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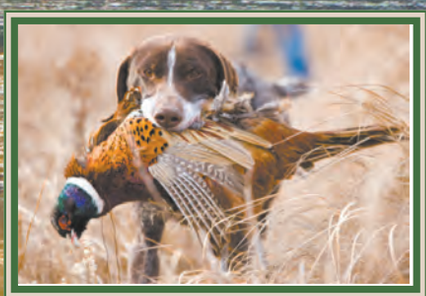

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# Louisiana CONTENTS

Volume 38 | Number 12 | December 2018

## FEATURES:

**27 Scraping by** cover story
Making mock scrapes is a great way to provoke a dominant buck — and it just might be the tactic that puts a big deer into your crosshairs.
>>>By Chris Ginn

**37 'Halftime' bucks**
The midpoint of the season is approaching, so it might be time to change up your game plan, make any necessary adjustments and then head back into the woods to pull out the second-half win.
>>>By Kinny Haddox

**51 Decoy details**
Dekes are probably the most important controllable factor for the average hunter. Here's how to set 'em up — so you can shoot 'em down.
>>>By Jerald Horst

**58 Working for 'wood' ducks**
Although it's not as prevalent as it once was in Louisiana, flooded timber still provides the state's hunters with plenty of opportunities to fill their straps.
>>>By Jonathan Olivier

**69 Going to Geoghegan**
There might be sexier places to fish this winter, but this nondescript canal near Rigolets Marina is hard to beat for consistent speckled trout action.
>>>By Chris Ginn

**79 Lord of the flies**
This Houma fly fisherman hammers speckled trout this time of year in the deep holes off Highway 1 near Grand Isle. But you can use his tips and tactics, no matter how you fish.
>>>By Jerald Horst

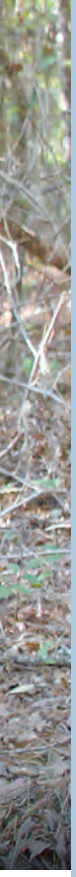
**92 Bayou Black bass blast**
These bass anglers spend every available minute together on the water, and they know there's no place better for numbers of bites than Bayou Black.
>>>By Andy Crawford

**100 Beating the post-front funk**
The days of rainy fronts, chilly temperatures and dreaded bluebird skies are upon us. But fish still have to eat — here's how the pros catch 'em.
>>>By David A. Brown

**107 Crushing cold-water crappie**
Try these tips from the pros to stay on fish as chilly conditions set in.
>>>By David A. Brown

## FISHING HOTSPOTS

156 Shell Beach
157 Chalmette
157 Grand Bayou
158 Delacroix
159 Lafitte
160 Toledo Bend
162 Dularge
162 Bayou D'Arbonne
164 Lake Pontchartrain
166 Stephensville

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**58** Working for 'wood' ducks

**100** Beating the post-front funk


## OUTDOOR UPDATE:


**16** Cocodrie guide catches 'leopard' redfish

**18** 167-inch buck arrowed near East Carroll Parish


## PLUS


**147** Top 6 tips to shoot more ducks this season


**ON THE COVER:**

Deer season is already approaching its halfway point. If you haven't scored on that big buck you're after, check out our deer features starting on page 27 for tips to put one down.

## COLUMNS:


**112** Creature Feature By Jerald Horst

**114** Ask Capt. Paul By Captain Paul Titus

**118** Fly Lines By Catch Cormier

**120** Grunts & Gobbles By David Moreland

**124** Lure Review By Don Shoopman

**126** Game Warden By Keith LaCaze

**128** Sticks and Strings By Sammy Romano

**132** Seafood Bible By Jerald & Glenda Horst

**136** Paddles 'N Puddles By Chris Holmes


## DEPARTMENTS:


**17** December Rut Calendar

**146** Field Notes

**148** Sportsman Showcase

**150** Hunting/Fishing Scrapbook

**152** Hunting Regulations

**153** Sunrise/Sunset Chart

**154** Sportsman Astro Tables

**155** Sportsman Tide Guide

**156** Fishing Hotspots

**167** Louisiana Guides

**168** Sportsman Classifieds

**169** Advertiser Index



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**Volume 38 | No 12**

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| Nov. 18-24, 2018 | Nov. 26, 2018 | 1 | 1 | 50 |
| Nov. 25 – Dec. 1, 2018 | Dec. 3, 2018 | 1 | 1 | 50 |
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# GUIDE CATCHES BEAUTIFUL LEOPARD RED OUT OF COCODRIE

## FISH HAS 400 SPOTS; BIT A BERKLEY RATTLE SHRIMP

By Patrick Bonin

Capt. Eric Pellegrin caught this leopard red on Nov. 3 near Wine Island Pass out of Cocodrie. It had about 400 spots, and was fooled by a coastal candy-colored Berkley Rattle Shrimp on a sliding cork rig.

Photo courtesy of Justin Langlois

Capt. Eric Pellegrin was in the midst of a hot trout bite in early November near Wine Island Pass out of Cocodrie when a redfish crashed the party.

But the 33-year-old guide didn't really mind it that time.

"We were catching some beautiful fish — you felt like you had to grab the net for every trout because they were really solid," said Pellegrin, the son of Capt. Tommy Pellegrin, who works with his dad for Custom Charters out of Houma. "The biggest one we had was probably around 3 pounds, but we didn't have to throw a fish back, and we didn't have to measure a thing."

Around 10 a.m., Pellegrin felt the familiar tug of a redfish that hit his coastal candy-colored Berkley Rattle Shrimp he was throwing on a sliding cork rig in about 5 feet of water.

He didn't realize it at the time — but this definitely wasn't your run-of-the-mill red.

"I knew it was a redfish when I was fighting it, but I didn't see it that good until it got to the boat," he said. "When I saw it, I was freaking out."

What Pellegrin and his clients Justin Langlois and Nathan Meiners saw was a spectacular bronze "leopard red," covered in spots on both sides.

"I was like, 'Oh my gosh!' I couldn't believe it. With all the fish I've caught and seen in my life … I never would have expected to catch something like that," he said. "To me, that's a once-in-a-lifetime fish that's more precious to me than my nice buck on the wall."

The spotted redfish was 26 inches long with a 14-inch girth, and tipped the scales at 5.5 pounds.

Catching it was the easy part — counting its spots wasn't.

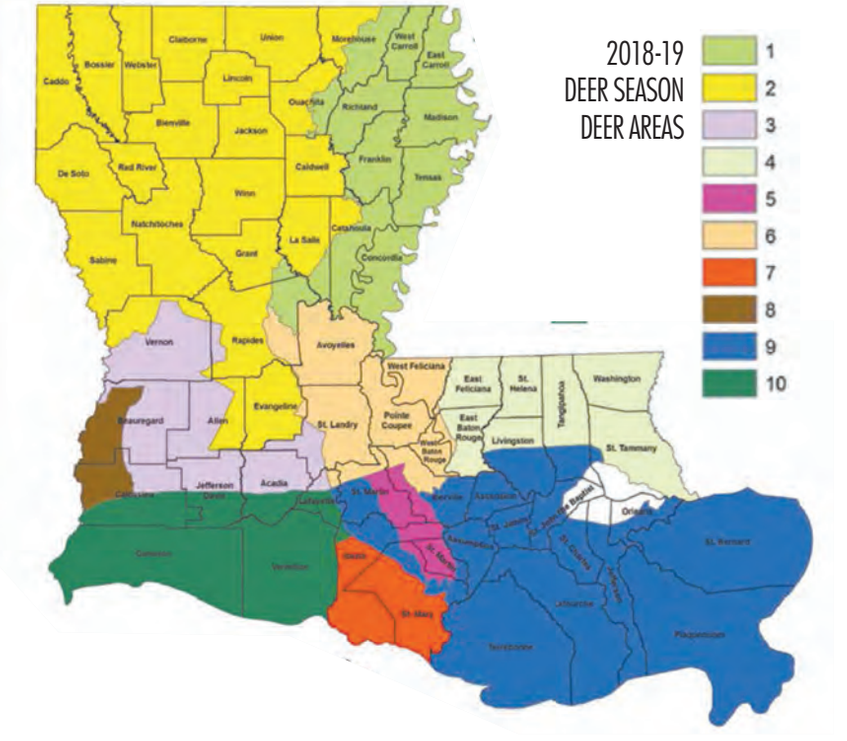
"The best I can say with a good accurate count is it's right at 400 spots total. Keeping track of spots counting on a fish is hard to do," Pellegrin said with a chuckle. "It's not the easiest task in the world. But it was almost identical on each side — I think there was 198 on one side and 202 on the other."

He's still in the process of formulating a plan on how the leopard red will be displayed.

