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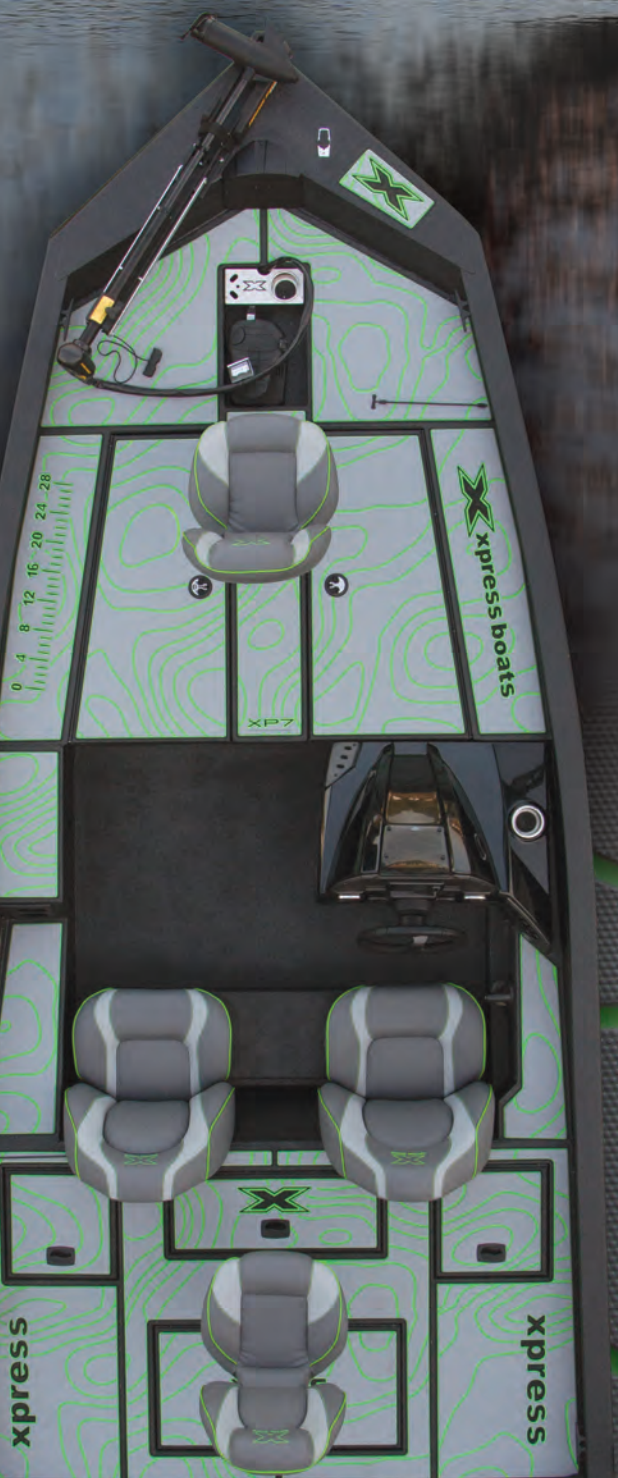

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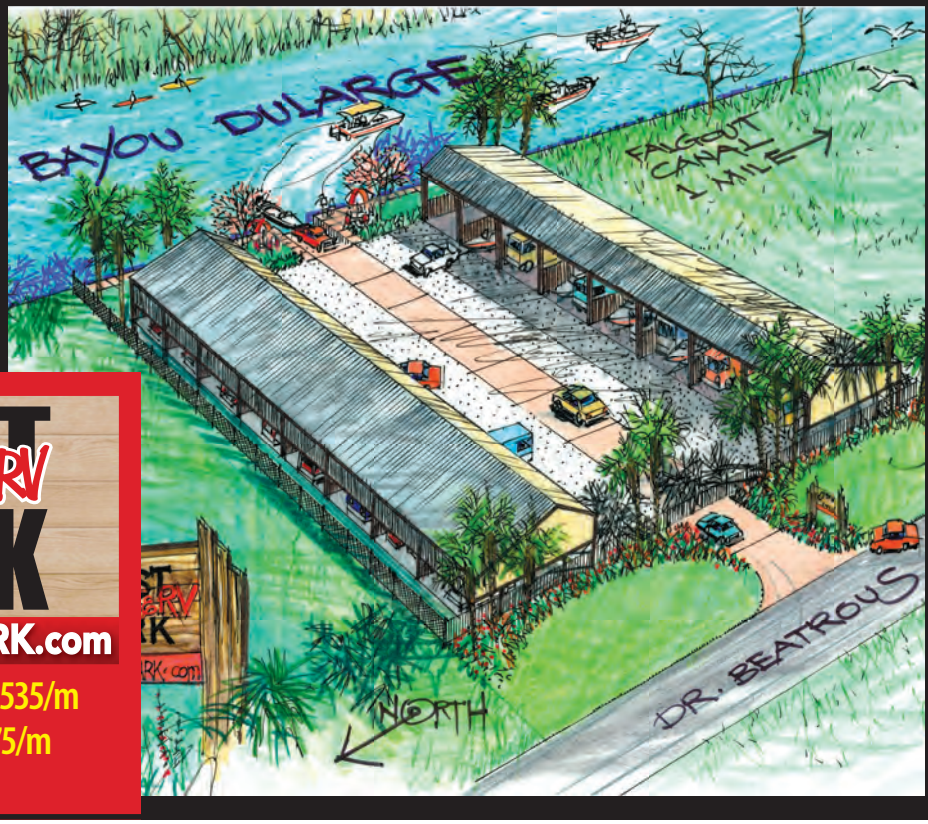

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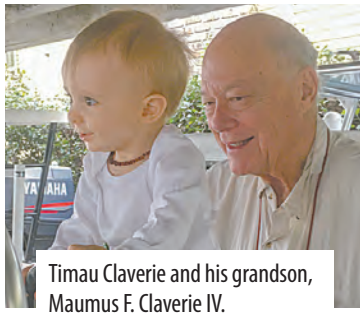
TRIBUTE TO A LOUISIANA FISHERIES PIONEER

EDITOR:

On Valentine's Day this year, Louisiana's saltwater fishermen lost one of the best friends they ever could have had when Maumus "Timau" Claverie passed away.

Timau was saving fish long before saving fish was cool. He got his start in fisheries management in the mid-70s when he saw a problem with the longliner boats from Japan catching lots of yellowfin tuna and billfish, and Timau knew this had to stop or we could lose our billfish stocks close to home: It was his dedication and untiring efforts that lead to legislation that stopped longliners from operating in the Gulf of Mexico.



Timau Claverie and his grandson, Maumus F. Claverie IV.

Timau moved on to be one of the founders of Save our Specks, which was successful in banning the use of mono gill nets in Louisiana's coastal waters. He was one of the founding members of CCA Louisiana in 1983, and chaired the science committee for many years. Timau knew more about fisheries management than most, and served in many areas of CCA, including the national board of directors. He also played a pivotal role in getting gamefish status for redfish in Louisiana, as well as the banning of gill nets in 1995. Timau gave thousands upon thousands of hours of his time to save the fish: He took time away from his family, his law practice and even fishing to save and protect our marine fisheries resources.

Timau served four terms on the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, including being chairman for one year, and was a longtime member of the board of trustees for the International Gamefish Association, the Billfish Foundation and the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. Timau made many trips to both the state and nation's capitol to testify on fisheries conservation issues.

When Timau spoke, people listened because he always based his comments on sound science and facts — not emotion.

One of his longtime friends said we lost a giant in fisheries management, and CCA would have not had the success it did without Timau. He was the best friend that speckled trout, redfish, billfish and tuna ever had in Louisiana. Timau came up with the idea for the speckled trout and redfish tagging program, and is the man that put together all the tagging kits, made the tag sticks, entered the information of tagged fish and then logged the recapture information via computer. Timau knew how critical this information would be for fisheries management, and put in thousands of hours for the program.

For all of Timau's hard work and dedication to fisheries management for more than 30 years, he was inducted into the Louisiana CCA Hall of Fame several years ago.

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Landon York, 23, of Mandeville, poses with the big East Carroll Parish 10-point he drilled on Oct. 5. The big buck was estimated to be 5 ½ years old, and green-scored 163 3/8 inches of bone.

Photo courtesy Landon York

BOWHUNTER DOWNS IMPRESSIVE EAST CARROLL PARISH 10-POINT

YORK'S BIG DEER GREEN SCORES 163 INCHES

By Glynn Harris

To say the least, it was a nerve-wracking stretch for Landon York in early October.

The 23-year-old Mandeville bowhunter encountered a big 10-point four times in two days on property his uncle owns in East Carroll Parish — but he was finally able to seal the deal on Friday, Oct. 5.

"On the afternoon of Oct. 3, I had gone hunting planning to do my part in taking a doe with my bow," York said. "Before climbing a tree with my Mathews Triax, I had taken the card from a camera located 10 steps from my tree and was looking at the images with a card reader.

"All of a sudden, I came across a couple of photos of the biggest buck I had ever seen and realized I was sitting overlooking where he had been hours before."

The evening wore on as York studied images of the big buck, and around 5:30 he looked up to see two does step out. Then without warning, the monster he was just looking at on the card reader stepped out and stopped behind a tree only 15 yards away.

"I was literally gasping for breath at what I was looking at," he said.

The buck stood for a minute or two and then turned and casually walked back into the woods.

He encountered the buck again on the morning of the 5th but couldn't get a shot, so he moved trees and put a new plan in action. After trimming limbs, he scooted up to nose-bleed height — some 50 feet above ground to avoid detection.

"After having to walk back to my 4-wheeler to retrieve my Thermacell and then climbing 50 feet, I was soaking wet with perspiration. I finally settled in and by then it was getting pretty late. Just before dark, the two smaller bucks walked out and I felt the one I was after would be following," York said. "He did, and stopped at 21 yards. I released my arrow and the buck tore out. I felt I had hit him a bit too far back, but could see blood on his side as he ran."

The area York hunts is located adjacent to the Mississippi River, and floods when the river is high.

"Some of the woods are underwater right now, and when the deer took off after I shot, I was afraid he'd get in the water and recovery would be tough if not impossible. I didn't want to push him so I went back to the camp and around 10:30, my dad and uncle joined me to begin the search," he said. "After going nearly a half mile and just before hitting the water, we found my buck."

The big deer tipped the scales at 200 pounds, and sported a wide 20 ½-inch rack with eight symmetrical points and two kickers. While all features of the rack were impressive, the bases were an astounding 7 ¼ inches each, and the big buck — estimated at 5 ½ years old — rough-scored 163 3/8 inches of bone. ▪

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NOVEMBER RUT CALENDARS

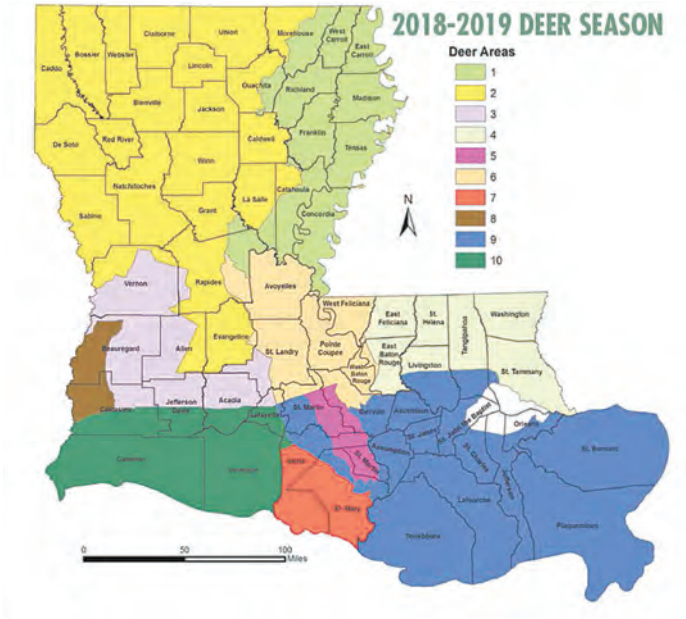
The arrival of November means primitive firearms and rifle season gets underway in most areas of the state.

In Southwest Louisiana (Areas 3, 7, 8 and 10), bucks will have finished up their second scraping period in late October, with the second breeding period forecasted to take place from about Oct. 24 through Nov. 6.

Area 2 bucks will be wrapping up their first scraping period around Oct. 23, with the first breeding period running from about Oct. 24 through Nov. 6. The second scraping period will begin immediately thereafter, running through about Nov. 22.

Deer in Areas 4 and 9 will be in pre-rut through about Nov. 6, with the first scraping period lasting from Nov. 7 through Nov. 22, with the first rut starting immediately thereafter and lasting through Dec. 6.

In Areas 1, 5 and 6, deer will be in pre-rut beginning Nov. 7 all the way through about Dec. 6. ■



NOVEMBER 2018 — Areas 1, 5 & 6

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7 Pre-Rut Starts	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

NOVEMBER 2018 — Area 2

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

NOVEMBER 2018 — Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10

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

NOVEMBER 2018 — Areas 4 & 9

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

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Business opportunities for new dealers

ANGLER CHASING SPECKS LANDS LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE IN VERMILION BAY

By Patrick Bonin

SURPRISE CATCH HAPPENED NEAR CYPREMORT POINT

When there's a big fall bite going on in The Cove, Cypremort Point anglers know that typically means speckled trout have finally moved in adjacent to camps and piers in an easily accessible spot on the east shore of Vermilion Bay.

Word spreads quickly, and an armada of boats and anglers soon move in to battle specks in what's a fall tradition for the area.

But Pat Hammon got a totally different "big bite" in The Cove in late September — one that he's never experienced in 40 years of fishing around Vermilion Bay.

When his 4 Horseman cork vanished about 5:30 p.m., the 59-year-old St. Martinville angler was initially thinking a redfish or speckled trout had devoured his offering of a tasty live shrimp.

Then he picked up the rod — and immediately changed his mind.

"I was netting a redfish for my buddy and I had put my rod in the rod holder, and I looked and the rod was bent," Hammon said.

When he grabbed the rod, he instantly knew something was amiss, and said the weight he felt was tremendous.

"It didn't pull drag. I didn't know what I had. It was like a big wet beach towel, like pulling in a 5-gallon bucket," he said with a chuckle. "I said, 'What the hell I got right here? A body?'"

Actually, what he had was a big loggerhead sea turtle — one that Hammon estimated weighed at least 60 pounds, with a 3-foot-long barnacle-covered shell.

Mandy Tumlin, a biologist with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries who serves as the marine mammal and sea turtle stranding and rescue program coordinator for the state, saw Hammon's picture and identified the turtle as a loggerhead, but couldn't tell the sex of the animal or get a good age estimate based on the photo.

"Loggerheads get to be about 3 feet long on average, and can weigh up to 250 pounds once they're adults," Tumlin said. "It looks like this would be a sub-adult to an adult, but it's just so hard to say. But dinner plate-size is around 2 to 5 years, so it's an older animal, yes."

Loggerheads, which are officially classified as threatened, live in open ocean and nearshore coastal waters, so Tumlin said it's likely not a fluke the turtle was in the area, and noted that females' nesting season is April through September, with the peak in June and July.

"They're often entering marshes, estuaries and coastal rivers, and loggerheads are pretty common in the Gulf," she said. "They'll nest on certain beaches, and they'll use the foraging grounds along the coast of Louisiana, and move in between nesting grounds and foraging grounds."

All sea turtles are federally protected under the Endangered Species Act, and Tumlin said Hammon and his crew did exactly what she would have hoped: safely remove the hook, take a photo for species identification and then let the animal go unharmed.

Pat Hammon, of St. Martinville, poses with the big loggerhead sea turtle he caught in The Cove at Cypremort Point while fishing for specks and reds with live shrimp under a cork.

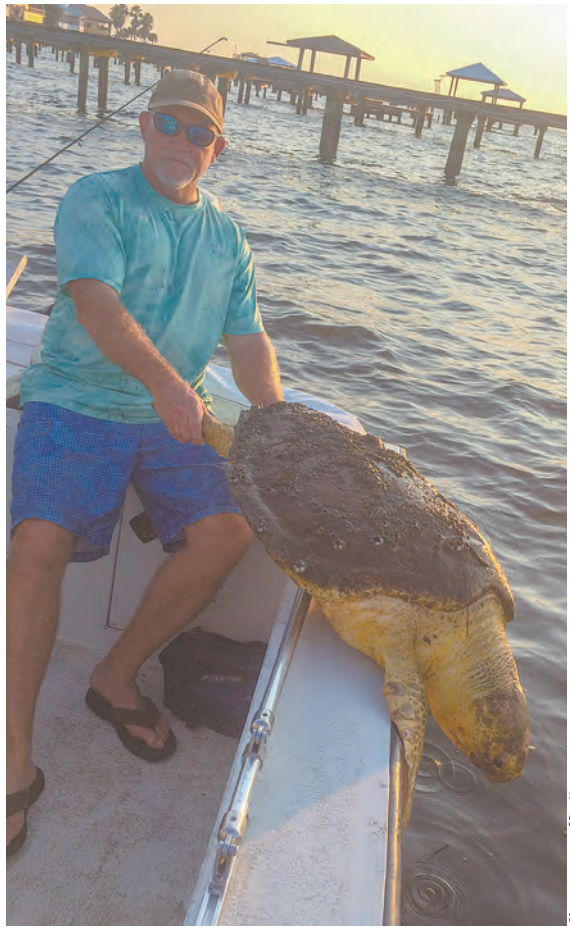


Photo courtesy of Pat Hammon

She also asked that even anglers who catch and release a turtle contact her office with the location, a photo and details on the catch — noting that no one would get in trouble for incidentally catching a sea turtle on a rod and reel.

"We can't be everywhere all the time, so we rely on the eyes and ears of the public out on the water and out on the beaches, helping us know where strandings are and where live animals are, so we can all work together to protect these for future generations," she said.

Hammon said unhooking the beast actually proved surprisingly easy.

"I grabbed it by the back flippers and slid it up the side of my boat. When you get it out of the water, it's pretty much helpless. I guess it's so heavy, it depends on the buoyancy of the water to move," he said, noting it was hooked right in the corner of the mouth with a 1/0 kahle hook. "After I got it on the side of my boat, there was no resistance. It didn't buck, it didn't fight — maybe it was stressed or exhausted."

Fortunately, the big reptile seemed no worse for the wear — and Hammon said it didn't linger around long after regaining its freedom.

"When we got the hook out and put it back, that thing took off," he said with a laugh. "He booked — those flippers were turning up some RPMs and he was getting the hell out of there." ▪

The Island's trophy bucks range from 150 up to 300 inches, and roam over 2,000 acres, according to owners Beau and Mike Blake. Inset: The Island offers pheasant and duck overnight combos just 40 minutes west of New Orleans.

THE ISLAND

A SPORTSMAN'S PARADISE JUST MINUTES FROM NEW ORLEANS

Mike Blake and his son Beau, two leaders in the oilfield industry, have a real passion for everything fishing and hunting. So when the opportunity arose to purchase 3,100 acres of some of the most unspoiled and diverse wildlife habitat in South Louisiana, they couldn't resist.

Built entirely from cypress logged from the Des Allemands area, The Island's main lodge has served guests and visitors since 1946. The Blake's just completed extensive renovations, turning the 5,200 square-foot space into a true hunting resort — while keeping its original character. Five-star meals, warm fireplaces, a poker room, mud and gun rooms and many other amenities make The Island a great place to spend time on your next hunting and fishing adventure.

"At The Island, hunting is our passion," Mike said. "My son and I love to hunt and fish, and we know what makes hunting memories. We strive to cater to every hunter's needs, and ensure you enjoy your stay with us."

"Right now we are offering hunts ranging from classic Louisiana duck and white-tail deer, to more exotic options like alligator, pheasant and fallow, axis and sika deer," Beau said. "We really do have just about every kind of hunting experience and combinations imaginable — and it's all minutes away from New Orleans in St. Charles Parish."

Mike and Beau are proud of the work that went into rejuvenating their paradise. They now have over 1,000 acres of water-controlled marshland just minutes from the lodge, along with professional guides and retrievers.

"One of the best packages we offer now is pheasant and duck overnight combos. You start with a clay shoot in the afternoon, followed by a delicious Cajun dinner with your group, and then a morning duck hunt," Mike said. "After topping the morning off with breakfast, we do a European-style tower pheasant shoot.

"And our trophy bucks roam over 2,000 acres through some fantastic deer habitat. Right now on the property we have whitetail trophy bucks that range from the 150-inch class, up to 300 inches."

To find out more about The Island in St. Charles Parish, visit their website at www.hunttheisland.com, or call 985-274-2221. ▪

Blake Ittmann with the 31.3-pound pending world-record tripletail he shot Sept. 19 out of Venice.

FREE-DIVER SHOOTS PENDING WORLD-RECORD TRIPLETAIL NEAR VENICE

ITTMANN'S 31.3-POUNDER SHOULD SHATTER CURRENT RECORD

By Todd Masson

Blake Ittmann has been free-diving the waters south of Venice for only four years, but in that time he's become pretty selective in what he shoots. Ittmann and his buddies could absolutely load the boat with tripletail at some of the platforms they frequented early this fall, but there's not a whole lot of challenge in that.

Still, that doesn't mean the divers avoid the tasty fish, and that was certainly the case on Sept. 19.

The crew went down hoping to get some meat for the table and maybe a trophy. They succeeded in that latter quest in spades.

Ittmann shot a 31.3-pound tripletail that is 4 pounds heavier than the current world-record, a fish shot by Lawrence Palmisano in 2015, according to the International Underwater Spearfishing Association.

"This time of year is when the tripletail are coming in to breed, and that's kind of why we went," Ittmann said. "We were looking for a monster as well as some to eat. We could have shot as many as we wanted, but we're not there to wipe them out. We wanted enough to eat and to find a big one."

Ittmann said the trophy fish was about 15 feet down, and he swam within 4 feet of it before spearing it. The shot was a clean one, but that didn't mean the fish came up easily.

"It was stuck between two rig legs, so I had to go down a few times to untangle it," he said.

Ittmann knew the fish had record potential, but he wasn't able to weigh it until four days later at a seafood market in Metairie.

Ittmann said tripletail are often so thick at the platforms south of Venice, there's really no challenge in harvesting them.

""I think the biggest challenge is how dirty the water is. It's definitely not ideal water clarity, and you're doing it at rigs people fish a lot, and there are ropes hanging all over," he said. "It's kind of sketchy, but it's not by any means the most difficult diving that I do."

Ittmann said he holds his breath on most dives for about 80 seconds, although he can push it to 90 seconds on occasion.

That doesn't sound like a lot of time, but the gear he and his fellow divers use helps them accomplish much in those valuable seconds.

"The fins are gigantic, so a couple kicks and you're down where you need to be," he said. ■

CARCASS IMPORTATION BAN EXPANDED TO INCLUDE LOUISIANA LANDS EAST OF MISSISSIPPI RIVER

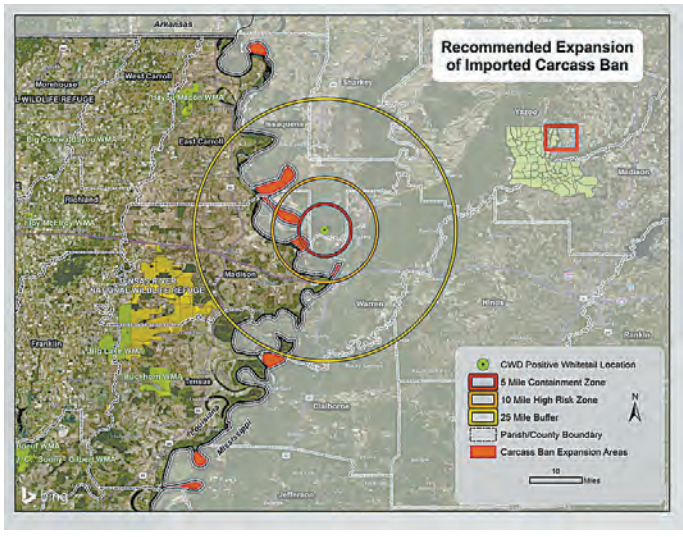
MEASURE AFFECTS HUNTERS IN PARTS OF EAST CARROLL, MADISON AND TENSAS PARISHES

At its October meeting, the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission approved a declaration of emergency that expands the current cervid carcass importation ban to include Louisiana lands east of the Mississippi River.

The measure went into effect immediately, and is designed to reduce the risk of chronic wasting disease from spreading into Louisiana. It has not been detected here, but was discovered in Issaquena County, Mississippi on Jan. 25 — only a few miles from the Louisiana border.

The regulation now reads in part: *No person shall import, transport or possess any cervid carcass or part of a cervid carcass originating outside of Louisiana, including Louisiana lands east of the Mississippi River in East Carroll, Madison and Tensas parishes, except: for meat that is cut and wrapped; meat that has been boned out; quarters or other portions of meat with no part of the spinal column or head attached, antlers, clean skull plates with antlers, cleaned skulls without tissue attached, capes, tanned hides, finished taxidermy mounts and cleaned cervid teeth.*

CWD has been discovered in 25 states including Texas, Arkansas and Mississippi. It is a fatal neurodegenerative disease affecting members of the family *Cervidae*, which includes white-tailed deer.



This map highlights Louisiana lands east of the Mississippi River in red where the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission expanded the cervid carcass importation ban.

The disease is caused by misfolded proteins called prions. These prions can be shed in saliva, urine, feces and decomposing carcasses. Infectious material can contaminate soil, becoming available for uptake by plants, which increasing transmission when the plants are consumed. ▪

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MLF ANNOUNCES 2019 PRO TOUR

From News Reports

BULK OF FORMER BASSMASTER ELITE PROS MAKE THE MOVE

There was a seismic shift in the world of professional bass angling last month, when Major League Fishing announced it was creating its own tour for 2019.

And many of the 80 anglers who officially signed up to compete with MLF next year include household names like former Bassmaster Elite Series pros Kevin VanDam, Edwin Evers, Mike Iaconelli, Jordan Lee, Skeet Reese and Gonzales' Greg Hackney.

The two tours will run independently, and anglers won't be allowed to compete on both circuits.

"We understand how difficult this decision was for pro anglers ... everyone who has faced a potential career-changing move can relate to it …," said MLF cofounder Boyd Duckett. "Sure, higher payouts are part of it, but for us this is not a competition we're in against other trails. It doesn't matter what B.A.S.S. or FLW does; our goal is different. These anglers know that and we're ecstatic to have them on board with the new MLF plans."

Other Louisiana Bassmaster Elite Series anglers who also made the jump to MLF include Cliff Crochet and Gerald Spohrer.

"This is a new day in professional bass fishing, with MLF and its team of anglers and partners now on a fast track to elevate the sport to a level comparable to that of other major league sporting events," MLF Commissioner Don Rucks said. "Our game is played on a 'field," and we have celebrities, fast action, rules, officials, penalties and a clock. Our participants like being role models and giving autographs, and we're going to make it easier for anglers and fans to share the passion of fishing going forward."

"I, we, are going into this new MLF venture with a different mentality," VanDam said. "To me, looking at this list is a very powerful statement about the future of the league. This group of anglers accepted the opportunity because they all believe in the vision and that we have the chance to do something very special for the sport of fishing.

"With all the anglers working hard for the same end goal, the future is going to be very exciting."

MLF will continue its Cup events and World Championship, airing on the Outdoor Channel and CBS, respectively. New are the Bass Pro Tour competitions and championship, and eventually, tour qualifiers — all of which will use the same catch, weigh and immediate-release format. ▪

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DEFINING DEER MOVEMENT

By Chris Ginn

Needless to say, it's pretty hard to harvest a deer if you never see anything from your stand. Local hunters weigh-in on conditions they like best for optimal action.

While sitting in my ground blind last season watching 15 deer second-lining down the lane I was hunting, I was struck by deer movement — and how it's really the only factor that matters.

Think about it. I could have been hunting the biggest bucks over the best food plot out of the best box stand money could buy, but if the deer wouldn't have been moving, I might as well have been back at the house watching The Bachelor with my wife.

No matter where I hunt, how I set up, or how scent-free I am, deer movement is critical to successfully bagging a deer — any deer — because the simple fact of the matter is if deer aren't up and on their feet, I'm going home with my tag still in my pocket.

So what is it that puts deer up and at 'em?

I guess if we had a definitive answer to that question we could just punch in to our stands 10 minutes before they got up and started moving — which would take just about every bit of the fun out of deer hunting.

Some say it's the first hour of daylight, while others say it's the last.

Some say to get in the stand before sunrise, while others say don't even get out of bed until brunch.

Some say hunt the cloudy, rainy days, while others insist in only hunting sunny, bluebird days.

I think the answer is as varied as the hunting zones in Louisiana.

Of course the old adage that you can't kill them if you're sitting on the couch rings true, but how many of us can actually spend all day long in our stands in an effort to make sure we're there when deer do start moving?

Unless you're hunting from something that resembles a high-rise condo, an all-day hunt is a pretty tall order for anybody.

RATCHET DOWN THE PRESSURE

In an odd twist, some hunters like Jeremy Tullos from Washington Parish believe the key is to keep deer on their feet — by never giving them a reason to get off of them in the first place.

"Low hunting pressure is key to keeping them comfortable enough to move," he said. "If you're trying to figure out when the deer are moving during the day while making them nocturnal because you're hunting them so much, it's kind of like you're taking one step forward and two steps back."

Tullos uses a low-impact approach that allows him to monitor when the deer are moving without even being in the woods.

"I'm using cameras that send the pics directly to your phone," he said. "They keep me from going in and checking them, which also pressures deer, and I can tell exactly when they're moving by a particular stand."

But if you're like me, knowing to stay out of an area to not pressure your deer — and actually doing it — are two entirely different things. It just takes so much willpower.

So aside from cellphone game cameras, how can you know when deer are up and moving during daylight without actually going into the woods?

KEEP IT COLD

According to several deer hunters across the state, the number one thing to look for outside the rut is a good, hard cold snap.

"It's so unusual to get really cold weather around here," said Mike Phelps from Franklinton, "that when we get one it kind of forces them to get up and move."

In his neck of the woods, Phelps has noticed that his local herd seems to like it cloudy with misting rain.

"It's miserable conditions for the hunter, but I've shot a couple nice bucks in that kind of weather," he said. "In my experience, the more miserable it is for me, the better my chances of seeing deer. So when my common sense is telling me to pack it in, that's when I need to settle back into my stand and stay put."

Phelps said a steady rain might even be better than a light drizzle, but he wouldn't know because his common sense wins more often than not in those conditions and he just can't take heavy rain and cold.

Curtis Simpson hunts around West Monroe, and agreed with Phelps.

"Hands down, a cold front is going

>

When to get in the stand and when to get out is a question all deer hunters are forced to make. BOTTOM: Documenting when deer move through your hunting spot with the help of a journal is key to getting your hands on a good buck.

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Hunters limited to hunting only when their jobs allow should hunt the standard early-morning and late-evening shifts.

to get them up and moving," he said. "No doubt about it. Cold weather forces them to eat more because they burn more energy trying to stay warm. And when they're eating more, they're moving more. Only stands to reason that you've got better chances of seeing them on a cold day."

Beyond just hunting a strong cold front, Simpson has noticed that the cold weather kind of makes deer in his area leave their bedding areas earlier in the afternoon ,and move back to them later in the morning.

"That means more daylight deer movement," Simpson said. "So it doesn't really matter if you're hunting a food source or the trails going to their bedding areas: If the weatherman is predicting a cold day, make sure you're in your stand."

Like Tullos, Simpson tries not to overhunt stands if the deer aren't moving.

"No sense in blowing everything out just to sit there and see nothing," he said. "If you kind of cherry pick your days and don't hunt the days that aren't good for deer movement, you'll notice your stands lasting much longer into the season."

Simpson added that he only hunts his best stands when everything is perfect. Otherwise, he stays out. The only exception he has is hunting a pipeline or high-line.

"Anywhere you can see a long way," he said. "Then you can sit in your stand and still stay away from moving deer. You just have to take a longer shot."

OPINIONS DIFFER

As if to prove just how different local deer populations behave, Chuck Blackwell from Bogalusa said he has learned that the deer he hunts seem to prefer the falling barometric pressure leading up to a strong cold front coming through.

"You get a little window in there where the pressure is dropping as a front is passing through that lasts a little while after it passes," Blackwell said. "After that it will start shooting back up with the high, bluebird days. I see a lot of deer movement in

Here in Louisiana the coldest weather often means more daylight movement, as deer head back to their bedding areas later in the morning and leave them earlier in the afternoon.

that little window of opportunity."

Up around Vidalia and Ferriday, Eric Dumas spends a lot of time on a deer stand at Giles Island Hunting Club. He has hunted all over Louisiana though, and came to the realization a long time ago that every area is different when it comes to deer movement.

"Some areas they like overcast and raining," said Dumas. "Other areas like here at Giles Island, they like sunshine and bluebird days. The only way to figure out when your deer like to move is to hunt a lot and take good notes. Once you see a trend starting to develop, you can start picking the days you hunt with a little more certainty."

THE OLD STANDBY

When guiding hunters, Dumas doesn't have the luxury of picking the days, so he falls back on the old standby morning and evening hunts.

"Let's say you can only hunt on the weekends," he said. "Well, you're going to the woods whether it's 80 degrees or 30 degrees because that's the only day you've got. Sounds simple, but in that case, get in your stand before sunrise and hunt to about 10. After a midday break, head back and hunt 3:30 to dark. "Regardless of what the weather is doing, you can bet early-morning and late-evening is going to give you the best chance to see deer."

So if you have the luxury of picking the days you get to hunt, there's no doubt in these deer hunters' minds that choosing the coldest days will definitely will up your odds of seeing deer. Now whether your deer prefer cold and cloudy — or cold and clear — is something you'll have to figure out.

However, if work or school limits the days you can get in a stand, going early and late is key if you want to see deer moving. And while it's true that hunting mid-morning to late afternoon is a great way to see big bucks, hunting mornings and evenings is a better way to see more deer in general.

TAKE NOTES

To better figure out deer movement for yourself, consider starting a hunting journal like Sid Havard from Simsboro did.

"I haven't kept mine up for the last couple of years, but I have one that dates back maybe 40 years," he said. "I started it way back in the days of hunting deer sign and trails long before people started putting out corn piles and planting food

>

plots. It takes a little effort, but the rewards are well worth it."

Havard suggested recording everything you can about every hunt – things like general weather conditions, wind direction, barometric pressure, moon phase, time of deer sightings, and direction of deer movement.

"It might take a while, but you're going to eventually see patterns starting to emerge," Havard said. "And it might seem crazy, but I'd say to keep a separate journal for your different hunting spots if they're in different zones.

"Deer do different things in different areas, so recording what deer are doing in South Louisiana in a journal you keep for North Louisiana is just going to throw you off."

I wish I would have been keeping a journal last year when all those deer marched down my lane, because the next time I hunted that stand I didn't see a thing.

Something was different, but I don't know what it was because I wasn't paying attention to anything but the deer themselves.

Defining deer movement is never going to be an exact science, but with a little knowledge and a lot of record keeping, I'll eventually nail down when my deer move best.

It's up to you to do the same. ▪

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

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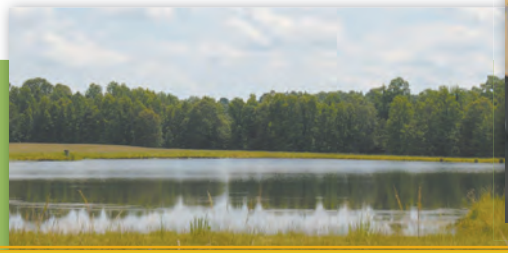

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Sure, live bait will always catch more fish. But the Ballay brothers insist artificial lures are all you really ever need for speckled trout and redfish down in Venice.

'ARTIFICIAL' INTELLIGENC

By Jerald Horst

Venice is arguably the ultimate fishing destination. Grand Isle fans would probably dispute that, but Grand Isle has more: It has beaches, shopping (at least a little), a goodly number of restaurants and even a big grocery store.

But Venice is just fishing — raw power-fishing.

I was there to fish with the strongest name in Venice fishing history: Ballay. Two Ballays, actually — brothers Brandon and Brent.

"We want to talk to you about fishing the old way in Venice, all artificials; no live bait," said Brandon. "Venice was made the fishing destination that it is today with artificials."

"Ten years ago there was no live bait for sale in Venice," Brent said. "Live bait is good, but it's expensive and it's a slow way to fish."

Brother Brandon expanded.

"To fish your way down a bank to find fish, you might waste 20 shrimp.

"We are more run-and-gun; hit a spot and move. People have gotten lazy. They don't want to fish without live bait."

"Let me give you an example," croaked Brandon. "Yesterday a guy came into the marina and asked for 150 live shrimp. An employee told him they were out. The fisherman huffed, 'Now how in the hell am I gonna catch fish?'

"It's easier."

"You don't have to cast as much," agreed Brent. "Plus, you don't have to learn the art of deceiving fish."

"It's not just about numbers," Brandon shook his head. "You shouldn't just judge your trip on numbers alone.

"When I take a guy out, I want to teach him how to fish. You can't teach a guy how to fish with live bait."

"Yeah," agreed his brother. "If they fish with us and learn how to fish and come to the marina and they are out of bait, they can still fish," he said, shaking his rod in a clenched fist for emphasis.

"We go the extra mile teaching people where to fish, how to present their lures, how to feel bites and how to set the hook," added Brandon. "We are not opposed to using bait. Some customers request live bait.

"We both buy 2 or 3 pounds of dead shrimp every day for insurance. Tipping jig hooks with a piece of shrimp adds smell — good for reds, flounder, sheepshead and drum."

"Everything but trout," finished Brent.

Finding fish is important of course. If the fish aren't found, no bait works.

"Everyone has access to satellite photographic maps such Google Earth, Standard Maps or chips in their GPS," Brandon said.

"We still use them to find cuts and ponds. For instance, coming down here this morning, Brent was on Google Earth scouting for spots and making a game plan."

GOING RED UP NEXT >

GOING RED

The brothers decided to begin their quest to show how effective artificial lures are in Venice by targeting redfish first and speckled trout second. It was kind of an unusual move, since speck fishing is often considered best in low-light conditions and redfish are more dependable, being semi-anchored to a spot of home turf in the marsh.

But tides are important to the way they fish, so it was redfish first.

They left the marina and headed west out through Tiger Pass, ran across Dixon Bay and fished the first and second spillways off of Southwest Pass from the north. (Spillways is a local term for what hydrologists call distributaries, smaller channels that shunt water from a larger pass to Gulf waters.)

These are not hard to find, as they are labeled "First Spillway" and Second Spillway" on maps.

They stopped at a likely looking drain, essentially a watery cut into the marsh grass. "On a falling tide, like we have this morning, the water flushes out of ponds in the marsh into the spillway," Brandon said.

"The water brings shrimp, mullet, crabs and pogies with it. The fish will set outside the drain on a drop-off. You never know what's going to be there. It could be trout in one, redfish in another and flounder in still another."

He situated his boat outside the drain in 10 or 12 feet of water. They cast 3 or 4 feet into the drain and bounced their lures out on a tight-line.

The action was immediate, with both hooking up on good reds.

"Any time the (Mississippi) river gets low, under 4 feet on the New Orleans gauge, the fish will go into the river system and they will relate to these drains.

"Even on a rising tide, they will be within 100 yards of the drain. A rising tide slows the river current down and makes it easier to fish. We can use singles instead of doubles."

The doubles Brandon was talking about were tandem rigs, hand-tied with 30-pound test mono, with 3/8-ounce jigheads and H & H Cocahoe Minnow soft plastics. Later in the day they shifted to single rigs, especially when they clipped on oval corks for trout, but the color of the plastic tails was constant.

The go-to colors in Venice, they said, are black-and-chartreuse or purple-and-chartreuse, 365 days a year. "Find another color on my boat," challenged Brandon.

A couple more drains and their limit of slot redfish was in the boat, in addition to a couple of bulls they set free.

The first redfish came on board before the sun even peeked over the horizon. **ABOVE:** Brandon points out a typical drain from the marsh. This one yielded several redfish.

TIME FOR TROUT

They didn't go far in their hunt for quicksilver action, moving into a canal system in the marsh between the first and second spillways.

"For some reason," tutored Brandon, "in Venice, trout, and for that matter reds too, like to be where a canal makes a Y. The fish are located near the junction of the Y. Redfish will be along the bank and trout will hold in the middle of the canal."

They bounced their baits off the bottom — pause one, two, three, then hop and let it drop to the bottom. Pause again and repeat. The specks always hit the jigs on the drop.

Brandon's most effective technique was to cast cross-current and let the current sweep the lure down-current, then hop the jigs all the way back up-current to the boat.

Live bait fishing is expensive, especially for speckled trout, where the action is fast and limits are generous, says Brent Ballay.

The action was good, but they needed to make 50 fish, so they moved a short ways down the canal to a tiny drain dribbling different-colored water into the canal. It wasn't much to look at, but it was enough to hold trout.

Still fishing on the bottom, they added more trout to the box. But following their run-and-gun philosophy, they pulled off biting fish to look for more. They found them where the canal emptied into Dixon Bay.

After anchoring, they swapped to single jigs under corks to fish the more open waters. Both often use corks in the summer and early fall when trout are in 2 to 4 feet of water.

Here they really conked the fish, ending what can only be called a perfect Venice day. ▪

DISADVANTAGES OF LIVE BAIT UP NEXT >

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DISADVANTAGES OF LIVE BAIT

It is easy to check off the major advantage of using live bait. It can produce bigger fish catches because it is easier to fool fish with the real thing. Of course, the bait has to be put where the fish are: The best bait in the world can't catch fish where they aren't.

The Ballays quickly admit that live bait catches fish. "I'm not trying to say that live bait is the devil," Brandon grinned. "I'm saying that there is an alternative."

Brent agreed, but nodded, "You don't need live bait in Venice, Louisiana."

Here is the brothers' list of disadvantages to using live bait.

- Live bait fishermen tend to cluster, producing crowding. Brandon is convinced that they do it on purpose. "The more live shrimp in a spot, the better. If you don't like being in the middle of a cluster of boats, you have to move. I like solitude."
- Live bait produces lots of trash fish — pinfish, ladyfish, catfish and stingrays.
- Live bait fishing is slow fishing. It is difficult to cover much water to find fish when live bait it used. Finding fish takes longer.
- It is expensive. "Shrimp are 40 cents each in Venice," growled Brent. "The average person buys 100. On 25 of those the reel's bail is going to trip and you are going to sling it off."
- It is not as challenging, reducing the skill factor of the hunt. ■

The Ballays only fish two color combos of plastic year round, black-and-chartreuse or purple-and-chartreuse.

ARTIFICIAL LURE ADVANTAGES

1) Bottom bites are very subtle. Leave the monofilament at home. Braided line is much more sensitive. Both Brandon and Brent use 30-pound PowerPro line.
2) Soft plastics are all that's really needed for speckled trout and redfish. Topwaters are fun, and so are other plugs, but they are not necessary.
3) Spinning tackle is the tool of choice. Modern lines and rods mean sensitivity is just as good with spinning tackle as with casting tackle. With spinning tackle, you never get backlashes, you can cast further and it's easier to cast into the wind.
4) Unless a cork is being used, concentrate on keeping lures on the bottom.
5) Keep color selection simple.
6) Stick with 3/8-ounce jigheads. They are the most versatile. They will go to the bottom in 20 feet of water, but still will make a cork pop well. Both brothers use unpainted jigheads.
7) Fan-cast any in any area you stop, then concentrate on a spot when you find fish.
8) Once you find the pattern on any given day, it will likely be the same at any other drain, point or pocket that you fish that day. But be prepared: The next day it may be all different. ▪

CREDENTIALS
UP NEXT >

The Ballays use unpainted jigheads, braided line and keep their lure color selection simple.

>

CREDENTIALS

To speak with the authority that Brandon and Brent Ballay do, you had to have had your passport stamped. You can't talk scuttlebutt.

The brothers are relatively young; Brandon is 44 and Brent is 42, but they have owned their own guiding businesses for 26 and 23 years, respectively. But the name Ballay pushes a big wake in Venice — because of their pedigree, as well as their own skills and experiences.

Their father Dave ran a part-time offshore charter boat well over 40 years ago. At that time only one marina existed in Venice, Ellzey's. It was a ramp and a hoist, nothing more — no ice, no tackle, no fuel, no snacks and no drinks.

"In the 1980s, Dad saw the need for a full service marina in Venice," Brandon said. "His best friend Mike Bush was a bank president and loaned him the money to start.

"He got a long-term contract to lease a patch of bare mud 4 miles south of the end of road and immediately began construction. Venice Marina opened in the fall of 1985. I was 11 years old."

"Bass fishermen ate it up," added Brent. "They finally had a place to park."

The brothers had grown up so far in Jesuit Bend, but their parents bought a house in Buras and they had a camper at the marina as well as a houseboat. They boys loved it.

"All we did was hunt and fish every day," laughed Brandon. "We fished off the dock, duck hunted behind the marina and rabbit hunted on the banks of the Mississippi River. We probably didn't appreciate it until we were about 30."

Dave and wife Debbie sold the marina in 2002. "Dad was burnt out — seven days a week, 365 days a year. He didn't even close for Christmas," Brandon said.

They retired "full-time" to their home in Lumberton, Mississippi and moved to Hurtsboro, Alabama in 2013.

Brandon started deck-handing on a boat when he was 13. "That, and a complete lack of interest in school, led me to begin chartering at 18 years old. When I began chartering, there were two offshore guides and one inshore guide in Venice. I was number three offshore."

Now he ballparks that there are probably 100 to 150 full-time guides and 75 part-timers working out of the tiny port.

As for Brent, he started early, deck-handing for guide Mike Frenette when he was 11. "I deck-handed for him and Brandon on weekends and holidays. Then I went to Southeastern Louisiana University.

"The whole time there I was wishing I was hunting and fishing. I took that fancy calculator with all the fancy buttons on it and figured out how much money I was losing.

"So I came home and started fishing."

Both run their charter businesses, Venice Outdoors (985-637-8901) for Brandon and Cast n Blast Venice (985-960-2605) for Brent, out of Venice Marina, now owned by Mike and Bill Butler. ▪

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

Both Brent (left) and Brandon often use corks with jigs for speckled trout fishing.

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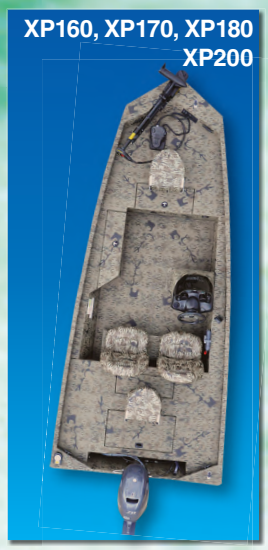

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By John Manion

Whatever the reason — from flooded corn fields up north, milder winters or any number of conspiracy theories floating around online — duck hunters in the Bayou State just haven't seen masses of birds migrating to Louisiana's dissolving wetlands compared to just a few generations ago.

But in South Louisiana, Mother Nature still sends an immense variety of birds — and every hunter hopes for an opportunity at one of those rarely seen exotic ducks.

Everyone has heard about "that guy" who shot a cinnamon teal, or has seen that aging goldeneye mount that was taken 30 years ago in a marsh that's now underwater.

There's little doubt, however, that if you are lucky enough to hit the exotic waterfowl lottery, the bird's headed to your favorite taxidermist and is going on the wall.

A true black duck — not what lots of area hunters call a mottled — is definitely a South Louisiana wall hanger. Learn how to tell the difference — and tips that will help your taxidermist if you shoot a trophy bird this season.

But as rare as they might be, a lot of hunters would say a black duck just isn't quite exotic enough — mainly because all duck hunters have killed one (or so they believe).

In classic Louisiana fashion, we've got a dozen different names for the same thing. Whether you learned to call it a black duck, a black mallard, a summer mallard, a mottled duck or a French duck, the reality is that hunters are probably talking about as many as three species that all appear very similar.

So it stands to reason that a Yankee bird that usually resides in New England and has half a dozen aliases often gets confused with its mottled Cajun cousin.

But, as Tony Cyprus Jr. can attest, a true, real-deal, olive-billed, red-legged black duck is absolutely a South Louisiana exotic — and it's most certainly a wall hanger.

BACKGROUND: Late season skies may be a bit empty, but to an old diehard that means scanning the horizon just that much harder. **INSET:** A trophy that any duck hunter would prize: Tony Cyprus with a one-of-a-kind South Louisiana black duck.

BACK IN BLACK

>

A TRUE BIG BRANCH BLACK

Nick Sicomo and Josh Gerard sat together in Cyprus' Southfork flatboat dubbed "The Mothership," begrudging the southerly flow producing less than ideal second-split hunting conditions.

"We ought to go solo this morning," Cyprus said, looking for consensus as he killed the motor.

"Yeah, we should spread out," Sicomo agreed. "They won't be stacked up this morning."

"Tony, you going to take the Honey Hole?" Gerard asked with hopeful inquisitiveness.

"No," Sicomo quickly interrupted, "I am."

Cyprus just laughed.

"Well, looks like it's going to be Plan B for me," he said.

The group paddled off into the morning darkness, each hunter taking a separate trenasse to gain access to the interior of the Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge situated on the northeastern shore of Lake Pontchartrain.

The rest of the public-land army was in the lake, already scanning the marsh with their Q-beams. But these three diehards wanted to put some distance between them and the masses.

Hunting 500 to 600 yards apart, the trio traded pin drops of each other's locations to ensure they wouldn't be flaring each other's working birds.

Naturally, Sicomo in the Honey Hole was getting plenty of action. He was getting good looks from greys, and he managed to bag a few for good measure.

Over at "Plan B," Cyprus lit up when he saw the first four birds of the morning working in his direction. Two quickly peeled off, but the other pair made a beeline for his pond.

Tony took the first opportunity they gave him.

BAM!

But when he finally got his pirogue to the bird, he immediately knew something was different: This duck wasn't from Dixie.

After the hunt, Cyprus made it back to find Sicomo and Gerard waiting on him.

"No way this is what I think it is," Cyprus said rhetorically, with the bird making a thud when he dropped it in Sicomo's pirogue.

"Damn! It makes my greys look like pigeons," Sicomo said. "What's the story?"

Tony told how he though the flight of four was made up of huge mottleds coming in from the lake.

"Two landed in the bay in front of me, and the other two just kept coming in low, like missiles," he said, his outstretched arms imitating cupping duck wings.

"Did you call? I only heard one shot from your direction," Gerard said.

The hunter said he didn't pick up a call.

"I was too weak in the knees to call, and they didn't work my decoys, either," Cyprus said. "They were coming down about 45 yards away, and I took the only shot I had.

"Hit him with one BB in the head."

Gerard picked up the bird in disbelief.

"Man, it's gotta weigh nearly 3 pounds," he said. "I think you gotta black. I will kill you if you do anything other than get this bird mounted."

Sicomo, a longtime hunter, added more certainty to the identification.

"It's a black," he said. "I saw one killed in the Chef Pass area. But that was more than 40 years ago."

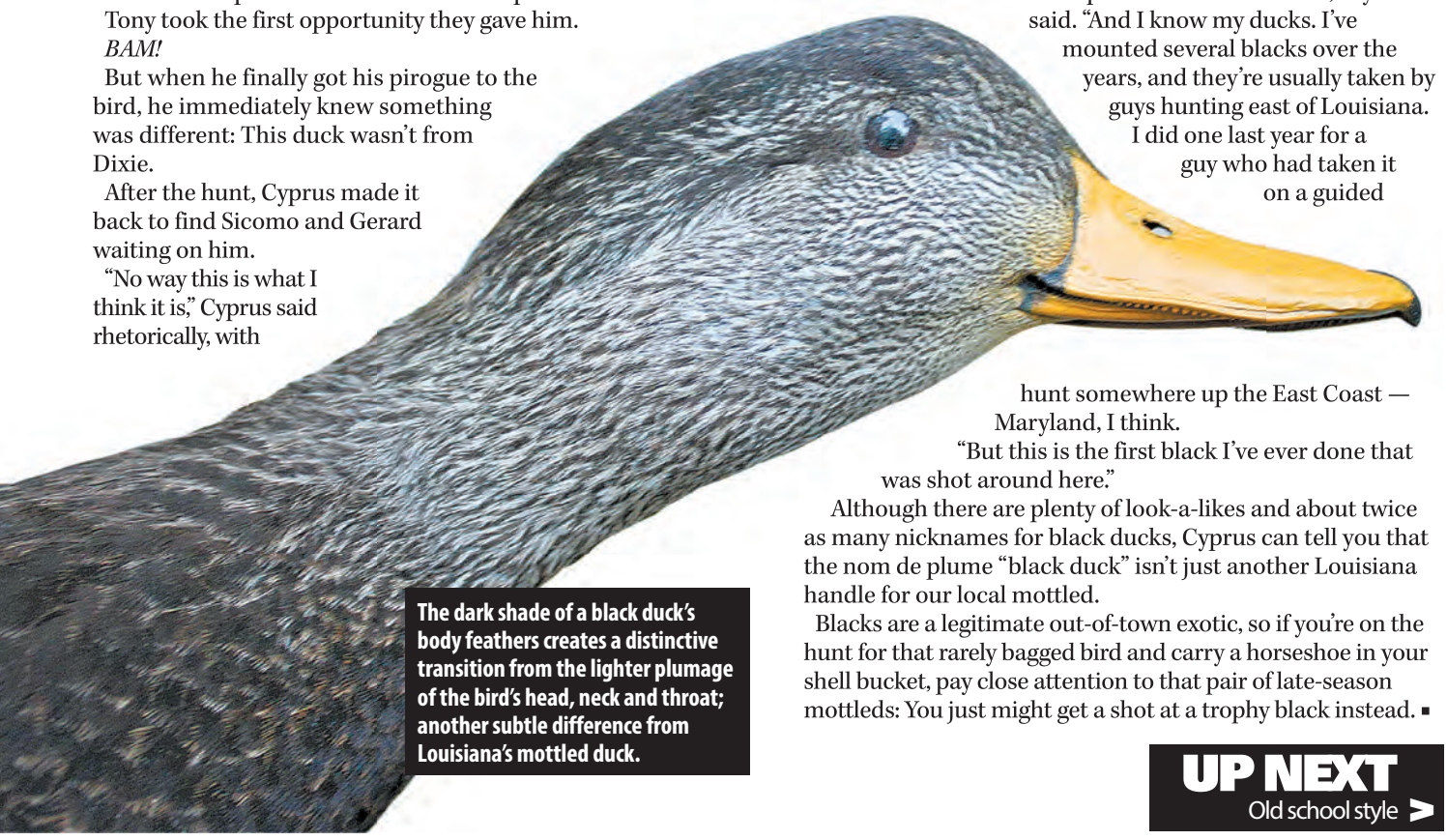
Now for the old schoolers out there already muttering, "Yeah, yeah, it's just another dark summer mallard," world champion taxidermist Kevin Hynes actually mounted the bird — and left no room for doubt on the ID.

"It's 100 percent real black duck," Hynes said. "And I know my ducks. I've mounted several blacks over the years, and they're usually taken by guys hunting east of Louisiana. I did one last year for a guy who had taken it on a guided hunt somewhere up the East Coast — Maryland, I think.

"But this is the first black I've ever done that was shot around here."

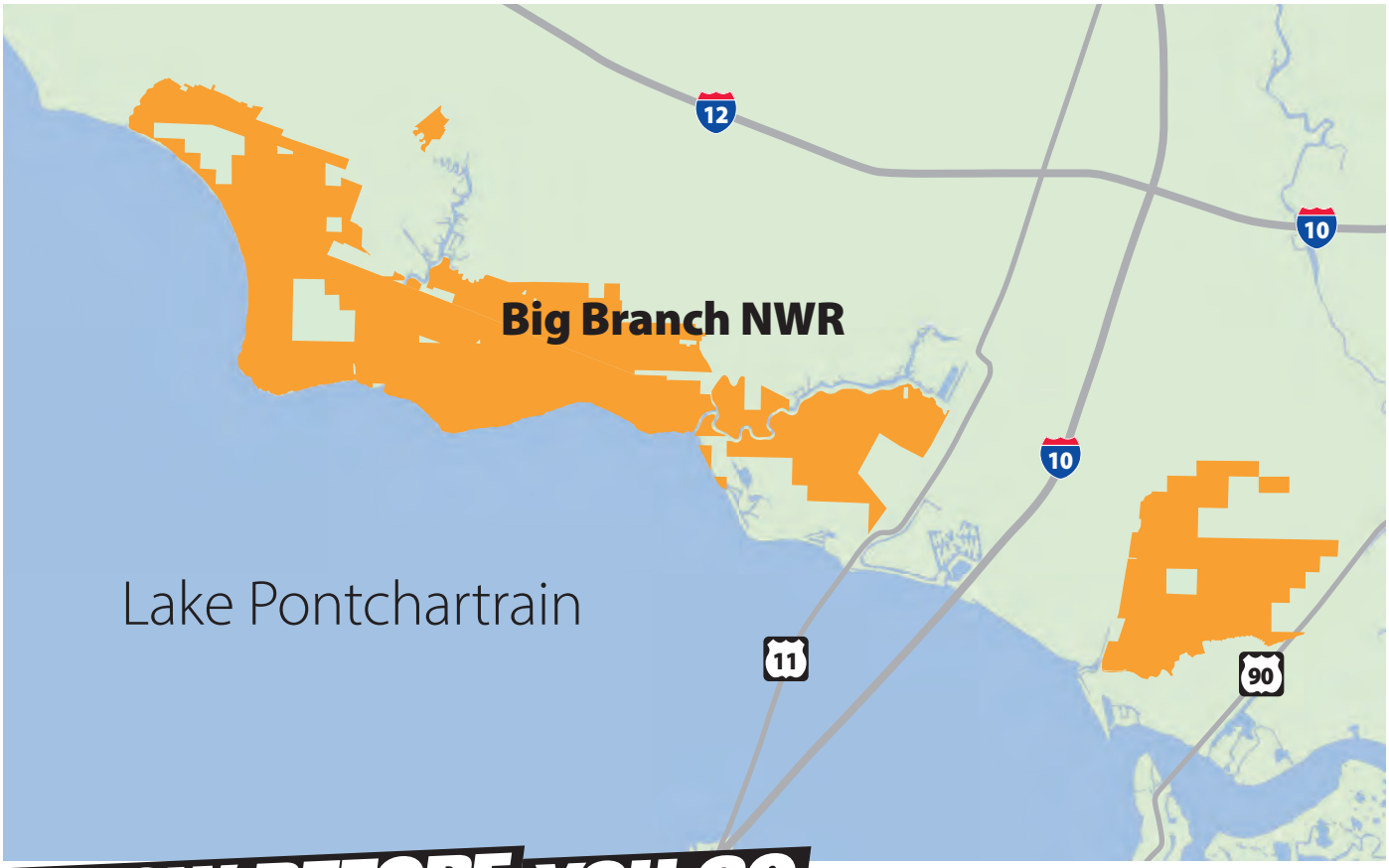
Although there are plenty of look-a-likes and about twice as many nicknames for black ducks, Cyprus can tell you that the nom de plume "black duck" isn't just another Louisiana handle for our local mottled.

Blacks are a legitimate out-of-town exotic, so if you're on the hunt for that rarely bagged bird and carry a horseshoe in your shell bucket, pay close attention to that pair of late-season mottleds: You just might get a shot at a trophy black instead. ▪



The dark shade of a black duck's body feathers creates a distinctive transition from the lighter plumage of the bird's head, neck and throat; another subtle difference from Louisiana's mottled duck.

UP NEXT
Old school style >



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Anyone planning to hunt Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge should read the regulations before heading out, Tony Cyprus Jr. said.

"The refuge has strict rules," Cyprus explained. "You can't be in there until 4 a.m."

Hunting has to end by noon, and dekes and blinds have to be rounded up by 1 p.m.

And Big Branch is also closed on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays to give ducks a rest and, hopefully, get them to stick around a little longer.

Cyprus also cautioned against hunting without the refuge permit, as hunters are checked regularly — noting he's a fan of the scrutiny.

"I like seeing the wardens out there," he said. "It keeps the early-birders from sneaking in too soon." ▪

— John Manion

OLD-SCHOOL STYLE

Mud boats just aren't an option on Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge. But that's of little concern to a seasoned old timer who regularly hunts the refuge with an original Ron Chapman pirogue.

"Mandevillian," as Tony Cyprus Jr. goes by on the Louisiana-Sportsman.com forum, regularly posts about his exploits in the marshes north of Lake Pontchartrain.

And Cyprus' response to being asked to share some advice on those exploits was classic public land hunter.

"I ain't giving you GPS coordinates to the Honey Hole" he said. "I can tell you how I hunt (ducks), but I'm not drawing you a map."

But he said the key to his consistent public-land success is pretty straightforward.

"It really isn't anything duck hunters haven't already heard before," Cyprus said. "Get away from the crowds and get hid."

He works hard at doing both, and his most effective tool is that antique Chapman.

"I use my pirogue to get through shallow, shallow, shallow sections of broken marsh," Cyprus explained. "This gives me access to the smaller pothole ponds."

The hunter, along with his group of diehards, usually end up hunting about half a mile from a tree line that's a natural ridge separating the marsh from high ground. It runs throughout Big Branch — from Slidell to Mandeville — parallel to Lake Pontchartrain.

This approach is definitely not for the lazy hunter.

"It can take some work to get back there," Cyprus said.

Tony Cyprus shows off a nice mature drake grey duck. Late season birds like this have feathered out and are much better choices if you are considering a duck for the wall.

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PALMETTOS FOR PIROGUE CAMOUFLAGE

Given its proximity to the New Orleans and Baton Rouge metro areas, Big Branch gets plenty of attention from hunters, as well as ducks.

He also will be the first to tell you that if you're not well hidden, the spot you end up hunting won't matter much. Cyprus has a passion for creating unbelievable camo concealment, and the product he creates is something Delta Force would envy.

Most duck hunters have used palmettos to camouflage their blinds, but Cyprus has a go-to stash of giant palmetto fronds that he uses to completely encase his pirogue.

"I make like a palmetto teepee around my Chapman and get it tucked into the broken edges of the pond," he explained. "I painstakingly make the tops of the fronds interlock to create a kind of goose pit blind in the marsh.

"It takes around 14 branches to cover both sides, and that fits fine in my ol' Chapman."

The palmettos also provide a secondary benefit: The palm stalks act like stakes to lock his pirogue in place.

"That lets me stay seated while I'm swinging around and when I'm shooting," Cyprus said.

His two-pronged approach provides him with plenty of action to keep him returning to Big Branch.

"I'm a good ways off from the pressure around Lake Pontchartrain, and my blind has a really low profile that blends into the marsh so those inquiring eyes of greys won't see anything out of the ordinary," Cyprus said. ▪

— John Manion

The secret to Tony's success is using large palmetto fronds to completely conceal his Ron Chapman pirogue tucked into the broken marsh edge. The interlocking frond edges look just like the top marsh grass.

UP NEXT
ID'ing black ducks vs. mottled ducks >

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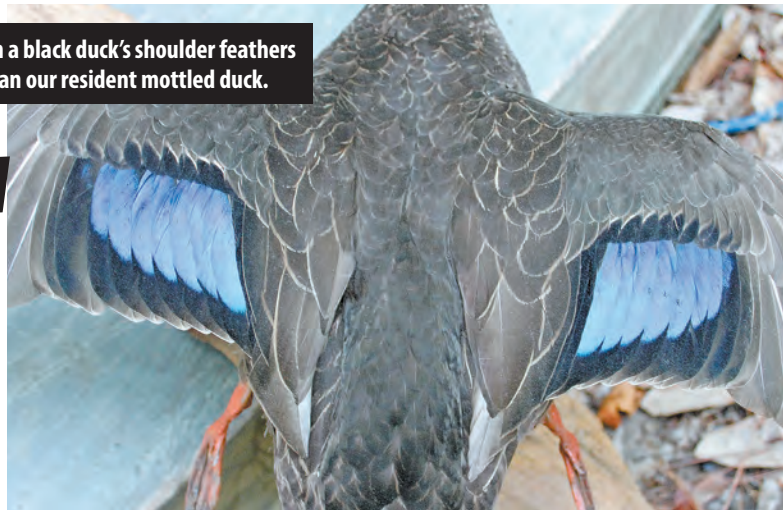

The almost absence of brown highlights on a black duck's shoulder feathers give the bird a much darker appearance than our resident mottled duck.

ID'ING BLACK DUCKS VS. MOTTLED DUCKS

Any seasoned Louisiana duck hunter has been part of this conversation in the blind:

Shooter: "Bruh, this bird's dark. You think its a black?"

Expert: "Let me see that bird. Annn, it's got a little white on the bottom of the wing. I don't think so."

Shooter: "But it's almost black, bruh — that little bit of white don't matter."

Expert: "A black's gotta be black. That bird's got brown feathers on it."

Shooter (now convincing himself): "All ducks got brown feathers. This duck's a black."

Back at the camp he announces the now positive identification with, "I got a black mallard, y'all."

And a legend is born.

Given the name, hunters tend to assume the color of the bird is the best way to confirm its species; it's obviously called a black duck for a reason, right?

But despite its name, hunters may not find the black feathers they are expecting to see. According to Paul Link, North American Waterfowl Management Plan Coordinator with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries, "There really aren't many good/easy distinguishing features between them (black ducks) and mottled ducks.

"Mottled ducks typically have much more tan edging around their greater tertial coverts (shoulder feathers) than black ducks."

When you have the benefit of side-by-side comparisons of known species, hunters can more easily see what Link is referring to.

The tan edging of the black's feathers is more similar to a pinstripe when compared to a mottled's tan edging, which is broader.

Therefore, the black duck's dark appearance is not due to black feathers per se, but rather the reduction of the thickness of tan edging on the black's body feathers.

"There are some more subtle differences in the throat, neck, and facial markings, but they are even less conspicuous," Link said.

WHERE DID YOU SHOOT IT?

Another ID technique has nothing to do with the duck — where hunters take the bird is nearly as useful as the actual bird itself.

Link recalled, "I was quite surprised to learn at my first Mississippi Flyway Wingbee several years ago that the 'expert' wing checkers nearly always use the recovery location when a questionable wing comes across the table."

It shouldn't come as any surprise to local duck hunters that Louisiana is not a likely black duck recovery location.

In the 2014-15 season, 276 blacks were taken here compared to nearly 29,000 mottleds. The percentage ratio held nearly the same for the 2015-16 season, when 154 blacks were taken compared to almost 14,000 mottleds. Last year, 133 black ducks were reported, compared to more than 9,100 mottleds.

And Link's own experience aligns with those numbers as well. "I only hear from a couple people per year that kill black ducks here, and most are associated with mallards," he said. "I've never heard of anyone killing a black duck flying with or paired with a mottled duck."

In contrast to the black duck, the shoulder feathers of mottled ducks have a clearly defined thick brown edging, nearly as wide as a highlighter tip.

In a state known for its hospitality, the black duck's Cajun cousin doesn't exactly fill that bill. That's probably because mottleds don't like to associate with any out-of-town ducks, regardless of similarities.

Link theorized that there might be a valid reason for the mottleds' shyness.

"They are alone in the marsh without all the migrant ducks species. When the bluewings arrive in September, hunters fire up boats and ATVs and make a bunch of noise in a previously quiet marsh," he said. "When most of the bluewings have passed on to Central and South America, the guns go quiet again."

With this process repeating itself in big duck season, it's of little wonder why local mottleds are decoy and call shy — they're basically freaked out by all the tourists.

So on your next hunt, unless you find yourself on the East Coast, when you pick up that dark mottled duck give it a skeptical eye. Take a close look at the thickness of the tan edging on the bird's body feathers.

And if it came in with a band of mottleds and stayed just outside the decoys ... well you know the old saying: "Birds of a feather …." ▪

— John Manion

UP NEXT
Getting a trophy from the pond to your wall >

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GETTING A TROPHY FROM THE POND TO YOUR WALL

A redhead captured in flight by Kevin Hynes appears almost alive. To have a world class mount, hunters need to take care of their birds all the way to the taxidermist.

The reasons duck hunters choose for mounting a particular bird are as varied as the waterfowl family itself. Regardless of why a bird is chosen for a trip to the taxidermist, duck hunters generally agree they want a finished product worthy for display.

So what can hunters do to ensure they end up with a prize suitable for hanging on the wall?

World champion taxidermist Kevin Hynes said the first factor in achieving a quality mount is the duck itself.

"Ducks feather out at different times," Hynes said. "Wood ducks can start the molting process very early in the spring, but divers are usually very late molters."

The more mature a bird's plumage is the better the mount will be, he said. So, depending on the species, don't believe that only second-split birds have full plumage.

"I find that older birds start molting sooner than younger ones, so I wouldn't say only wait until the second split to save one for the wall," Hynes said.

If you happen to be a trophy hunter, the Pearl River taxidermist will tell you the quality of your mount starts the moment you pull the trigger.

First, consider your shot selection.

"No. 2s make a lot bigger holes than No. 6s," Hynes said. "And don't pick up your bird by the neck — that stretches it out. Pick it up by its feet."

Once you've got that bird back at the house, then what?

"Treat your mount like you would food," Hynes said. "What do you do with fish and shrimp? Freeze them with water.

"It's really important to prevent the duck from drying out."

The award-winning taxidermist stressed the importance of keeping the bird workable during the mounting process.

"Never ever use dry paper or newspaper," Hynes said. "Paper actually pulls moisture out of the bird quicker."

Also, don't bother with trying to wash out blood stains; he said he's going to wash and tumble-dry the duck before it's all over with, anyway.

"You can run plain water on blood stains, like if it gets on white feathers, but don't use soap and try to scrub out the blood," Hynes said.

And what about keeping your bird saved in panty hose?

"That advice blows my mind," Hynes said "It's way too tight and will damage feathers, particularly the primary feathers.

"It's not necessary to try to save feathers like that."

FREEZING TIPS

He said it's somewhat hard to say how long you can leave your prize in the freezer.

"A year, year-and-a-half maybe?" he said. "I wouldn't say two years is safe. But if you freeze them my way it will help."

The process for preparing a bird for the freezer looks like this:

1) Run water over the bird, top to bottom.
"Wetter the better," Hynes said.
2) Tuck the head underneath one wing.
"This prevents the neck from getting cracked off once the bird is frozen," he said.
3) Next, Hynes recommends saturating a paper towel and placing it on top of the bird. To hold the wet paper towel in place, he uses several wraps of plastic wrap.
4) Slide the whole duck sandwich into a plastic bread bag.
"I find these bread bags work well for most ducks," Hynes said. "But don't try to force a big mallard or goose in one."

5) Seal the bag to keep moisture locked in.

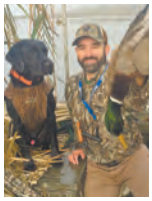
"If you shoot a really mature bird, but really busted it up, keep it, freeze it and bring it to your taxidermist," Hynes said, pointing out nearly invisible pellet damage on a mount in his shop. "Most taxidermists have techniques for BBs in the bill, broken feet and wings, and even damaged primary feathers."

Plus, you can choose from all types of poses to camouflage damage.

"Standing mounts can hide a lot," Hynes said with a smile. ▪

— John Manion

Editor's note: Kevin Hynes can be reached at 985-863-0040, or through his website at taxidermybykevinhynes.com.



John Manion *is an LSU graduate and has been writing about the Louisiana outdoors since 2009. He grew-up hunting and fishing the marshes of South Louisiana and lives in Slidell with his wife Betsy and their two girls. He can be reached at jemanion4@gmail.com.*

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By Kinny Haddox

MAKING THE BIG BUCKS

Wall hangers don't just show up these days — they grow up. And this North Louisiana hunter shares some tips on how you can cash in this season.

The past several seasons, big buck contests and social media posts have exploded with impressive photos of true trophy bucks, more than most anyone can remember in the recent past.

So what's the reason for this increase of big deer? Ask a dozen hunters and you'll probably get a dozen answers. Is it better food plots? Are more hunters passing up shots on younger bucks? Is it better land use? Are hunters smarter? Or are they sharing their success in a more open and timely manner?

It's probably all of the above — and a little more.

THE FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

One North Louisiana hunter has quietly observed all sides of the trophy deer hunting game — and thinks she knows the reason.

That's right — she.

Pam Streeter Garrett of Sterlington believes women are often portrayed as shopping, TV-watching home chefs who enjoy cuddly animals.

She's the same way — but she enjoys shopping for hunting gear, watching deer hunting videos, cooking up tasty venison and mounting big deer heads.

"I'm just glad to see that you are asking a woman about her perspective on trophy deer hunting," Garrett said. "There are a lot of women who are really good hunters, and the number is growing every day. And more of us are focusing on big deer, not just any deer that walks by.

"I am blessed to have hunted with a rifle and bow since I was old enough to go with my daddy. I've walked in his footsteps and patterned my hunting ways, secrets and knowledge after him. I've done the same with my husband, and now I enjoy being able to pass that on to others."

Above: Pam Streeter Garrett and her dad, Wesley Streeter Sr., pose with her Papaw's giant set of antlers from a deer killed more than 100 years ago. But big ones like this rarely just show up these days without some serious management efforts.

The Streeter family legacy started with Pam's pawpaw, Bill Streeter, more than a century ago. There weren't many deer in 1910 when then 20-year-old Papaw Bill loaded up with the men and went meat hunting. They had to load everything from guns, ammo, food and tents on a mule — the kind you fed hay to — and walk back in the swamp to even find a deer.

One day he found the buck of a lifetime: a 14-pointer that weighed well over 280 pounds and was officially scored at 174 7/8 inches. He shot it with a Winchester 32-gauge single-barrel. It was so huge they had to pack it out on the mule, and its head touched the ground on one side and its back feet touched on the other. As the story goes, the mule even balked a few times and regularly turned around to bite the deer and get it off its back. They didn't mount bucks in those days, but the antlers have been preserved, and are now on a huge deer head.

UNDERSTANDING BIG BUCKS

But deer like that don't just show up these days. With land use changes and pressure of all sorts, it takes serious management to even come close to that kind of specimen.