"I'm doing a table piece, or a floor piece with a pedestal," he said. "To me, I would not be doing that fish justice if I just showcased one side of it and did a flat wall mount. I'm 100 percent doing some kind of mount with a scene, whether it be marsh grass with some mullets that it's chasing … I'm going to leave it to the taxidermist at that point."

Out of the hundreds and hundreds of reds he's reeled in, he's looking forward to getting back a mount he'll cherish — to commemorate a day he won't ever forget.

"I'm still trying to take this all in," Pellegrin said. "It's not something you ever dream about happening." ■




# DECEMBER RUT CALENDARS

Deer season is about at its halfway point, and while rutting activity has already wrapped up in some parts of the state, it's slated to kick into high gear in other areas.

In Area 2 in Northwest Louisiana, the second breeding period is forecast to end about Dec. 6.

After that, hunters will have to concentrate on food sources for any shot at bucks.

Deer in Areas 4 and 9 will be wrapping up the first rut on or about Dec. 6, with the second scraping period estimated to run from Dec. 7 through Dec. 21. The second breeding period is forecast for Dec. 22 through Jan. 4.

In the Mississippi Delta and upper- and lower-Atchafalaya Basin, the pre-rut is slated to wrap up on Dec. 6, with the first scraping period running Dec. 7 through Dec. 21, immediately followed by the first rut, Dec. 22 through Jan. 4. ■

**DECEMBER 2018** — **Areas 4 & 9**

| 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 Second Scraping Period Ends | 22 Second Breeding Period Starts |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | |

**DECEMBER 2018** — **Area 2**

| 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 | 31 | | | | | |

**DECEMBER 2018** — **Areas 1, 5 & 6**

| 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 First Scraping Period Ends | 22 First Breeding Period Starts |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | |

# FORMER LSU QB TACKLES 167-INCH MONSTER

## LANE KNOCKS DOWN BIG 14-POINT NEAR EAST CARROLL PARISH

It's a well-known fact that on the football field, LSU and Ole Miss are mortal enemies: Very little love is lost between the two state-line rivals.

Although it may be difficult to imagine, a former Ole Miss quarterback passed up the chance to down a huge 14-point buck, and handed the honor over to a former LSU QB. That Ole Miss guy is Bob Lane — and the LSU fellow is his 59-year-old dad, Robert Lane.

"My son and I hunt on a 7,600-acre property, Pittman-Hogue Island, a group of us purchased in East Carroll Parish," Robert said. "Actually, the land is technically in Mississippi, although it lies west of the Mississippi River. An old river boundary that marks the boundary between the two states makes a loop around our property. The river is to our east, but Pittman-Hogue Island is determined to be in Mississippi. We abide by Mississippi fish and game laws."

The club has some rather strict rules about bucks that can be taken on the property. A buck has to have at least 10 points, and must be 5 ½ years of age or older.

And just such a buck started appearing on game cameras before bow season in 2017.

"Last year, this was a fine deer but we felt it was somewhat short of the minimum we shoot," he said. "He had a drop tine on his left antler but lacked just a little being a shooter, so we decided to let him go, hoping he'd survive to this season."

In August prior to bow season opening, the buck began appearing on camera and according to Lane, its characteristics had exploded. "DT," which was the big buck's nickname for its drop tine, was a definite shooter this season.

"My son and I hunt from a Primos ground blind that allows you to see out, but a deer can't see in. On Monday, opening afternoon and Tuesday, my son and I sat in the blind together, he with a bow and me with a camera — I wanted him to get the deer while I filmed the hunt. Although several bucks came out both afternoons, DT was not one of them," Lane said.

As Friday rolled around, the elder Lane was faced with a dilemma: He could hunt that afternoon, but his son had other obligations and couldn't go.

"I asked my son 'Would I be a terrible dad if I went hunting without you and got DT?' He quickly said go ahead, that I was deserving of a chance at him, so somewhat reluctantly, I went," Lane said.

The temperature was approaching 90 degrees that day in early October late as he climbed into the blind. As he waited, deer began coming out and suddenly, out walked DT.

"I said a little prayer… 'Lord, don't let me do anything to mess this deer up. If he presents himself, let me make a perfect shot.' It was as if the Lord answered my prayer immediately as the buck turned broadside at 16 yards and I released my arrow," Lane said.

The buck traveled about 90 yards, and with the help of two young members of the club, was recovered.

The 14-point hammer sported a main frame 10-point rack with four additional points, including the drop tine. The 220-pound buck, aged at 5 ½ years old, was green-scored at a whopping 167 3/8 inches of bone.

"I shot him with an old Darton bow I've used for the last 20-plus years," Lane noted. "My impression of this event is that an old man, shooting an old bow and an old arrow, shot an old deer." ▪

**Desoto Parish >**

Robert Lane poses with 'DT,' a big 14-point buck he arrowed on Oct. 4 on Pittman-Hogue Island, near East Carroll Parish. The big deer green-scored a whopping 167 3/8 inches of bone.

## DEER GALLERY

All stories by Glynn Harris

**Desoto Parish 13-point:** Page 20

**Jeff Davis 11-point** Page 22

**Sabine Parish 10-point** Page 23

**Tensas Parish 11-point:** Page 24

**Union Parish 10-pointer:** Page 26

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# 13-POINT DESOTO PARISH BUCK BITES THE DUST

## VACATION TIME WELL SPENT FOR 155-INCH-PLUS DEER

Trip Taylor downed this big DeSoto Parish 13-pointer on Oct. 24.

The number 13 might be considered unlucky by some, but it's probably one of Trip Taylor's favorites now.

The 29-year-old deer hunter from Greenwood had been seeing photos of a monster 13-pointer on trail cameras on the 300 acres he hunts in DeSoto Parish — and decided to use up vacation time in an attempt to down the buck.

His plan finally came together on Oct. 24.

"My dad and a friend and I have access to a 300-acre tract of land near Longstreet in DeSoto Parish. We just acquired access to the land last year; the property is primarily a pine plantation. We didn't really know what the deer herd looked like on the property, although we had seen enough to get our interest level up," Taylor said. "However, it wasn't until this past August just before the season opened that we found this big buck on our cameras.

"He was showing up at night but also at various times during the day. This is why I decided to take my vacation during a week I felt like I might see him."

Taylor hunts from a box stand overlooking three shooting lanes with food plots, each lane being about 150 yards long.

On Day 1 of his vacation, he sat on his stand from daylight to dark and although he saw some deer, the one he had his eyes on never showed up. Days 2, 3 and 4 were virtual repeats of the first day, and Taylor was becoming a bit discouraged, wondering if his vacation would end without seeing the buck.

"I had gotten down to Day Five, my last day of vacation before having to go back to work. I hunted that morning with no sightings," he said. "By mid-afternoon on the fifth day, it started to rain and was stormy, and I felt the game was over. However, I hung with the stand and was determined to ride it out until dark."

With less than half an hour to go, Taylor watched a small 3-point buck step out of the thicket some 175 yards away and begin feeding on a patch of buck forage oats he had planted on his food plots.

"Right behind the 3-point, the big boy finally stepped out. As it continued to rain and darkness was approaching, I was frustrated because the smaller buck obscured any chance for a shot at the big buck. Finally with no more than 20 minutes of daylight left, he stepped from behind the little one," he said. "I put the crosshairs of my .35 Whelen on his shoulder, squeezed the trigger and thankfully, the buck dropped right there so we didn't have to follow a blood trail in the dark and rain."

The buck was a brute, not only weighing 220 pounds, but with a rack that was genuinely impressive. A mainframe 10-point, the deer had three additional sticker points, with an inside spread of 17 inches and heavy mass throughout.

The buck was aged at 4 ½ years, and green-scored between 155 and 160 inches. ■

**Jeff Davis >**

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Britt Buller shot this big Jeff Davis Parish 11-pointer on Oct. 27. The buck green-scored 146 inches.

# GIANT JEFF DAVIS 11-POINT CAPS OFF WILD WEEK

## BULLER SHOOTS THREE BUCKS OVER THREE DAYS — INCLUDING ONE THAT GREEN-SCORED 146 INCHES

They say good things come in threes — and Britt Buller proved it during a wild stretch of hunting late last month in Jeff Davis Parish.

The 18-year-old from Kinder filled his buck tags in three successive days: On Oct. 25 and 26, he shot two 8-points, then finished up on Oct. 27 with a big 11-pointer measuring 146 inches.

If you're counting, that's 27 antler points in just three days.

"I live in Kinder in Jeff Davis Parish with my parents and three sisters, and I hunt on our family land just across the highway from were we live," Buller said.

His wild week began after he returned from a trip to Oklahoma.