"I grew up with the knowledge of aging whitetails and understanding their patterns for eating, sleeping and rut. I've tracked deer habits to determine stand placement based on the type of terrain and overall deer movement and habitat. A big buck is more complicated, therefore he makes you work smarter for success," she said. 'Big buck' means different things to different hunters, and I've learned over the years it's the journey that makes it worthwhile."

For the record, Pam's dad is Wesley Streeter Sr., a pioneer in wild game taxidermy going back to the 1950s. Growing up, she worked alongside him in his shop north of Bastrop mounting everything from big whitetails, mule deer, elk, caribou, bear and exotics to both fresh and saltwater fish. And she went alongside him in the woods where he regularly pursued his passion — hunting.

Pam grew up seeing hunters shoot deer with small antlers just because that was all they had back in the 70s and 80s. Now, she sees lots of bigger deer in the taxidermy shop — and she knows what people are doing to make "big bucks."

LET SMALLER DEER WALK

"Without a doubt, the biggest change in our whole region is the fact that people are learning more about bucks, learning to look at their antlers and body type — and now know the difference between young bucks and mature bucks," she said. "The top thing that you can do to produce bigger bucks is to let those smaller ones walk. It isn't easy, but it is rewarding."

continues >

MOUNT PREPARATION

Putting on her taxidermy hat, Garrett said these steps are critical for maximizing full shoulder trophy deer mounts. Keep the deer cool. Leave plenty of hide, and if in doubt, leave more. Freeze the head and hide as soon as possible if you're not going straight to the taxidermist. When skinning the deer, make the first cut 8 inches behind the front legs and ring around the body. Then cut a ring around the legs at the knee. Peel the legs out and skin the hide down to the neck. ▪

The 2018-2019 DONATE A DEER Campaign has Arrived!

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Calcasieu	Holliers Cajun Kitchen
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Managing property for bigger bucks, from habitat to supplemental food supplies, is also important. And the more land that you can manage correctly the better. Hunting clubs and landowners are working together to provide larger land tracts all following the same management principles. That includes harvesting does and scrub bucks to keep the herds and the habitat healthy.

Knowing what to look for in the woods is critical, also. Some big bucks will show up on camera, but others won't venture far away from their safe zones except in the peak of the rut. Learning to scout the woods and find rubs and scrapes and even small signs, like broken limbs where bucks rub their antlers, are all key to taking mature deer.

Pam is primarily a gun hunter, shooting a Remington .308 with a Nikon Prostaff 4-12 x 40 BDC and 150-grain Remington bullets. But she also is learning how to shoot a bow and arrow, and is looking forward to taking a really big buck during archery season soon.

Pam's father, trend-setting taxidermist Wesley Streeter, has been mounting giant bucks — like the whole body mount in the photo — for decades.

A LASTING LEGACY

The Streeter legacy of preserving wildlife has gone public. Wesley Streeter Sr., donated his personal collection to the Chemin-A-Haut State Park in Morehouse Parish near his hometown. That means a wide variety of people have the chance to see Louisiana's rich diversity of wildlife up close, thanks to the generosity of this long-time hunter and sportsman.

Approximately 30 mounts are on display in protected areas throughout the park. Some items from the large collection include trophy whitetail mounts, a rare white squirrel, agiant loggerhead snapping turtle shell and various game fish. If you visit the park, make sure and ask to see the collection. ▪

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Besides scrapes, rubs are the other common calling card of big bucks. A rub on a big bush like this indicates a pretty good deer.

The first few cool days of fall have her excited about the upcoming season. That hasn't been hurt by the fact that she's seen numerous bucks on her game cameras, including some young up-and-comers that she calls her "investment for the future" bucks — and at least one nice 10-point that she's ready to cash in on now if the opportunity presents itself.

If she does bring a big one down, it will continue the three-generation, 100-year cycle of a family member shooting a wallhanger. She, her husband and her dad have also harvested numerous double-digit deer, and mounted more of those than she can count. You can definitely say she knows how to 'make the big bucks.' ▪

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

DEER HAVE ANTLERS ... CARS HAVE HORNS

Deer hunters often talk about "horns" on a big deer. But deer don't have horns — cars have horns and deer have antlers.

Antlers are often called horns by some deer hunters, but they are not. Sheep, goats and cows have horns, formed by hair-like tissue that grows over a bony core. Horns are typically not shed, and can reveal the age of an animal by counting the annual growth rings inside.

But deer antlers are a bone growth, made up primarily of calcium and phosphorous.

They are deciduous, which means they are shed each year and grow back the next. ▪

CASHING IN ON BIG BUCKS

Pam Streeter works in the banking business, and she plays in the woods. But she'll tell you the same principles for making "big bucks" apply in both worlds.

Her "Six Ps" give you a blueprint to follow:

1. PERCEPTION:

"If you want to grow and kill big bucks, you have to set a goal for that. What you plan for, you will usually get. Gather information regarding the location of the best bucks in your area. Gain hunting access to that area by joining a hunting club or asking for written permission to hunt private landowner's land. Start your nest egg with a small investment and watch it grow over time."

2. PRODUCTS

"There are lots of products on the market to help improve deer habitat, health and hunting success. Start by obtaining good, reliable information about the land and what the land already produces. Have an idea of the carrying capacity of the area in which you hunt. Pinpoint areas of deer traffic by placing deer cameras. Feed near those cameras and spend time scouting the lay of the land. Know what lies beyond and what borders your hunting land. Supplement your area with products natural to that environment. We like the natural food plots, like iron clay peas, winter wheat and green top turnips. You can hold does and young deer around good food plots all year and when it's time, the big bucks will come. During parts of the year when food is scarce, add corn or rice bran. A good camera provides a log of activity, which is vital in keeping up with bucks."

Sowing natural food seeds such as iron clay peas, winter wheat and green top turnips produces food plots that in turn, produce big deer.

3. PRACTICE

"Now that you are armed with this knowledge and equipment, you will need to practice to reach your goals. This is the easiest one for a hunter to skip, but one of the most vital to being successful. Spend time locating the deer, preparing to make that once-in-a-lifetime shot and keeping yourself hidden from the deer. For big bucks, you have to go to them. They rarely come to you.

"Prepare yourself and your equipment. Archery hunters should keep in practice year round. Gun hunters must clean and store their weapons at the end of the season and again clean and maintain them during the season. Don't spend thousands of dollars on club dues, private hunt fees, licenses, rifles, scopes, ammunition, side by sides, stands of all kinds, camo clothing, boots & scent protection and not be ready to make the shot."

4. PATIENCE

"You are going to have to be patient. Growing good bucks and hunting them takes patience. You make your own destiny. I believe a person gets back from hunting what they put in ... Let the small bucks walk to have a chance at growth over another year. Bucks start out as spikes and take time and management to produce returns for a hunter. Keep your area accessible to does and fawns, and trap or shoot the varmints during the off season to protect the little deer and other wildlife."

5. PERSISTENCE

"Keep investing your time, be involved with your deer maintenance by providing a food source year round as best you can. Be aware of how your hunting area changes due to weather-related issues or timber company cuttings, make your strategy moves accordingly and anticipate any setback or relative changes that could influence your deer management. A good investor plans ahead of the market for success and doesn't make knee jerk moves out of poor planning after the market falls on you."

Bucks like these are the result of taking time to invest and following the 'Six Ps' for positive results.

6. PARTNERSHIP

"The bigger an area you have where everybody is playing by the same rules, the more chance you have of growing not just one or two big bucks, but a consistent group of trophy deer that can be sustained year after year. This goes back to area knowledge and developing relationships with neighboring clubs and land owners.

"In other words protect your investment in that big buck by planting that seed with others which will make your investment continue to flourish. There is power in numbers." ▪

- Kinny Haddox

BIG THREATS TO BIG BUCKS

Even with the best management efforts, the list of serious threats to big bucks is growing. The risk of chronic wasting disease looms on the horizon. Wild feral hogs are reaching critical numbers as a habitat menace. The re-establishment of black bear populations has reached nuisance level in some prime deer zones. And while incidents are down, outlaw hunters who don't follow the rules are always a cause for alarm. ▪

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MAGIC MAN

By Todd Masson

Capt. Lloyd Landry's second-favorite color for fishing the waters around Dularge is a green hornet Matrix Shad. Most often, however, he uses shrimp creole.

Go on the right day this time of year, and you can almost will Dularge speckled trout into appearing.

Capt. Lloyd Landry is apparently a master of black magic. It's clear he spends his free time reading tarot cards, casting tea leaves and studying the works of Aleister Crowley.

How else to explain the man's ability to peer hours into the future and foretell events?

The sun was still tucked in its bed below the eastern horizon when Landry backed his Realtree-wrapped Ford pickup onto the gravel parking area in front of his boat dock. His son, Lloyd Landry V, "Five" to his friends and family, stretched in the passenger seat before unfolding his long legs and dropping them out the open door.

The elder Landry moved toward a locked shed, and answered a question that was unasked, but still hung in the thick, humid air.

"I know they're catching keeper trout all along the coast, but it hasn't happened here yet," he said. "You can catch all you want, but maybe one out of 30 will measure (12 inches).

"We had a full moon last night, so maybe that will change today."

The affable Landry moved with easy motion for such a mountain of a man, talking and laughing as he and "Five" stowed gear in the boat and shoved off for the 15-minute run into Lake Mechant, a semiannual spring and autumn hotspot.

The eastern horizon had begun to turn pink, and a bright moon hung to the west, shooting lasers of light across the ruffled surface as the big Lake & Bay moved south and then west.

NON-STOP ACTION UP NEXT >

NON-STOP ACTION

Landry promised seagulls would collect and dive on shrimp in Mechant after sunrise, but he wanted to fish near the mouth of a drain since the tide was falling. He shot across the lake, and eased back on the throttle. The sun had still not breached the horizon.

"Spots like this are where the fish show up first," Landry said. "In a couple weeks, the birds will have keepers under them, but not yet."

Landry tossed a tight-lined shrimp creole-colored Matrix Shad toward an isolated patch of roseau cane along the shoreline, and hoped his full-moon prediction would come true. A few fruitless casts later, however, he was surely having his doubts.

But then the sun poked its nose over the horizon, and it was like every speckled trout in South Louisiana punched in for work. Landry missed a fish a second before Five buried the hook in one. Landry reeled in, and made another cast. This time, the fish wasn't so lucky.

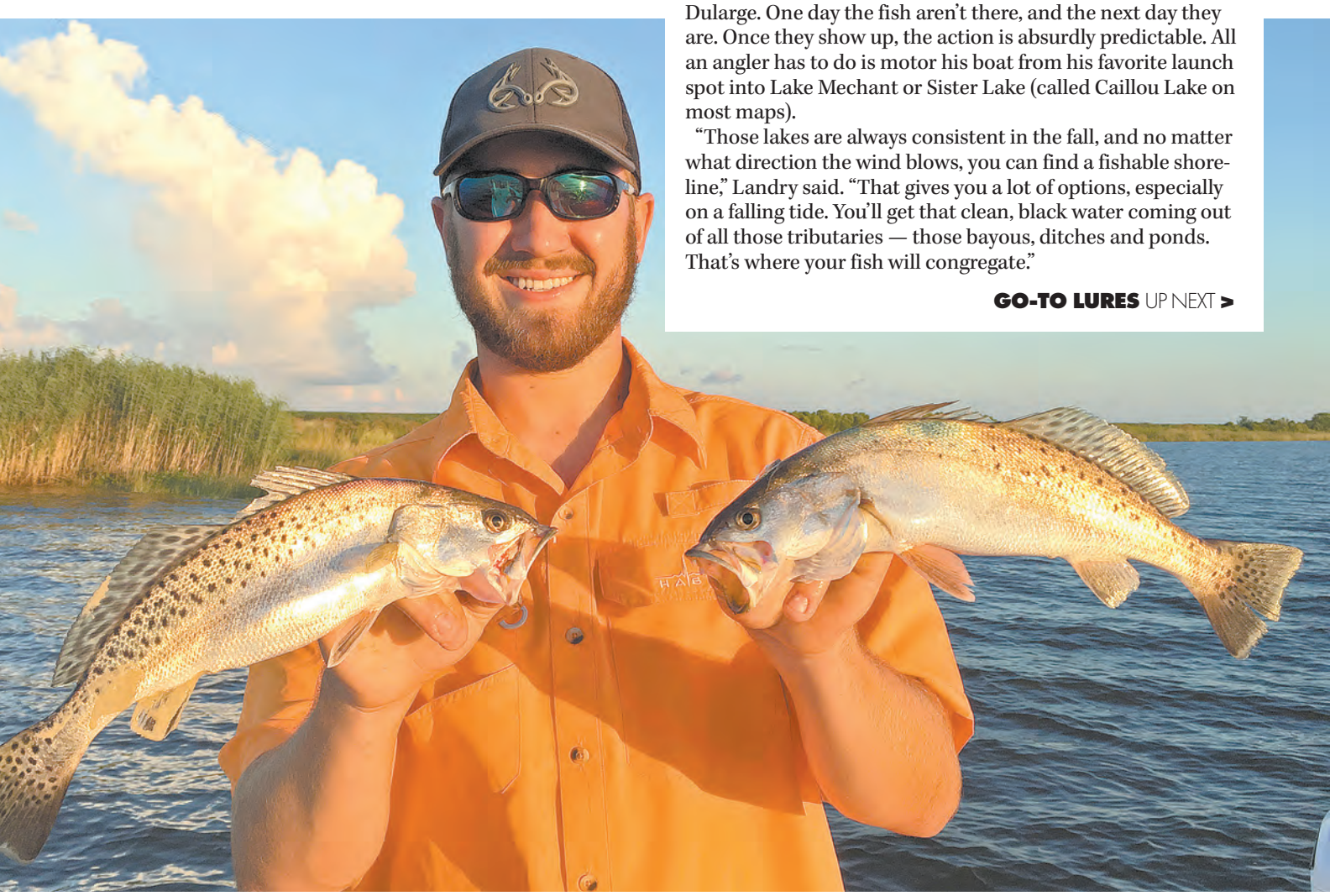
The father-and-son team proceeded to waylay the speckled trout. They didn't measure a single fish because all were clearly longer than Louisiana's 12-inch size minimum.

ABOVE: Capt. Lloyd Landry greets a Dularge speckled trout with a kiss. **BELOW:** Lloyd Landry V doubled up with his dad during a recent trip to Lake Mechant.

That's how quickly the fall bite begins in the marshes around Dularge. One day the fish aren't there, and the next day they are. Once they show up, the action is absurdly predictable. All an angler has to do is motor his boat from his favorite launch spot into Lake Mechant or Sister Lake (called Caillou Lake on most maps).

"Those lakes are always consistent in the fall, and no matter what direction the wind blows, you can find a fishable shoreline," Landry said. "That gives you a lot of options, especially on a falling tide. You'll get that clean, black water coming out of all those tributaries — those bayous, ditches and ponds. That's where your fish will congregate."

GO-TO LURES UP NEXT >



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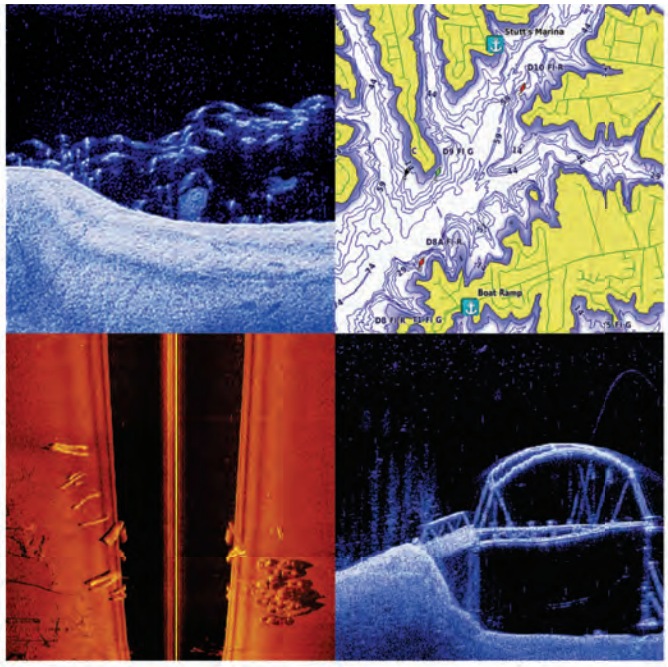

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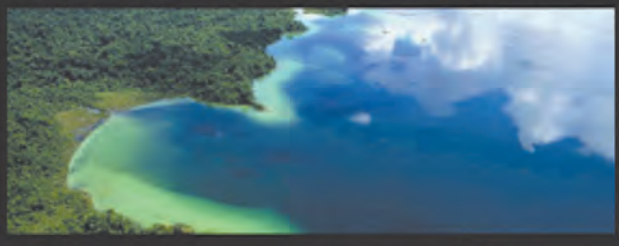

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GO-TO LURES

That was certainly true on this trip. Lake Mechant wasn't exactly dirty, but the water was a stained green color. Clear water being sucked by the falling tide out the cut Landry fished formed a ragged boundary with the more opaque lake water. The keeper fish were all in the clear stuff, feasting on shrimp riding the conveyor belt of the tide out of the marsh.

The little crustaceans had plenty of company throughout the region, as evidenced by the residue from a tropical storm that hit the Alabama coast just a couple weeks earlier.

"There are white shrimp all the way to Falgout Marina," Landry said. "When (Tropical Storm Gordon) pushed through, the water got high and came over our docks and into the boat sheds. I'd come down each morning, and I'd have little dead shrimp on my dock. I mean, think of how far up (in the estuary) that is."

In that clear water, Landry likes to throw shrimp creole-colored Matrix Shads almost exclusively. In the more stained waters of the lakes, he'll go with the green hornet color.

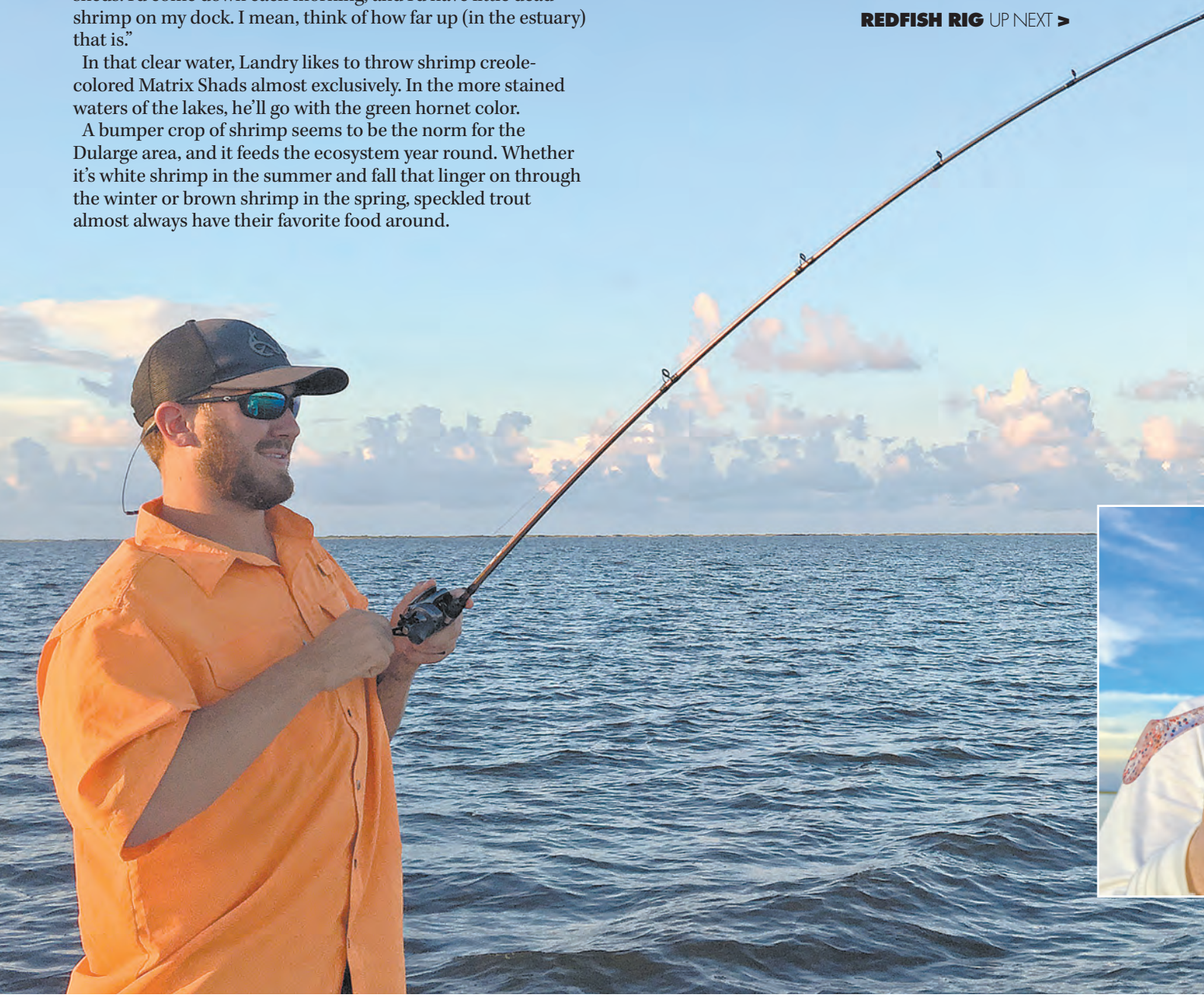
A bumper crop of shrimp seems to be the norm for the Dularge area, and it feeds the ecosystem year round. Whether it's white shrimp in the summer and fall that linger on through the winter or brown shrimp in the spring, speckled trout almost always have their favorite food around.

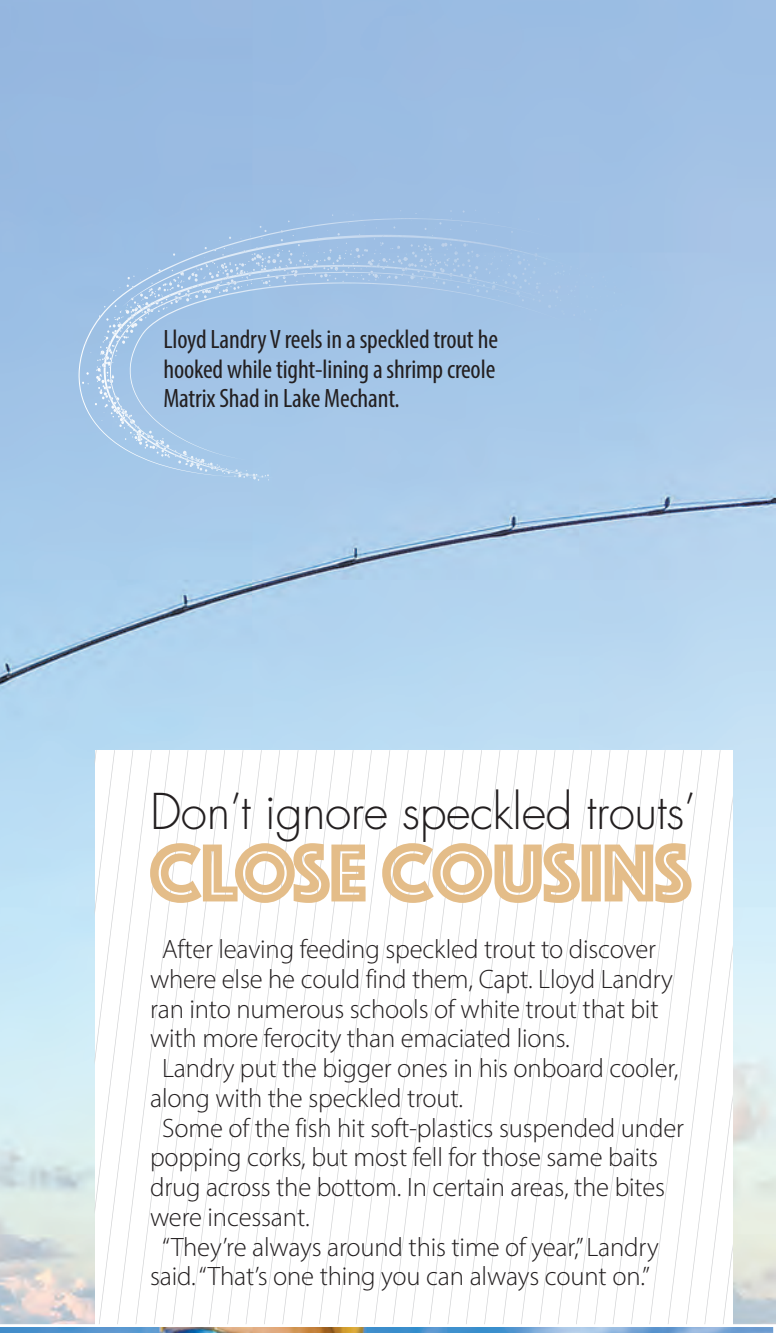
That's why last spring Landry relocated his successful guide business from Buras, where he spent his entire career, to Dularge.

"The fishing is just so good here," Landry said. "It's like the old days. Most of the time, it's just easy, easy.

"The area is just so vast. My clients meet me at Falgout Marina, and on a Saturday, there's a line and a hundred boats in the water, but then you go fishing, and all day you might see 10 boats. You can fish everything from Cocodrie to the Atchafalaya River, all from that one location. You have all that area to fish trout, but if it's really windy, you can tuck back in this marsh and catch all the redfish you want."

REDFISH RIG UP NEXT >





Lloyd Landry V reels in a speckled trout he hooked while tight-lining a shrimp creole Matrix Shad in Lake Mechant.

Don't ignore speckled trouts' CLOSE COUSINS

After leaving feeding speckled trout to discover where else he could find them, Capt. Lloyd Landry ran into numerous schools of white trout that bit with more ferocity than emaciated lions.

Landry put the bigger ones in his onboard cooler, along with the speckled trout.

Some of the fish hit soft-plastics suspended under popping corks, but most fell for those same baits drug across the bottom. In certain areas, the bites were incessant.

"They're always around this time of year," Landry said. "That's one thing you can always count on."

White trout are plentiful in the marshes around Dularge this time of year.

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The pot of gold at the end of the rainbow is the Dularge marsh, which is still healthy and productive.

REDFISH RIG

Even successful trout days often end with Landry back in the marshes catching the spottails. When he's got clients, he targets them an unusual way, with a green hornet-colored Matrix Shad fished only a foot beneath a 4 Horsemen cork.

"It's easier for clients to fish a cork," he said. "They can throw it up toward the bank and watch it. The cork will tell them when they've got a bite. They don't have to work it and fish based on feel."

That technique is most effective, Landry said, in ponds with scattered grass. Some of his favorites have hydrilla and coontail topping out at about 18 inches below the surface. He fishes directly over the grass.

In ponds that hold more matted grass, he fishes the edges of the mats.

"Guys want to fish the bank, but that will kill you in a pond like that," he said. "Those fish are using the matted grass as a bank. They're just cruising along the grass beds looking for something to eat — crabs, shrimp and mullet."

On a falling tide, Landry looks for ponds that have ditches — "trenasses" in South Louisiana parlance — pulling pretty water and bait out of the back marshes.

"It's common this time of year to sit at one mouth and catch your limit," he said.

That didn't happen on the recent trip. Landry just couldn't drag himself away from the keeper speckled trout that he had almost willed into existence.

Lloyd Landry, a modern-day Marie Laveau. ▪

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

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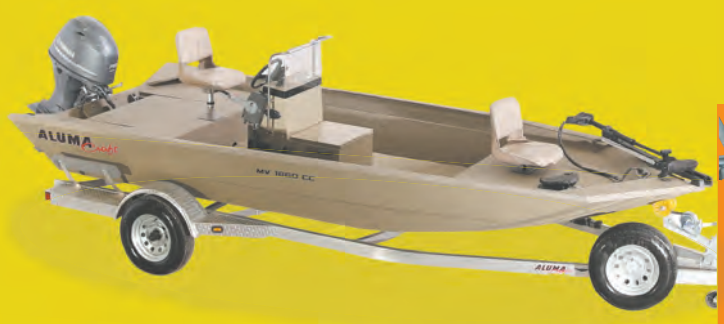

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CONQUERING THE 'CAJUN SLAM'

By Jerald Horst

Two-time world champion Steve Lessard breaks down his 'yak-angling tactics for specks, reds and flounder — and explains why he targets waters nearer motorboat launches.

I felt like an over-aged and overweight sports-writer trying to cover an Olympic runner by pacing beside him — while burdened with a note pad and a heavy camera.

Steve Lessard is a slender, bespectacled, fair-skinned, studious-looking man. He looks like an indoors academic.

But make no mistake about it — he is an athlete.

I first read about him in a press release from the Hobie Cat Company announcing the Louisiana boy had won his second Hobie Fishing World Championship.

The contest is pretty much accepted as the International World Series of kayak fishing, and Lessard is the only two-time winner in its history.

The impression I got over the phone was that he was agreeable and easy-going, but at the same time hyper-organized.

I later found out how competitive he really is.

The 49-year-old also had won the Inshore Fishing Association Kayak Championship, the Bayou Coast Fishing Club Angler of the Year Award three times and has been victorious at more than 20 independent tournaments.

THE TRIP

It was a beautiful sight over Leeville before sunrise the morning we headed out. To the east was a fuchsia-painted sky. To the west hung the awesome bowl of an early November harvest moon.

It was still dark when we crossed over the Highway 1 bridge and shot off the first exit on the Gateway to the Gulf Bridge to old Highway 1, long superseded by the new elevated expressway. Lessard was looking for a low-key spot instead of the big public launch in Leeville to put the kayaks in.

"The chances of catching a big speckled trout are better in low-light conditions, so we will go after them first," he explained. "Redfish are affected more by the tidal cycle and are also more dependable so we will fish those later."

He started by fishing an old eroded home site combined with the remains of a well site, all of it encrusted with oysters.

He always begins the morning with a topwater lure to locate fish, in this case a Rapala Skitter Walk. From there he moved to more challenging open water. He pedaled hard and fast (too fast for me to keep up) to a rock breakwater in Lake Jesse. >

Like any competitive fisherman, Steve Lessard hates to lose time re-rigging, so he carries six rigged rods mounted behind him in his kayak.

There, he unlimbered a rod bearing a motor oil-colored Corky Devil, a slow-sinker. He immediately followed any missed strike or swirl at the topwater lure with a cast of the Devil. "A Paul Brown's Soft-Dine works just as well," he noted.

He worked the upwind side, which was the shallow side of the breakwater with chartreuse Gulp Shrimp on a 1/8-ounce jighead for flounder. Then he hit the ends of the breakwater and the deeper, lee side for trout.

Lessard's conditioning and practice really shined. Tides were strong and the wind steadily picked up. If I stopped pedaling for what seemed like an instant, I was immediately swept away, often into the shallows were the fins of my pedal drive bogged down.

It was frustrating to say the least.

Seemingly without effort, he skimmed his kayak so swiftly across the surface that it pushed up a bow wave.

He was prepared for challenging conditions, carrying six pre-rigged rods mounted behind him in his kayak. One held a topwater lure, another a suspending plug, a third was rigged with a 1/8- or ¼-ounce jighead with either a Berkley Gulp or a plastic lure.

The fourth had an oval popping cork with a D.O.A. shrimp. The fifth rod was his bull red rod, set up with a 1-ounce jighead and a plastic Bass Assassin Die Dapper. The final rod was Carolina-rigged with a ¾-ounce weight and a No. 8 circle hook impaled through the nose of a Gulp curly tail grub.

From there, he fished grassy shorelines in coves, quickly skimming the water's surface with a Skitter Walk. "Redfish love these just like trout," he shouted over the wind. He alternated with the D.O.A. shrimp under a cork.

He moved to the shoreline of Southwest Canal then across the outside of a modest bay, all the time firing off cast after cast. "I fish fast to locate fish, KVD (Kevin VanDam)-style. Then when I find them, I slow down," he explained.

His last stop was actually in the turning basin of the big public boat launch in Leeville, where he dredged a mud flat with a Gulp looking for flounder.

Before he moved to the Southwest Canal, he oozed self-assurance. "I'm going to catch a flounder here, or a redfish, or a trout — or all three."

Confidence is hard to beat. >

STUCK ON HOBIE

Steve Lessard started kayak fishing seven years ago. The Dutchtown resident was tired of the expenses and work after trips that went with the motorboat experience, but wanted to keep fishing.

A friend, Brenden Bayard, introduced him to kayaks — and he promptly went to Pack and Paddle in Lafayette to check them out. "John Williams and his staff helped me select a Hobie because of my desire to go further and faster.

"They will match a person's desires and body type to the kayak they want. It's like getting fitted for a pair of shoes," he grinned.

He is now stuck on Hobie. "Their Mirage Drive gives me the power and torque I need in strong currents, while leaving my hands free to fish.

"Other pedal drives are newer to the game and don't have either the torque or the speed of a Hobie. There is not a kayak out there as fast as these."

Lessard has evolved into a tournament angler "by chance," he said.

"I liked group events. They are by definition 'tournaments.' I found out that I enjoyed it." ■

- Jerald Horst

Lessard credits much of his competitive fishing success to the Hobie-built Mirage Drive, a pedal propulsion system.

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FINDING MICROHABITATS

"Finding the right habitats for each species within the Magic Zone is the key to success," deadpanned Steve Lessard.

"Kayak fishermen can't just crank up and leave. We have to fish our area more completely, with the result being the limitation makes us better anglers.

"I want to know all my deep water areas to start. That's key — the most important thing. That's where everything travels, both bait and fish species. I call them 'highways.' And deep water is the source of tidal flow.

"Deep water by my definition is three times deeper than the water around it. It will have nice flow, with white tide lines on its surface."

Lessard, as a tournament fisherman, frames everything in terms of "slams," defined as catching speckled trout, redfish and flounder in one trip.

"The peak of productivity for getting a slam is November, followed by October. Trout move up into the marsh in October. Flounder leave the marsh to go offshore in December.

"Late spring also produces slams, especially April, but it can be unpredictable because flounder trickle back inshore in the spring. In the fall, they flush out in a flood. But there are still enough trout around in the spring to pull off slams."

SPECKLED TROUT HABITAT

"Rocks mean trout," Lessard said flatly. "Any rock pile adjacent to deep water is going to hold trout. It's just a matter of timing."

But specks hold in other areas, as well. Coves in marsh grasses near "mini highways" are feeding flats for them. Coves physically next to the highways are the ones he concentrates on.

He coaches that fishermen should look for oysters in the center of larger coves. Often part of the oyster bar that extends into deeper water can be seen on a nearby bank.

"It's best to look for oysters at low tide. That's part of returning again and again to a zone and learning it."

Trout, he noted, will also congregate at the mouths of small bayous and canals that intersect highways. And don't overlook the open interior flats that these bayous and canals drain, he cautioned. They will often only be 1 ½ feet deep, but big trout can be caught from them.

Islands seem to hold a special attraction for trout. "What's special about islands is that they cause current breaks. They create two waters that move at different speeds and make a seam.

"Trout will also use islands as ambush points. Points of marsh do the same thing."

Eroded, submerged ridges that lie across the direction of the predominant water flow also create trout ambush points. These ridges are best if located near deep water.

"The rules all change in extremely cold weather, though. We avoid shallow, fast-moving water and instead look for deep dead-end canals or deep, slow-moving water."

continues on page 84 >

Large speckled trout can be caught in shallow ponds located near the deeper channels that Lessard calls "highways."

Photo courtesy of Steve Lessard

WHAT IS THE MAGIC ZONE?

Whether the term "Magic Zone" is Steve Lessard's invention or not is irrelevant.

It works.

He called the Magic Zone the area extending from the boat launch out to where the average motorboat angler shuts down his big motor to begin fishing.

"That's three or so miles," he said.

Running away from the launch makes sense to the average angler. No one spends tens of thousands of dollars on a bay boat with a big outboard motor to launch the boat and fish near the launch. After all, aren't the biggest ones farthest away from "civilization?"

Well — maybe not.

"In the Magic Zone, you have the water to yourself, with really large fish that seldom see a lure. They are untouched," he smirked.

It can take five years to produce a nice redfish, and they can't grow if they are caught, he explained. The Magic Zone concept works for speckled trout, too.

"Boat launches are located near deeper waterways that trout use when they move into interior marshes. They feed in the shallows near these highways, but boats seldom ever stop near the ramp. They keep going on out.

"Although trout move a lot more than redfish, they use the same areas year after year. By focusing on the Magic Zone, you learn the best spots.

"Flounder are found in 'hot spots.' When they are there, they are there. It's nice that no boat fishermen are throwing baits at these small spots.

"There are other magic zones, areas that if you are fishing in a boat you look at and want to get into, but can't because of obstacles or shallow water.

"The Magic Zone fits perfectly into the niche of kayak fishermen. Anglers new to kayak fishing buy kayaks for a variety of reasons, but they learn quickly that this zone is plenty productive." ▪

- Jerald Horst

Lessard's lure selection for chasing a slam is relatively simple. The lures on the left, the gold glitter D.O.A. shrimp under a popping cork and the chartreuse Gulp 4-inch Swimming Mullet on a 1/8-ounce jighead, were for all three species. The holographic silver Rapala Skitter Walk, upper right, is for trout and redfish. The bone/silver Paul Brown Soft Dine, middle right, is for trout and flounder and the bone Rapala Shadow Rap, lower right, is for redfish.

Photo courtesy of Steve Lessard

Redfish are the most dependable of the three species in a slam because they are more territorial and easier to locate.

LOCATING REDFISH

Although Lessard admitted that redfish, especially smaller ones, will often be found together with speckled trout, he maintained that redfish are a more territorial species. "The biggest redfish will stake out submerged aquatic grass and run smaller reds out.

"On outgoing tides, small sloughs, drains and ditches are really good for redfish. They will go up into the sloughs. Trout are almost always found on the outside of the sloughs near or on highways.

"Redfish love wooden structure too — old pilings or well heads. You find them and you can bet there's redfish around. They can be caught on bare marsh shorelines, but it's sporadic. It's not the habitat I look for.

"Industrial structure means both redfish and flounder. If it's deep industrial structure, over 3 feet deep, I think redfish. If it's shallow, 1 to 3 feet, it's good for flounder."

Lessard defines industrial structure as sunken boats, pilings, machinery, "a lot of UFOs — just junk." Included in that definition are concrete chunks placed in shallow water for erosion control, which are good on rising tides. On falling tides, redfish like to move to ditches, he said.

During extremely cold weather, Lessard advises searching dead-end canals, where redfish will often form large balls of fish near the end of the canal. "I won't fish the hundreds of yards of length of the canal," he stated. "I go directly to the dead-end and fish there, then move to the next one and do the same thing."

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YAMAHA

Flounder are the most difficult of the three slam species to pattern consistently.

Photo courtesy of Steve Lessard

FINDING FLOUNDER

Flounder are the hardest of the three species to pattern, Lessard said, calling them more of an "opportunity catch."

Season makes a difference.

"Flounder can be anywhere in summer, winter or spring. But during the fall, they can be patterned by searching bridges, passes and bayous leading to exterior waters.

"They tend to congregate at bridges during migration season. It is so easy for them to move from shallow to deep water near a bridge. Best are shallow flats along the banks of a broad bayou near a bridge. Strong current occurs near bridges because the bridges themselves choke down the bayou.

"Definitely look for an area with the potential for flowing water near mud flats. Flounder will rest on the bottom, move a couple of hundred feet to feed in the current and then move back again.

"When they are settled in their resting spot, they won't feed. You can put a live shrimp in front of them and they won't take it."

Lessard asserts that flounder also like wood.

"Anything I can get hung up in is a good place for flounder. Any wood with mud flats nearby is best. Flounder don't like grass.

"They will often show up at a spot repeatedly during the summer and winter for no apparent reason. Learning your Magic Zone thoroughly is an advantage in identifying those spots." ▪

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

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By David A. Brown

BLACK MAGIC

Big yellowfin may get the lion's share of offshore glory, but blackfin tuna also put up a heckuva fight — and they taste great, too. Here's the intel you need to make a blackfin meat haul.

From short jokes to hand-me-downs that don't quite fit, it's tough being the smallest kid in the family.

But you can withhold any sympathy for blackfin tuna because, despite being the smallest of the Gulf's tuna clan (which includes bluefin, bigeye and yellowfin), these guys have no problem claiming their spot in the sport-fishing game.

Darker in overall coloration than their lemon-trimmed larger cousins, adult blackfin sport shimmering purple accents and a golden brown lateral bar. Juveniles sport similar coloration, but often with light vertical bars.

As far as sporting value, Gulf blackfin running about 18 to 25 pounds allow you to scale down from the gorilla gear needed to stop a yellowfin four to five times that size — yet still enjoy the reel-sizzle for which tuna are known.

Shrimp boats are tuna magnets, but you want to work the ones that are moving; otherwise, it's a shark and jack fest. BACKGROUND: Smaller cousins of the mighty yellowfin tuna, blackfins pack plenty of power in their streamlined frames.

On the dinner plate, ahi purists will probably never yield on their yellowfin preference, but for general seafood table fare, blackfin do just fine.

"I've always liked the blackfins," said Capt. Mike Frenette of Venice-based Redfish Lodge. "The thing about blackfin is they're more prevalent than the yellowfin. And when you clean both and cut it the same size, it's hard to tell them apart."

Capt. Hunter Caballero, of Paradise Outfitters, finds blackfin year-round throughout the Delta region, but he knows fall brings the action closer — often within 10-15 miles of the passes. The main reason, he said, is that opportunistic tuna come in to capitalize on the waves of pogies falling out of the passes.

So, what's the best way to catch blackfin? Truthfully, anytime you can get a bait in front of one of these gluttons. But to narrow down your search...

TRAWLER TAKEDOWN

It's a big Gulf and blackfin tuna are one of its most ADD creatures. That means the most time-effective plan targets where the fish are most likely to congregate. Simple deal, actually — just follow the food.

If you're thinking "bait schools," you're not necessarily wrong; but while tuna are fully capable of running down a meal, they're no different than any fish in that the easy meal is always the tastiest. For the fall season, that means shrimp trawlers.

>

Tuna like bonito chunks, so cut a bunch for chum and bait.

To maximize their time, shrimpers typically cull one load, while trawling for the next. Tossing their discarded bycatch overboard, along with the persistent smell of the gear, creates a massive chum line that attracts hungry tuna.

Notably, Frenette points out that if a shrimper stops to anchor and clean up, the impatient tuna will go elsewhere. Sharks and jacks might stay, but once the buffet is gone, tuna bounce to the next meal.

Bottom line, moving boats are what you want; but, as Frenette points out, this deal can be considerably more challenging than simply flipping out a couple of baits in the free chum line. On the contrary, the very premise of working with a moving target creates a challenging dynamic that can make you look silly — or worse.

"It's not for the faint of heart," Frenette warned. "You want to make sure you know how to handle your boat, because the shrimper's wheel wash can spin you around — and the last thing you want to do is get tangled up in his gear."

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Caballero agreed, and uses the tuna's appetite to his advantage. He'll look for shrimpers as shallow as 125 feet, but normally starts around 200. Before starting his search, he'll sling a cast net in coastal shallows to load up on fresh pogies, which he'll use for bait and strategic chumming.

"When I pull up to a boat, I'll chum like crazy with cut pogies to pull off a school," Caballero says. "I want to get them 100 yards away from that boat so I don't have to worry about getting tangled in his gear.

Working the perimeter of deep water rigs will often yield blackfin hook-ups.

"You might get bonitos chummed up first, but don't leave. Sometimes, the blackfin come up quickly, but we've gone 30 minutes with only bonitos and then suddenly, the blackfin show up."

Strategy note: While the opportunity presents itself, grab a few bonito for chunk bait options. Caballero will also fish those chunks of pogie, but the bloody, oily bonito flesh can be a game-changer.

With blackfin showing in his chum line and on his electronics, he'll drop pogy chunks on 6/0 to 8/0 3X strong Mustad circle hooks. Presentation, he said, is key.

"You always want to hide your hook," Caballero explained. "I cut a little slit in the bait and push the hook into meat — you're not actually hooking it. That way when the fish bites, the hook comes right out. Also, when you're reeling in my line (for a new presentation), the bait chunk comes off so it won't twist your line."

To cover his options, Caballero also deploys a live hard tail about 50-100 feet down to tempt any big tuna that resist the chum. To get the bait through the bonitos, he affixes a 16-ounce weight to his leader about 20 feet above the hook with several wraps of a heavy duty rubber band.

If the tuna are hot at the surface, try topwater poppers or, as Frenette suggested, a 12-weight fly rod with a baitfish pattern. Whatever you prefer, don't slack on the appetizers.

"You always want to have lots of chum this time of year," Caballero said. "Some days you may go through 250 pounds of chum."

To complement the trawler option, here are a few more productive blackfin tactics.

RIG PIGS

Blackfin don't seem to mind roaming the nearshore rigs or the deep water floaters, as long as there's food to be had. One thing Caballero has noticed is that on those deeper rigs, blackfin tend to hold about 50 yards from the structures, basically between the trash fish zone and where you'd expect the yellowfin.

Chunking works here, but you'll also do well by trolling large diving lures, swimbaits and the venerable cedar plugs. If he's marking fish deep, Frenette deploy a Mann's Stretch 25 on a downrigger.

continues >

"I rely heavily on my Raymarine Axiom Pro 12 to see what's going on beneath the surface," Frenette said. "The RealVision 3D imaging helps me see around the rig to find where the fish are. The clarity of that CHIRP sonar is very helpful in differentiating bait from tuna."

Now, rigs can be every bit as productive as a shrimper, but hold off on the chumming here or you'll be looking at one enormous jack crevalle and shark convention. You're much better off relying on nature's chum machine.

"I look for piles of birds and little bonito busting at the surface," Caballero said. "When you have birds and bonitos, you'll have tuna beneath them."

UPS AND DOWNS

If you're marking rig fish deep and can't get them to come up to the chum, or if bonitos are too thick behind a shrimper, fire down a Striker Offshore Tackle Flat Fall jig, or similar blade-style jigs with dual hook harnesses. Drop the bait below the fish marks and vertically jig it through the target zone.

Remember, tuna are slashing feeders, so don't be surprised if you feel a brief tug, then slack. Often a fish will have the jig in its mouth without being fully hooked. (This is where an optional stinger harness at the opposite end can prove helpful.) Nevertheless, if a fish hits and drops your jig, immediately return to your jigging motion.

However you choose to engage blackfin, know that they're just not gonna give up anytime soon. Not as much horsepower as a big yellowfin, true; but don't be fooled by the more manageable size — these fish have plenty of gas in the tank.

Caballero tackles blackfin with a 6-foot, 6-inch Penn Ally Rod with a size 20 Penn conventional reel packed with 5- to 600 yards of braid backing a topshot of 80-pound monofilament, terminating with a 25 feet of fluorocarbon. Some days call for light leaders, but Caballero stresses the importance of starting off loaded for bear.

"I like 80- to 100-pound fluoro because there could be a big yellowfin mixed in with the blackfin," he said. "On days when I'm not getting many bites, I may downsize to 50-pound fluoro, but I don't like to start that size.

"When a fish wants to run, never try to stop him, don't yank on him. On the initial run, back off the drag, let the fish make a big run, then tighten the drag and get on him from there. ▪

BELOW: Bonito are a nuisance to tuna seekers, but be patient and the blackfin will eventually show up. RIGHT: Trolling plugs is a good way to cover water and locate blackfin.

LATE NIGHT DELIGHT

Anyone fortunate enough to see the Delta's offshore waters at night, knows the incredible vision of flood lights illuminating the many oil and gas platforms. The bright stuff is intended for human safety, but fish know how to leverage this bait-gathering influence to their benefit.

Tuna are high on the list of nocturnal feeders, and if you're up for an after-hours mission, nighttime is the right time for some off-the-chain tuna pounding. You can go as simple as free-lining cut pogies or white trout around the rig lights, but artificials can make it happen, too.

"You get a lot of baitfish coming to the surface; a lot of little flying fish and stuff," said Capt. Mike Frenette. "If you really want to target blackfin, you can't go wrong by fishing the platforms at night in 300 feet and deeper.

"It's a jigging technique; you drop it 60 to 100 feet down and just come up hard and almost every drop you're going to get a blackfin tuna. When you're marking them it's such a thrill when they thump it — there no mistaking it."

Topwater walkers and poppers are also effective, especially when you see tuna busting at the surface. Try different angles and distances to dial in the sweet zones. ▪

— David A. Brown

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

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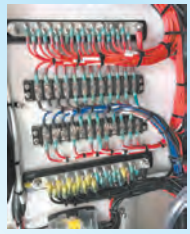

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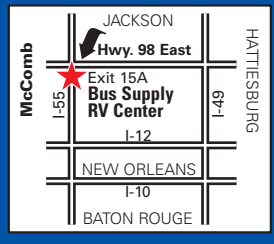

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Major League Fishing anglers targeted Lake Bruin last fall — providing local fishermen the opportunity to gain insight on how pros patterned the oxbow.

By Chris Ginn

The bass bite is a Bruin

One of the most fascinating things weekend bass tournament fishermen can witness is professional anglers picking apart their local lakes when major tournaments roll into town.

Toledo Bend, the Red River, the Mississippi River Delta… all have hosted major tournaments that drew thousands of fans and hundreds of spectator boats.

But Lake Bruin?

Small lakes like this often-overlooked jewel in Northeast Louisiana were perennially passed over by major tournament organizations like B.A.S.S. and the FLW, in large part because of their lack of housing and amenities.

But Major League Fishing put a stop to that.

Because of its limited field and lack of live weigh-ins, MLF has brought attention to some of the best small lakes in the nation in a format that gives many more anglers a pro's perspective of their local lakes.

James Davis, a tournament angler from Ferriday, was just as eager as anybody when MLF visited last fall on the Black River/Cocodrie, Lake Bruin and Larto Lake.

He has fished against some of the MLF anglers at several events and always wondered how they would approach an obscure oxbow like Bruin — a lake where he cut his bass-fishing teeth.

"I've caught a lot of shallow bass on that lake over the years," said Davis, "but what stood out to me was that they were able to catch so many up shallow in small spots by just continuing to pound the same spot over and over. I look back and see that I have blown through some of the same areas I saw them fish, but kept moving after catching a couple.

"Well, they sat in the same spot and just kept fishing and kept catching."

Take Takahiro Omori for example. Davis said he's fished the same small group of cypress trees that Omori fished during the MLF event, but that he had never sat on them like the professional angler did.

"He just sat there fishing the same group of trees over and over again all day long," Davis said. "I wasn't surprised at all by the pattern he was fishing, but it floored me to learn that when I catch one or two bass off a group of trees like that and keep moving, I'm leaving an entire school of catchable bass behind."

In fact, none of the patterns established by the MLF pros on Lake Bruin surprised Davis.

The only thing that did surprise him was that anglers known for fishing jigs struggled to establish a flipping pattern.

"It was also funny to watch them complain about the same old thing we've complained about for years," Davis said. "Finding fish on the bank and then having to move around all those long docks and piers to get back to the next section of bank. There's no way around it, though. It's just part of fishing Bruin."

There's no doubt MLF knew what they were doing scheduling the event during the fall since it's one of the absolute best times of the year to fish the lake.

This November may be even better than normal because the lake is undergoing a drawdown, which will concentrate bass that want to be up feeding on shad in shallow water around whatever cover isn't high and dry.

"Shad… that's what it's all about during the fall," Davis said. "How many times have you heard that if you find the shad you'll find the bass? Nowhere is that old saying any truer than it is at Lake Bruin. Find the shad, figure out how they're positioned on the bank, and throw reaction baits."

Davis noted that November is also one of the most peaceful times of the year to be on Bruin because so many anglers are in the woods chasing deer.

"Man, you can go a whole day out there during November and not even see another boat," he added. "Get you a little plan together to quickly figure out what's going on, and you'll be good."

One of the best fall patterns for fishing Lake Bruin is throwing spinnerbaits on the windiest banks. **INSET:** When fishing the ends of Bruin with fast moving baits, Davis will slow down and fish isolated cover with a Reaction Innovations Pocket Rocket.

STEP 1 FISH BOTH ENDS

Both ends of Bruin have the shallowest water in the lake, and they are extremely attractive to fall bass looking to chase shad. From a birds-eye perspective, the far ends nearly pinch back together with just a sliver of land separating them.

The southeast end closest to the Mississippi River is generally considered the state park end — although some may still call it the "KOA end" — while the southwest end closer to Highway 65 is called Brushy.

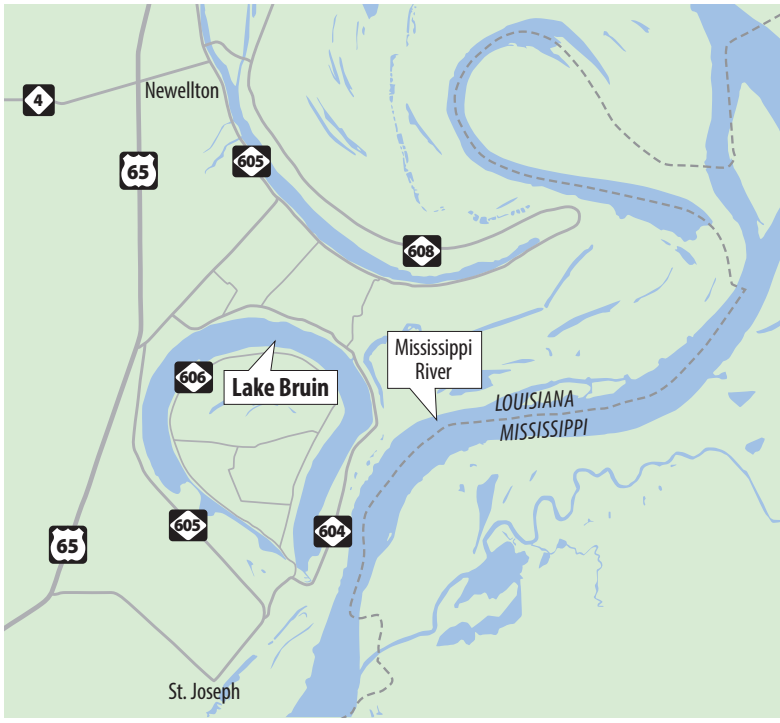
"The ends usually have some pad stems and maybe some scattered coontail," Davis said. "When the shad get up in that vegetation, bass move in and you'll see them schooling out there in the open.

"It can be a dynamite bite."

Upon arrival at either end, Davis visually scans the area trying to find schooling bass activity, or just visible shad flipping on the surface.

After confirming that bass are in the mood to chase bait,

BELOW: Walking baits like the Vixen are great for working the ditches in Lake Bruin.



Davis typically starts out throwing topwater buzz frogs, lipless crankbaits and spinnerbaits.

"If I come up on some cover that I think might hold a bass, I'll pick up something like a finesse jig, shakey head, or a Reaction Innovations Pocket Rocket, which is kind of a souped up Senko style bait with ridges on it that push a lot of water," Davis said.

TRY THE CYPRESS TREE ISLAND — STEP 2

On the main body of lake on the northwest corner of what would have been the inside bend of the old river channel is an island loaded with shallow cypress trees.

"I see this spot as a big transition area," Davis said "That island has enough deep water nearby with enough shallow trees on it and a shallow bank near it to make it the perfect spot for bass that want to move in and out."

He'll throw some of the same baits he threw on the ends, but Davis would start to add squarebill crankbaits and topwaters like buzzbaits and walking baits.

"If they didn't want to bite the moving baits, I'd switch to a finesse jig or shaky head fished slow around the shallow cover," he added.

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CHECK THE DITCHES — STEP 3

After working over the shallow ends and the cypress tree island, Davis runs to the discharge ditch where water is being released out of Lake Bruin for the fall drawdown. There are a few small ditches that run out of the lake, but he said that one in particular is on the outside bend of the lake on the state park end.

"It might not look like much, but it's big enough to fit a full size bass boat in there no problem," Davis said. "I would imagine this ditch is going to be full of shad in that moving water, so it's a 'follow-the-bait pattern' again. The fishing in there is going to be a little different with it being more of a bank pattern, but I won't change my baits up too much."

If bass shy away from hard baits, Davis ties on a Skinny Dipper to give them a more subtle shad presentation.

Davis said he would start at the mouth of the discharge ditch with reaction style baits like spinnerbaits and lipless crankbaits, but he would add a Reaction Innovations Skinny Dipper swimbait to the mix and swim it much like he would a spinnerbait by just slowly reeling it in.

"It gives them a little bit of a different look that perfectly matches those shad," Davis said. "I'd also maybe try a Vixen topwater walking bait or a buzzbait to see if the bass wanted to eat on the surface if I couldn't get them to bite anything else."

Once he's worked over the discharge ditch, Davis runs back to the cypress-tree island. Only this time, he'll focus more on the bank behind it rather than the island itself.

This ditch is more of a canal that was dug as lake access for some nearby homes.

"The mouth of this ditch can be really good during the fall," Davis said. "Sometimes those bass that were out on the cypress trees on that island will move up to the bank and stack up whenever the shad start ganging up there. I'd stick with the same baits I used at the other ditch."

FIND A WIND-BLOWN BANK UP NEXT

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The bass bite is a Bruin

James Davis quickly fishes his way around a long Lake Bruin dock with a finesse jig.

FIND A WIND-BLOWN BANK — STEP 4

Davis checks this pattern last because he knows just how consistent it can be during the fall. (He would rather establish a pattern that might not be fished as hard before he relies on one that everybody knows about and fishes.)

"Sometimes you do what you've got to do, though," Davis said. "There's probably no better known pattern on Bruin than fishing the windiest bank you can find. The best banks would be the ones that the wind has been blowing in on for a couple of days. All that wave action crashing on the bank stirs up the food chain, and bass take advantage of all the confusion for as long as they can."

One of the best ways to take advantage of the windy banks is to throw a heavier spinnerbait in the ½- to ¾-ounce range. An easy-to-fish alternative would be a ChatterBait.

"Of course the problem with fishing windy banks is going around all those docks," he said. "If I were out just fishing, I'd work my way around the docks kind of fast with a finesse jig or a shakey head because those can be some finicky fish.

"But if I were fishing a tournament, I'd do the same thing those MLF pros did and motor around them to get back into productive water as quickly as possible."

While it might have been fascinating to glean a new tip or two from the MLF pros fishing Lake Bruin, the most important thing you should have taken from the event was just how systematically they eliminated water until they found a group of fish.

This's exactly what Davis' four-prong approach does; it will help you key in on productive areas while quickly being able to eliminate those not holding bass.

"And when you get a bite or two," Davis concluded, "you better work those places over just like those MLF guys did." ■

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

SHRIMP COCKTAIL

Largemouth bass in the Sabine River follow the bait — and that means successful anglers can fish a shrimp pattern in the fall to fill their box.

By Jerald Horst

"We are very blessed," Johnny Watkins said. "There are very few places where you fish bass on a shrimp pattern.

"Shrimp will occur in the summer, but we really start seeing them in the fall — September through December. Any kind of north wind 5 to 7 miles per hour will flush them out of the marsh.

"These Sabine River bass know it when it happens. Those fish know it," he reiterated emphatically. "They prefer shrimp over anything else.

"Best conditions are post-frontal: blue skies, high pressure, north wind. It's all about the bait."

The 40-year-old firefighter captain from Longville, Louisiana had invited me over. "You know Ken Chaumont, the owner of Egret Baits. Come with him. His son Hunter and I were good friends in college. I will let him know when things are right."

And he did.

- Vudu Shrimp, a lure originally designed for saltwater species, is very effective for marsh bass.

THE HUNT BEGINS UP NEXT >

THE HUNT BEGINS

It seemed an odd time to be bass fishing — an 8 o'clock boat launch into the river, a north wind, azure blue skies, high pressure and downright nippy for early fall. (Yeah, I remembered that he said these were actually the best conditions, but still ....)

Photo courtesy Lance Melendy

ABOVE: Chaumont recommends the best colors for marsh bass fishing to be, from top to bottom, brown, golden and natural. **LEFT:** The stomach contents of this Sabine River largemouth bass shows what the river's fish feed on.

Watkins launched his boat in Orange, Texas because it is a good, wide, multilane public facility maintained by the City of Orange. He eschewed using the Burned Out Bridge Launch on old Highway 90 southwest of Vinton.

"It has limited parking, especially on weekends, and also a history of occasional vandalism," he explained.

At the launch, we were 5 miles upriver from Sabine Lake and about 60 miles south of Toledo Bend Reservoir. The area not industrialized was beautiful, freshwater marsh broken by individual and clumped cypress trees.

The closer we came to Sabine Lake, the fewer the trees became — and the more the landscape was dominated by stands of 6-foot tall roseau canes.

The morning would be divided into two parts, Watkins said. Because tide changeover wouldn't occur until 10 a.m., the pair would "kill time" by fishing what Watkins called "industrial structure."

After the tide began falling well, they would shift to fishing drains, sloughs and cuts coming out of the marsh — that hopefully would be carrying shrimp in their flow.

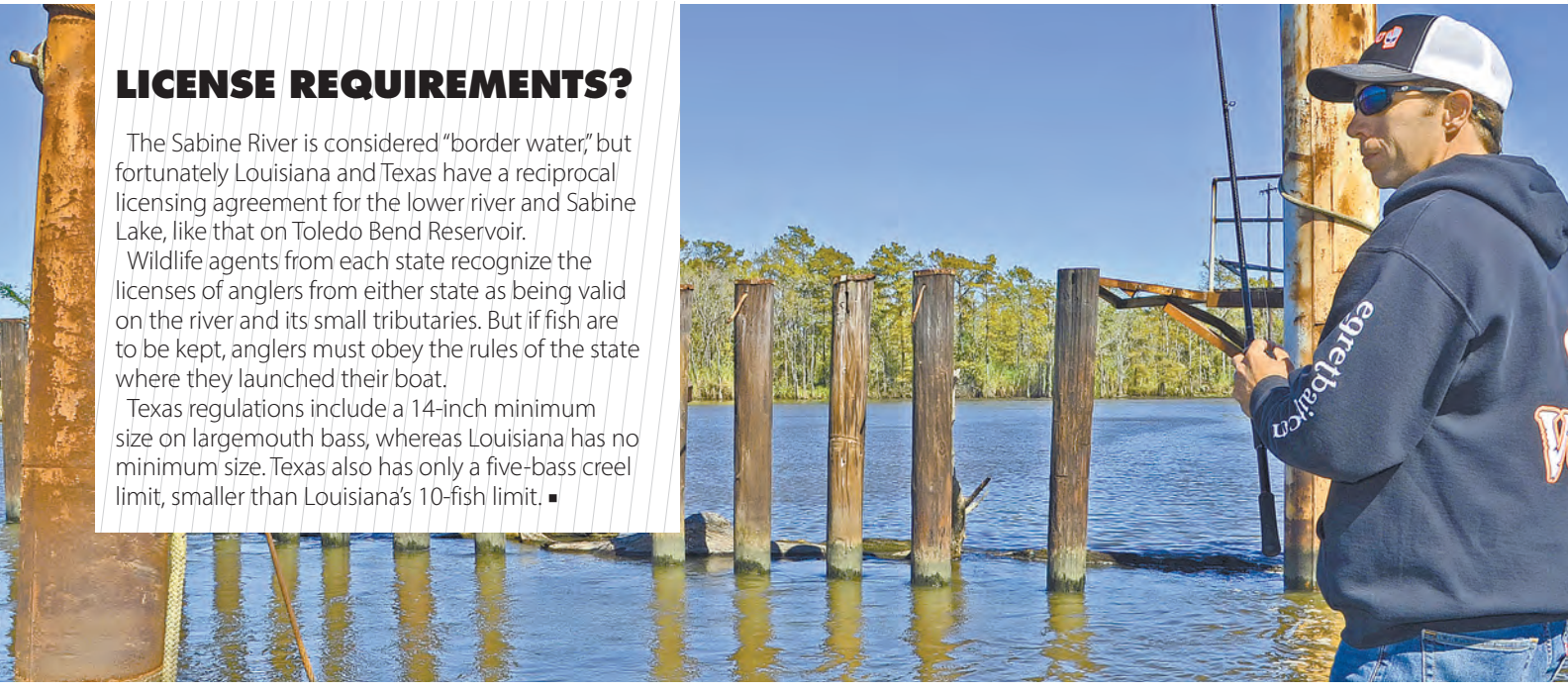
HITTING INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE UP NEXT >

LICENSE REQUIREMENTS?

The Sabine River is considered "border water," but fortunately Louisiana and Texas have a reciprocal licensing agreement for the lower river and Sabine Lake, like that on Toledo Bend Reservoir.

Wildlife agents from each state recognize the licenses of anglers from either state as being valid on the river and its small tributaries. But if fish are to be kept, anglers must obey the rules of the state where they launched their boat.

Texas regulations include a 14-inch minimum size on largemouth bass, whereas Louisiana has no minimum size. Texas also has only a five-bass creel limit, smaller than Louisiana's 10-fish limit. ▪



The skinny on the SABINE

Except for the massive Toledo Bend Reservoir formed from its waters, few Louisianans know much about the Sabine River other than that it forms the state's border with neighboring Texas.

Better known is the Calcasieu River, the drowned mouth of which is Calcasieu Lake, commonly called "Big Lake" by dedicated speckled trout anglers. Although only 20 miles apart, they are totally different rivers, as noted by Johnny Watkins.

"The Calcasieu has a saltwater barrier on it — a water control structure with a lock located north of Interstate Highway 10. The Sabine is more natural. When winter rains slack off, typically late April or early May, saltwater begins to intrude up the river.

"Saltwater species like pogies (menhaden) and shrimp move up the river with the saltwater. Pogies can be found as far north as Starks, north of I-10. Shrimp are not found quite as far north as are pogies."

Pogies are heavily used by largemouth bass as food, and are found in the river from May until it gets "really cold" in December, explained Watkins. Shrimp are prevalent mainly in the fall months.

Because shrimp tend to penetrate deeply into the marsh, experienced bass anglers take advantage of tidal cycles for fishing. "Sometimes we won't leave the house until 11 a.m. because we want to fish on falling tides," Watkins said.

"Falling tides together with north winds really push water out of the marsh and flush shrimp with it. By January though, a lot of the shrimp are gone. Bass become lethargic and the water gets dirty then."

Not much further upriver from the tidally-influenced lower river, it changes character rapidly. Ken Chaumont, 63, remembers his early experiences on that section of the river.

"I started to fish it right out of high school. We would launch at Niblett's Bluff on Highway 12 to fish it. It is a narrow, winding river with lots of sandbars. Most of the bass we caught were spotted bass, although some of my biggest largemouths came from the upper river.

"It's a gorgeous river, but you need an aluminum flatboat to fish it, not a bass boat. The upper river is also dramatically affected by power generation water releases from Toledo Bend.

"The Sabine River Authority doesn't generate electricity every day, but when it does, water levels rise rapidly in the upper river. Generation doesn't have as much effect on the lower river as do tides and wind." ▪

Watkins emphasized that industrial structure set in the channel of the river itself can be very productive.

HITTING INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE

"The good thing about all this industrial structure," said Watkins, "is that on this river, unlike Calcasieu River, you can catch fish on a rising tide. When the current swirls around any structure, it always creates an eddy that serves as an ambush point for bass.

"Plus I also fish the shade provided by big structure, like barges. Bass hide in the shade and come out and blast shrimp and pogies that come by. Fishing industrial structure in the main river is best in late summer, when the water is clear."

All of the industrial structure in the river is located on the Texas side. The Louisiana side is totally different — wild and natural in appearance.

Our first stop was a barge canal just below the boat ramp. A massive number of the big steel hulks were parked in the canal awaiting repair work. A half-mile into the canal, passage was blocked bank to bank by a barge placed crossways to form a vehicular bridge.

Water exiting the canal was forced under the barge, creating an up-welling effect, ideal for bass ambushes, Watkins said.

He began with a 3 ¼-inch Vudu Golden Shrimp, fishing a tight-line. Chaumont tied on a shallow running, suspending Zombie RIP Stik in clown around color, also made by Egret Baits. One lure imitated shrimp, the other pogies. Used to fishing together, when one found a solid pattern of what the fish preferred, both shifted to that lure.

The first bass came on board at 9:15 a.m. as half of a double. It was followed by a bull red, then another bass. Chaumont replaced his RIP Stik with what was then a prototype of what is now sold as a Vudu Vixon, a paddle tail-style lure.

Watkins trolled the boat from the cross-barge to the racked rows of barges, positioning it for them to be able to toss their baits under the barges' overhanging bows and into the shade. Again they jacked bass after bass out of their lairs.

"The bass we are going to catch today," said Chaumont, "are typical marsh bass, with the exception of those at Lacassine (National Wildlife Refuge). A 1 ½- to 2-pound fish is good; 3 is great and 4 pounds is a trophy.

"Because there are so many of them, they don't grow big."

"You have to down-size your size expectations," interjected Watkins. "The upside is the numbers of fish."

"Use light tackle to feel the bite, and it's a lot of fun," added Chaumont.

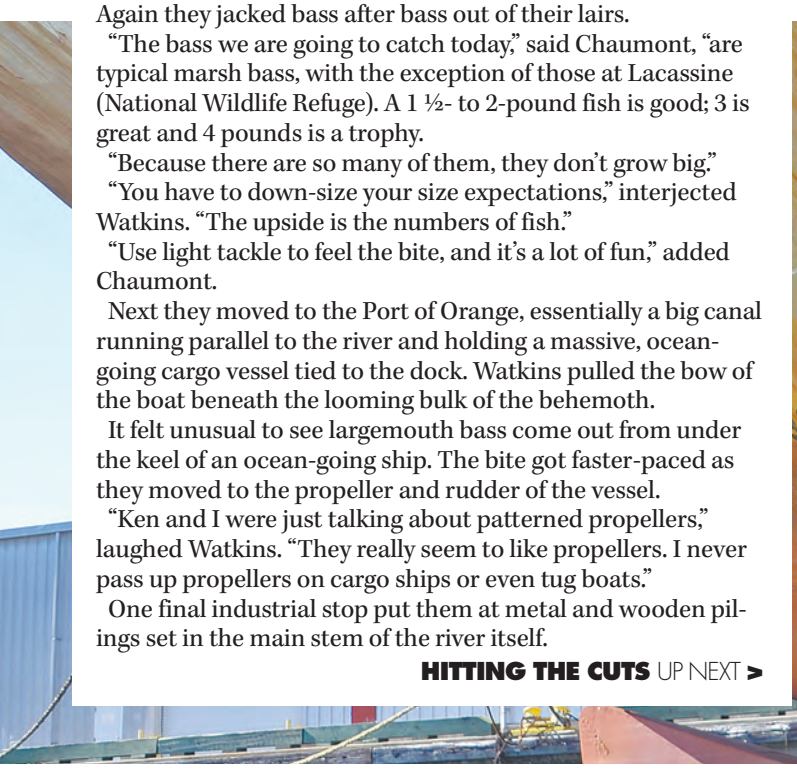
Next they moved to the Port of Orange, essentially a big canal running parallel to the river and holding a massive, ocean-going cargo vessel tied to the dock. Watkins pulled the bow of the boat beneath the looming bulk of the behemoth.

It felt unusual to see largemouth bass come out from under the keel of an ocean-going ship. The bite got faster-paced as they moved to the propeller and rudder of the vessel.

"Ken and I were just talking about patterned propellers," laughed Watkins. "They really seem to like propellers. I never pass up propellers on cargo ships or even tug boats."

One final industrial stop put them at metal and wooden pilings set in the main stem of the river itself.

HITTING THE CUTS UP NEXT >



Ken Chaumont has decades of experience in the freshwater and saltwater lure business.

Vudu Ken talks BASS

With 34 years in the fishing lure business, Ken Chaumont is often recognized for the longtime role he played with Bill Lewis Lures and Stanley jigs. Then in 2013, with the introduction of the Vudu Shrimp, the Iowa, Louisiana resident founded Egret Baits.

Naturally, he loved to talk about his lures.

"What Johnny is throwing (a 3 ¼-inch Vudu Shrimp) is the original lure made by Egret Baits. We designed it as a saltwater lure. But when we used it along weed lines in sweetwater marshes for redfish, we did really well with bass.

"Anywhere you have brackish water, where saltwater and freshwater mix, it is a big lure. The 3 ¼-inch size has tremendous importance, because it imitates a 31-35 count shrimp, the predominant size shrimp coming out of the marsh.

"Color matters too. In normal coffee-clear water, white, brown and golden colors are best. In stained waters, you can go to lighter colors such as chartreuse or pink."

Vudu shrimp made their reputation by being fished beneath a popping cork, but for bass fishing, presentations without a cork are best. On the first cast into a spot, Chaumont and Johnny Watkins often use a fast retrieve, almost popping the lure to the water's surface.

Then they slowed down and made a mid-water retrieve, followed finally by bouncing it off the bottom as they reeled it in. ■

Setting the hook on a bass under the looming sides of an ocean-going cargo ship was an unusual experience.

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Watkins shows off one of 11 bass taken from the mouth of the cut behind and to the right of him.

HITTING THE CUTS

By 11 a.m., Watkins and Chaumont deemed the tide to be falling hard enough to fish what they called "cuts." These were 30- to 40-yard-wide bayous draining into the river or into Adams Bayou.

The Sabine River is intersected by the Intracoastal Waterway from the east, and the two run as one channel to Sabine Lake. Adams Bayou opens into the combined channel from the Texas side.

The habitat along Adams Bayou was a little different than near the river itself. It was still flat, but higher in elevation. Pine trees appeared and oaks replaced cypresses.

They hit the cuts intersecting Adams Bayou hard, focusing on the downstream points of the intersections. Using variable retrieves, every cut yielded fish, none huge, but all willing and spunky.

Leaving Adams Bayou, they moved up the Sabine River above the landing to focus on cuts coming in from both sides of the river. Typically smaller than the cuts in Adams Bayou, 20 to 30 feet in width, they were just as productive as the larger cuts to the south. Here again, the banks were heavily wooded.

"You can catch 25 bass from a single cut here on a north wind and falling tide," Watkins said.

The best we did was 11 from a single cut.