"After those two exciting days when I got 8-points two days in a row, my dad and a friend and I headed to the woods to hunt Saturday morning. Along about 8, my dad sent me a text suggesting that we call off the hunt; nothing seemed to be moving. I had this feeling based on the fact that there was a full moon this week, the deer would be moving later," Buller said. "So I asked if we could stay just a little bit longer, and dad agreed we would give it just a little more time."

Although the family did not put out cameras this year, Buller found several rubs on trees the size of his thigh, so he know there was a big buck hanging out in those woods. He felt like if he stayed with it just a bit longer, there was a chance this big one might show up — and it did.

"As it was getting near the time when I'd have to leave my ladder stand propped against a big pine, a doe suddenly ran across one of my lanes where I have corn and rice bran out as an attractant," he said. "She didn't stop to eat; she was in a hurry. Within a few seconds after she left the lane, I caught movement behind her and this buck with a head full of horns appeared behind her at about 100 yards."

But the buck was trotting at a good clip, and when Buller finally got the scope of his Browning 7 mag on the deer just before it disappeared into the thicket, the crosshairs settled behind the shoulder and he hit the trigger.

The buck ran only 10 yards before collapsing.

"When I saw the buck hit the ground, I was pretty shaken up because I could see from the rack that this was the biggest buck I ever shot," he said. "When I got down to where the buck was piled up, I was even more impressed — the rack was really big."

The buck had 11 points on a massive rack, with inside spread of 18 inches. The deer, which weighed about 160 pounds, was green-scored at 146 inches. ▪

# THIRD SUSPECTED CWD CASE DISCOVERED IN MISSISSIPPI

## ISSAQUENA COUNTY DOE COLLECTED ON NOV. 1 TESTS POSITIVE

Mississippi appeared to have located its third known deer with chronic wasting disease — and the first doe to be discovered with the deadly protein-based illness — when a 2 ½ year old female deer was collected and tested in early November.

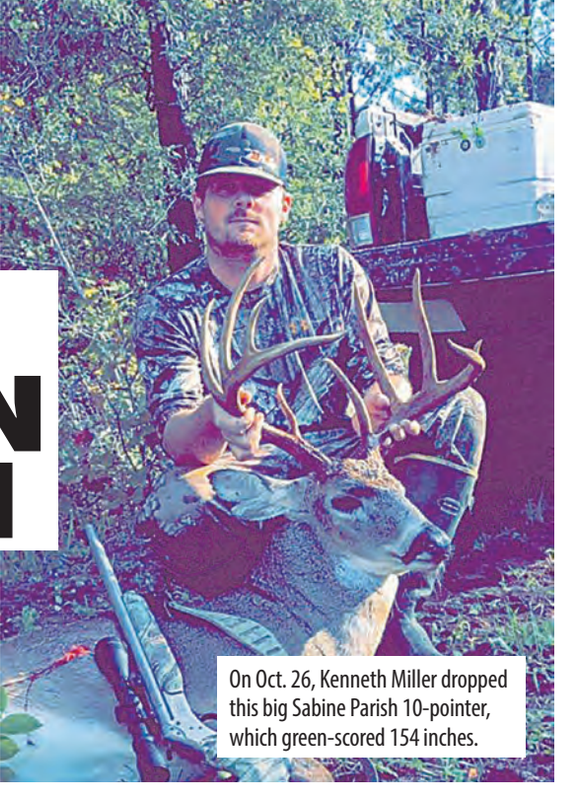
The deer tested positive for CWD initially, and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks said samples had been sent to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Iowa for additional testing.

The doe was collected in Issaquena County, the same county where CWD was first confirmed in the state last January when a buck there tested positive for the protein-based disease that is 100 percent fatal to cervids, like elk, white-tailed deer and mule deer.

Hunters there are advised not to dress deer exhibiting signs of illness or disease. Instead, contact the MDWFP at 1-800-BE-SMART (800-237-6278) ▪

# NICE 10-POINT GOES DOWN IN SABINE PARISH

## MILLER'S BIG BUCK GREEN SCORES 154 INCHES OF BONE



On Oct. 26, Kenneth Miller dropped this big Sabine Parish 10-pointer, which green-scored 154 inches.

Friday, Oct. 26 was the last day of primitive firearms season in Area 2 — and Kenneth Miller took full advantage of the final hours of that season.

The 30-year-old DeQuincy construction supervisor wanted to use his CVA .45-70 before regular rifle season opened the following day, and he got the chance when a 154-inch 10-point stepped into his sight picture.

"I checked the weather and saw that a front was scheduled to move through the latter part of the week — a front that would lower temperatures and perhaps make the deer move," Miller said. "I hadn't killed a deer so far this season, so I asked my boss if I could have the rest of the week off, and he agreed, so a friend and I hit the road for the 80-mile trip to our hunting club in Sabine Parish."

Miller's club, MC Hunting Club, is located just east of Florien and consists of 50 members hunting more than 15,000 acres of land owned by a timber company. Each member has his own area, and Miller selected a place to erect his tripod stand that is bounded on one side by tall mature pines, and planted pines 6 to 7 feet tall on the other side.

"Sitting in my stand, I'm looking at some fire breaks in the small pines as well as a skidder lane out front," he said. "I planted Buck Busters blend on the lane, as well as put out some rice bran to attract the deer."

Miller and his friend had hunted Thursday morning and afternoon and saw some deer, but nothing they wanted to shoot. Friday morning things changed for the better.

"I was sitting on my stand watching five does feeding on the lane when they all suddenly went on alert and quickly took off," he said. "I wondered if perhaps I had moved or they winded me, but then I saw movement in the young pines.

"I could see a deer and antlers — but I had no idea what kind of buck this was."

One particular buck had been on his trail camera a year ago, a fine deer with an 8-point rack. This season, some of his friends had camera images of a big 10-point — and Miller hoped this was that particular buck.

"When I spotted the buck that had stopped in the pines, I eased my rifle up, peered through the scope and could tell it was a pretty good one," he said. "The buck made a step clearing the pines and I was ready, squeezing the trigger and watched it take off at the shot. I felt good about my shot because I could see a bloody spot behind his shoulder as he ran."

After texting his friend, they eventually walked down to where the buck was standing when it was shot, and they found evidence of a hit. They walked into the woods less than 20 yards, and saw the white belly of the buck on the ground.

"We just looked at each other, high-fived and realized I'd shot not a 'pretty good buck,' but a really good buck," he said.

The 165-pound buck sported 10 points with an inside spread of 17 inches, and had 10-inch brow tines and good mass and length throughout. Miller's taxidermist measured the rack at 154 inches of bone. ▪

**Tensas Parish >**

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# IMPRESSIVE 11-POINTER ARROWED IN TENSAS PARISH

## HUSTED'S 260-POUNDER STRETCHES THE TAPE TO 150 INCHES

Vicki Husted busted this imipressive Tensas Parish 11-pointer that green-scored 150 inches of bone.

During the 2008-09 deer season, Monroe's Vicki Husted earned the No. 11 spot in the state's big buck record books for non-typical archery when she arrowed a Tensas Parish monster scoring 172 3/8

Two seasons later in 2010, Husted arrowed another unbelievable buck — one that currently resides in first place in the non-typical archery listing with an unreal score of 227 6/8 inches.

But that was then, and this is now.

Husted had her eye on a beautiful typical buck this season, one that had not shown itself in daylight, only teasing and tantalizing

her with nighttime trail camera photos.

"This is an impressive buck and one I wanted to try and get a chance at, but with the deer not showing up during daylight, chances were iffy at best," she said.

But on the afternoon of Oct. 21, Vicki's husband Billy dropped her off at a ground blind she likes to hunt.

"This particular blind is situated next to a food plot where we had forage planted, along with putting out some soybeans to attract deer. I was sitting in my blind that afternoon and to avoid being too visible, I had closed three of the four openings on the blind — leaving only the one facing the food plot open," she said. "My plan was to try and arrow a doe for venison at the camp."

As the afternoon wore one, things were relatively quiet until she saw movement to one side. She took a peek out one of the closed windows and saw four bucks: Three were small to average, but one of the bucks was a big one — obviously the dominant of the four.

"As I watched them, the big one kept threatening and running at the others to keep them away. He slowly began to work his way feeding along toward the area where we had soybeans out and as I watched him, I realized he looked an awful lot like nighttime photos of the big one I had seen on camera," she said. "The closer he got, the more nervous I got and when he finally worked his way to in front of my blind at 20 steps, I put the pin on his vitals and released the arrow.

"I shoot a Hoyt bow with a Shuttle T-lock broadhead. I heard a loud thump when it hit the deer and I was afraid I had missed where I was aiming and hit a shoulder blade instead."

Sitting for a while as the afternoon wore on, Husted finally exited the blind and looked for evidence of a hit. Finding none, she walked to the last spot she saw the buck next to a dense briar patch. She did find a spot of blood there, and texted her husband with the news: He told her to wait until he came to help her search.