Poor us. ▪

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

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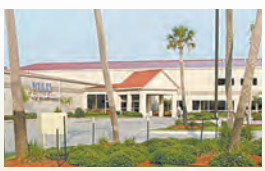

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CREATURE FEATURE

Jerald Horst

Shad are excellent bait, but as Johnny Broussard demonstrates, they must be caught with a cast net since they won't bite a baited hook.

THE LITTLE SHAD IS A GOOD SHAD

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THREADFIN AND GIZZARD VARIETIES

For a lot of freshwater fishermen, a shad is a shad is a shad.

But not to biologists.

They know that the fresh waters of the southern United States hold two species of shad — gizzard shad and threadfin shad.

And biologists definitely like threadfin shad.

Unlike their bigger cousin the gizzard shad, which rapidly grows too big for all but the very largest of game fish to eat, the threadfin stays conveniently "bite-sized." Most are 3 to 5 inches long, and only the largest will grow to their maximum size of 7 inches.

And unlike gizzard shad, which thrive in cold water, threadfin shad are subtropical. In the U.S., their native range was confined to the Deep South. Only the states of Louisiana and Mississippi lay entirely within their range. But they are found through eastern Mexico and Guatemala, into Belize (British Honduras).

COLD KILLS

Because they stay small and predator fish love to eat them, they have become the darling of fisheries biologists, who have stocked them throughout the country, including Hawaii.

Their one drawback is they are cold-sensitive. Massive winter kills of threadfin shad outside their native range (and sometimes even within it) are documented. At water temperatures of 50° F, they quit feeding. At 47°, they become inactive — and at 39° they die.

In some northern reservoirs, they are able to overwinter by relying on warm-water discharges from power plants. In others, their populations just boom and bust. But large threadfin shad kills are uncommon in Louisiana, if they occur at all.

While superficially at least, threadfin and gizzard shad look alike, there are some easy-to-recognize differences besides size.

The mouths of threadfin shad are located at the tip of the snout, while the mouths of gizzard shad are located under the snout — giving the fish an overhanging upper-jaw and snub-nosed appearance.

Color is another indicator, with threadfin shad having varying amounts of yellow mixed with their generally silver color. The yellow is especially noticeable in their anal (belly) and caudal (tail) fins.

Juvenile menhaden (pogies), which will also occur in fresh waters near the coast, also have yellow highlights in their fins, but they have entirely different trap door-shaped mouths. While menhaden and both shad species will have a large black spot on each side behind their heads, menhaden most often have approximately eight faint dark spots set in two rows behind the large spot.

Usually, a broad golden stripe occurs in the light area between the back and the sides of threadfin shad. Yellow coloration is especially noticeable in breeding males.

THE SHAD SPAWN

Threadfin shad begin spawning later in the spring than gizzard shad, at water temperatures of 70° F and above. Spawning takes place early in the morning and is usually done near some structure, such as brush, logs or water plants.

A single female will be flanked by several males, as the small group swims erratically near the surface. When they near submerged structure, they discharge eggs and sperm. The fertilized eggs sink quickly and become slightly sticky so that they can adhere to the structure.

Both sexes will spawn several times during a season, with females producing 2,000 to 24,000 eggs per spawn. The eggs hatch in three days and the young threadfin shad form dense schools that travel near the surface — and may have 1,000

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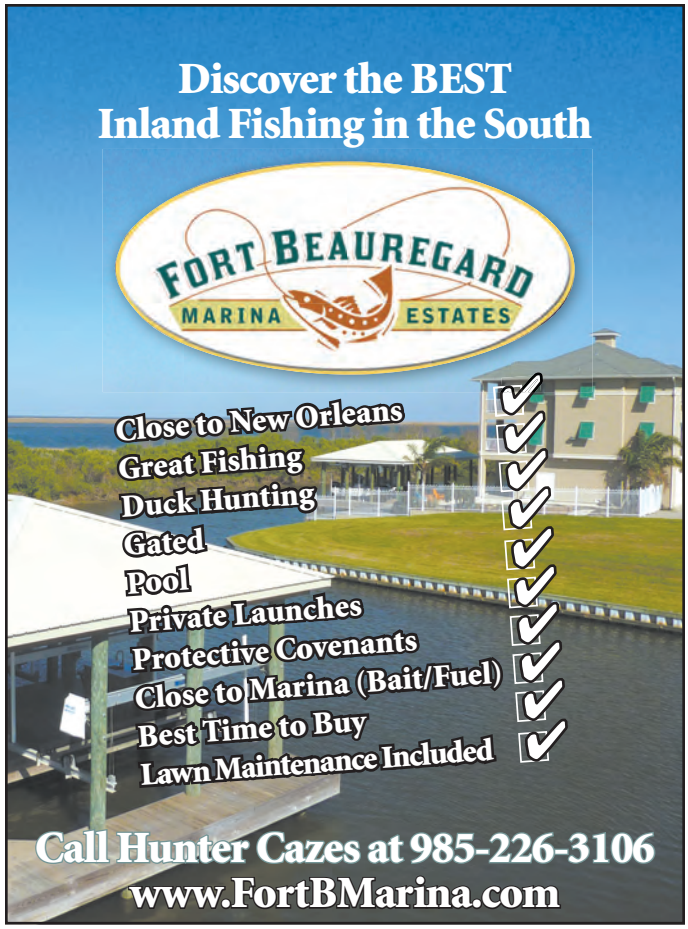

RIGHT: The mouth of a threadfin shad opens on the end of its snout, and its body and fins show yellow highlights. BELOW: A gizzard shad's mouths opens beneath the end of its snout, and it grows larger than threadfin shad.

young fish per square yard.

From the time of hatching until death two or three years later, a threadfin shad's diets remain the same: about half phytoplankton (microscopic algae) and half zooplankton (microscopic animals). Unlike their bigger cousin, the gizzard shad, they do not forage in bottom detritus for food.

The maximum reported size for threadfin shad, which was recorded in the Bogue Falaya River here in Louisiana, is 8 inches long. Females grow larger and live longer than males, with an occasional female living to age 4.

Threadfin shad are not only a favored food item for largemouth bass, but in many reservoirs crappie living in open water feed heavily on them. They have no food value for humans, however. Besides their small size, they are very oily and have many tiny bones in their flesh.

Threadfin shad are too small to have commercial value, as gizzard shad do for crawfish bait. But they are excellent trotline bait, and are used by both recreational and commercial trotliners.

Most used as trotline bait are caught with a cast net directly by the fisherman who plans to use them — they are seldom available for purchase. ▪

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

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Capt. Paul Titus

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CAPT. PAUL'S FISHING EDGE FOR LAKE BORGNE

FEATURES MORE THAN 160 WAYPOINTS IN THE AREA

As a longtime fisherman of the Lake Borgne area, I had a vast library of locations to fish — and more than 160 of these are included in the Lake Borgne Edge file.

This Edge covers an area from the shoreline at the Mississippi Sound to Shell Beach, and from the Intracoastal Waterway on the west to the lake shoreline by the Biloxi Marsh on the east.

You will find locations such as the pilings in the southern part of Lake Borgne at Bayou Yscloskey shown as waypoint LKB45 plotted as 29°52.0689' N Lat ~ 89°40.4087' W Long, which is an excellent spot for flounder — and the mouth of Bayou Yscloskey in the lake shown as waypoint LKB104, plotted at 29°52.1163' N. Lat ~ 89°40.4773'. This is a key location to get in and out of the lake from the Shell Beach area.

It also has the mouth of Doulluts Canal at the shored-up shoreline shown as waypoint LB106 plotted at 29°51.7327' N. Lat ~ 89°39.1036' W. Long.

It also has waypoints on the western side of the lake in and around Bayou Bienvenue, and locations around the Intracoastal Waterway and Chef Menteur Pass. It has a location where there are remnants of an old gas drill hole at Bayou Magill in the lake, shown as waypoint LKB34A at 30°02.2242' N. Lat ~ 89°45.1913'.

It has the mouth of the bayou just north of Alligator Point shown as waypoint LKB at 30°01.6061' N Lat ~ 89°43.0067' W Long.

On the eastern side of the lake it has locations such as the mouth of Bayou Hasouse (aka Bayou Sue) at the lake shown as waypoint BYU SUE LKB located at 29°53.6907' N Lat. ~ 89°35.4403' W Long. This opens the Biloxi Marsh area to several other nearby deeper bayous.

Naturally, it has Bayou Biloxi at the lake at 29°59.8504' N. Lat ~ 89°33.4055' W. Long.

Also included is the well site designated as the Tulane Rig, with two platforms at 30°01.6010' N. Lat ~ 89°36.3240' W. Long.

In addition, there are over thirty-five (35) sites in the open lake where gas platforms were once located, with those corresponding waypoints. My depth finder shows an irregular bottom at many of these locations, making them worth a cast or two when in the area.

I call the program "Capt. Paul's Fishing Edge" because I believe it give the angler an advantage in getting to, finding fishing spots, moving around and getting back from some of the premier fishing areas in the state.

Presently, Capt. Paul's Edge is available for 21 different areas, including Barataria Bay, the Rigolets, Hopedale to the Miss Sound, Hopedale to Bayou Terre Boeufs, Delacroix to Point a la Hache, Bayou Bienvenue, Port Sulphur, Lake Pontchartrain, Calcasieu Lake, Pearl River WMA, Lafitte, Leeville East and Leeville West, Vermilion Bay, Empire-Buras, Myrtle Grove, Cocodrie/Dulac, Bayou Sauvage NWR, Big Branch NWR and Lake Borgne, which is highlighted in this column.

Each of the Edge programs have more than 100 of my fishing and navigation waypoints, and they're written in most of the common formats needed for consumer GPS units.

EDGE WAYPOINTS CAN BE ELECTRONICALLY INSTALLED

Each file can be downloaded into a variety of GPS units. All of the EDGE programs are sent as an email attachment to your computer address. This data download enters all of Capt. Paul's Waypoints into the unit, and each download also

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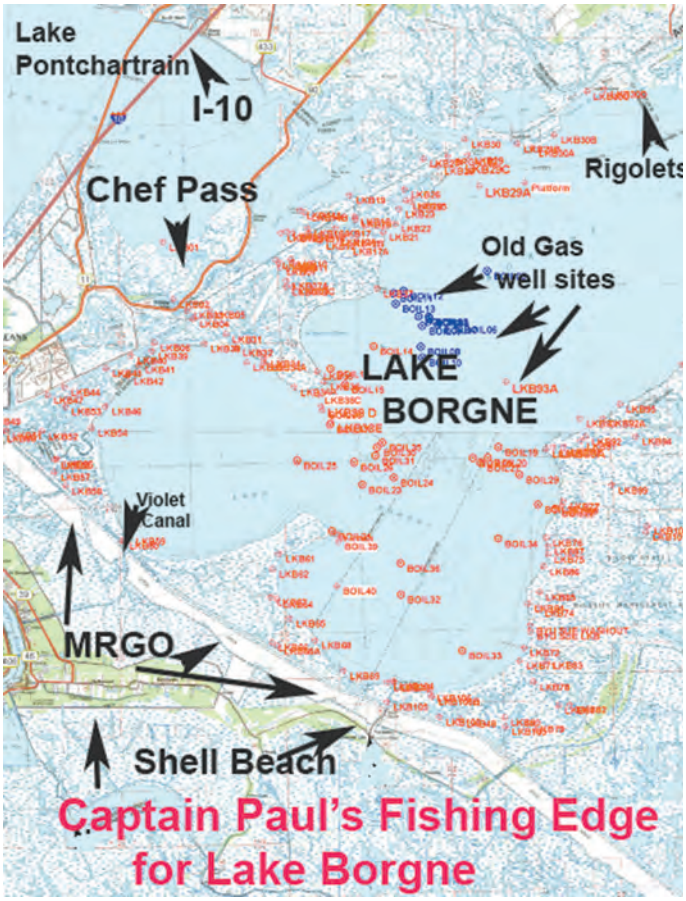

features a general map of the area in 1:100,000 scale, as well as individual information on each waypoint.

These map images cannot be installed in the GPS unit, but offer a location of the waypoints and their descriptions, as well as a READ ME and INSTRUCTIONS file.

To order an Edge file, you must have an email address that accepts attachments. All of Capt. Paul's Fishing Edge files can be found in Louisiana Sportsman' s Outdoor Store (www.sportsmangear.com).

In addition, there are several link buttons throughout LouisianaSportsman.com which will bring you to the EDGE ordering page.

Remember that you must state your brand of GPS unit, your email address and the selected area.

NOTE: The Edge files are NOT brand name interchangeable — so be sure to make the correct GPS selection. ▪

Capt. Paul Titus *has been responding to GPS questions on LouisianaSportsman.com since 2000. He has been fishing and hunting in Louisiana since 1957. Titus holds a USCG license and conducts instruction courses in the use of GPS for private individuals and government agencies.*

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Making VOSIs simply requires perch floats, a sharp knife and a Dremel cone. Halves can also be used for poppers. **INSET:** Jacob Cormier with a Catfish Lake trout taken on a Clouser Minnow suspended under a VOSI.

THE VOSI REVISITED

DEALING WITH VERTICALLY-CHALLENGED FISH? FLOAT ON!

With Thanksgiving Day approaching, I'm compiling a list of the many things to be thankful for.

Somewhere on that list are speckled trout and sac-a-lait. I love catching both on fly rod as much as my family enjoys them at the dinner table — and November is prime time for both.

One of the best methods of catching either this time of year is with a lure under a cork. For flyrodders, the "lure" is a weighted fly, while the "cork" is a VOSI.

Fishing a fly under a float brings out my inner-child. But it also brings home dinner.

SO WHAT IS A VOSI?

Twenty-five years ago, I conceived an idea based on Pete Cooper's Perch Float Popper. Pete took a Styrofoam perch float, cut it in half, then scoured out a concave face on the fat end using a Dremmel cone. After making a slit, the float was glued to a hook and painted.

My idea was to use that "half perch float" as a flyrodder's popping cork. Simply slip it up a leader with the fat end facing the fly line, and insert the pin on the back end to hold it in place.

At the time, anti-cork sentiment in the fly fishing community ran high. So I named my creation the "Vertically Oriented Strike Indicator," or VOSI (pronounced *vo-see*).

Over the 18 years I've done this column, the VOSI has been mentioned numerous times. And for good reason — its been highly effective for untold fly anglers.

>

UPCOMING EVENTS

• **Nov. 3-4 (Fri-Sat) - Southern Fly Fishers Rendezvous.** Annual gathering of fly tiers from Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, and elsewhere. North Toledo Bend State Park, Zwolle, LA. No planned activities but lots of fly tying, food and fishing. Admission fee, lodging extra. For details, go to www.gulfcoastcouncilffi.org.

• **Nov. 18 (Sun) - Sage, Redington, Rio Factory Tour, Pack & Paddle,** 601 E. Pinhook, Lafayette. 2 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Free event. Sample factory rods and lines and check out other gear from Sage, Redington and Rio and talk to company reps. Also, fly tying demonstrations from local tiers. For details, go to www.packpaddle.com.

VERTICALLY-CHALLENGED FISH

Long ago, the late outdoors writer Bob Scearce — popularly known as the Ol' Beachcomber — explained why jigging lures was so deadly on speckled trout. He theorized that the up-and-down retrieve imitates a panicked baitfish, which then triggers a predatory response from the trout.

Likewise, fishing a lure under a cork also imparts a vertical motion to the lure when the cork is displaced. Whether it's a tube jig for crappie or Sparkle Beetles for trout, the result is more bites than a straight retrieve.

That same principle applies to weighted flies suspended under a VOSI. The only explanation I have is that some fish are vertically-challenged.

SPECK GUIDELINES

I tell folks there's a 37-page operations manual on using a Vertically Oriented Strike Indicator. Of course that's a joke. The manual is only six pages — but I'll try and condense it to a few paragraphs.

For specks, a weighted fly — like a Clouser Minnow or EP Shrimp — is suspended below the cork, usually 2 to 3 feet. It's important that before any retrieve is made, the fly falls to its maximum depth.

When this happens, the cork will be slightly tilted, as opposed to sitting horizontally on the water. At this point, make a short jerk of the rod tip. I know that violates the principle of "strip

continues on page 118

TIPPETS

The fall migration of speckled trout to the interior marshes is in full force. Good days will be on a light south wind and a moving tide. Weighted baitfish and shrimp patterns under a VOSI will deliver numbers of school trout.

Even better days are when the skies are overcast or foggy. This is the time to break out surface patterns - Crease Flies, Bubbleheads, Pencil Poppers, Perch Float Poppers or Gurglers.

Some of the best redfish action will come a couple days after a cold front, when winds die down and water levels in the marsh are still low. Look for exposed backs and tails.

A wide range of flies do well this month, including toads, bendbacks, kwans, sliders, crab patterns, charlies like the LaFleur's Charlie, and copper or root beer spoon flies.

Crappie action revs up with the colder weather. Cast flies to shallow water brush piles and docks near deeper water. Crappie Candies, Fluff Butts, Silli-Butts and small Clousers are all good options.

Chain pickerel (aka grass pike) will be very active now that cool weather is here. Try neutral buoyancy flies with lots of motion — such as Seaducers, Millers Fluke Fly and large streamers.

Rainbow trout stocking is now on a two-week cycle for the Little Missouri River (Murfreesboro, AR), the Mountain Fork River (Broken Bow, OK) and the Sipsey River (Jasper, AL). Woolybuggers, Squirmies, and wet flies will all work well.

popping," but trust me, this works better.

After each jerk, retrieve the small amount of slack. Let the cork sit a couple of seconds as the fly descends. Countless trout have been caught on this pause.

CRAPPIE GUIDELINES

Flyrodders have long used football strike indicators for crappie. But those indicators are pretty pricey — about a dollar each.

My buddy Randy Leonpacher determined it was a lot cheaper to use VOSIs. What he also noticed was that the crappie needed a more subtle presentation, so he inverted the VOSI — placing the narrow end facing the fly line.

Crappie love structure, and won't venture far from it. A VOSI and a dropper fly (e.g, Fluff Butt) allow the angler to stay in the bite zone longer. For this reason, the retrieve calls for tiny strips and longer pauses.

With sac-a-lait, be aware of any suspicious movement of the float. The tiniest bounce may be a bite, so raise the rod tip and set the hook.

PERCH FLOAT SELECTION

The two most common perch floats used are both 1 ½ inches long. One is 3/8-inch diameter, the other ½-inch.

The narrower floats are easier to cast, but are limited to weighted flies 1/40 ounce or less. They're also limited to calmer conditions.

The wider floats can handle heavier weighted flies and pop better in choppy water. But they're also more difficult to cast on lighter rods.

When slicing a float in half, I usually put the white ends aside to use for Perch Float Poppers. If you decide to use these for VOSIs, I suggest coloring them with an orange permanent marker for better visibility.

OTHER TIPS

A VOSI does not work well on a heavy leader. I use a light three-section leader (butt, midsection, tippet). The butt is usually 20 pounds, tapering down to a tippet of 12 pounds for salt, or 8 pounds for fresh.

I also get better results if the tippet is long (3 feet max), and the float and fly are on that same section.

As mentioned in the May column, VOSI setups are best cast with a more open loop, or a Belgian Cast to prevent tangles.

VOSI setups do not work well in very clear water. Speckled trout will often attack the float instead. When that happens, switch to a popper. ▪

Glen 'Catch' Cormier
has pursued fish on the fly for 30 years. A certified casting instructor and renowned fly tier, he and his family live in Cotile.

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Dove buckets are an absolute must in the field.

DON'T 'KICK' THE BUCKET

BUCKETS HAVE BECOME NECESSARY EQUIPMENT FOR HUNTERS AND WILDLIFE MANAGERS

According to Mr. Google, the word bucket started being used in the 1200s. In the American colonies, leather buckets were common items around the homestead. Wooden buckets were made in the Middle Ages, and in 1837 galvanized buckets were manufactured. As kids we used washtubs to keep fish, turtles and crawfish in until we were told to dump them out. But in 1967, a major bucket breakthrough occurred when the first plastic buckets were marketed (although it seems like we had small plastic beach buckets long before that.)

With the invention of the bucket came new phrases for people, such as 'a drop in the bucket' and 'bucket list.' The name Buckethead belongs to the American musician Brian Patrick Carroll. The term gutbucket is a familiar one to deer hunters, but according to Google it refers to a washtub bass — a stringed instrument that uses a washtub as a resonator, and some music is sometimes referred to as 'gutbucket' jazz.

If you dove-hunted in September, you might have sat on a bucket designed for hunters with a swivel seat, a styrofoam insert and a cloth cover with storage pockets. We use them all the time in the dove field. But such portable seats can be used for other hunting adventures. Buckets also go well with a ground blind. If you hunt many wildlife species, buckets are ideal to help keep your gear organized and always ready for a hunt. I use buckets all the time around the house; in fact, I am not sure I could do the work I do without buckets. For the outdoor-oriented person, buckets are essential.

CHAINSAW BUCKETS

In the early 80s on Pearl River WMA, we did a lot of TSI work (Timber Stand Improvement). Ironwood was the dominant tree in the understory and it pretty much shaded out sunlight, preventing the growth of desirable woody and herbaceous plants that wildlife eat. We would go into an area and simply cut the ironwood trees; occasionally we would cut a small maple, elm or oak that would sprout and provide more browse for deer. A 5-gallon bucket provided a way to carry fuel, oil, tools, drinks and food. I still have a chainsaw bucket to carry all the necessities when working on our property.

GUT BUCKETS

A gut bucket is a must for any respectable deer camp. Wash tubs are com-

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monly used, but a 5-gallon bucket also works. Those big plastic buckets that are used for swimming pool chemicals are usually larger than the common 5-gallon bucket and can hold more. When full, buckets can be easily loaded on a wheeler or truck for dumping at an appropriate site. But with the issue of CWD, the preferred disposal method is to bury the carcasses.

A 5-gallon bucket also works well when cleaning doves and ducks and keeping the feathers from getting all over the place. Of course buckets also have been used for fish cleaning, and are great for crawfish and crab boils. When you think about it, the plastic bucket is pretty much a universal tool for outdoor and wildlife activities.

PLANTING AND FEEDING

I do not have a seed and fertilizer spreader for the tractor, so buckets are a must for my planting. In the old days when I was much younger, I could use a 5-gallon bucket for fertilizer and seed, but at age 66 I prefer a smaller bucket.

Reed's Metals has been giving out small black buckets for the past few years at the Sportsman Show, and these are perfect for me. A bag of fertilizer will fill three of these buckets. I throw the fertilizer out from one bucket, set it down and go get another bucket, picking up where I left off. The buckets can be easily cleaned, and won't corrode like those handheld bag spreaders.

There is no telling how many pounds of corn have been distributed from a 5-gallon bucket. We use buckets for feeding our chickens and domestic turkeys, as well as collecting rain water from the roof to fill water troughs. It is hard to imagine how I would function in this world without a bucket.

NOVEMBER DEER HUNTING

November is the hot month for Area 2 deer hunters, so check the rut schedule and hit the woods. The rut is the best chance for a hunter to connect with a mature buck because it's solely focused on does and breeding. When the rut is on and bucks are chasing does, the best hunting technique is to sit in the stand and wait for the action. If the weather is right with a cold front moving through, simply sit tight in those areas where you have seen deer feeding or along travel corridors — and be patient.

While the bucks are not feeding much, the does will still be eating, and where the does go, bucks will surely follow. So just enjoy the hunt and be ready for the action, because it can be fast and furious.

November also is the key month for managed deer hunts on public lands. This is an excellent opportunity for a hunter to put meat in the freezer. The public lands have different season dates, so check the hunting regulations. On public lands, hunters have to wear orange hats and vests; if you are not aware of it, hunters can also wear blaze pink instead of the hunter orange — so don't be surprised if you see pink in the woods.

continues on page 122

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• 39 Acres ... $3,950/AC
• 51.85 Acres ... $4,725/AC
• 69.69 Acres ... $3,800/AC
• 91.83 Acres ... $3,800/AC
• 100 Acres ... $5,552/AC
• 115 Acres ... $4,130/AC
• 125 Acres ... $3,175/AC
• 125 Acres ... $3,600/AC
• 200 Acres & Camp ... $1,120,000
• 360 Acres & Home ... $3,500,000
• 884 Acres and home ... $3,950,000
• 1,305 Acres & Home ... $7,500,000

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• 44 Acres & cabin ... $345,000
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• 95 Acres ... $3,500/AC
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• 243 Acres ... $4,900/AC

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• 15 Acres ... $2,500/AC
• 40 Acres ... $2,500/AC
• 69.5 Acres ... $1,850/AC

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• 86.65 Acres ... $3,439/AC
• 110 Acres & log cabin ... $575,000
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• 12 Acres ... $54,000/AC
• 16.29 Acres ... $90,000/AC
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• 43.74 Acres ... $3,715/AC
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• 12 Acres ... $144,000
• 38 Acres ... $10,000/AC
Red River
• 9 Acres ... $153,000
Sabine
• 21 Acres ... $3,095/AC
Tangipahoa Parish
• 35 Acres & Home ... $359,000
Webster
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A chainsaw bucket will hold everything needed for the task at hand.

The Hunters for the Hungry Program is alive and well in this state. Now that the regular season is open, hunters can kill a deer and donate it to the program. This organization has contracted with processing facilities where hunters can take the carcass and the facility will clean and process it at no charge.

Check out their website at www.hunters4hungrylouisiana.org, and donate a deer and share with someone in need this season. ▪

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

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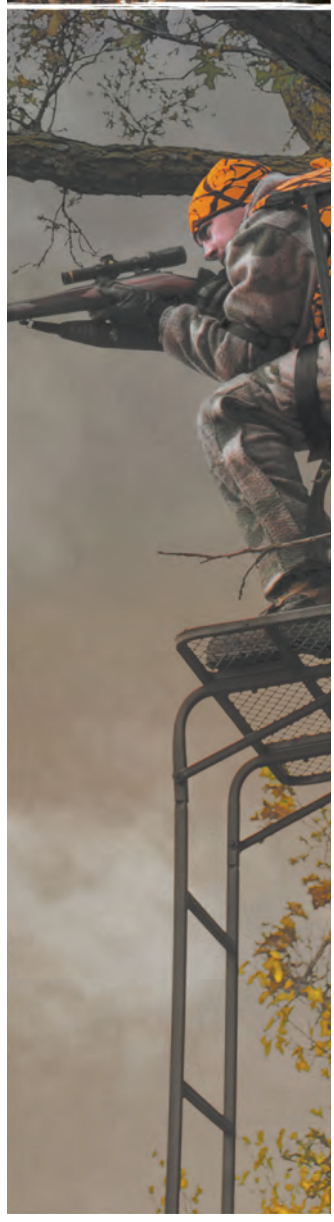

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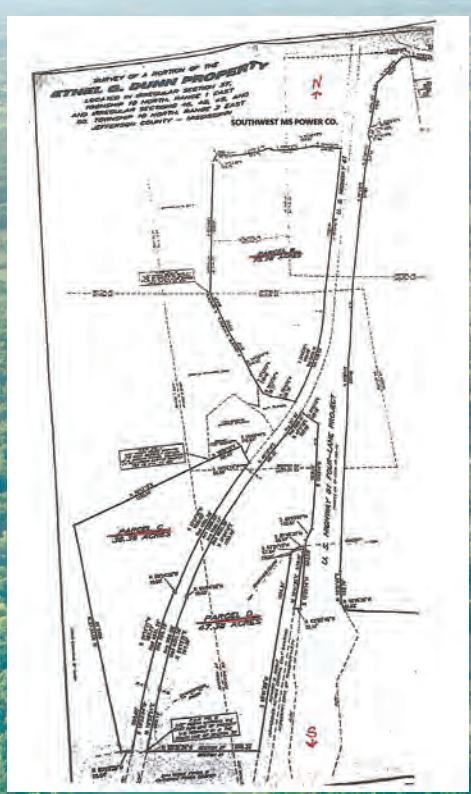

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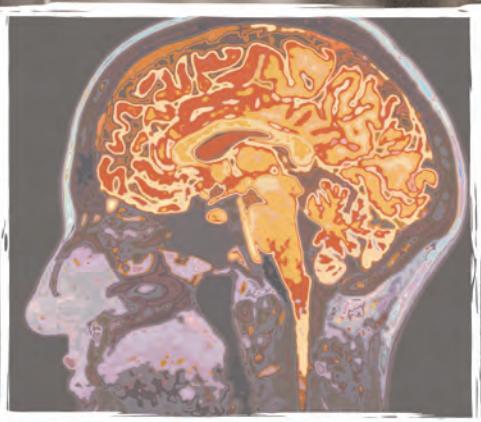

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LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

CRACKIN' CRAW

BASS AND REDFISH FALL FOR THE ENTICING ACTION OF THIS 3-INCH BAIT FROM CAJUN LURES

If you want to catch bass or redfish, you better get crackin'.

Kaplan-based artificial lure manufacturer Zach Dubois, who specializes in soft plastics, has watched the fairly new Crackin' Craw — a crawfish imitation — take the bass fishing world by storm. And to his pleasant surprise, it's also become a go-to bait for redfish along the coast.

"It's been selling all year long for bass fishing," Dubois said, noting that Living the Dream bass fishing guide Matt Loetscher used the Crackin' Craw as a jig trailer while fishing with Harold Allen in January. They had a winning sack of 28.74 pounds to win the Toledo Bend Texas Team Trail Tournament one weekend, and the following weekend they had 31.72 pounds to finish second in a Bass Champs tournament at Lake Sam Rayburn.

"But lately I've been selling a lot for redfishing guys," he said. "I kind of noticed a lot of guys were using more craw lures."

REDFISH COLORS

Realizing that, Dubois stirred the color pot and came up with some shades known to be loved by redfish, namely the blue crab, which is dark green with a blue swirl to it, and rouge candy — a clear color mixed with gold and red flakes. Naturally, some of the bass colors work, too, including white pearl, blue sapphire, june bug and june bug red, he said.

About the blue crab, he said, "It's an interesting color, a little more time consuming to make and produce. It has kind of like a blue sheen like crabs in the marsh. A lot of people use it."

The Cajun Lures Crackin' Craw hit the market in November, and its popularity has increased with each succeeding month.

Dubois had a soft plastic crawfish imitation in the lineup for Cajun Lures called the Poo Doo Craw with a thick, solid body.

But he wanted to make a product that had even more action.

"I was kind of looking for a new design going forward, something a little different," he said.

Josh Clark of Jackson, Michigan, who made the mold for Cajun Lures' highly successful Cooyon Croaker frog, answered the call and sent him a mold for what eventually would become the Crackin' Craw.

PINCER LAGNIAPPE

After some tweaking, the Crackin' Craw took shape and was ready to fish. The salt-free soft plastic's body is about 3 inches long and the pincers are thinner, have a flared design and are raised at the

While fishing for redfish with a Crackin' Craw, this speckled trout decided to eat, too.

ends to give more action.

And he quickly learned there was lagniappe with the claws. They stand up when attached to a jig as a soft plastic trailer. Videos on his website demonstrate the claws in action.

"It's pretty neat," he said.

When retrieved at a tantalizing pace for redfish, the claws "swim" it through the water.

The 26-year-old University of Louisiana graduate who has a degree in industrial design tried it out himself on the saltwater scene.

Dubois said redfish fishermen who are sight-fishing and kayak-fishing throw it a couple different ways, but using it as a slowly retrieved swimbait is very effective. That technique worked for him recently when he fished the marsh around Houma with Dillon Hymel of Morgan City. It was Dubois' first time using one of his bass creations for redfish — and he caught five.

"I was excited to do that," he said, noting he was using a Lazy Man hook. Other anglers Texas-rig it and peg a 1/8-ounce weight on the nose.

It got the name Crackin' Craw after he sent some of the first models to a friend, Lucas Ragusa of Gonzales, who said when he set the hook on bass, it "was like crackin' them on the head," Dubois said.

"That's kind of the one that stuck."

For more information on the Crackin' Craw and other Cajun Lures products, go to www.cajunlures.com. ▪

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

GAME WARDEN

Keith LaCaze

The daily bag limit on ducks may include up to three woodies. **INSET:** Youth waterfowl hunts are Nov. 3 and 4 in the Coastal Zone, Nov. 3 and Jan. 26 in the West Zone and Nov. 10 and Feb. 2 in the East Zone.

HERE COME THE DUCKS

AVOID THESE COMMON VIOLATIONS OF WATERFOWL REGULATIONS

GOT A QUESTION FOR THE KEITH?
EMAIL IT TO KLACAZE15@ATT.NET

Louisiana's 2018-19 duck season begins on Nov. 10 in both the West and Coastal Zones. The first segment runs through Dec. 2, and reopens on Dec. 15 for the second split, which ends on Jan. 20.

East Zone dates are Nov. 17 through Dec. 2, and Dec. 15 through Jan. 27. Youth hunt dates are Nov. 3-4 in the Coastal Zone, Nov. 3 and Jan. 26 in the West and Nov. 10 and Feb. 2 in the East.

The daily limit for ducks is six, no more than four of which may be mallards (no more than two hens). Other species limitations are no more than three wood ducks, three scaup, two canvasbacks, two redheads, one mottled duck, one black duck and two pintails.

That's pretty generous compared to bag limits we've seen in the past: Last year, we were limited to one pintail. Possession limits are three times the daily bag limit.

License requirements are a basic hunting license ($15), La. duck ($5.50), Harvest Information Program certification (free) and the federal duck stamp. The federal stamp goes for $25 at the post office and duckstamp.com. It can also be obtained from LDWF license vendors, on-line licensing and by phone at 877- 447-1318, but it will cost $27.22. Anyone planning to pick one up at the Post Office better get it early: I waited a little too late last fall and went to three before finding a stamp.

COMMON WATERFOWL VIOLATIONS

As one might expect, wildlife agents in Louisiana do a lot of waterfowl enforcement work. I suspect the vast majority would agree the top violations are shooting hours, exceeding the daily limit, baiting and failure to tag.

SHOOTING HOURS AND LIMITS

Legal shooting hours for migratory game birds end each day at sunset. That is a half hour earlier than for resident game, deer for example. The primary reason for the sunset cease fire is identification. It is difficult to distinguish between ducks in the fading post-sunset light. Another reason is ducks don't begin flying to roost until well after sunset. But in a good roost, they really pile in and are very vulnerable to illegal gunning.

Wood ducks, given their tendency to roost in shallow wooded areas, are frequently shot illegally after sunset. With a daily limit of three in recent years, and

two for many years prior, poachers apprehended for late shooting are frequently also exceeding the daily limit. Another downside to this violation is that due to full darkness by the time the shooting is over, many of the illegally killed and crippled ducks are never recovered.

BAITING

Baiting for waterfowl is not nearly as prevalent as it once was. This is due in large part to better training and equipment for wildlife agents. During training, agent cadets receive extensive instruction in waterfowl ID, bait detection and investigative techniques needed for effective prosecution. Field agents are well-equipped with the boats and ATVs needed to access hunting areas.

We have talked about bait regulations for doves, and how crops grown in the field may be mowed or manipulated for those birds. But crop manipulation is not permitted for waterfowl hunting. Ducks may be hunted on harvested crop fields or over crops that have been grown in the field and left standing and undisturbed. But mowing, rolling or scattering of grain or other feed is not permitted for ducks.

POSSESSION LIMITS AND TAGGING

Many hunters seem to be a bit confused about possession limits and tagging. Maybe it's because we sometimes refer to a "possession tag" when discussing tagging. So let's try to explain it and keep it simple: The possession limit is the maximum number of ducks anyone may possess anywhere at any time. This includes homes, as well as camps, hotels or other temporary abodes.

Since the daily bag limit is six and the possession limit is three daily bag limits, 18 is the maximum number of ducks anyone may have, anywhere. Let's set that aside and move to tagging.

Before giving, putting or leaving any migratory game birds at any place or with another person, the birds must be tagged by the hunter with his name, address, the date the birds were killed, the number of birds and the species. And he must sign the tag, which is not any type of official form. It may be any piece of paper, card stock or container on which the required information is legibly written.

Here is a simple example: A hunter is at the camp. He hunts today and returns to camp with his ducks. He stays overnight and goes out to hunt again the next morning, leaving the ducks in a cooler at the camp. Before leaving, he takes a piece of card stock, writes the information on it, signs it and ties it to the ducks with string. That hunter is in compliance with tagging requirements. It's as simple as that.

Take the time to read the section on migratory birds in your free 2018-19 hunting regulations booklet, or at wlf.louisiana.gov.