"When Billy got there and saw that the deer had run into this impenetrable briar thicket, he called a member of our group who has a blood-trailing dog. He arrived with the dog and walked around the thicket to find the deer lying dead just on the other side. I had hit him just right where I was aiming," Husted said.

The body of the buck was huge, estimated to weigh in the 260-pound range. The mainframe 10-point typical rack carried a small sticker, giving it 11 total points. The inside spread was 20 inches wide, and the green-score came in at 150 inches.

"It may not be another state record," said Husted, "but this is the heaviest buck I have ever killed." ■

**Union Parish >**


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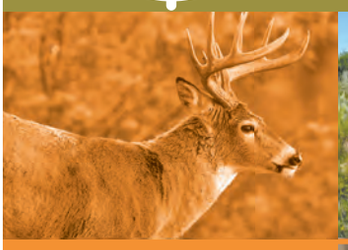

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# BIG UNION PARISH 10-POINTER GOES DOWN

## RISINGER'S BUCK GREEN-SCORES NORTH OF 145 INCHES

On Oct. 29, Todd Risinger busted this big Union Parish buck on Oct. 29 that green-scored north of 145 inches.

As the owner of a construction company, West Monroe's Todd Risinger is able to follow his passion for deer hunting — and that typically means a trip up to Illinois in the fall to bowhunt big bucks up there.

But just before heading north this year, he had a big Union Parish buck that he head seen on trail cameras on his mind. So on Oct. 29, he decided to see if he could rendezvous with the big Corney Creek bottom buck before heading north — and that very morning he came face to face with the big 10-pointer.

"Since the rut in Illinois occurs at the same time ours does here in Louisiana, I don't get to experience it here at home because I'm usually gone," Risinger said. "It's been a long time since I heard the grunt of a rutting Louisiana buck, and I wanted to have the chance before heading north."

Climbing into a box stand on Barnes Bridge Hunting Club in Union Parish, Risinger settled in to wait for a chance at the buck.

"This was a special morning," he said. "I got to watch a coyote running back and forth across my shooting lane and saw several does — including one with an unusual double white throat patch. While I was enjoying the morning watching all this, I heard a buck grunt behind me," he said.

The stand Risinger was hunting gives a view of the Corney Creek bottom on one side, and an old abandoned field that is now a pine plantation on the other. The grunting Risinger heard was coming from the pines, and he could tell it was headed in his direction and closing distance fairly quickly.

"I put my Browning .270 out one window of the blind thinking he was coming on that side. Then I saw movement out the other window and there he stood only 20 steps from me. I was fortunate the buck was looking the other way, and I was able to switch windows and get my gun out. Looking through the scope, he was so close all I could see was brown but I found his vitals and squeezed off a shot. The buck bolted and ran and I was concerned at first as I felt the shot was a bit far back," he said. "Fortunately, the buck ran only some 20 yards before collapsing.

"Hunting in Illinois, I have taken some good-sized bucks, and when I tried to get this buck loaded into my truck, I realized I had shot a really nice-sized Louisiana buck. It was all I could do to get him in the back of my truck," he said.

The buck weighed 210 pounds, and carried 10 points on a symmetrical rack with a 15 ½ inch inside spread, long tines and mass throughout. It green-scored 145 4/8 inches.

"Every buck you hunt has a story," Risinger said. "And I feel real fortunate to be able to get the one Louisiana buck I was hunting." ▪

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Making mock scrapes is a great way to provoke a dominant buck — and it just might be the tactic that puts a big deer in your crosshairs.

By Chris Ginn

# SCRAPING BY

Washington Parish deer hunters Tim Haik and Michael Williams aren't necessarily control freaks, but there is no doubt both would rather make something happen than sit around waiting for something to happen.

That's why both men are proponents of using mock scrapes during deer season — and not just during the rut.

Rather than sitting back in their climbers and waiting on a buck to work a scrape line during daylight hours, they dive head first into the middle of that line and do whatever it takes to make that buck think it stands a very good chance of losing all its hot does to a new buck on the block.

Both men have successfully made mock scrapes from Missouri to Alabama, and their curiosity made them start trying the tactic here in Louisiana.

What they found was that Louisiana deer aren't as different as many people think.

"Mock scrapes definitely work in Louisiana," Williams said. "I know people say all that crazy stuff they see hunters doing on TV won't work here, but that's mainly because they just feel silly trying stuff like that. But the proof is what you throw in the back of your truck after you pull this crazy stuff."

**MAKING SENSE OF SCRAPES** UP NEXT >

>

## MAKING SENSE OF SCRAPES

Most deer hunters know the excitement that comes with finding a fresh scrape in the woods, but few of us have given them much thought beyond where to hang our stands.

Understanding why deer make scrapes — and how they use them — will go a long way toward successfully scratching out your own imitations.

Scrapes are typically associated with the rut, but bucks begin their initial scraping activity way before breeding begins.

"Deer use scrapes to communicate," Williams said. "It's more of a deer identification system. Deer are naturally curious animals, especially if something is tearing up the dirt or raking back leaves in their woods. When they see a scrape, they're going to sniff it out."

They're also going to know the scent of every local deer in their core area. If a doe comes in and urinates in a scrape, that buck is going to be able to recognize it. Later on during the rut, that buck is going to know if that doe is ready to breed.

"A deer's sense of smell is its life," Williams said. "Each one is different. A buck is going to know if another buck comes into its range. They have glands at different parts of their bodies — eyes, base of antlers, back legs — and they use them to leave scent all over a scrape and the branches right above it."

## THE DEVIL'S IN THE DETAILS

Raking back a pile of leaves or pine straw to expose bare dirt underneath doesn't seem like it would be all that specialized, but Haik and Williams know there is a bit more to it if they hope for a deer to actually visit the spot they created.

"There's not much to it, but you've got to do it right to attract attention," Haik said. "I generally take a rake with me to make one, or I just grab a stick in a pinch. I've also thrown one of those handheld 3-prong garden cultivators in my bag and use it. Any of it will work to pull the ground cover back."

After clearing the ground, Haik pulls out his pocket knife and starts shaving off slivers of VS1 estrus scent by ConQuest Scents before smearing it down into the scrape. Then he'll mark up the surrounding trees with the same scent.

He then goes to work on a fake licking branch right above his fake scrape. Being that he hunts Washington Parish a lot, he typically selects a privet hedge branch and starts to mash it with a pair of pliers.

"I'll go to town on it pretty good," Haik said. "Crushing the branch lets it soak up a lot of the scent I put on it. I'll also pull

Try to rile up a big buck by making a large mock scrape right in the middle of an established scrape line. **FACING PAGE:** A deer that has been fooled by a mock scrape will often drag its hoof right through the middle of it.

the branch to rough up the leaves to make it look like a buck has been hooking it a little bit."

He's been experimenting a lot lately with a preorbital gland scent on the licking branch.

"Deer have this gland in the corner of their eyes that has a waxy kind of substance in it that gets on the licking branch," Haik said. "I found some online — it's the Smokey's Deer Lures out of Kentucky. I've been trying their forehead gland lure on the licking branch. That scent tells other deer that this is his area."

And rather than being a miser when it comes to putting out scent, Haik doesn't think it's possible to overdo it — the more scent he can put in a mock scrape, the more attractive he feels it will be.

"I'll even wrap up by pouring some buck urine in the scrape with the doe estrus that's already there," he said. "I'm trying to tick off a dominant deer, and all this scent is just the thing to do it."

While putting out deer scent, Haik takes precautions to reduce or totally eliminate his own. He wears rubber gloves and rubber boots while making a mock scrape, and he sprays down all the tools he uses with scent-killing spray.

**SELECTING LOCATIONS** UP NEXT >

## SELECTING LOCATIONS

Running out in the woods and making a mock scrape anywhere could very well get the attention of a passing deer, but knowing *where* to make them is just as important as knowing *how* to make them.

"If you're just looking to kill a deer, you can make mock scrapes just about any place on your property that deer use regularly, like the edge of a food plot," Williams said. "But if you want to kill a big buck, you've got to figure out where his core area is and look for a place where you would think there would be a scrape.

"If there's not one there, make one."

Some locations where Williams has had success in the past include old logging roads and small ridges. The key to picking the best spot in these larger areas is to locate overhanging limbs that are about antler-high on a mature buck.

Perhaps the easiest way to implement mock scrapes on your property is to find an active scrape line — and put a fake one right in the middle of it.

"This works great for making whatever buck is running those scrapes to take notice," Williams said. "Get in there and make one bigger than all the other ones you see and add a lot of scent to them. When that buck comes back to check his scrapes, he's going to stumble across the one you made and absolutely tear it up."

Williams added that the next time you check a mock scrape in the middle of an established scrape line, you'll more than likely find a huge track right in the middle of the dirt.

That's as good a sign as any that the buck knows there is an invader in its space, and it's signalling to the visitor that it's not at all welcome.

Because he typically bowhunts all season long, Haik prefers to locate his mock scrapes in locations that will bring deer within bow range.

"I'm generally hunting some kind of funnel or travel route," Haik said, "so I like to make mock scrapes in those kinds of areas. One of the things that seems to work really well is finding a big cow oak dropping acorns within a funnel, or along a trail and making one underneath it."

Mock scrapes work great when bucks first start checking out does at the beginning of the rut.

## TIMING MOCK SCRAPES

Haik has killed deer over mock scrapes in Washington Parish as early as the first week of November, which might seem a little unusual since the rut doesn't kick off in that region until late December.

"I put them out early because bucks are ready to breed as soon as they shed their velvet," Haik said. "I killed an 8-point on Nov. 2 a few years ago that was running to one of my mock scrapes with his nose to the ground like a dog."

Making a mock scrape before all the local does actually come into estrus seems like a good way of attracting some early attention from a dominant buck. At the very least, your local bucks are going to come investigate an early scrape because they're ready — even if the local does aren't.

Williams agreed that getting started early is a good idea.

"Guys check out girls," he said. "A guy might not be fully interested in a girl for whatever reason, but as soon as he smells that perfume she's wearing when she walks by, he's going to pick his head up and take notice. So even if your bucks aren't fully committed to breeding, they're still going to check out the smell of a doe."

Of course, putting out mock scrapes during the peak of the rut should be considered standard practice if you're going to make some: Just don't forget about giving them a try early to see what happens.

**HOW TO HUNT THEM**
UP NEXT >

# The 2018-2019 DONATE A DEER Campaign has Arrived!

**Hunters for the Hungry's annual "Donate a Deer" campaign is officially under way. Hunters can donate all or part of their harvest from the field to a designated HFH processor on the list. Deer must be field dressed upon donation, and are processed AT NO COST to the hunter. All protein is donated to area charities and food pantries. Thank you for joining us in our mission to help families in need!**

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| Bossier | Bellevue Meat Processing |
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| Franklin | PoBoy Farm Meats |
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| Ibberville | Roucher's Meat Market |
| Iberia | G & M Processing |
| Jefferson | Badeaux Wild Game |
| Jefferson | Pat Givenco's Deer Depot |
| Lafayette | Little Veron's |
| Lafayette | Southern Deer Processing |
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| Livingston | Caitoir's Whitetail Smokehouse |
| Madison | 2 Bucks Meat Processing |
| Madison | Powers Processing |
| Morehouse | Hammond's Deer Processing |
| Natchitoches | Dietrich's Processing |
| Natchitoches | M & M Grocery |
| Natchitoches | Troy's Butcher Shop |
| Ouachita Parish | Whetstone's Deer Processing |
| Point Coupee | Bayou Shack Café |
| Point Coupee | Kelly's Cajun Specialties |
| Rapides | Martin Meats |
| Tangipahoa | Tangi Meats |
| Tensas | Laurel Oak Smokehouse |
| Union | Dean's Slaughterhouse |
| Vermillion | Circle V Meat Processing |
| Webster | Payne Farm Processing |
| West Feliciana | Feliciana Seafood & Deli |

>

## HOW TO HUNT THEM

Making a mock scrape and then hanging a stand within sight of it probably isn't going to give you the results you want.

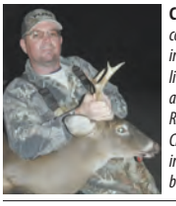
Rather than hunting near your mock scrape, Williams and Haik recommended backing off of it to the downwind side of deer trails the buck you're hunting is using to work those scrapes.

Williams even likes to pull out his grunt call when hunting a mock scrape.

The trick to killing big bucks off mock scrapes is to set up where you can spot them working the scrapes from downwind.

"An aggressive buck is not quiet," he said. "I'll hit the grunt call a few times because you've got to do some stuff out of the ordinary to make him think there is another buck there chasing one of his does. Crashing a few limbs right around you might be good, too. It's just as good as rattling as long as you don't make it sound like a stick just broke and fell out of a tree — that's not going to get his attention. Try to make it sound like the limbs are hitting antlers."

So if you're tired of sitting in your stand just hoping a buck walks your way, it's time to take matters into your own hands with mock scrapes — and make it happen. ▪



**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.*

## CHURCH POINT BUSINESS BOTTLES FRESH

# DOE-IN-HEAT URINE

Anglers would be the first to tell you that fresh is best. I mean, who wants to eat freezer-burned speckled trout fillets a year after they were caught?

Straight from the lake to the plate — that's where it's at.

Gardeners and farmers' market connoisseurs will tell you the same thing. Farm-to-plate and field-to-plate are great ways to eat because they provide the freshest ingredients possible.

Why in the world, then, would anybody want to buy deer urine that's over a year old?

Tim Thibodeaux, owner of TT's Buck Wild Deer Scent out of Church Point, decided a few years ago that the principles that applied to fresh food could also be applied to deer scents for hunters.

"We have real doe-in-heat urine because we collect fresh urine from does that are actually in heat," he said. "And it's just as fresh when you purchase it. Rather than have to produce it a year ahead just so we can get it to market, we collect it and bottle it at the same time. The TT's doe urine you're using today was collected a week or two ago."

Thibodeaux equated using TT's Buck Wild doe-in-heat urine to eating a good, fresh piece of tuna versus eating tuna out of a can.

"Because we offer urine this season that was collected this season, we don't have to add all the additives to keep it fresh and from turning into ammonia," Thibodeaux said. "And to make it even better, we run all our collections through a stainless steel system rather than metal because urine is so acidic it eats up that metal, which ultimately contaminates the urine."

Thibodeaux said the TT's product is great for spraying boots, or using on drag rags tied to boots. And some hunters have told him they've been using it along lanes and pipelines about every 40 or 50 feet so the wind carries the scent into the woods.

The makers of TT's Buck Wild Deer Scents out of Church Point believe fresh doe urine is better at attracting wary bucks.

"If a buck is cruising a thicket off that pipeline, he's going to smell it," Thibodeaux said. "He's going to cross that pipeline and go to the scent rag. That's why you want to make sure you put it out on the upwind side of the pipeline — to get him to cross that lane and give you a shot.

"And, yes, it will work great in a mock scrape."

For more information about Thibodeaux's doe-in-heat urine, search for TT's Buck Wild Deer Scents on Facebook, or call 865-250-5856. ■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# 'HALFTIME' BUCKS

The midpoint of the season is approaching, so it might be time to change up your game plan, make any necessary adjustments and then head back into the woods to pull out the second-half win.

By Kinny Haddox

In sports, it's better to be ahead than behind at halftime. But it's what you do with halftime adjustments and what you're able to accomplish in the second half of the game that usually determines whether you win or not.

It's the same way in deer hunting — especially when big bucks are your goal.

Curtis Simpson of West Monroe is well known for his deer hunting success, but what a lot of people don't know is that he often uses the first half of the season to set up the second. Curtis is a bowhunter, but whether you use arrows, primitive weapons or guns, the same principles apply.

"December has been good to me as a deer hunter, but it is because I use all my preparation and all my patience to help make it that way," he said. "A lot of times guys will see big bucks on their trail cams or in the woods and crash in there on them. That's a huge mistake.

"The odds are in your favor the second half, but you can't shoot yourself in the foot during the first half by letting them know you are there. If you do that, those big deer probably won't come out except at night."

## DO NOT DISTURB

That's a common complaint these days: Deer are becoming more nocturnal. But Simpson said if you're quiet, calm and don't disturb the big deer in the first half — you are a lot more likely to get a good shot in December or January.

One reason they become nocturnal is because they feel threatened all the time.

"Deer usually get into the first rut the week of Thanksgiving and in the weeks following, so that's when the odds turn in your favor as the big bucks let their guard down some," he said. So you have to study big deer and figure out their weaknesses, just like football coaches do with their opponents.

>

## And properly using trail cameras is an excellent way to do that.

Simply seeing a big buck on a deer cam won't help you kill it, but Simpson said if you can determine a pattern, that's key. Use trail cams to help you position yourself as close to the bedding area as possible without spooking a big deer.

If your cams are showing nice deer at 11 p.m. or 2 a.m., you are too far from where they are bedding. When you see them right at dusk or daylight, you know you have caught one close to where it's laying up.

But if you get too close and let it know you've been there — you can forget it. One thing that you hear about deer hunting that is 100 percent true is that the older they get, the wiser they get.

In fact, one time Simpson had been seeing a big deer on his camera, but noticed the buck didn't show back up in the woods or on his camera for two or three days after he hunted.