Have a safe and successful duck season. ▪

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

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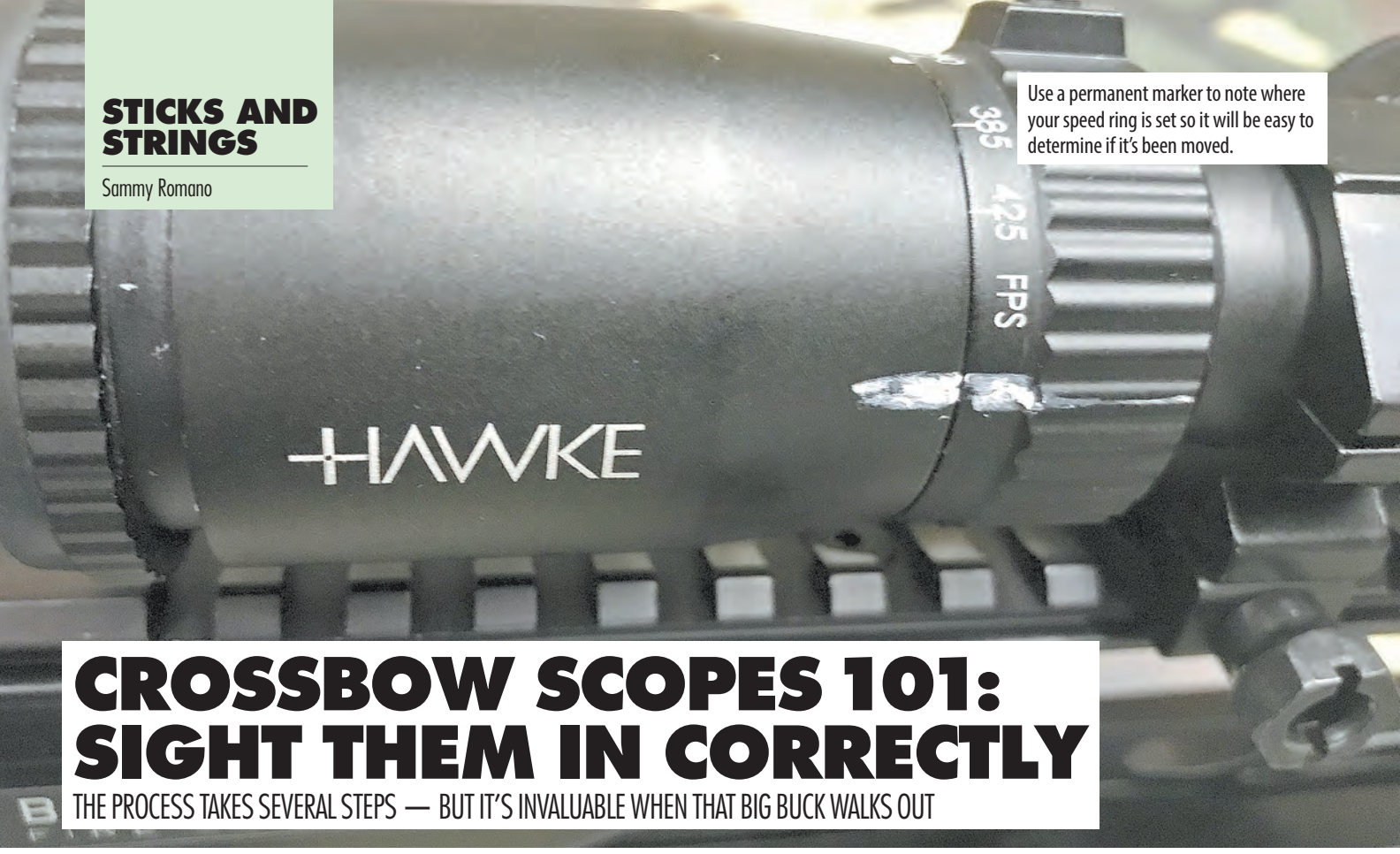
Sammy Romano



Use a permanent marker to note where your speed ring is set so it will be easy to determine if it's been moved.

CROSSBOW SCOPES 101: SIGHT THEM IN CORRECTLY

THE PROCESS TAKES SEVERAL STEPS — BUT IT'S INVALUABLE WHEN THAT BIG BUCK WALKS OUT

Due to more liberal regulations and an aging population with more and more physical limitations, crossbow use has increased dramatically almost nationwide.

The heightened demand has led to many technological advances in both crossbow design and accessories. And the accessory that has seen the most improvement is the scope.

Better optics and newer features such as variable power, illuminated reticles and ocular lens adjustments combine to make these scopes much clearer and more accurate than ever.

A HUGE LEAP IN TECHNOLOGY

For many years, crossbow scopes were fixed power with multiple crosshairs. This enabled the shooter to have multiple aiming points without resorting to "Kentucky windage" — holding over the target at longer distances. The problem was that each manufacturer only made one scope for many different crossbow models with varying speeds. This led to vast differences in the corresponding distances at which each crosshair was zeroed, depending on which model crossbow it was mounted on. Shooters had to learn distances through trial-and-error by shooting a lot of arrows at varying distances, often carrying a "cheat sheet" to keep track of them.

Higher-end, modern crossbow scopes, such as the Hawke Optics XB-1 that I use, allow the shooter to calibrate the crosshairs to exact 10-yard increments, making life much simpler. This is achieved by turning the variable-power ring to adjust the appearance of the gaps in the crosshairs.

Unlike a variable-power rifle scope, where a hunter uses a higher power to examine his target better or shoot longer distances and a lower power for closer shots; once a crossbow is sighted in, the shooter never moves the variable power ring again. This is probably the most-misunderstood feature, and the one I get more questions about than any other crossbow topic. This week alone, I've had eight to 10 phone calls asking for help about this exact issue.

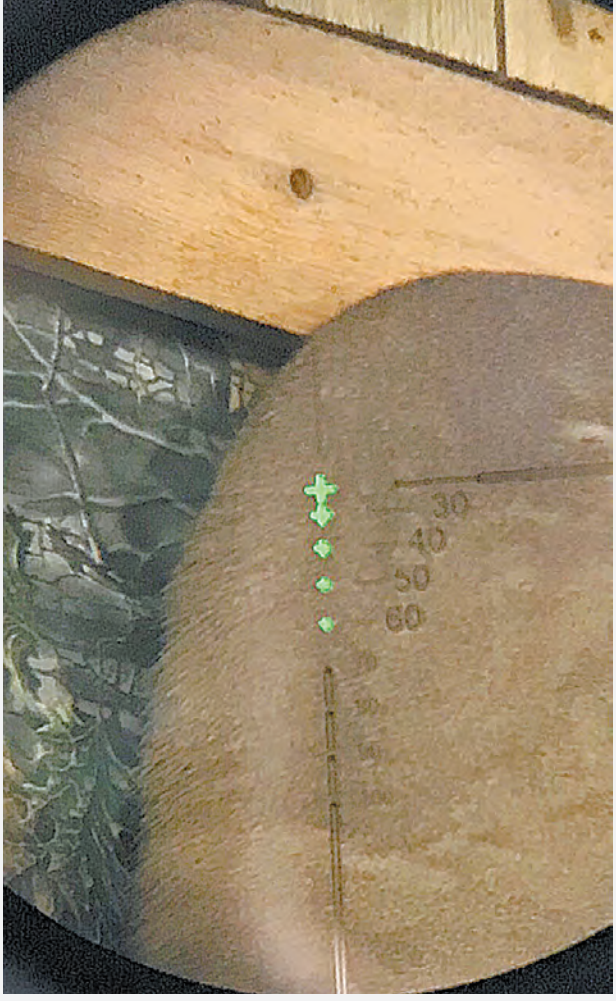
ZEROING IN, STEP BY STEP

First, make sure that the scope is properly mounted, level and that all screws have been tightened on both the base and rings. Then, adjust the ocular focus ring at the back of the eyepiece until the crosshairs become clear and focused. Next, adjust the variable-power ring (aka speed ring) to the published speed for your crossbow. There is no need to chronograph your crossbow; you can calibrate the scope better by shooting at two distances. Next, zero in your top (20-yard) crosshair at a measured 20 yards using the scope's windage and elevation turret adjustments.

It is important to remember that these adjustments are being made at only 20 yards, because most scopes are ¼- or ½-minute of angle, meaning at 20 yards it will take five clicks to move your arrow's point of impact ¼- or ½-inch. In other words, you will be moving them a good bit more than when you zero a rifle at 100 yards.

Once you have the top crosshair zeroed at 20 yards, replace the covers on the adjustment turrets, since you will not have to move them again.

Now that your top crosshair is zeroed at 20 yards, move back to 30 yards. Shoot at the bullseye using the second crosshair from the top. Your arrow should impact the target in line with the bullseye left to right. If it hits the bullseye, you are done. If it impacts high, slightly turn the speed ring higher (counterclockwise) to lower the point of impact. If it impacts the target low, slightly turn the speed ring lower (clockwise) to raise the point of



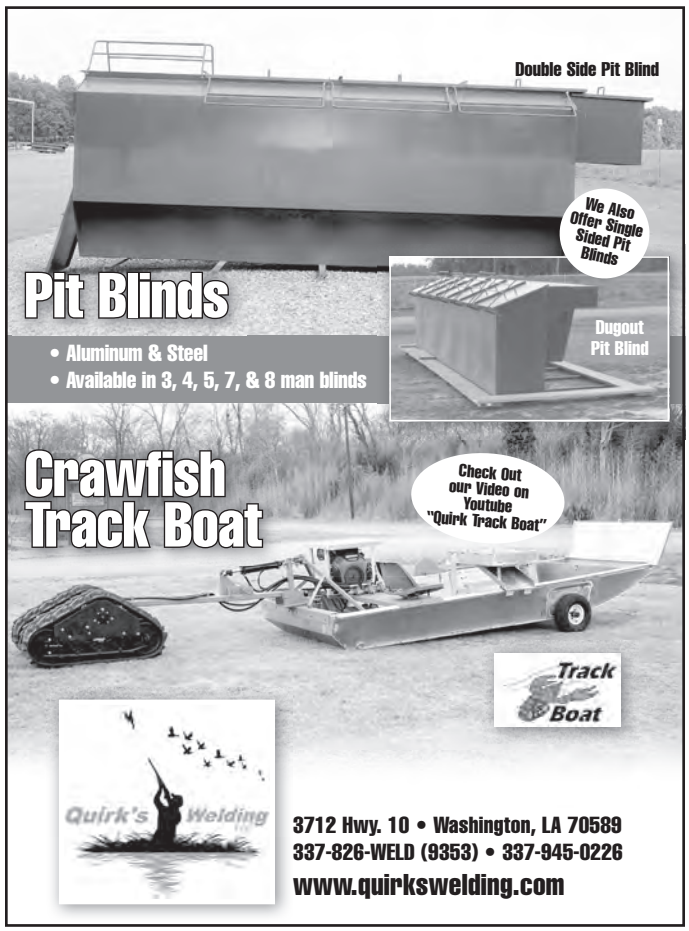
ONE AT A TIME:
When sighting in a crossbow scope, start with the top crosshair and work your way down, shooting at a greater distance each time to keep your point of impact consistent at each range.

impact. Continue adjusting until the second crosshair is zeroed at 30 yards. When that's done, you should be sighted in at all distances. Check another distance — the third crosshair at 40 yards — and if this checks out, you are done.

I recommend marking across the speed ring and scope tube using a paint marker so you can see if someone moves this adjustment. Do not move the speed ring again or it will throw your scope out of calibration. Once you have your scope calibrated and are using a rangefinder to range a target, there is no reason to miss.

A little time spent on the range calibrating your scope will pay dividends when the moment of truth arrives this season. These scopes are an excellent addition to any crossbow that does not have a scope with this calibration feature. Try one out this year to improve your results in the field. ▪

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.*



Bill Garbo

The author's nephews with a really nice Southwest Mississippi buck.

NEW MISSISSIPPI DEER RULES AND REGS IN PLACE

PROPOSED CHANGES INCLUDE BANNING IMPORTATION OF CERVID CARCASSES FROM ANY STATE

It's finally November, and we all know what that means: For my fellow members of the deer hunting community, the last nine months have slowly and steadily built up to right now. Untold amounts of toil, sweat and treasure have been expended to get to deer season.

It is a dizzying realization when you actually think about how many tractors, ATVs, pickups, trailers, farm implements, pounds of food plot seed and fertilizer, sacks of supplemental feed, sticks of treated lumber, sheets of decking and plywood, gallons of diesel and gasoline and man-hours of labor have been put into the preparation.

As we all know, whitetail deer season is a really big deal.

REGULATION CHANGES

To kick things off, let's first go over some important proposed changes that the MDWFP announced in late September to deer hunting rules and regulations. The proposed changes should be enacted and become official by the time this installment of Happy Trails hits the newsstand.

But, don't just assume anything. *To be absolutely certain, check the final regulations before you head to the woods.*

Regarding deer season:

- Importation of cervid carcasses from ANY state, regardless of CWD status, is now prohibited.
- It is now lawful to hunt less than 100 yards from feed or a feeder.
- Beginning, July 1, 2019, it is unlawful to use natural scents or lures that contain natural cervid biofluids, or other biological material.

The first bullet point of course is relevant to any hunter who hunts successfully outside the state of Mississippi and wants to bring meat, antlers, the cape, etc., back home. A cervid is a hoofed mammal of the deer family cervidae, which includes whitetail deer, mule deer, elk, moose, caribou, axis and sika, among others. Check the regulations closely, as the new requirements are very stringent.

The second bullet point means that it will now be lawful starting with the 2018-19 deer season to hunt less than 100 yards from, and within sight of, feed or a feeder.

I was never really a fan of feeders and feed, but years ago when it became lawful to feed under strict guidelines, I jumped on the bandwagon and employed them mainly during deer season for use with game cameras. Even though the regulations required that a feeder had to be located at least 100 yards away from a hunter and screened from view, I always felt like many hunters hunted within sight of their feeders and used them as bait in spite of the regula-

The author setting up a trail camera for pre-rut buck surveillance.

tions. So now we're at least catching up with reality.

The third bullet point is quite interesting since it will outlaw the use of cover scents, scent bombss and lures that contain natural cervid fluids. But the good thing is that this new regulation will not go into effect until next summer, after July 1.

This will give all of us time to go through our hunting closets and locate anything that will become unlawful, and to use it all up this current season — which is what I plan to do.

The key phrase is natural cervid fluids, so I will have to look closely at my stock of doe-in-heat scent, rutting buck urine, deer scent gel, aerosol estrus doe scent bombs and anything else similar that I might have on hand.

BUCK MOVEMENT STUDY

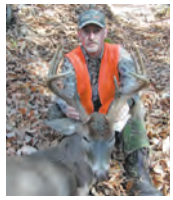
As we transition during November into the pre-rut period, get your trail cameras out if they are not already in place. If you have at least a few years in the whitetail woods under your belt, you have probably noticed that across the breadth of a deer season you will see homebody bucks that pretty much live on your property all year, bucks that suddenly appear and stay through the rut, bucks that you have been watching that suddenly disappear and lastly, bucks that appear maybe just once and stay for a day or two and then vanish. Help in understanding this phenomenon is on the way.

The Mississippi State University Deer Lab is already two years into a three-year study of year-round buck movement patterns that when should give great insight into their travels.

According to professor Steve Demarais, early returns are pointing to the fact that 60 percent of bucks tend to have a sedentary personality, with the remaining 40 percent being mobile and ranging around more.

The Big Black corridor in Madison and Yazoo counties is the setting for the study, which began in 2016 with the capture of 55 mature bucks that were fitted with GPS tracking collars and ear tags.

To enhance the results, a number of hunting clubs and landowners in and adjacent to the collared buck release area have agreed to collect detailed information regarding when and where they hunt throughout each hunting season of the study period, so that the effect of hunter pressure can be also analyzed. I absolutely cannot wait to see the results. ▪



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.*

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.*

LITTLE BOATS PERFECT FOR BIG WATER

CANEY, THE BEND, D'ARBONNE ALL GREAT FALL SPOTS

Louisiana has several great freshwater fishing lakes that offer a variety of species like bass, bream and catfish. Also, don't forget the excellent crappie fishing (white perch in North Louisiana, sac-a-lait in the South).

While many are associated with high-powered bass boats screaming across the water, they also offer great kayak fishing opportunities. Many double-digit bass have been taken in these lakes, some within sight of the launches. These lakes have been stocked one or more times with a variety of gamefish and bait species to enhance the populations and fishing opportunities. From limits of schoolies to the ever-present chance for a lunker, take your pick and give it a try.

Such iconic spots like Toledo Bend, Caney Creek, Lake D'Arbonne and many others are typically underutilized by kayak anglers, but are quickly catching on.

Other less popular, but still-productive lakes, include Chicot, Poverty Point and Valentine, and are all good kayak-fishing choices. Most of these lakes are full of draws and drains that carve out small pockets and fingers with many varied coves.

LOAD UP NEAR THE LAUNCH

Some have docks an piers, providing additional structure other than the natural shorelines and flooded timber. All have places that offer protection from big water areas, especially during windy cold fronts.

Limited by their human-powered range, many kayak anglers stay away from these big water areas believing they can't adequately cover enough ground or get to where the fishing is good.

However, as many experienced 'yak anglers have learned, fish do not know where the boat launch is. Therefore, when the bass boats crank up their couple-hundred horsepower engines to scream toward parts unknown, just smile and wave goodbye. Start fishing immediately after hopping in the kayak, and you literally may never get out of sight of the launch.

So far this year, fall has been nonexistent — who knows when winter will arrive? The fish have remained in extended summer patterns across the state, but after a couple of cold fronts they will begin moving out of the main lake areas and staging near creeks, points and coves.

For fall and winter fishing, the patterns on these lakes change. The first thing to look for are signs of schooling bass. Bass start herding baitfish into isolated schools where they can maul the forage. This is oftentimes given away by surface action as the bait tries anything to get away from the feeding bass.

If you locate such a spot, paddle upwind and let the kayak drift slowly toward the activity. Make your casts as far as possible. You want to be part

No giants, but schooling bass action can be incredible in the fall. This mild November day produced plenty of keepers with spinnerbaits and Rat-L-Traps near the mouth of a creek.

CONTINUES >

of the action, but not in the middle of it. Watch for jumping bait to get a handle on what size lures to throw. Natural shad colors in the appropriate size best match what they are feeding on. If the frenzy is visible on the surface, throw topwater lures or shallow crankbaits.

When the visible action slows, it doesn't necessarily mean that the feeding is over. Throw a spinnerbait, Rat-L-Trap or deep-diving crankbait to see if the bite is still on at deeper depths. After picking off a few fish, the bite may stop. However, don't abandon that particular area unless you see nearby action. Wait things out for a little while, as bass will usually start herding the bait again, and the scene will repeat itself.

On milder days, the bass may move shallower up onto flats, where plastic worms and even topwater plugs will be productive. However, after a cold stretch, look for deeper water and fish stacked up at particular depths where they are comfortable.

DEPTH FINDER IS KEY

While kayak fishing is considered a minimalist sport, many serious kayak anglers outfit their rigs with all the equipment of a Bassmaster champion. One in particular is a depth finder. This is a real asset when fishing larger lakes. Areas that look shallow can, in fact, be the edge of a hill with deep water mere feet from the bank. Also, locating fish and bait hiding down in the timber or under the vegetation,can spell the difference between success or a skunk. Watching the screen as you move along can show bait as well as a depth range where the fish holding.

Fishing these larger lakes can be intimidating for kayak anglers. A great way to save wasted energy and increase your odds is to study Google Earth before your trip. You can get a bird's eye view to help plan your route and target a preferred area. It still may take several trips for kayak anglers to develop productive patterns and preferred areas, but this advanced scouting increases your odds of success. No matter which direction you choose to go, fish your way there. There is no sense in passing up fish that can be found by simply casting as you move.

Some of these lakes have areas of flooded timber. Some is visible, but oftentimes it is not. This is not a problem for those that are paddling, but those with pedal-powered kayaks should be aware of unseen obstructions. Deliberate, slow travel is advised to avoid damaging your drive system. Although the water is generally clear, these stumps seem to appear from nowhere — and there is no give when you hit one. Slowly moving along allows you to safely pedal your 'yak without risking damage. If you want to work concentrated areas of standing timber, it is best to simply use your paddle as you fish your way through.

Some of these lakes are within state parks, and offer on-sight camping and cabin opportunities where you can stay overnight within close proximity to the water. Others have marinas and commercial campgrounds nearby that offer similar options. Whether a day trip or a long weekend stay, don't shy away from these lakes — you might just miss out on some of the states' best freshwater kayak fishing. ▪

Schooling bass are typically feeding on shad or other small baitfish. Lipless crankbaits like this Rat-L-Trap can be used at all depths by varying the fall and retrieve speed to get to where the action is.

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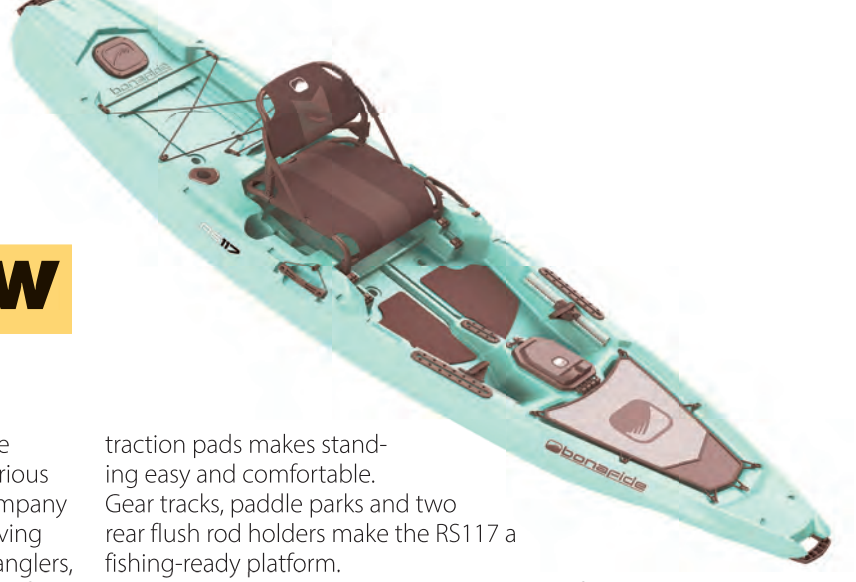
NEW GEAR REVIEW

BONAFIDE'S RS117



With all the buzz around new pedal drive kayaks, Bonafide launched a new paddle kayak that is feature-packed for serious kayak anglers at an entry level price. Bonafide is a sister company of the wildly popular kayak accessory brand, YakAttack. Having made their mark amongst a dedicated following of kayak anglers, Bonafide was a natural progression of YakAttack's reputation for innovation and high-quality products. The RS117 is the newest addition to their initial model line.

Bonafide's design team incorporated many high-end kayak features into this low-cost, stable fishing machine. When choosing a paddle kayak, ease of paddling and tracking are a major deciding factor. The RS117 checks off both of those marks. Besides adding unquestionable stability, the RS117's hybrid Cat Hull design also provides reasonable speed and arrow-straight tracking. This is far from a cheap, big-box plastic boat. It is packed with angler-friendly features found on many high-end 'yaks. Oversized, integrated handles make carrying and loading a breeze. Front and rear gear wells provide plenty of on-deck storage and a MiniTub hatch provides secure, dry storage for cell phone, keys, wallets and other valuable items. The ample flat deck with non-skid traction pads makes standing easy and comfortable. Gear tracks, paddle parks and two rear flush rod holders make the RS117 a fishing-ready platform.

The rear tankwell accommodates a variety of ice chests, crates or buckets, and has plenty of flat surfaces for easy customization options. A rear plate makes accessing the interior hull easy for securely adding accessories. Mighty Mount tracks on either side of the cockpit and a large, adjustable seat provides for additional storage underneath and all-day comfort. And it has dual skid plates at the rear to protect the hull for those launch sites where dragging is necessary. It comes ready to add your favorite electronics, including a transducer scupper with inserts.

The RS117 is a perfect kayak for anglers looking for comfort, performance and stability — without sacrificing quality or emptying your wallet. Well thought out and laid out, the RS117 is a premium kayak at an entry level price.

MSRP: $999.99

*Pre-production specs-may vary slightly for final production this fall.

Length: 11'7"
Width: 33.5"
Weight: 75 pounds
Capacity: 425 pounds
Deck Height: 11.5"
Colors: Endless Summer Aqua, Hondo Orange, True Grit Sand, Top Gun Gray and Cool Hand Blue

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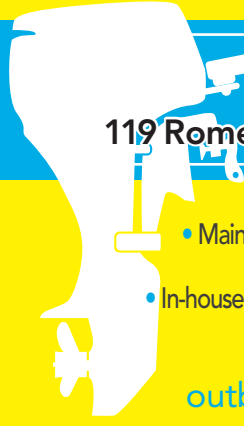

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*Due the lag time from information to print, weather conditions can change the bite so check in regularly with **LouisianaSportsman.com** for the latest updates.

NOVEMBER'S BEST BETS

FRESHWATER

WHERE: Toledo Bend
WHAT: Crappie (aka sac-a-lait/white perch)
HOW: While widely known for its great bass fishing, crappie may be Toledo's not-so-secret secret. The fall and winter fishing for crappie can be off the charts. Crappie will be off of the brush piles and holding along the deeper edges of creeks and channels. A depth finder is invaluable for finding concentrations of fish. Depending on the water temps, the fish will be scattered during warm spells or deeper and bunched up as the temperature drops. Finding fish on the depth finder makes them easy to target and put lures right up to their face. Small tube jigs, curly tails and live minnows all do the trick. Fish slowly and watch your line for the slightest twitch.
LAUNCH: There are numerous launches and facilities all along the Louisiana side of Toledo Bend. From dirt roads to full-service marinas, the launch options are nearly endless. Several locations offer cabins and camping areas. Louisiana has north and south state parks on Toledo bend that offer cabins, camping and boat launches.
INSIDER TIP: If you're not familiar with Toledo Bend, start your trip at one of the full service marinas like Jolly Roger, where you can get local knowledge and information in order to cut down on wasted time and energy.
www.crt.state.la.us/louisiana-state-parks
Jolly Roger Marina- Facebook

SALTWATER

WHERE: Delacroix Island
WHAT: Speckled trout, redfish, bass
HOW: The area offers a blend of shallow marsh for fast action on warmer days, and some deeper bayous and pipelines where the fish seek refuge if it gets cold. The thick grass of summer has subsided, and the trout have moved into the marsh for their winter patterns. Topwater baits are easier to work with the thinner grass and are productive on warmer days. Live bait may be available at the local marinas, but usually isn't necessary. Plastics tight-lined or popped under a cork generally do the trick. If it's cold, look for the deep canals and deadend pipelines not far from the launches. Slowly work jigheads/plastics on the ledges. Position the kayak where you can work the bait down, or up onto, a ledge — depending on where they are holding. Any cast is likely to yield a trout, red or bass, all in the same spot and all on the same lure.
LAUNCH: Two commercial launches offer concrete ramps and secure parking. Both have small stores and sell live and dead bait when available. Good fishing can be found within sight of the launches, so fish your way out and you may not have to paddle very far.
Serigne's Marina: 5933 Delacroix Highway, St. Bernard, La. (504)265-0007, $5 launch fee.
Sweetwater Marina: 6205 Delacroix Highway, St. Bernard, La. (504)342-2368, $10 launch fee per kayak.
INSIDER TIP: Duck season opens November 10 and runs into December and January. Keep a watchful eye out for duck boats and give the hunters a wide berth if you come across them set up in a pond. Camps, rooms and cabins are available throughout the area. Ask the marina owners for recommendations.

During a fall/winter warm spell, don't overlook throwing a topwater bait. This 4-pounder was up on a flat near a small island.

SEAFOOD BIBLE

Jerald & Glenda Horst

COOKING WITH 'CAJUN SPICE'

THIBODAUX CHEF'S SEASONING LINE A PERFECT COMPLIMENT FOR WIDE VARIETY OF DISHES

Buddy Callahan looks like anything but a Cajun with curly blond hair, fair complexion, a stocky build and a grizzled Van Dyke beard.

But the Thibodaux resident is Cajun through and through — and definitely cooks Cajun.

So Cajun, in fact, that he has launched his own food company, Buddy's Cajun Spice, centered around his personal Cajun seasoning of the same name.

Buddy's Cajun Spice has a unique taste, with a distinct note of sweetness derived from cane sugar. Although he quickly gives his mother Beverly Boquet Callahan credit for inspiring his cooking interest, he also admits to cooking birds and fish over campfires.

"Mother cooked three meals a day, Cajun style: white beans, pork roast, carrots and ground meat.

"We always had good food. I grew up in modest circumstances, but didn't feel poor. We didn't have a lot of money, but we lived a rich life. Our family was tight-knit."

He started in the cooking business after entering jambalaya cooking contests at Thibodaux Regional Medical Center, where he worked as a radiation therapist. He created what became Buddy's Cajun Spice to season the jambalaya, and he started selling it out of his home in Ziploc bags.

"I couldn't keep up with demand. Friends suggested that I get it made professionally." In 2010, Rouse's Markets accepted it and sales were good so they kept it on the shelf.

" ... Whatever excites me is what I cook. Spanish, Mexican, Cuban, and of course Cajun are my deep interests. I cook wild game, especially deer burritos. I do this for hunters with their kill (985-713-1078)."

Callahan's full line of products is available at Rouses, Dorignac's Food Center, L & N Food Store in Thibodaux, French Quarter specialty shops and online at Buddyscajunspice.com.

With the tail segment left attached, Buddy's Bronzed Shrimp make an excellent finger food. **INSET:** Buddy Callahan's personality is as big and bold as his cooking.

INGREDIENTS:

2 lb. large shrimp tails
2 tbsp. olive oil
2 tbsp. butter
1 lemon, quartered
Buddy's Cajun Spice to taste

BRONZED SHRIMP

Buddy started bronzing as a cooking technique preparing fajita meat. He would flash fry it, with what else — Buddy's Cajun Spice.

"I said, 'Let me try a thin-cut ribeye.' It was the best ribeye I ever ate," he recalled proudly. "I tried fish strips, thin-cut pork chops and then finally, shrimp. Everybody loved the shrimp. I did a demo bronzing shrimp at Rouses and I sold fifteen 12-can cases of the spice in four hours."

The dish is a good entrée and a great appetizer. It's a quick cook, too.

"This is the fastest dish you will ever want to cook," he boasted. "The only thing quicker would be to eat it raw."

PREPARATION: Serves 4-6.

Peel and deeply de-vein the shrimp, leaving the last segment of the tail attached. Season the shrimp generously with Buddy's Cajun Spice. Heat the olive oil and butter in a frying pan until very hot. Sear the shrimp in the oil and butter while almost constantly turning and tossing them. Do not over-cook. Squeeze the juice of the lemon over the shrimp while stirring to mix. After plating, sprinkle the shrimp with additional Buddy's Cajun Spice to taste.

INGREDIENTS:

8 cups reduced salt chicken stock
1 package Buddy's Seasoned Gumbo Mix
1 14-oz. can cut okra
1 10-oz. can Rotel diced tomatoes & green chiles
1/2 lb. crabmeat
2 lb. peeled medium shrimp
Chopped green onions to taste
Chopped parsley for garnish
Buddy's Cajun Spice for garnish

DOWN DA BAYOU GUMBO

BUDDY'S MIX FEATURES PEPPERED VINEGAR FOR A UNIQUE TASTE

HOW TO MAKE IT! >

Down Da Bayou Gumbo has a unique taste that comes from peppered vinegar, while retaining its credentials as a real Cajun gumbo.

Although this dish uses a quick gumbo mix, it is Callahan's very own original recipe. He said that his grandmother's gumbo was the inspiration for it. "Although she had no written recipe, the only difference between hers and mine is that this one is gluten-free and doesn't have an oil-based roux," he said.

The dish has a subtle, but very unique taste that comes from peppered vinegar. Buddy keeps a jar of the homemade potion on his dining room table, where he uses it on everything from greens to white beans.

"Growing up, we used it like ketchup," he grinned. "I wanted my gumbo to be unique so I included it in the formulation of the mix. I wanted it to compliment the other ingredients, but not overwhelm them."

PREPARATION: Serves 10.

Bring chicken stock to a boil and remove from heat. Whisk in one package of Buddy's Seasoned Gumbo Mix. Return to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Add the canned okra and tomatoes. Return to a boil and simmer for 15 minutes. Add the crabmeat and the shrimp and simmer for 20 minutes. Serve over rice. Sprinkle green onions and parsley over each bowl of gumbo. Garnish the rim of each bowl with Buddy's Cajun Spice.

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

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Bassmaster Elite Series pro Keith Combs said a topwater frog is a great all-around lure for shallow wintertime bass.

Andy Crawford

TOP 3 WINTERTIME BASS BAITS

Bassmaster Elite Series pro Keith Combs has to put fish in the boat year round, but he experiences what every other angler does during the summer: Tough fishing, when five bites a day are what you hope for.

But that all changes as cool fronts push through the South, lowering water temperatures and putting fish back into a feeding mood.

"They're going to be easier to catch, as a whole," Combs said. "The late summer gets tough because they're waiting on a weather change, cool temperatures.

"That's when the shallows come to life."

This Texas angler said shad move into shallow water again, and predatory bass follow. However, there's also another baitfish we anglers often forget.

"Don't forget about the ones feeding on bluegill," Combs said. "Those are going to be hammers."

To make the most of his cooler-weather fishing, Combs depends on these three lures:

NOTHING LIKE TOPWATER FROG EXPLOSIONS

By Andy Crawford

1. STRIKE KING HOLLOW BODY FROG

When bass head for the shallows, they often bury in the salad that grew up during the heat of the summer.

Sure, you could flip and catch some of those fish — but why not have fun with topwater explosions? And the Strike King KVD Sexy Frogs offer everything you could hope for.

"I can throw it anywhere — around wood, vegetation," Combs said.

It's also a lure that can reach a lot farther than a punching bait.

"You want something you can make long casts with," he explained.

He simply skips the frog along until he reaches holes and thin spots in the vegetation, where he slows down a bit to allow any nearby bass time to get aggravated enough to blast the apparent hopper.

Another bonus to the lure is that he can cover a lot of water.

His rod of choice is a 7-foot, 5-inch Shimano Zodias heavy-action rod matched with a Curado K 7.3:1 reel.

That high-speed reel ratio is important.

"When you hook them shallow, a lot of times they come at you (after the hookset)," Combs said. "I'm able to catch up with them with that reel."

2. STRIKE KING KVD HEAVY COVER SWIM JIG

This is another lure that allows him to cover water and catch numbers of actively feeding bass.

"I want a bait I can cover ground with," Combs said.

But it's extremely versatile, working in open water and around cover.

"I can fish it around weeds and wood, and I'm not going to get hung up," Combs said. "I try to contact weeds or wood occasionally."

His preference is for the 3/8-ounce version teamed with a Strike King Swimming Caffeine Shad.

He fishes his swim jigs on a 7-foot, 2-inch Shimano Zodias medium-heavy rod with a fast tip paired with a Curado K reel.

3. STRIKE KING SWIMMING CAFFEINE SHAD

This soft-plastic is a versatile lure that really doesn't require a lot of attention to technique.

"It's just a steady retrieve," Combs said.

And it's perfect for when a fish misses a topwater skipped across vegetation.

"Some days, it's a great follow-up to your frog," he said.

He rigs it with a 3/16-ounce, 4/0 Owner weighted hook, and just casts and retrieves. Well, that's what he does most of the time.

"I might get it up and wake it across the top of the water," Combs explained. "That works really well on a muggy, cloudy morning. The fish will get way up in the water column, and look for that wake."

His tackle setup is the same as with the swim jig. ▪

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Glenn Young caught this redfish and a host of others on a Z-Man ChatterBait while fishing Venice last month.

REDFISH SUCCESS WITH A CHATTERBAIT

By Todd Masson

Most Louisiana anglers have seen, either in person or in videos, redfish in water that's so clear, it looks like it should have been delivered by the Kentwood man.

But aside from that, even water that most Louisiana anglers would call clean has some degree of stain or color to it. Sight range in such water is, at best, maybe 3 feet.

That means redfish have to use their lateral lines in addition to their eyes to feed, so lures that give off some type of vibration tend to produce more than those that are whisper-quiet moving through the water.

The Z-Man ChatterBait certainly does that. The lure has skyrocketed in popularity in local waters because it produces when many other baits don't.

Certainly a portion of the productivity has to do with the flash the lure gives off as it's moving through the water, but it's no more than a gold spoon or traditional safety-pin spinnerbait with a gold Colorado blade.

What sets the bait apart, however, is its vibration. Tie one to the end of your line, and within three cranks of the handle, you'll swear you're retrieving a Rat-L-Trap.

Glenn Young, national sales director for Z-Man, put the lure to good use last month while fishing in Venice for three days. It was just about the only thing he threw, and it put plenty of keeper reds in the boat.

He said, as a general rule, anglers who don't have success with ChatterBaits are probably fishing them too quickly.

"If I'm fishing a clean bank, I'll really slow it down to give those fish time to zero in on it," Young said. "Sometimes you can't do that because there's grass around, but even then, you want to slow it down in the clean areas between the grass patches."

The hits Young got weren't dainty. He didn't have to think about setting the hook, as fish practically ripped the rod from his hands.

ChatterBaits come in a host of sizes and styles, but some are designed for bass fishing.

If you intend to target redfish with them, be sure to pick up the DieZel ChatterBait, which is made from hardier components for inshore fishing.

The bait retails for $6.99. ■

DECOY SPREAD DETAILS

By Patrick Bonin

INCREASING REALISM ULTIMATELY LEADS TO MORE BIRDS ON YOUR STRAP

Larry Reynolds criss-crosses the Louisiana coastline multiple times each fall — cruising at 100 knots with a bird's-eye view from just 125 feet up, estimating the number of ducks that have arrived in the state's ag fields and coastal marshes.