Simpson later realized that when he parked his truck, even though he was a half-mile away, his lights were shining across a clear-cut into the deer's bedding spot. The buck simply refused to come out for days when it knew something was going on.

"Let me tell you, the big bucks will pattern you way before you can pattern them," he said. "That's how they become big bucks."

**TOP CAMERA TIPS** UP NEXT

Curtis Simpson sets up on deer as close to bedding areas as possible to improve his chances of seeing a trophy during daylight hours.

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## TOP CAMERA TIPS

Other camera tips Simpson suggested include putting out cameras with gloves on, placing them 30 to 36 inches high and always being quiet. Never crash into a deer's bedding area to put up a camera. And never cross the trail you think it's traveling to put up a camera or check it. Always study your deer cam photos carefully to determine the direction deer are moving.

Simpson said there is one thing that overrules cameras in the second half — a fresh scrape or rub. If you find an active scrape, hunt it. You'll never see all the deer on a trail cam, but if there's a hot scrape, there's a buck coming by regularly.

It's also all about the food in the second half of the season.

Simpson said deer are a little more spooky around food piles than they are natural browse, but stuff like corn and rice bran attract does.

And during the rut, if you see a doe come to a feeder or food plot while nervously looking over its shoulder, there's probably a big buck close by.

If acorns are still plentiful — especially white oak acorns — and you can find a good spot close to a bedding area nearby, that's also a good spot to find big deer.

Besides the rut, there is one other thing that will get a big buck up on its feet — a cold front.

If you can hunt right before, during or the morning after a cold front, you are more likely to see deer moving. And the more you see deer moving, the more likely you'll see big ones move.

Simpson offered one final tip for the remainder of the season.

"You know how coaches always hold out a special play or two for the second half in case they need it?" he said. "Same with deer hunting: I've mentioned it before, but if you know you are on a big buck, but he is not showing himself, don't go in there looking for him. Learn as much as you can about him. Wait on him to come to you.

"And remember the odds are better in your favor if you wait until the second half. You've got to, as they say in football, 'Play the whole 60 minutes.'" ▪



**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.*

**PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE** UP NEXT

## GEARING UP FOR THE SECOND HALF

Curtis Simpson has a clear offensive and defensive game plan for winning the second half of deer hunting. On defense, that includes a 'common scents' approach to keep his foe off balance. On offense, it means scoring points using his 'best players.'

Here's how he does it:

## COMMON 'SCENTS' ON DEFENSE

They say defense wins championships in football — and Simpson believes the same thing in trophy deer hunting.

His defense consists of a well-organized ScentLok lineup that takes away much of big buck's home field advantage. Most of his shots are under 35 yards, so to get deer that close, he has to defend from them sensing his presence.

"I keep all my ScentLok gear in airtight Rubbermaid storage boxes, and I keep them in the back of my truck," he said. "I've got a locking cover and I never take them out. I keep my clothes in one, my rubber and insulated boots in one, my backpack in one and extra gear in another. I never get dressed in my ScentLok clothes until I get to the woods. I have a heavy rubber door mat that I throw on the ground to stand on while getting dressed."

He always goes out of his way to block his scent, but it's even more important in the second half of the season when the deer are more on edge after seeing and hearing hunters in the woods.

"I keep my backpack and everything I take to the woods in a container, so they are never exposed to anything, anywhere, except the woods," he said. "I use Wildlife Research

White oak acorns are a favorite food of big whitetails.

Curtis Simpson uses ScentLok clothing and keeps all his gear in airtight boxes to eliminate any chance of extra scent in the woods. He even waits to get dressed until he parks his truck to head to his stand.

Center Super Charged Scent Killer Spray on everything as added protection."

## DEPENDABLE PLAYERS ANCHOR THE OFFENSE

With the defense working, Simpson turns to the offensive attack using his hunting MVP — a Mathews Heli-M bow that he has shot for more than 10 years.

He uses an Optimizer Ultra One-Pin Sight and a QAD Ultra arrow rest. His objective, obviously, is to score — hopefully with heavy racks featuring eight, 10 or even 12 points.

One thing in most archery hunters' playbook is a wrist strap, but Simpson put his on the bench years ago.

"The wrist strap was mostly to keep the bow from jumping out of your hand, but the modern bows are so smooth that shouldn't happen now," he said. "Frankly, it's the best thing I ever did. Not having a wrist strap makes it so much easier to get your bow ready and hang it back up.

"That little bit of extra movement could give you away if a big one is eyeing you out of the thicket."

There is a lot of good archery equipment on the market, but Simpson uses only what he knows works for him — a Mathews Heli-M bow, Maxima Red Carbon Express arrows and Rage Chisel Tips.

He uses a loop on his bowstring and a Scott Archery S-Horn release. It's simple and easy to get on and off the loop without having to look, he says.

His ammo is a Maxima Red Carbon Express arrows with Rage Chisel Tip blades. The arrows are forgiving at different draw weights, and the broadhead has a devastating point for quick kills. ■

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# PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

Studying — but staying away from big deer until the second half of the season — has led to two of the biggest deer Curtis Simpson has ever killed.

One of his best trophies is a nearly 5-year-old 10-point killed in 2015. He saw the deer for the first time in 2012, but it didn't look like much. He saw the buck regularly on camera the next year when it was 3 ½ years old.

But the deer (Photo 1) had a terrible looking rack and a right front leg injury, possibly from being hit by a vehicle. So Simpson let the deer pass.

Gimpy legged and scraggly racked, Simpson let this deer pass in 2013.


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In 2014, the deer showed back up as a decent 8-point (Photo 2), but again, Simpson stayed patient and didn't venture into the buck's territory.

The next year, his patient plan paid off.

The deer had grown to a full big-bodied 10-point, (Photo 3) and Simpson got him.

Trail cameras also helped Simpson kill a big 8-point last season. He studied the deer via trail cam for weeks and found that in mid-December, the buck was coming out about 10 in the morning. And every afternoon, it returned about 4 or 4:30 in the evening.

So Simpson quietly set up his lock-on climbing stand one evening near the feed pile about 2 p.m. and waited. About 4, a doe came out and was constantly looking over its shoulder.

About 15 minutes later, it was obvious from trail cam photos why: The big buck stepped out and headed its way. Two minutes later, Simpson shot the big buck, now a trophy 8-point.

When he took the card out of his cameras that night, Simpson saw the big deer standing there at 10 a.m. the very morning he killed it — just like the scouting report said it would. ■

## 'HALFTIME' BUCKS

The next year, the buck was in better shape — but still wasn't quite what Simpson was looking for.

By 2015, a year later, it was time. The deer had recovered and turned into a beautiful 10-pointer.

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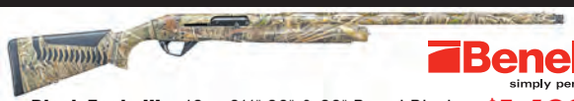

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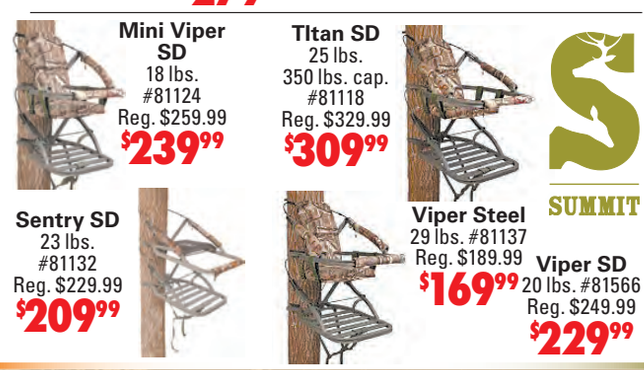

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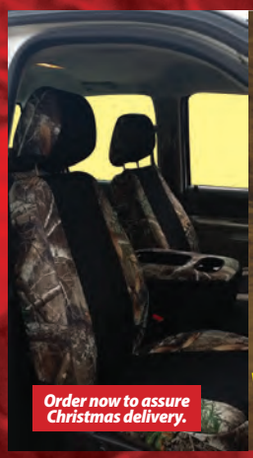
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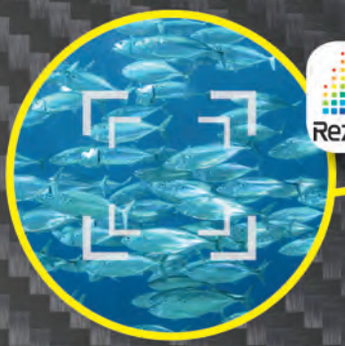