The waterfowl study leader for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries since 2008, Reynolds spends several days each fall in the seat of an airplane staring out at a variety of habitat during those annual surveys.

As you might expect, in even the slowest of years, he sees thousands and thousands and thousands of birds — and observes how they move about and interact on the landscape.

In the course of estimating the number of birds calling the Bayou State home each winter, the biologist also comes across hunters' efforts at producing realistic decoy spreads from his seat in the plane — and well, let's just say some are better than others.

KEEPIN' IT REAL

"When I can look at a decoy spread and go, 'That doesn't look like ducks,' I gotta believe a duck does the same thing," Reynolds said. "Hunters have to be aware of what ducks look like on the water. They don't universally mix around, and they don't sit in large regular groups. When I see regularity, I know it's not ducks. Whenever there is a discernible pattern, I know it's not ducks.

"Ducks don't sit in a 'J,' they don't sit in an 'H' and they don't sit in two teardrops opposed to each other with a big lump on the levee between them."

On his 150-acre lease in the marsh in Cameron Parish, he keeps things pretty simple for the opening of the season.

"I start out in my biggest pond with a pretty good spread of 70 decoys," Reynolds said. "Typically, I start out with three dozen teal decoys, six hen mallard decoys to represent mottled duck pairs, then I'll use a dozen or so pintail decoys out in the more open parts of the ponds.

"I'll throw in another two dozen or so gadwall decoys in small groups."

As the season progresses, Reynolds drastically downsizes his spread and seeks out smaller ponds on his lease as dabblers pair up and become less social.

"By the time the season ends, I'm hunting with typically a dozen decoys, and that will include a couple of hen mallard decoys, five teal decoys and couple of mallard decoys," he said. "So the adjustments that I make on my little patch of ground are primarily based on the behavioral differences of the ducks ….

"Build some irregularity into your spread to increase the realism. No matter what, you're going to be more successful if you increase the realism."

SPINNING DEKES

As for spinning-wing decoys, Reynolds says they definitely catch his eye when he flies the January aerial survey while hunters are out in the field.

"When those spinning-wing decoys are on, I can see them for miles," he said. "They really do look like ducks flapping their wings, so I can absolutely see why they attract ducks."

But Reynolds uses a spinning-wing decoy only during teal season. If you feature one in your spread during duck season, he suggests using it in moderation via remote control.

"If they're continuously spinning, you look at that and go, 'That's not realistic,'" he said. "They do it in a way that becomes predictable and overdone.

"My conclusion is that anyone that just uses a plain spinning-wing decoy for the entire season has definitely got to see a reduced response, and I think they'll probably see avoidance of their spread late in the season." ▪

Madisonville's Caleb Meyer recycles old lures like these by melting them down and pouring them into his own soft-plastic mold.

Todd Masson

ONE MAN'S TRASH ... IS ANOTHER MAN'S TREASURE

By Todd Masson

To some anglers, they're "gut piles." To others, they're "dead soldiers."

But to Madisonville teenager Caleb Meyer, they're tomorrow's fishing lures.

Every fisherman can look at the floor of his boat following a day's fishing, and see scattered soft-plastic lures that were unceremoniously ripped off the hook and discarded to be replaced by a fresher one, a different brand or a new color.

Most sweep those baits into a pile with their hands, scoop them up and place them atop the overflowing garbage cans at their local marina.

But not Meyer.

He collects them, stores them and eventually recycles them into brand-new baits.

With the help of his parents, the 13-year-old ordered a Golden Grub brand open mold in a design he liked, and ever since has been creating his own plastic worms from his and other anglers' discards.

"I just like making my own baits," he said. "It's fun catching fish on something you made yourself."

Meyer melts store-bought plastic when he wants specific colors, and he'll also sort used baits into like colors. Mixing random colors usually results in baits that are grayish-brown — not very appealing to anglers, but the fish still like them.

He uses the lures in neighborhood ponds as well as in the marshes around Cocodrie, where he fishes with his maternal grandfather.

A vast assortment of soft-plastic molds is available at do-itmolds.com.

Most retail for around $50. ▪

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Mississippi pro Brock Mosley said a short mono leader is all that's needed to provide a little stretch between braid and topwater lures like the Bill Lewis StutterStep.

Andy Crawford

ADD A TOPWATER 'SHOCK ABSORBER'

By Andy Crawford

MONO LEADER PROVIDES STRETCH

Topwater strikes make anglers' knees go weak, but the thrill of victory can quickly turn to crushing defeat when monster bass pull off.

And the current trend of using braid with topwaters contributes to those lost fish because of the lack of line stretch inherent in the line.

"The line doesn't stretch, and straight braid to your topwater bait, with those treble hooks, something's going to give," Bassmaster Elite Series pro Brock Mosley said.

Solving that problem is as simple as creating a shock absorber between the main braid and his lures.

"On my Bill Lewis StutterSteps, or any walking bait in general, I'll put a mono leader on my braid," Mosley said.

This Mississippi pro uses 50-pound braid to ensure secure hooksets on long casts, but that mono leader is vital to preventing him from pulling the lure out of fish's mouths.

"The mono leader allows the fish not to pull off," Mosley said.

The danger of losing fish is compounded because of topwater lures' treble hooks.

"With treble hooks and that much pressure, it's easy to lose fish," Mosley explained. "This mono leader cuts down on your losing fish."

And the leader doesn't have to be very long — about 12 inches. In fact, Mosley said a long leader can actually be detrimental to success.

"It could be longer — it could be 18 inches, if you wanted," Mosley said. "You just don't want it to be too long where it's catching the eyes on your rod when you're casting because that's going to weaken the knot (connecting the leader)."

He uses a uni-to-uni connection to secure the leader. And, while others use loop knots on walking baits, Mosley said he doesn't trust them.

"Every fisherman is different," he said. "A big thing is that you have to have confidence in your knots, and I don't have confidence in a loop knot."

It's important to remember, however, that mono takes a beating and weakens when fighting fish — especially big girls.

"Mono, you do have to re-tie after a couple of good fish," Mosley said. ▪

PUT A SKIRT ON - AND PUNCH THAT JIG

BULK UP YOUR BAIT FOR MORE BITES

By Todd Masson

Punch skirts are popular with many bass anglers because they turn normal creature baits into essentially jig presentations. Madisonville bass angler Jeff Bruhl put the technique to good use during a September bass-fishing trip to Venice, just before the river jumped up due to late-summer rains in the Midwest.

"It's just something else to catch their attention," Bruhl said. "It bulks up the bait, and makes it look more like a bream instead of a crawfish."

Although some weights are designed to hold skirts in place, Bruhl fished his punch skirt below a pegged 1-ounce tungsten weight.

Since he's trying to mimic bream this time of year, Bruhl likes punch skirts with a lot of watermelon and a bit of blue and orange. His favorite is one made by Delta Lures.

When he fishes Venice, he punches the rig through hyacinth rafts and matted hydrilla.

Tournament pro Randall Tharp of Port St. Joe, Florida, is also a big fan of punch skirts, but he fishes them around spottier vegetation. He feels the skirts hang up too frequently when punched through matted grass, which kills his efficiency.

The skirts aren't exactly cheap, ranging in price from $4 all the way up to about $12. ▪

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LDWF Secretary Jack Montoucet announced during October's Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission meeting that an agreement between the Department and the Grand Isle Independent Levee District for a proposed airstrip on Elmer's Island had been terminated.

PROPOSED ELMER'S ISLAND AIRSTRIP NIXED

From News Reports

Patrick Bonin

CONTROVERSIAL PLAN DROPPED AFTER PUBLIC OUTCRY

Amidst criticism from conservation groups and the general public, a proposed airstrip on Elmer's Island isn't getting off the ground.

At the October meeting of the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, Secretary Jack Montoucet announced that an intergovernmental agreement between the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to essentially lease land to the Grand Isle Independent Levee District for the airstrip had been terminated.

"I am surely not too proud to recognize and understand the criticism and concerns that have been raised, both in regards to the environmental concerns with the project, but also as it relates to the desires for the public to have involvement beyond the permitting process for this proposal," Montoucet told the commission.

He said the department actually shared many of the environmental concerns surrounding the old airstrip property, but had initially decided to allow Grand Isle Mayor David Camardelle the opportunity to at least begin the permitting process.

"… Mayor Camardelle indicated that he could propose a project that would have minimal impact on fish and wildlife resources and provide recreational access and economic development to the area, all at no cost to the state. He simply asked for an opportunity to try," Montoucet said. "Knowing the many state and federal permits that such a project would require before it could even begin to be implemented, and trusting that those permitting processes would both identify and address any potential impacts to wildlife resources or habitat, we decided to see what he could propose.

"I am confident that I speak for myself and the governor when I say that this administration never absolutely supported the construction of an airport on Elmer's Island, ignoring all consequences. Rather, we endorsed the mayor's effort to develop a preliminary plan — a proposal — to be properly evaluated and vetted …

"I assure you that I value open and transparent government and that it was not my intention to create an appearance of operating outside of the public eye. However, it is evident from the number of people here today and from the communications I've received that folks would like a greater opportunity for public discourse in this matter.

"For that reason, I'm glad that Mayor Camardelle was gracious enough and willing to agree to mutually cancel and terminate the current intergovernmental agreement.

"You have my word that if this proposal is ever considered in the future, it will be done through the commission and would initially be limited to a feasibility study to allow for appropriate and public evaluation." ▪

LDWF ENFORCEMENT ROUNDUP

TWO CITED FOR OVER THE LIMIT OF BASS ON BAYOU BLACK

ANGLERS NEAR GIBSON ALLEGEDLY CAUGHT WITH 53 FISH

Enforcement agents with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries cited two men for fishing violations in late September after they were allegedly found with 53 bass in Terrebonne Parish.

According to a press release, agents cited Ray Louviere Jr., 65, of Prairieville, and Robert Holland, 80, of Livingston for possessing over the limit of black bass.

Acting on a tip, agents set up surveillance at a boat launch near Gibson, and eventually made contact with Louviere and Holland. They found the men in possession of 53 bass, which put them 33 over the legal limit of 10 bass per fisherman per day, the release states.

Over the limit of black bass brings a $100 to $350 fine and up to 30 days in jail. The men may also face civil restitution totaling $443 for the replacement value of the illegally possessed fish, according to the release. ▪

FOUR CITED FOR ALLEGED SQUIRREL HUNTING VIOLATIONS

INCIDENT OCCURRED ON OPENING DAY IN WINN PARISH

Enforcement agents with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries cited four men for alleged squirrel hunting violations on opening day in Winn Parish.

According to a news release, on Oct. 6 agents cited Joshua Young, 24, and Ernest Nowlin, 64, both of Tullos, for possessing over the limit of squirrels. Agents also cited Michael Sullivan, 50, of Olla, and Richard Decker, 54, of Tullos, for hunting squirrels without a basic hunting license.

Acting on a tip that hunters were taking too many squirrels, agents set up surveillance at a nearby camp. When the men arrived back from their opening day squirrel hunt, agents made contact and allegedly found Young in possession of 16 squirrels and Nowlin in possession of 10 squirrels.

The legal daily bag limit is eight squirrels per licensed hunter for the fall and winter season. Agents also found Sullivan in possession of seven squirrels and Decker with one squirrel, but neither man had a hunting licenses, according to the release.

Possessing over the limit of squirrels brings a $250 to $500 fine and up to 90 days in jail. The men may also face civil restitution up to $365 for the replacement value of the illegally taken squirrels. Hunting squirrels without a basic hunting license carries up to a $50 fine and 15 days in jail. ▪

ROBELINE MAN CITED FOR DEER HUNTING VIOLATIONS IN NATCHITOCHES PARISH

SUSPECT ADMITTED TO SHOOTING AN 8-POINT, LDWF SAYS

A 20-year-old man was ticketed for multiple deer violations in mid-September for allegedly shooting an 8-point buck near Robeline in Natchitoches Parish.

According to a press release, enforcement agents cited Justin S. Matthews of Robeline for taking deer during a closed season, possession of an illegally taken deer, hunting without resident and big game licenses, fail to possess deer tags and failing to comply with deer tagging requirements.

Acting on a tip about the 8-point, agents contacted Matthews on Sept. 15, and he admitted to shooting the deer the evening before about 6:30 with a Marlin .30-30, the release states.

Agents seized the deer meat, antlers, rifle and scope, according to the release.

Taking a deer during a closed season brings a $900 to $950 fine and up to 120 days in jail. Possession of an illegally taken deer carries a $400 to $950 fine and up to 120 days in jail. Failing to possess deer tags and complying with deer tagging requirements each brings a $100 to $350 fine and up to 30 days in jail. Hunting without a basic hunting and big game license each carries up to a $50 fine and 15 days in jail, the release states.

Matthews may also face civil restitution totaling $2,033 for the replacement value of the illegally taken buck, according to the release. ▪

Z-MAN BAIT BINDERZ TACKLE BAGS

Hard-sided tackle boxes are so 80s. They are bulky and create a lot of wasted space. And if you're using mostly soft-plastic lures, it's inconvenient to store them in hard tackle boxes while keeping them in their factory bags.

The new doublewide Z-Man Bait BinderZ give anglers the perfect storage option. These soft-sided bags are durable, take up little room, and allow you to store your soft plastics in their factory bags. But, the bags also have bulk storage areas for fishing essentials like pliers, scissors, spools of line and jigheads.

The corrosion-resistant binder rings are perfectly sized and spaced to fit the factory-punched holes on Z-Man's soft plastic pouches, but the BinderZ have plenty of room to store plastics from other manufacturers as well.

Hook-and-loop closures and plastic snaps keep your tackle secure, provide easy access and won't rust or corrode like zippers. The doublewide BinderZ retails for $34.99.

More Info: www.zmanfishing.com

TINK'S BLACK LABEL

If one scent product is iconic in the deer-hunting industry, it's Tink's #69 Doe-in-Rut. So how do you make the best better?

The folks at Tink's, who have been branding and bottling their deer lure since 1972, have certainly tried. This fall, they've brought out a top-drawer version of the classic, TInk's Black Label, in limited quantities for hunters who want the best of the best.

Black Label is a doe-urine scent collected from does that are fed a special diet to keep them in optimum health, and it's in a concentrated formula collected from the peak of a doe's estrus cycle. Black Label comes in a 2-ounce bottle that's inscribed with the date the bottle was filled, so hunters know exactly how fresh it is.

Tink's Black Label has an MSRP of $24.99.

More Info: www.tinks.com

HYBRIDLIGHT'S MAMMOTH

Talk about a flashlight that's much, much more. That's HybridLight's Mammoth, a multi-light/charger that can take on just about any lighting task a sportsman can think of.

The Mammoth puts out a bright 400 lumens from an LED light, or 150 lumens as a flashlight, the difference being one click of a button. It recharges from a USB port, a built-in retractable wall plug or built-in solar panel. Battery life is 35 hours for the flashlight function, and 18 hours as an area light from a built-in, lithium-ion battery.

The Mammoth has a rotating, magnetic base and a 120-degree flexible head that allows it to be used as a desk lamp on a campground table or a perfect, angled light for working under the hood of a vehicle or ATV.

The Mammoth, which has a MSRP of $59.95, is 9 inches long and weighs about a half-pound.

More Info: www.hybridlight.com

New product submissions can be emailed to **Mark Boyd** at **markb@lasmag.com** or call 601-829-8080.

BAITCLOUD

You can only be at one fishing location at a time — so what if you could make that spot more productive by attracting baitfish and gamefish to your specific area?

Now you can with BaitCloud, a formulation of fish-attracting components that utilize all of a fish's senses, including smell, sound, sight and feel.

When submerged, the 1 ½-inch diameter balls react with a fizzing, bubbling action that releases concentrated attractants into the surrounding water and creates a zone of activity. All ingredients in each BaitCloud ball are 100 percent earth-friendly and bio-degradable, and do not contain fish parts as chum — or any 'live or prepared bait' that would disqualify the product for tournament use.

The product comes in a variety of scents that can attract species including bass, catfish and panfish. Each tube contains three balls, and BaitCloud is available at many retailers for about $10.

More Info: www.baitcloud.com

NIKON'S BLACK RIFLESCOPES

Engineered to deliver your longest shots with confident precision, the new BLACK FX1000 is set to raise eyebrows and expectations among long-range shooters.

Competition-ready straight from the box, the BLACK FX1000 integrates renowned Nikon optics into its first focal plane optical system for tack-sharp images and dialing functionality at any magnification and distance.

Proprietary new glass-etched tactical reticles paired with precise, high-speed turrets allow fast, repeatable distance corrections and intuitive hold-off points. And for rapid return to your zero, the FX1000 debuts Nikon's all-new BLACK Return-to-Zero integral zero-stop in the elevation turret. Sunshade included.

The manufacturer's suggested retail price for the model shown is $799.95, including Nikon's No-Fault lifetime repair and replacement policy.

More Info: www.nikonsportoptics.com

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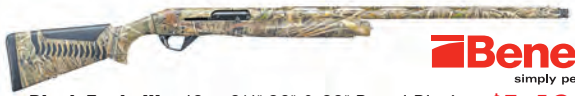

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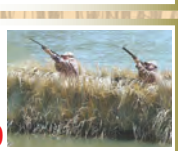

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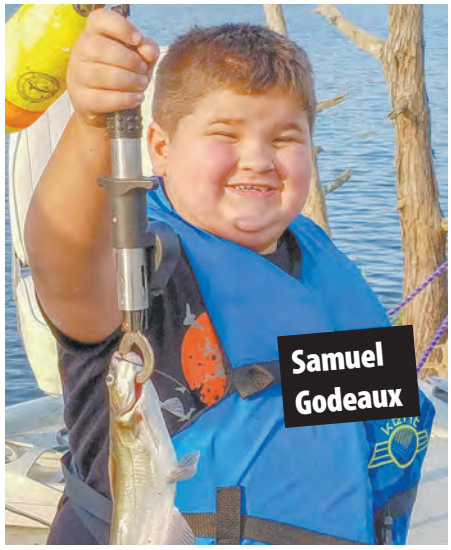
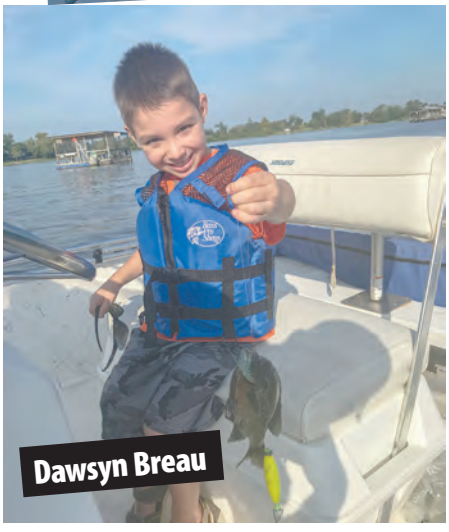
Mike Hawkes caught this big redfish on cut bait at Joe's Cove in Hackberry last fall.



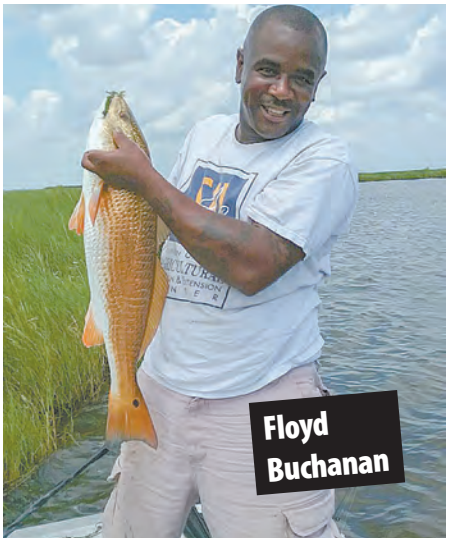
Samuel Godeaux pulled in this catfish at City Lake in Eunice.



Dawsyn Breau proudly shows off his catch from Old River in Morganza on Aug. 13.

Mike Dudenhefer shot two nice bucks in South Mississippi: One had a 22-inch spread, the other was 18-inches wide.

Dianna Ruff caught this 6.8-pound bass on an oxbow lake off the Mississippi River in East Carroll Parish.



Floyd Buchanan shows off a nice 28-inch red he caught on a Gulp shrimp down in Dularge.

Patrick Storey, 9, took the hog on the left with his .22LR Cricket with a single shot to the head while hunting with his father, John Storey, on April 20.

Mike Sambola with a hammer speckled trout he caught on a trip to Hopedale.

Joseph Wilson, 9, killed three ducks with one shot during the 2017-18 youth weekend in Gueydan.

Chris Blackwell of Gonzales caught this nice redfish in Golden Meadow on Sept. 21.

BELOW: The Ward family pose with a big drum that was caught in Cocodrie over the Labor Day weekend.

Crystal Percy killed her biggest deer to date in Kentwood at 93 yards on Jan. 6. The buck weighed 182 pounds, and its rack was broken off on one side.

Nick Nobile poses with a nice Lake Des Allemands sac-a-lait.

Jennifer Metzger with a pretty Bayou Bienvenue redfish.

Matt LeBlanc caught this 42-inch bull red in Caminada Pass while fishing with his great-grandfather, Gerard LeBlanc.

(Left to right) Anna Olinde, Joey Olinde, Caleb Olinde, AJ Perentin, Onyx the lab and Andrew Ivey straight from a successful teal hunt on Catahoula Lake.

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 **alicial@lasmag.com**

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

Davy Sicard with a bass he caught in the Mississippi River Delta out of Venice.

Nick Perkins nabbed this 16-inch sac-a-lait from Lake Boeuf.

This 10-point beauty was killed in Union Church, Mississippi by Matthew Talley.

Cooper Saurage, 5, with two 3-pound bass caught with a Zebco 33 and a crankbait.

Annie Newchurch, 9, of Thibodaux ,took a day off from Mardi Gras parades to drop this nice hog with her PawPaw's old .30-30.

Reuban Curole with a pretty redfish caught on the Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA near Larose.

An offshore trip with Capt. Troy Wetzel's Louisiana Offshore Fishing charter service provided this catch of tuna for (left to right) Gerald Pete Griffin, Nathan Griffin, Wade Gaubert and Derek Gaubert, all from St. Charles Parish.

Grant Speer, 9, landed his first bull red in Dulac while fishing with his dad.

Ashley Burch with a nice Christmas Eve redfish out of her camp in Dulac.

Addison Melancon hooked her first bull red while fishing with her dad — and they caught 55 nice trout that day.

Cassie Ohlmeyer, 17, with a redfish she caught on live shrimp while fishing in Black Bay during the Thoth Charities Fishing Rodeo in Hopedale.

Mona Hughes with the turkeys she took on April 10 in Junction, Texas — including one that had 1 5/16-inch spurs.

Lori Lambert of Prairieville with a frog she caught in the Atchafalaya Basin with her dad, Eddie Lambert, earlier this winter.

Brian Schmidt of Metairie holds up a 26-pound, 35-inch redfish he landed on July 15 in Lake Barre out of Cocodrie on live shrimp under a cork.

2018-2019

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

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

WATERFOWL SEASONS

	EAST ZONE	WEST ZONE	COASTAL ZONE
DUCKS*, COOTS & MERGANSERS	Nov. 17 - Dec. 2 Dec. 15 - Jan. 27	Nov. 10 - Dec. 2 Dec. 15 - Jan. 20	Nov. 10 - Dec. 2 Dec. 15 - Jan. 20

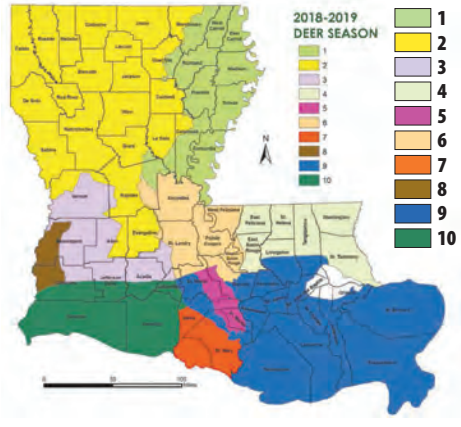
The daily bag limit for ducks is six and may include no more than four mallards (no more than two of which may be females), two canvasback, one mottled duck, one black duck, three wood ducks, three scaups, two redheads and two pintails. Daily bag limit for coots is 15. Daily bag limit for mergansers is five, only two of which may be a hooded mergansers. The merganser limits are in addition to the daily bag limit for ducks. Possession limits for ducks, coots and mergansers is three times the daily bag limit. Youth waterfowl hunts will be held Nov. 3 and Jan. 26 in the West Zone, Nov. 10 and Feb. 2 in the East Zone, and Nov. 3-4 in the Coastal Zone.

GEESE (snow, blue, Ross & white-fronted [specklebelly])	(Statewide) Nov. 3 - Dec. 2 Dec. 15 - Feb. 10	Daily bag limit for light geese (snow, blue, Ross') is 20, with no possession limit. The daily bag limit for white-fronted geese is two, with a possession limit of six.
CANADA GOOSE SEASON	(Statewide) Nov. 3 - Dec. 2 Dec. 15 - Jan. 31	The daily limit for Canada geese is one per day, with a possession limit of three.
CONSERVATION ORDER FOR LIGHT GEESE	(Statewide) Dec. 3 - 14 Feb. 11 - March 10	

Only snow, blue and Ross geese may be taken under the terms of the conservation order, which allows the use of electronic calls and unplugged shotguns, and eliminates the daily bag and possession limits. Shooting hours begin one-half hour before sunrise and extends until one-half hour after sunset.

DEER SEASONS

2018 - 2019 Deer Hunting Areas



AREA	ARCHERY (Either-sex)	PRIMITIVE FIREARMS (All either-sex, except as noted)	STILL HUNT (No dogs allowed) (All either-sex, except as noted)	WITH/WITHOUT DOGS (All either-sex, except as noted)
1	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Nov. 10 -16 Jan. 21 - 31	Nov. 17 - Dec. 7 Jan. 7 - 20	Dec. 8 - Jan. 6
2	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Oct. 20 - 26 Jan. 14 - 20	Oct. 27 - Dec. 5	Dec. 6 - Jan. 13
3	Sept. 15 - Jan. 15	Oct. 13 - 19, Nov. 26 - 30	Oct. 20 - Nov. 25	Dec. 1 - Jan. 6 (certain areas)
4	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Nov. 10 - 16 Jan. 21 - 31	Nov. 17 - Dec. 7 Jan. 7 - 20	Dec. 8 - Jan. 6
5	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 10-16 (either-sex) Jan. 21 - 31 (bucks only)	Nov. 17-18, Nov. 23 - 25 (either-sex) Nov. 19-22, Nov. 26 - Dec. 7 (bucks only)	Dec. 8-9, Dec. 22-23 (either-sex) Dec. 10-21 (bucks only) Dec. 24 - Jan. 20 (bucks only)
6	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 10 - 16 Jan. 21 - 31	Nov. 17 - Dec. 7	Dec. 8 - Jan. 20
7	Sept. 15 - Jan. 15	Oct. 13 - 19 Nov. 3 - 9	Oct. 20 - Nov. 2 Nov. 10 - 25	Nov. 26 - Dec. 30
8	Sept. 15 - Jan. 15	Oct. 13 - 19, Nov. 26 - 30	Oct. 20 - Nov. 25	Dec. 1 - Jan. 6
9	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 10-16 (either-sex) Jan. 21 - 31 (bucks only)	Nov. 17-18, Nov. 23 - 25 (either-sex) Nov. 19-22, Nov. 26 - Dec. 7 (bucks only)	Dec. 8-9, Dec. 22-23 (either-sex) Dec. 10-21 (bucks only) Dec. 24 - Jan. 20 (bucks only)
10	Sept. 15 - Jan. 15	Oct. 13 - 19, Nov. 26 - 30	Oct. 20 - Nov. 25, Dec. 1 - Jan. 6	

November 2018

Date	Sunrise	Sunset
1st	7:14 a.m.	6:13 p.m.
2nd	7:15 a.m.	6:12 p.m.
3rd	7:16 a.m.	6:12 p.m.
4th	6:16 a.m.	5:11 p.m.
5th	6:17 a.m.	5:10 p.m.
6th	6:18 a.m.	5:09 p.m.
7th	6:19 a.m.	5:09 p.m.
8th	6:20 a.m.	5:08 p.m.
9th	6:20 a.m.	5:08 p.m.
10th	6:21 a.m.	5:07 p.m.
11th	6:22 a.m.	5:06 p.m.
12th	6:23 a.m.	5:06 p.m.
13th	6:24 a.m.	5:05 p.m.
14th	6:25 a.m.	5:05 p.m.
15th	6:25 a.m.	5:04 p.m.
16th	6:26 a.m.	5:04 p.m.
17th	6:27 a.m.	5:03 p.m.
18th	6:28 a.m.	5:03 p.m.
19th	6:29 a.m.	5:03 p.m.
20th	6:30 a.m.	5:02 p.m.
21st	6:30 a.m.	5:02 p.m.
22nd	6:31 a.m.	5:02 p.m.
23rd	6:32 a.m.	5:01 p.m.
24th	6:33 a.m.	5:01 p.m.
25th	6:34 a.m.	5:01 p.m.
26th	6:34 a.m.	5:01 p.m.
27th	6:35 a.m.	5:00 p.m.
28th	6:36 a.m.	5:00 p.m.
29th	6:37 a.m.	5:00 p.m.
30th	6:38 a.m.	5:00 p.m.

*Time based on New Orleans, sunrise/sunset; source U.S. Naval Observatory. Corrections (in minutes)

Alexandria	Baton Rouge	Lafayette	Lake Charles	Monroe	Shreveport
Rise/Set	Rise/Set	Rise/Set	Rise/Set	Rise/Set	Rise/Set
+12/+8	+5/+4	+8/+7	+13/+12	+10/+5	+17/+13

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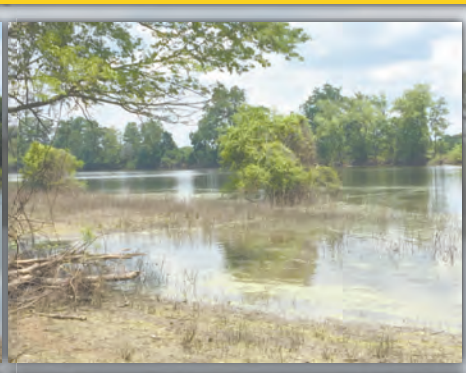

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ASTRO TABLES

Astro Tables is far more effective than "moon tables," because it takes into account critical solar energies as well as lunar.

• The "Best Days" column is based on the ever-changing positions of the sun and the moon, rating each day on a scale of 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more solar/lunar influence that day is experiencing (see "Value" column or corresponding black bars).

• The two Primary periods (Moon Overhead and Moon Underfoot) vary in length from one hour to three-and-one-half hours, depending on a number of important lunar cycles, such as how close the moon is to the earth that day and how high its orbit is. The solar symbols alert you to when a Primary period overlaps a major solar period (eg: Dawn, High-Noon, and Dusk). The secondary periods of Moonrise and Moonset last about one hour each… 30 minutes before and after the listed time. (See key at bottom of each month for more detail.)

• **Astro Tables** is a quick-reference version of its parent publication, the **PrimeTimes Wall Calendar**, which is recommended for those wishing more complete data on the best days and times to go fishing and hunting for the entire year (see "Available Products" below).

• **PrimeTimes'** forecasts are based on solar/lunar research at a leading college of astrophysics and our own research pond/wildlife area. Annual data is supplied by the U.S. Naval Observatory. All times are adjusted to the center of your time zone and for Daylight Saving Time.

AVAILABLE PRODUCTS:

The 2019 PrimeTimes Wall Calendar. **$13.95** (plus $4 s&h). Know the best days, best times, and their relative strengths for all of 2019 with this information-packed, full-color, 11-inch by 17-inch, graphic peaks-and-valleys forecaster. Includes rise and set times for the sun and moon, space to log your catches, "Timely Tips," plus fish and game symbols showing you each month's don't-miss periods. Also includes exclusive summary charts revealing the best and worst days of 2019, the year's best periods, a look ahead at 2020, and more. Comes with FREE 2019 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for $8.95, plus $3 s&h.

Book: ***"How to Know When to Go" by Rick Taylor.*** **$14.95** (plus $4 s&h). 100 pages, 43 illustrations. A comprehensive look at the main factors influencing fish and game activity periods, plus how to devise an effective when-to-go game plan using any year's PrimeTimes calendars. Individual assessments of bass, panfish, deer, turkey, and more.

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2018 NOV

	BEST DAYS		LUNAR PERIODS (TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED)				
	POOR FAIR GOOD EXCL VALUE		MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
Thu 1		49	12:56 am	6:26 am - 9:36 am	3:00 pm	6:51 pm - 10:01 pm	
Fri 2		41	2:03 am	7:28 am - 10:24 am	3:41 pm	7:53 pm - 10:49 pm	
Sat 3		37	3:09 am	8:28 am - 11:08 am	4:18 pm	8:53 pm - 11:33 pm	
Sun 4		44	3:15 am	8:27 am - 10:49 am	3:53 pm	8:52 pm - 11:14 pm	End DST
Mon 5		50	4:20 am	9:24 am - 11:30 am	**4:28 pm**	9:49 pm - 11:55 pm	
Tue 6		55	5:24 am	10:23 am - 12:09 pm	**5:03 pm**	10:48 pm - 12:34 am	
Wed 7		57	**6:27 am**	11:20 am - 12:52 pm	5:39 pm	11:45 pm - Midnight	NEW
Thu 8		44	**7:29 am**	12:16 pm - 1:34 pm	6:17 pm	Midnight - 1:17 am	
Fri 9		32	8:29 am	1:12 pm - 2:20 pm	6:59 pm	12:41 am - 1:59 am	
Sat 10		20	9:26 am	2:05 pm - 3:07 pm	7:44 pm	1:37 am - 2:45 am	
Sun 11		14	10:20 am	2:55 pm - 3:57 pm	8:32 pm	2:30 am - 3:32 am	LOW
Mon 12		13	11:09 am	3:45 pm - 4:47 pm	9:24 pm	3:20 am - 4:22 am	
Tue 13		11	**11:54 am**	4:31 pm - 5:37 pm	10:17 pm	4:10 am - 5:12 am	
Wed 14		18	12:34 pm	5:15 pm - 6:27 pm	11:11 pm	4:56 am - 6:02 am	Apogee
Thu 15		31	1:10 pm	5:53 pm - 7:19 pm		5:40 am - 6:52 am	HALF
Fri 16		24	1:44 pm	6:32 pm - 8:08 pm	12:06 am	6:18 am - 7:44 am	
Sat 17		22	2:16 pm	7:10 pm - 8:58 pm	1:02 am	6:57 am - 8:33 am	
Sun 18		25	2:47 pm	7:45 pm - 9:51 pm	1:58 am	7:35 am - 9:23 am	
Mon 19		39	3:18 pm	8:22 pm - 10:44 pm	2:56 am	8:10 am - 10:16 am	
Tue 20		51	3:50 pm	9:00 pm - 11:40 pm	3:56 am	8:47 am - 11:09 am	
Wed 21		65	**4:25 pm**	9:42 pm - 12:38 am	4:57 am	9:25 am - 12:05 pm	
Thu 22		72	**5:05 pm**	10:28 pm - 1:38 am	6:02 am	10:07 am - 1:03 pm	FULL
Fri 23		64	5:49 pm	11:19 pm - Midnight	**7:08 am**	10:53 am - 2:03 pm	
Sat 24		57	6:41 pm	Midnight - 2:39 am	8:14 am	11:44 am - 3:04 pm	
Sun 25		49	7:38 pm	12:16 am - 3:42 am	9:19 am	12:41 pm - 4:07 pm	HIGH
Mon 26		45	8:41 pm	1:16 am - 4:42 am	**10:19 am**	1:41 pm - 5:07 pm	Perigee
Tue 27		42	9:48 pm	2:18 am - 5:40 am	11:13 am	2:43 pm - 6:05 pm	
Wed 28		45	10:55 pm	3:22 am - 6:34 am	12:01 pm	3:47 pm - 6:59 pm	
Thu 29		51		4:23 am - 7:23 am	12:43 pm	4:48 pm - 7:48 pm	HALF
Fri 30		38	12:02 am	5:22 am - 8:08 am	1:21 pm	5:47 pm - 8:33 pm	
	25 50 75 AVERAGE						

ANY LUNAR PERIOD IS ENHANCED WHEN IT OVERLAPS A KEY SOLAR PERIOD. THE BEST OF THESE OVERLAPS ARE DESIGNATED BY THE SUN SYMBOLS: = DAWN = HIGH NOON = DUSK

*WHILE THE LESSER **MOONRISE** AND -**SET** OVERLAPS (ABOUT 30 MIN. BEFORE AND AFTER THE LISTED TIME) ARE DESIGNATED BY **BOLD BLACK TYPE**.*

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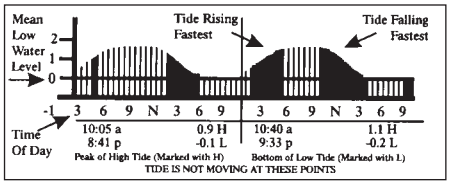
How to use the SPORTSMAN Tide Guide



Fish feed most actively when the tide is moving. Louisiana Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most-active feeding periods each day in the Tide Guide. Just fish those times indicated in black. To find the best time to fish your favorite honeyhole, find the spot under Tide Corrections that is closest to the area, and add or subtract the time from the corresponding daily prediction.

Tide Corrections

East Point, Grand Isle	HIGH	LOW
Barataria Pass	+1:00	-0:10
Bastian Island	+0:41	+0:12
Bay Gardene	+2:51	+2:44
Bayou BonFouca	+9:59	+10:11
Breton Islands	+0:54	+0:48
Caillou Boca	+0:40	+0:48
Caminada Pass	+0:20	+0:12
Chandeleur Light	+0:37	+0:34
Chef Pass	+5:17	+5:07
Cocodrie	+1:22	+1:33
Comfort Island	+1:34	+0:54
Delacroix Island	+3:42	+3:31
Empire Jetty	-1:03	-1:45
Four Bayou Pass	+2:18	+0:17
Gardner Island	+0:40	+0:47
Grand Pass	+1:48	+1:16
Head of Passes	-0:48	+0:00
Hopedale	+4:17	+4:56
Independence Island	+2:29	+1:59
Jack Bay	+1:59	+1:28
Joseph Bayou	-0:36	-1:37
Lafitte	+1:45	+2:51
Long Point, Lake Borgne	+2:28	+2:11
Manila Village	+2:32	+3:13
Michoud Substation	+5:24	+5:02
New Canal (Bucktown)	+10:34	+10:49
North Pass	-0:31	-0:37
Paris Road Bridge	+5:53	+5:58
Pelican Islands	+2:26	+2:26
Pointe a la Hache	+3:12	+3:01
Port Eads	-0:17	-1:37
Raccoon Point	-0:03	-0:20
Shell Beach	+4:32	+4:25
Ship Shoal Light	-1:54	-1:50
South Pass, Miss. R.	-1:13	-1:20
Southwest Pass, Miss. R.	-0:38	-1:33
Tchefuncte River	+10:23	+11:01
Timbalier Island	+0:19	+0:23
Wine Island	+1:08	+1:02

Calcasieu Pass, Lighthouse Wharf	HIGH	LOW
Cote Blanche Island	+4:33	+3:40
Eugene Island	+1:49	-0:39
Lighthouse Point	+0:58	-0:53
Mermentau River ent.	+0:20	+0:25
Point Au Fer	+1:53	-1:02
Point Chevreul	+3:16	+0:30
Rabbit Island	+2:01	-0:36
Shell Island	+3:08	+0:45
South Point	+1:55	-0:33
Southwest Pass, Vermillion Bay	+1:42	+0:51
Weeks Bay	+3:58	+3:56

East Point Grand Isle

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 3:34 am 1.3 H 3:23 pm 0.2 L	2 4:49 am 1.2 H 4:07 pm 0.4 L	3 7:02 am 1.0 H 4:35 pm 0.6 L 11:59 pm 0.8 H
4 3:46 am 0.8 L 9:27 am 0.9 H 3:22 pm 0.7 L 9:21 pm 0.9 H	5 5:07 am 0.6 L 8:40 pm 1.0 H	6 6:05 am 0.4 L 8:39 pm 1.2 H	7 NM 6:57 am 0.2 L 8:59 pm 1.3 H	8 7:46 am 0.1 L 9:29 pm 1.3 H	9 8:34 am 0.1 L 10:04 pm 1.4 H	10 9:22 am 0.1 L 10:40 pm 1.4 H
11 10:10 am 0.1 L 11:19 pm 1.3 H	12 10:59 am 0.1 L 11:57 pm 1.3 H	13 11:47 am 0.1 L	14 12:35 am 1.2 H 12:30 pm 0.2 L	15 FQ 1:10 am 1.1 H 1:06 pm 0.2 L	16 1:39 am 1.0 H 1:30 pm 0.3 L	17 1:38 am 0.9 H 1:37 pm 0.4 L 10:55 pm 0.8 H
18 1:12 pm 0.5 L 8:56 pm 0.8 H	19 5:06 am 0.5 L 8:09 pm 0.8 H	20 5:18 am 0.4 L 7:59 pm 1.0 H	21 5:52 am 0.2 L 8:12 pm 1.1 H	22 6:33 am 0.0 L 8:39 pm 1.2 H	23 FM 7:20 am -0.1 L 9:15 pm 1.3 H	24 8:13 am -0.2 L 9:57 pm 1.4 H
25 9:10 am -0.3 L 10:44 pm 1.4 H	26 10:09 am -0.3 L 11:32 pm 1.3 H	27 11:07 am -0.2 L	28 12:20 am 1.2 H 12:01 pm -0.2 L	29 LQ 1:04 am 1.1 H 12:48 pm 0.0 L	30 1:32 am 0.9 H 1:19 pm 0.1 L 11:42 pm 0.7 H	

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Calcasieu Pass Lighthouse Wharf

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 5:25 am 1.7 L 8:07 am 1.8 H 4:22 pm 0.4 L	2 12:27 am 2.2 H 6:03 am 1.5 L 10:12 am 1.8 H 5:32 pm 0.6 L	3 12:57 am 2.1 H 6:42 am 1.2 L 12:15 pm 1.9 H 6:39 pm 0.7 L
4 1:17 am 2.1 H 6:20 am 0.9 L 12:43 pm 2.0 H 6:38 pm 0.9 L	5 12:32 am 2.1 H 6:58 am 0.6 L 1:48 pm 2.1 H 7:31 pm 1.1 L	6 12:49 am 2.0 H 7:36 am 0.3 L 2:50 pm 2.2 H 8:21 pm 1.3 L	7 NM 1:09 am 2.0 H 8:14 am 0.1 L 3:50 pm 2.2 H 9:11 pm 1.4 L	8 1:32 am 2.0 H 8:53 am 0.0 L 4:43 pm 2.2 H 9:58 pm 1.6 L	9 1:56 am 2.0 H 9:31 am 0.0 L 5:32 pm 2.2 H 10:44 pm 1.7 L	10 2:19 am 1.9 H 10:09 am 0.0 L 6:28 pm 2.1 H 11:32 pm 1.8 L
11 2:36 am 1.9 H 10:47 am 0.1 L 7:40 pm 2.0 H	12 11:28 am 0.3 L 8:47 pm 2.0 H	13 12:16 pm 0.4 L 9:40 pm 2.0 H	14 1:16 pm 0.6 L 10:22 pm 1.9 H	15 FQ 2:21 pm 0.7 L 10:50 pm 1.9 H	16 5:42 am 1.3 L 8:51 am 1.4 H 3:21 pm 0.8 L 11:09 pm 1.9 H	17 5:48 am 1.1 L 10:28 am 1.5 H 4:19 pm 0.9 L 11:22 pm 1.8 H
18 5:59 am 0.9 L 11:51 am 1.6 H 5:16 pm 1.0 L 11:34 pm 1.8 H	19 6:18 am 0.7 L 12:44 pm 1.7 H 6:08 pm 1.1 L 11:49 pm 1.8 H	20 6:43 am 0.4 L 1:28 pm 1.8 H 6:53 pm 1.2 L	21 12:07 am 1.9 H 7:14 am 0.1 L 2:12 pm 2.0 H 7:35 pm 1.3 L	22 12:27 am 1.9 H 7:48 am -0.1 L 3:01 pm 2.1 H 8:18 pm 1.4 L	23 FM 12:49 am 1.9 H 8:27 am -0.3 L 3:53 pm 2.1 H 9:03 pm 1.5 L	24 1:12 am 1.9 H 9:09 am -0.4 L 4:47 pm 2.1 H 9:48 pm 1.6 L
25 1:39 am 1.9 H 9:55 am -0.5 L 5:45 pm 2.1 H 10:34 pm 1.6 L	26 2:09 am 1.9 H 10:43 am -0.4 L 6:58 pm 2.1 H 11:27 pm 1.7 L	27 2:48 am 1.8 H 11:36 am -0.3 L 8:11 pm 2.0 H	28 12:50 am 1.6 L 3:49 am 1.7 H 12:37 pm -0.1 L 9:06 pm 1.9 H	29 LQ 2:47 am 1.4 L 5:23 am 1.5 H 1:50 pm 0.2 L 9:49 pm 1.9 H	30 3:45 am 1.2 L 7:46 am 1.4 H 3:04 pm 0.4 L 10:23 pm 1.8 H	

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November is typically a prime month to catch speckled trout at the Trestles in Lake Pontchartrain.

Courtesy of Capt. Matt McCabe

Sportsman FISHING HOTSPOTS

THE PONTCHARTRAIN PARADE BEGINS

The Lake Pontchartrain Trestles becomes a boat parade in November, and with good reason.

It's arguably the best month of the year to fish the place, and many locals point their boat in its direction to target speckled trout this month.

But, with more boats comes a great amount of pressure — and that can certainly shut the fish down, according to Lake Pontchartrain fishing guide Capt. Matt McCabe.

"You've got guys trolling, you got guys throwing live bait, you got people running in and out throwing anchors," he said. "It screws them up."

One way to keep catching is to alter your presentation from what everyone else is doing.

"These fish get lure shy," McCabe said. "There are so many people fishing for them, so you have to do something just a little bit different. A little subtle change will get you more bites than everybody else."

McCabe changes both jighead weight and line size to coax the fish into biting.

"I'll go down as far as 8-pound fluorocarbon and maybe a 5/16-ounce jighead just to give it a different fall and a different look," he said.

McCabe said he keeps a couple spinning and baitcasting rods on the deck of his boat with different jighead weights and lure colors so swapping isn't a big deal.

The veteran guide's favorite baits and colors are midnight mullet and ultra violet from Matrix Shad.

Whenever possible, McCabe likes to plan his trips to the Trestles around an incoming tide.

"These fish like to set up on that west side of the bridge," he said. "That's what they prefer, and I think it's because you don't have that other bridge that's right there. They can just kind of set up far enough off. You've got nothing all the way to Mandeville."

McCabe also likes to time his trips on either side of November cold fronts.

"Usually the day or two before is really good," he said. "They'll realize the pressure is changing and if you can target the best tide time during the day, you can have a pretty good day if the wind allows. A couple days after is really good." ▪

- Joel Masson

SLOUGHS STILL HOLDING D'ARBONNE CRAPPIE

If you want to slay the crappie on Lake D'Arbonne this month, you've got to search the sloughs — that's where the fish will be, gorging on shad and filling up for the winter.

"November's a great month to fish for crappie on D'Arbonne because the fish are still hanging in those sloughs, but cooler weather is making them more active," according to veteran angler Bobby Phillips. "The old sloughs from 12 to 20 feet deep that are full of stumps are the best spots to fish. And you'll find the crappie on them where you find the shad."

Sloughs are simply deeper areas that are not too far from the old river channels.

>

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All images will be considered, but those taken on the water or in the woods will have the best chance of being featured.

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Bobby Phillips with a chunky D'Arbonne Lake crappie.

D'Arbonne Lake is full of them from the spillway all the way up the two feeder creeks, D'Arbonne Bayou and Corney Creek. And with today's fancy electronics, it's a lot easier than it used to be. Side- and down-scanning views allow anglers to cruise areas more quickly than the old way Phillips and other long-time anglers did it — by keeping their bait in the water for hours.

"That sure makes a difference," he said. "But you've still got to figure out what they want to bite when you find them. This time of year, my favorite baits are chartreuse and blue for muddy water, and gray or white with a blue hue for clear water. If you hold up a shad, you'll notice it always has a blue hue. Anything that duplicates a shad will do," he said. Bobby Garland's baby shad, blue thunder and popsicle are three of his favorites. He also likes to use Black Lake hair jigs in grey, chartreuse and blue. The size of the jig depends on how deep the fish are: If they're shallow, use a smaller jig because it falls slower and gives them a little longer to hit the bait. They'll also hit minnows, but Phillips doesn't like to fool with them.

Later this month, some of the fish will start migrating toward the deeper river channel, but not until the water cools off. Shad can't take really cold water, so they move quickly when it cools off.

"This is a transition month, so it strictly depends on the weather as to how long they stay in the sloughs. If it stays warm like some times in the past, you can catch them in 6 to 8 feet of water on Thanksgiving Day. If the water comes way up, sometimes the shad will move up the creeks pretty quick. You just have to adjust with the weather.

"But know this," he said. "If you find the bait, you'll find the fish. Crappie are not going to be too far away from the dinner table." ▪

- Kinny Haddox

MARSH SPECKLED TROUT ACTION ON FIRE

Specks show up hungry — in numbers

The long summer trout drought is finally, mercifully over. Specks have reappeared all over the lakes and marshes — and they're hungry, nicely-sized and plentiful.

Local fisherman and fish cleaner extraordinaire, Frank Roberts (aka 'Frankie Fillet,' 504-657-4028), says the action is so good you almost can't go wrong right now.

"The trout transition came about a month later than usual, probably due to the long, hot summer," he said. "But the trout finally started moving to the inside. I think they got tired of waiting for the fronts to show up so they just started moving by sheer instinct.

"Right now the Lake Borgne action has been great from the castle in Violet to here in Shell Beach. Reds are hitting plastics and dead shrimp all along the rocks in Lake Borgne and in the MRGO, and trout are hitting live shrimp in the mouths of the bayous on falling tides. The fronts turn the action on in the Biloxi Marsh in Stump Lagoon, Mack's Pass, Mussel Bay, Pete's Lagoon, Goose Flat and all the big bays with oyster reefs."

Roberts says reds are plentiful in the same areas and any cast could produce specks or bronze backs. But if you specifically want to target reds, ply the shorelines at points, cuts and coves, where gold spoons, live or market shrimp or topwater baits will entice the beasts to pounce.

"You can get up in the bigger bays with oyster reefs and anchor or just drift, or use your trolling motor to control your drift," he said. "I fish with live shrimp under a High Water cork and the trout are eating up." ▪

- Rusty Tardo

Frank Roberts said the trout transition was delayed this fall, but fish have finally moved inside.

CANEY BASS OFFER ANGLERS TWO CHOICES

Target shallows around grass beds, or focus on offshore schools

If you want to catch Caney Lake bass in November, they basically give you two choices: Chase them around the grass beds shallow, or focus on finding offshore schools.

Either way, the cooler days of fall provide excellent largemouth angling for the lake just outside of Chatham.

"Caney Lake has a mind of it's own," Hunter Freeman said. "It's a breed all it's own. I was fortunate enough to grow up right by the lake, so I've learned a lot and built some really strong suits fishing there."

That's how Freeman, who will be taking on the FLW pro bass tour next year as a rookie, knows how to do well in November. And he doesn't mind sharing his tips.

"This month the water is cooling off and the shallow bite can be pretty frenzied," he said. "Shad start piling up around the shallow grass in the coves and out in the big lake. We've got milfoil, hydrilla, and eel grass, and the fish get around all of them. The key is finding grass with shad."

A big bass like this one full of shad caught by Hunter Freeman is why many anglers go to Caney, but it's the exception rather than the rule this month.

For shallow bass, Freeman's favorite bait is an Xcite Shadnasty swimbait in pearl color. He also throws frogs around lily pads when it's calm, and spinnerbaits or Flukes around the grass when it's windy. The common thread among baits this month is to make them pearl or shad color.

When he has time to go deep, he looks for any cover with a hard bottom — the tops of humps, old road beds or a ridge with lots of timber laying on it. The shad seem to prefer those spots. This approach takes more work, and he says he often spends an hour at a time scanning areas with his Lowrance electronics.

When he finds fish offshore, he'll start with another of his favorite lures, a Bryant's Custom swim jig in anything from green pumpkin to black or brown. Carolina rigs and drop shots will also work when the fish are less aggressive. Because he fishes a lot of different lures, Freeman said a versatile rod like Falcon's 7-foot, 3-inch Cara Amistad is very efficient.

There is one unique thing about November on Caney: It's known for trophy bass (six of the top 10 largemouths in the state grew up here), but this is definitely not the best month to catch thee, Freeman said. You'll catch a 7- or 8-pounder mixed in with other fish this time of year, but they don't get isolated as much as they do the rest of the time. November is mostly about numbers — and the numbers are usually pretty good. ▪

- Kinny Haddox

Toledo Bend up next >

FALL BASS MOVING SHALLOW AT TOLEDO BEND

But lack of hydrilla concerning ...

This 7-pound, 2-ounce bass was caught by Dusty Anders of Alexandria on a Top Toad in the 12-15 area.

There was a brief chill to the air in late September, so much so that we opened all the doors to our place and turned off the AC here behind Toledo Town & Tackle just west of Many.

It was 65 degrees on Sept. 27, a welcome change from the high 70s or so we've been waking up to during the heat wave of the past several months.

A mild cool front entered the region, the first significant weather system of the fall, with a stronger expected to follow.

We already were experiencing cooler temperatures because of a rainy stretch and, my goodness, what a difference it seems to have made on the bass bite at Toledo Bend.

When November rolls around, I'm expecting bass fishing success to be pretty solid after a subpar late spring and summer that was as confusing as it was frustrating.

If it isn't, well, that's another story — and the issue will be to find out why.

From all indications, bass are biting as the water temperature starts to cool. Dusty Anders, a good friend and part-time guide from Alexandria, is out right now after some encouraging trips. He told me recently he did well on a plastic frog in shallow water, which coincides with other reports of schooling action and bass on the move in traditional migratory patterns. With consistent 95- to 100-degree days over now, bass will exit their deep domains and that means more and more will be found from the bank out to 6-foot depths, especially in late October and November.

Isn't that great? It'll be like springtime. I've got my fingers crossed and I'm excited about this month.

Before I get into patterns, I need to talk about the lake level. It was at 168.25 in late September, and I don't expect it to vary much from that range because, based on reports, repairs to floodgates are scheduled to start in mid-October and end next April — which means the pool stage must be maintained at that level or below until the scheduled restart of generating next May.

So for November, what you've got is what you get at 168. Ditto for the winter. And the same for spring. There won't be any bush fishing to speak of for those folks who love to get into the flooded environments.

Bass certainly still will be able to do their thing — spawn — next spring. But the lower lake level will affect available habitat, what they're going to do and where they're going to go.

I really don't see a negative in this, but it will be different from what we're accustomed to at Toledo Bend.

As for November, the feedbags should be on the lake's bass population. Moving baits such as your favorite topwaters — including ½-ounce white or chartreuse/white buzzbaits or plastic frogs — ½-ounce chartreuse/white spinnerbaits, ½-ounce chrome/blue Rat-L-Traps, bream-colored ChatterBaits and jerkbaits should account for most of the bass this month.

Why? Shad are in the lake by the zillions. There are shad balls everywhere. Bass will follow them to the points and secondary points, and to the drains and ditches, which are their travel highways.

Other go-to artificial lures this time of year include Carolina-rigged soft plastics, wacky worms, Flukes and Senkos. Top colors should be watermelon/red. Black's always good, too, as is june bug.

I am concerned about the lack of hydrilla in so many places, including Housen Creek. Last year at this time it was carpeted front to back, no matter the depth. Now it's gone, totally stripped in vast areas.

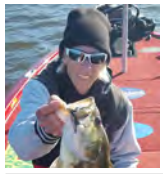
Thankfully, the shallow-water grass such as peppergrass, some milfoil and some coontail remain across much of the lake. And there are miles of lily pads.

For sure, there'll be a lot of open water out there as outdoorsmen take to the deer stands and duck blinds in November. But believe me, many of them will be kicking themselves that they aren't bassin' on Toledo Bend.

At least I hope it's that good.

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

- John Dean



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

Orange Grove up next >

The first cool fronts create a feeding frenzy for Orange Grove bass, which are eager to put on winter weight in anticipation of the spawn.

WINTER BITE BEGINS FOR ORANGE GROVE BASS

Backs of dead end canals should be active

Some of the best bass fishing before the onset of what passes for winter in South Central Louisiana isn't far from Houma or Morgan City.

Bill McCarty knows that from years of hooking and boating bass during November in the Orange Grove area east of Bayou Black. The ¾-pound to 1 ½-pound bass in those waters usually are plentiful and willing to bite, according to the all-around outdoorsman from Morgan City, who also will be doing his share of bow-hunting for deer on the Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area.

McCarty pointed bass anglers to the myriad of dead end canals in the Orange Grove area, specifically the back 200 yards or so of a dead end. Look for canals with less current than others and for water clarity of 12 to 18 inches, ideally with grass beds or scattered grass beds.

"There's a ton of dead end canals down there," he said.

The Orange Grove area is located on the north side of the Intracoastal Waterway between Houma and Morgan City and on the north side by Bayou Black. It is just west of Mandalay National Wildlife Refuge, about 12 miles west of Houma.

"Typically, the first few cold fronts get them started, gets the water stirring," he said, noting the bass start a feeding frenzy to put weight on for the winter and the spawn, which really is only a few months away.

Try to fish an outgoing tide, he advised, adding that he uses Shell Island as the tide reference point and adds an hour to that time.

Over the past few decades, McCarty finds that small profile Lucky Strike and Humdinger spinnerbaits are deadly when bassin' in the area each November. He said a 3/8- or ¼-ounce white, chartreuse/white or chartreuse/green/white spinnerbait with double willowleaf blades, or a Colorado/willowleaf combination, are hard to beat.

If a bass swings and misses on a spinnerbait retrieve, a reliable comeback bait is a green pumpkin Yumdinger, McCarty said, noting that he adds a little chartreuse dye to the tail — an addition the fish apparently love.

There's another reason he thinks highly of the Orange Grove area in November. After catching so many bass, he turns his attention to sac-a-lait.

He consistently hooks and boats sac-a-lait on Lucky Strike jigs in blue/white and smoke/white fished 24 to 30 inches under a cork, he said.

Much of the time the sac-a-lait there are located along drop-offs about 4 feet off the shoreline. Also try pearl/chartreuse, black and chicken-on-a-chain Wedgetail Crappie Minnows.

McCarty knows putting some slabs in the boat is a heckuva way to polish off a bass fishing trip to the Orange Grove area. ■

- Don Shoopman

West Pearl River up next >

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WEST PEARL RIVER GETTING RIGHT FOR BASS

Smaller-profile lures key for November, angler says

There are so many great fishing options during the fall that it can be hard to choose one. Speckled trout are practically committing suicide in the marsh, redfish are everywhere, shrimp are popping for their lives and huge flocks of birds are diving.

The hardest thing about November fishing is figuring out exactly what to do.

Even with the all the saltwater madness, avid freshwater angler and tournament fisherman Jason Pittman frequently points his boat toward the West Pearl River this time of year, and he said once conditions get right there in the fall, the bass fishing is phenomenal.

The key to discovering when the conditions are favorable is to check the Pearl River gauge at Pearl River.

"Anything under 8 feet is going to be great," Pittman said. "If you can catch it falling, that's even better."

The West Pearl has a ton of current flowing through it, and Pittman uses that to his advantage.

"We'll get a couple cool fronts coming through, and those fish will start feeding because they know winter is coming," he said. "All you're looking for are ambush points on current.

"A lot of times we'll look for an outside bank," he said. "The fish are starting to get a little weary because they know cold weather is coming so they're not going to get trapped up there in the shallow water, so they're going to stay somewhere they can move out to deeper water if stuff goes bad."

Pittman likes throwing smaller profile baits in November. He likes the Rat-L-Trap Echo 1.75 crankbait, and Santone's ¼-ounce, compact spinnerbait.

Pittman really likes the compact spinnerbait.

"It's just a smaller profile, and in the current, it comes through a little bit easier," he said. "I'm looking to catch those aggressive fish that just want a quick meal that are eating a lot — instead of one fish that's looking for a big meal."

Courtesy of Jason Pittman

Bass fishing can be phenomenal this time of year on the West Pearl River, according to Jason Pittman.

Moving baits aren't the only thing Pittman throws in November, and he said it's important to carry slow-moving baits, too.

"When the reaction bite slows down or if you get some fish that are short striking or maybe hitting it but not taking it, we'll flip a craw down in there, like a Mister Twister Poc'it Craw." ▪

- Joel Masson

Trout up next >

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After a long summer essentially devoid of trout, Capt. Marty LaCoste is looking forward to the annual fall invasion of specks.

Photo courtesy Capt. Marty LaCoste

THE 'BEST MONTH OF THE YEAR' HAS ARRIVED

No twitch, just slow steady retrieve is key for Dularge trout

Mother Nature has been a true hag this year, baking South Louisiana with scalding temperatures well into October.

But November ushers in what Dularge guide Capt. Marty LaCoste said is historically a fishing bonanza.

"It's usually our best month of the year," the owner of Absolute Fishing Charters said. "Trout fishing usually takes off."

That will be a welcome change, as trout moved out early and seemingly vanished — even in the normal summer hotspots.

But cooling temperatures should have the marshes filling with specks.

"The first couple of weeks, birds will be diving," LaCoste said.

That makes easy work of limits. "You can work the fish under birds with double rigs and corks," the veteran captain said.

The pattern will change, however, as more cold fronts move through the state.

"Once we get a couple of cold fronts and the water temperatures fall into the mid-60s, the trout will move into the bayous," LaCoste said.

That's when he puts up the corks and double rigs in favor of single plastic cocahoes, which he tight-lines on the bottom.

But he said many anglers make a common mistake, even if they let their baits reach the bottom where the trout are congregated.

"Usually it's just a slow retrieve," LaCoste said. "It's usually not twitching it — just a slow, steady retrieve right on the bottom."

He said his lure preference is a Matrix Shad threaded on a ¼-ounce jighead.

Best areas will be in 6 to 8 feet of water, at least until the sun climbs.

"When the sun comes up, they will also move out onto the reefs," LaCoste said.

Focus on those bayous around the major lakes — Sister Lake, Lake DeCade, Mechant Lake — for best success.

You probably won't catch huge fish, but there should be plenty of eaters to go in the box.

"You could be catching anything from 12- to 18-inch trout," LaCoste said. ▪

- Andy Crawford

Sulfur Mine up next >

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SPECKLED TROUT SLAM IN THE SULFUR MINE

Birds are a dead giveaway to solid action

Gordon Matherne said keeper specks should be plentiful this month near the Sulfur Mine.

My old friend and former charter guide Gordon Matherne said November is the best month of the year to fish the Sulfur Mine.

"There are several inland lakes that'll produce some good numbers of trout this month, including Catfish Lake, Lake Chien and Little Lake, but I prefer

to fish the Sulfur Mine area for several reasons," he said. "It's close to home, it only requires a short run from Basson's Launch to the mine, and it's protected water. You're not in a huge open lake or bay like in Little Lake, so the winds aren't as much a factor as they are in bigger bodies of water. Which makes the area perfect for smaller boats to access, and for kayak fishermen."

Matherne said the trout this month aren't necessarily huge, but they'll be plentiful.

"We catch a lot of school trout in November, so you may have some throwbacks in the mix, but you'll have no trouble finding keeper-size fish in the process," he said.

The key?

"Just look for birds," he said. "There will be flocks of birds all over, and they'll be diving on bait. Sneak in within casting distance to the frenzy and toss H&H beetles or cocahoes in glow or chartreuse, either tight-lined or about 2 feet under a cork.

"Better yet, throw doubles."

Matherne said you want to choose a day with a good tide range of eight-tenths to 1 ½ feet, and you definitely want to fish a falling tide.

For reds, Matherne said besides catching them in the mix along with specks, you can target them in Lake Salvador or along the grass in Catahoula Bay by using market shrimp, gold weedless spoons or top-water baits. ▪

- Rusty Tardo

Venice up next >

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FOLLOW THE RIVER FOR VENICE REDS

Start on the outside, and work your way in

The fishing in Venice depends on the Mississippi River more than humans rely on oxygen, and a slowly falling, high river in October will shove the November redfish farther from the river, according to Capt. Dustin Bounds.

"It should start cleaning up, and maybe toward the middle of November, we might start seeing some green patches in the river where you start trailing them from the outside and working your way back up closer to the river," he said.

Bounds advised anglers to start at the major bodies of water and work their way in.

"If they're starting to move in, we'll start at the end of the passes and slowly work your way in the passes," he said. "If you're fishing South Pass, we'll start fishing the very end of it, and then you can just kind of follow them all the way up the river."

The Venice guide targets redfish with cork-suspended live and dead shrimp hurled right against the canes on the bank. When throwing to the canes, Bounds said it never hurts to see some vegetation as well.

"When we're fishing the passes, we always look for those flats where the canes meet the grass," he said.

Bounds mostly fishes the shallow water of the flats, but he said not to be hesitant to fish deeper water.

"They'll be hanging around the drop-offs, too," he said.

November is littered with cold fronts, and although they're not a deal breaker, Bounds said you want to do your best to avoid them — and be prepared to make a lot of casts if you can't.

"You have to work harder. It'll slow them down, and you just have to wait them out," he said.

The good thing is, cold fronts don't shuffle the fish around like in other parts of the state.

"(Fronts) don't really move the fish a lot. The fish are there," he said.

Bounds said most of the fish anglers can expect to catch are slot redfish, but he also finds a good amount of rat reds. Additionally, sheepshead, flounder and the occasional trout will be in the mix. ▪

- Joel Masson

Courtesy of Capt. Dustin Bounds

After October's high river, Capt. Dustin Bounds suggested starting on the outside and working your way in for Venice reds.

BIG LAKE GIVES UP BIG FLOUNDER

Starting in mid-October and peaking in November, saltwater fishermen enjoy some of the best fishing — then feasting — the coast has to offer in the Calcasieu Ship Channel along the western edge of Big Lake.

Fishing success for flounder — I'm talking doormat-size flounder — will be good to great in November along that stretch, according to Capt. Kirk Stansel.

The smaller males start biting in October, but the bigger ones — the females, which grow faster — go on a tear in November.

"November is the month," Stansel said. "The cold fronts came and the big females come out (of the marsh), really nice big flounder."

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

Some of the more likely places to hook up with doormats are at the Older River Washout and the jetties. Look for eddies in the shallows and fish slowly, dragging the bottom with your presentation, and probe the depths.

"You've got to figure them out," Stansel said.

His favorite flounder catching technique is to use a tandem-rigged Gulp 3-inch mullet combination on ¼- or 3/8-ounce ljigheads. He uses a 6 ½-foot medium rod as opposed to a medium-light stick, and braided line attached to a 30-pound monofilament leader — with one of the lures 18 inches below the braid, and the other 9 inches below.

If the flounder fishing is slow, tip the artificials with shrimp. That works, but if croakers (and there are plenty of them now) eat the shrimp off the hook, use one of the croakers for bait. Cut a thin strip about 3 or 4 inches long with some skin and meat and put that on the hook — results should be rewarding.

Carolina-rigged live cocahoes also account for many flounder this time of year, Stansel said. Fish them on a 1/0 or 2/0 kahle hook under a 3/8-ounce egg sinker or split-shot weight, the latter of which is quicker to work with. Stansel noted he employs a surgeon's knot to tie on the leader.

November is prime time for doormat action in the Calcasieu Ship Channel at Big Lake.

The clearer the water, the better, he said, adding that he prefers to fish for flounder on a falling tide.

There is a hotspot that gives up plenty of flounder to anglers in boats as well as wade fishermen, he said, noting the area around Louisiana 182 between the Gulf of Mexico and the Cameron Ferry is a honey hole.

Many a wade fisherman, some armed with 10-foot poles, mop up on the flatfish around there, he said. ▪

- Don Shoopman

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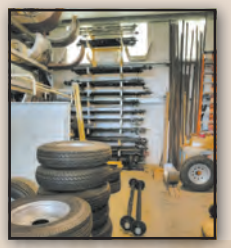

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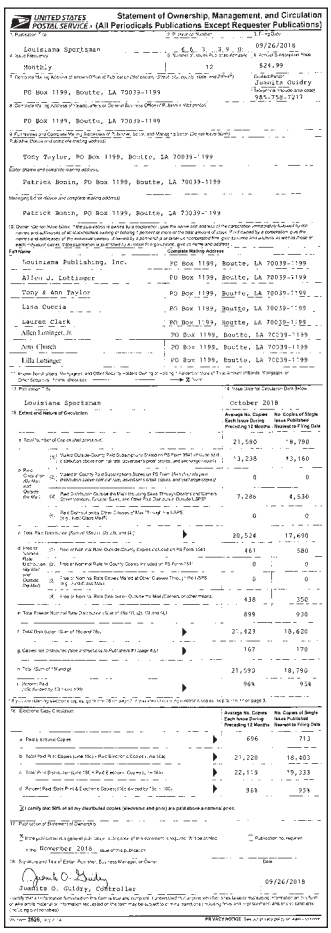

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	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
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Total Paid Distribution [Sum of 15b, (1), (2), (3), and (4)]	20,524	17,690
Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541	461	580
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Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)	438	350
Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d, (1), (2), (3) and (4))	899	930
Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)	21,423	18,620
Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3))	167	170
Total (Sum of 15f and g)	21,590	18,790
Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100)	96%	95%

16. Electronic Copy Circulation

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a. Paid Electronic Copies	696	713
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c. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)	22,119	19,333
d. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (16b divided by 16c × 100)	96%	95%

17. Publication of Statement of Ownership

Publication not required.

Will be printed in the November 2018 issue of this publication.

18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner

Juanita O. Guidry, Controller — 09/26/2018

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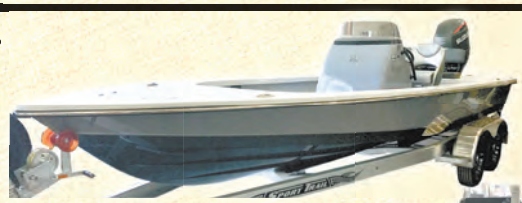

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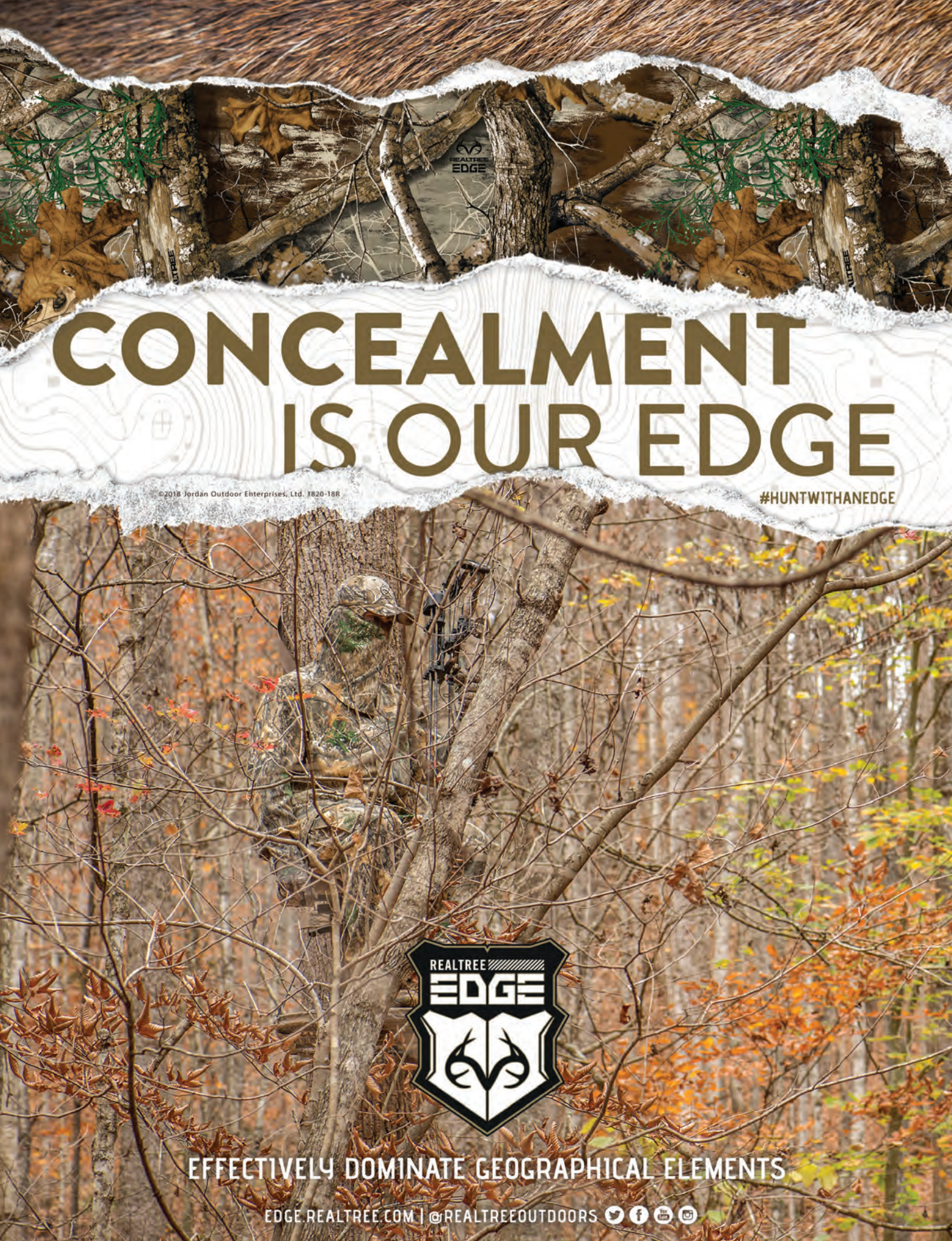
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