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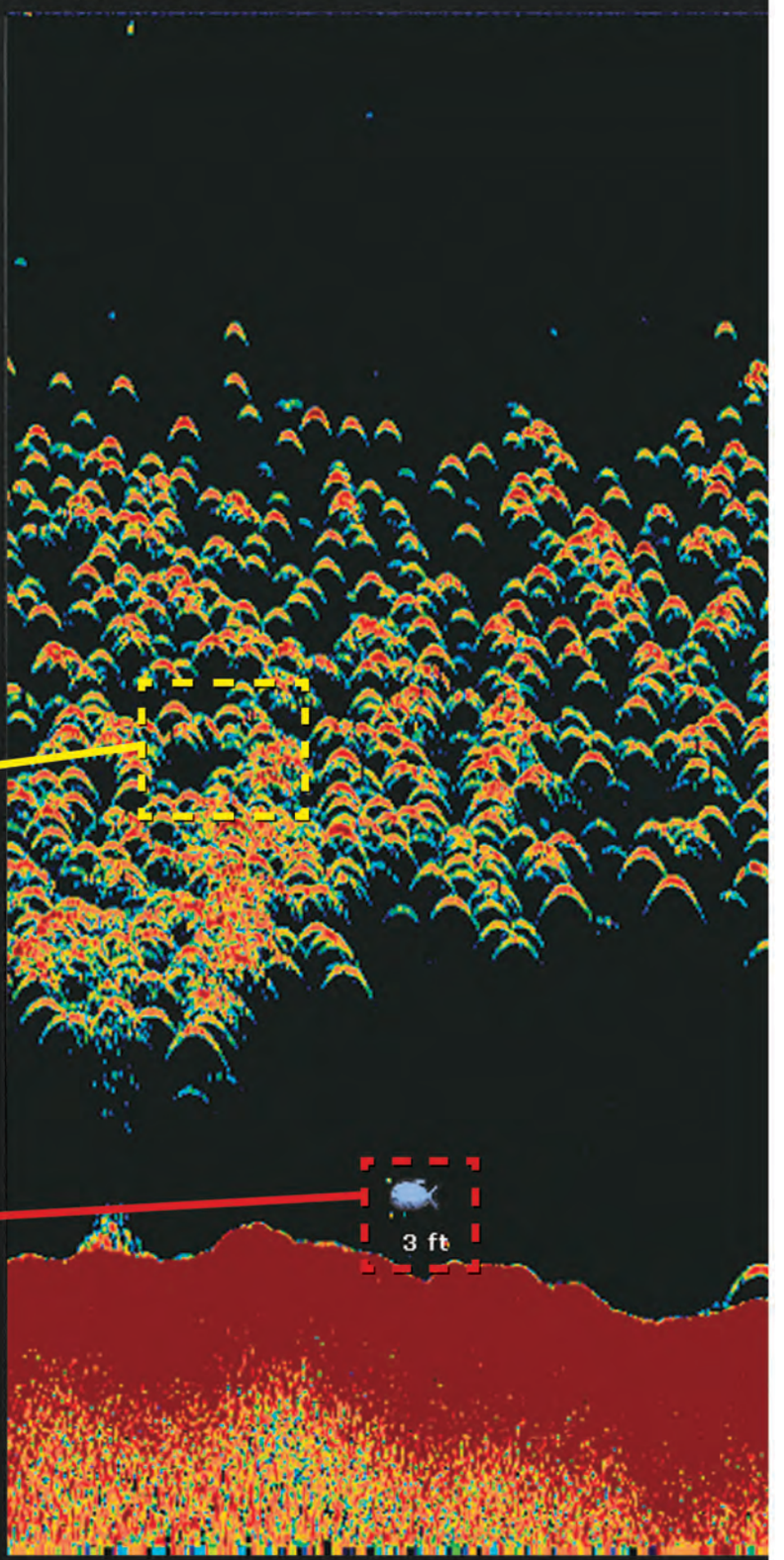


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Creighton Ward prefers dove spinning wing decoys over larger mallard spinners, and sets them about 1 ½ feet above the water.

BY JERALD HORST

# DECOY DETAILS

DEKES ARE PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT CONTROLLABLE FACTOR FOR THE AVERAGE HUNTER. HERE'S HOW TO SET 'EM UP — SO YOU CAN SHOOT 'EM DOWN.

Creighton Ward has a big problem with ducks: He can't shoot enough of them.

And time is a big factor. But it's amazing he can hunt at all considering the irons he has in the fire.

The 51-year-old is managing partner of Acadian Landscaping of Louisiana, sales manager for the Louisiana Division of American Tank and Vessel and owns Southern Exposure Inland Fishing Charters out of Buras with Tim Anderson. Finally, he's partners with Victor Bergeron (Southern Exposure's lead captain) on a belt-mounted drink holder called a Hip Huggie, as well as a newly designed camouflage clothing pattern.

Incredibly, he still averages hunting 40 days a season. "My passion is waterfowl, anything with wings," he said in a colossal understatement.

He has leases in both North and South Louisiana. I asked why more than one. "If I could have 100, why not?" he shrugged. "My wife asks, 'You have another one?' My reply — 'Well, I can't pass it up.'

"Duck hunting is a family tradition. My grandfather Pat Pier handed it down to me. At 12 years old, my daddy finally let me go with him. He was a hard-ass; he would make me cry. But I loved the outdoors so much and he was my only outlet to do it.

"I brainwashed my son Collin at an early age. He shot his first duck at 4 ½ years old. He's 21 now. The most days we've hunted together is 47 out of 60."

Ward prides himself in the attention he pays to his decoys, probably the most important controllable factor for the average hunter.

He ranks being where the ducks want to be as the most important part of success, followed by concealment, then decoys and lastly, calling.

"For the average person, being where the ducks want to be isn't an option anymore. Waterfowl leases that used to be sections (640 acres or one square mile) are now broken down into leases on individual ponds.

"Concealment falls to third because it doesn't do any good to be concealed if you aren't where the birds want to be, or you can't bring them into range. Of course you still have to be hidden in any case."

So attractants — decoys, are next most important.

## DECOY SELECTION

In what seems to be an obvious rule (even though it's ignored more than honored), Ward recommended using a species mix that matches the local bird population. Hunters commonly hunt over mallard decoys simply because they are the easiest ones to find in stores.

On his Plaquemines Parish lease, he uses a decoy spread featuring gadwall, pintail, wigeon, green-winged teal, blue-winged teal and coots. He doesn't use diver duck decoys because in most situations he prefers not to shoot them.

In Northeast Louisiana, his decoy choice is entirely different. Sixty of 75 decoys that he typically uses there will be mallards.

"Brands are pretty important too," he noted. "I like Greenhead Gear, but the up-and-coming brand is Avian-X. Realism is important. If you are going to go through all the effort and expense of duck hunting, why skimp on decoys?

"I see guys using decoys that have been handed down generations — sun-bleached and paint worn or knocked off. A live duck is vibrantly colored, so decoys should be colorful. But they shouldn't be shiny. A sculpted decoy is not as shiny as a smooth one."

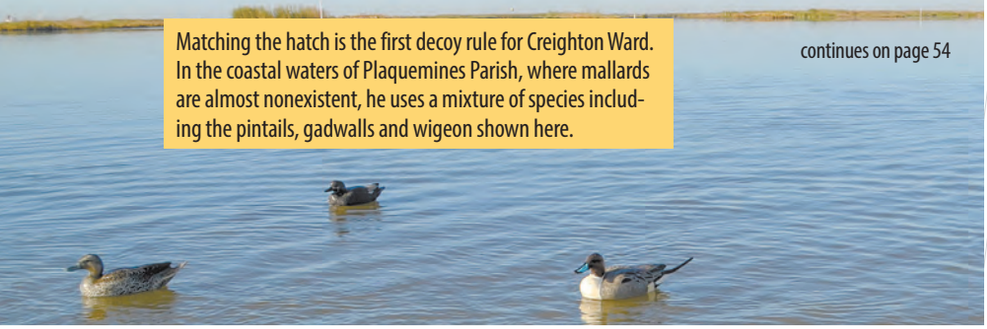
Ward always uses weighted-keel decoys for two simple reasons.

"It is a big inconvenience to have to set every decoy in place. You can't throw water-keel decoys. And water-keels also drain water all down your arm — a big problem when it's cold."

As for size, with the exception of a few pintail decoys, Ward uses standards for ducks. Where he does use magnums is with coots. "I feel that they look more realistic than standards," he explained.

## NUMBERS

"I like to use 60 to 80 decoys year-round, both in North and South Louisiana," Ward said. "It's largely a space issue — room in the boat. If I had room, I would hunt with 150.



Matching the hatch is the first decoy rule for Creighton Ward. In the coastal waters of Plaquemines Parish, where mallards are almost nonexistent, he uses a mixture of species including the pintails, gadwalls and wigeon shown here.

continues on page 54

Staying in your blind later often results in heavier stringers of birds.

# SEVEN KEYS TO DUCK HUNTING SUCCESS

1. You are never too old to learn. Pick up tips from other hunters.
2. Don't leave the blind too early. Pack a lunch. What forces hunters out of their blinds more than anything is hunger.
3. Don't hesitate to experiment on your own, even if the idea seems silly.
4. Make sure you pattern your shotgun. Most people have no clue about what shot size shoots best in their shotgun. It's also unbelievable how many modern European guns are not true to point-of-aim.
5. Shoot improved cylinder chokes with larger shot sizes as they tend to shoot tighter patterns.
6. If you haven't mastered a duck call, minimize your calling. Gray duck calls and wigeon whistles are easiest to use.
7. Don't brag on your dog until it's dead.

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"One thing that bigger spreads do is present a temptation to leave decoys out between hunts. These decoys will weather and wear. And birds in the area get used to the decoys being in the same place and are not as attracted to them.

"I understand that new fronts bring in new birds. But the new birds quickly learn from the old birds."

Ward doesn't agree with the oft-recommended tactic of reducing decoy numbers to give late-season birds a new look. "I wonder if the hunters doing this are just getting lazy late in the season," he pondered. "I think confidence is in numbers all season long."

## HANDLING

Handling large numbers of decoys is much easier if a method that reduces tangling and doesn't requiring wrapping lines is used. Ward's preference is for using a Texas rig. The rigs are built with large-diameter monofilament line.

Texas rigs are built with a weight hammered on one end of a heavy monofilament line and a loop crimped on the other end. For storage, the weight is slid on the line up near the decoy body. The loop of each decoy is snapped on a carabiner clip until a manageable number is reached.

A large egg sinker is hammered onto one end of the line. The line is then passed through the eye of a large swivel of a snap swivel (that is in turn snapped onto the decoy) and a loop is crimped on the other end.

After a decoy is picked up, its weight is slid up the line to rest next to the decoy's body and its loop is snapped into a carabiner clip. As more decoys are picked up, their loops are also snapped in the clip until a manageable number are joined together.

## DECOY CARE

Ward said washing decoys is important. "I try to do it every other weekend trip," he said.

"Don't hesitate to throw away decoys every four or five years. To keep worn out or beat up decoys is just ignorance," he said, mincing no words. "Re-painting decoys is smart too, if hunters have time to do it."

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Texas-rigging allows the Wards to handle large numbers of decoys in a tangle-free fashion.

## CONFIDENCE DECOYS

The use of confidence decoys begins and ends with coots for Ward. "I use coots instead of just more duck decoys so I can replicate a natural situation — within reason. Obviously, I am not going to put out 2,000 coot decoys.

"I can't tell you how many times I have jumped six gray ducks out of 24 coots while running my boat. Time on the water is what led me to use coots.

"I use 36 coots and set them a little apart from the ducks, in a loose pattern rather than tight that makes them look like they are more in number."

## DEKES IN MOTION

"I am beginning to second-guess the use of spinning wing decoys. My level of confidence in them is about even with my lack of confidence. I think there is a time and place to use them, rather than as an everyday thing.

"I like them when I am set up in heavy vegetation where it's hard for the birds to see my decoy spread. Also, in areas where hunter concealment is limited, I feel that they can divert the birds' attention away from the hunter.

"And they are more useful on large bodies of water, 100 acres or more. Spinning wing decoys do better in sunny conditions, where ever they are used."

But Ward no longer uses large duck spinning wing decoys, opting instead for smaller, dove versions. The batteries are easier to deal with, but most of all, the flash is more limited.

"I like to set them as low to the water as possible and I place them on the inside edge of the decoy spread. Even if birds flare at the last minute because of the flash, they are still within gun range."

Ward generally uses spinning wing decoys less and less as the season progresses, unless he's in open water. But he has used other motion decoys.

"I have been using Wonderduck decoys as long as spinning wing decoys. I call them flash-and-splash decoys and in no-wind situations, I like them more.

"Mojo Mallard Machines are amazing, but they are a pain in the butt. You have to tote a car battery and run a wire from the battery to the set up. You better remember where the wire is, too, when you run your boat.

"Of course, you can still use a home-made jerk string like we all started with. They are still effective, but less convenient than spinning wing decoys."

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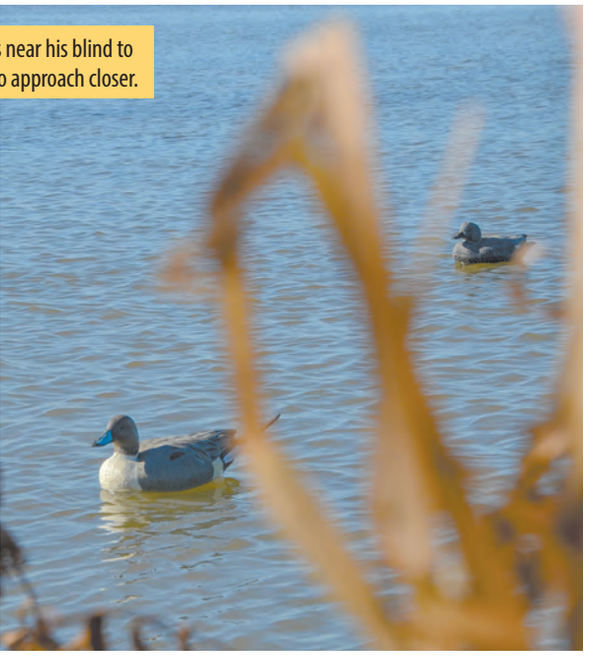


Ward likes to set decoys near his blind to prompt the wild birds to approach closer.

## PROPER PLACEMENT

Like many other hunters, Ward feels that duck behavior has changed. "With the pressure on birds now, coupled with their natural wariness, I think that ducks now tend to land on the outside edge of the decoy spread. This is especially true for gray ducks.

"So for me, the decoys can never be too close. I place the closest ones 20 feet from the blind and the furthest ones 15 yards from the blind. Because of this tendency for ducks to light further out, never let birds set in ponds. Shoot to scare them out.

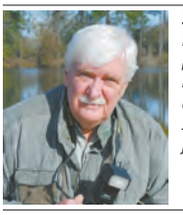
"I set my coot cluster separate from the duck decoys. If you know what direction the ducks will likely be coming from, set the ducks to intercept the birds first and then the coots behind them."

Ward is particular about not having to face the sun. He always wants the rising sun to his back and will actually place his decoys on the up-wind side of the blind to avoid facing the sun. This, of course, forces the birds to go over the blind to alight in the decoys. "I back-shoot them," he said with an evil grin.

In South Louisiana marshes he will mix gadwalls, wigeons and pintails, but he always keeps his teal and coots separate. In North Louisiana, he will separate his mallard decoys from the coots and gadwalls. He calls this a "massive splash of mallards, with some mixed species on the edges."

No matter where he sets up, he always leaves an open landing zone with just a couple of dekes there. In his experience, he says ducks will almost always land in the open zone or on the outside edge of the decoys.

"Do not use Vs and Js," he said emphatically. "They are not necessary. It is important to adequately space decoys apart to make them look natural. Nothing aggravates me more than decoys being placed so close that they bang into each other." ▪



**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.*

# SALVINIA AND SURFACE DRIVES ...

Creighton Ward is concerned about the future of the sport he loves so much.

Duck hunters are a tradition-bound bunch. They want to pass the sport along to the next generation, so it's only natural that they fret and worry over threats to what they so dearly love.

Creighton Ward is no different. He has two overriding concerns now. One is expected; the other is a surprise.

Vegetation issues concern Ward.

He calls invasive salvinia "absolutely horrible." He ticked off areas that were "fantastic waterfowl areas" before they were infested with the weed and heavily impacted by it: the White Lake area, Bayou Bienvenue and the Intracoastal City area.

"It blankets all the natural vegetation," he spat.

"It looks like a garden, not a pond," added son Collin.

"It decimates an area," the senior Ward went on. "It voids it of waterfowl. I've personally seen it go from thousands of ducks to absolutely nothing."

The other vegetation issue that worries Ward is the current mealy bug attack on roseau canes on the Mississippi River Delta.

"In the last year or two, certain stands of roseau cane have been decimated. The canes are the only thing holding the Delta together in places. Their rhizomes lock together, forming dense mats.

"The canes enclose ponds and marshes protecting them. If you lose them, you lose the Delta's wintering waterfowl habitat, as well as its estuarine fishery.

"Our main concern is the loss of habitat, but roseau canes are also important for hunting cover. I can build a blind out of anything, but a lot of hunters down here, especially on public land, hide themselves in canes."

He moved on — cautiously, to his other concern: surface drive engines.

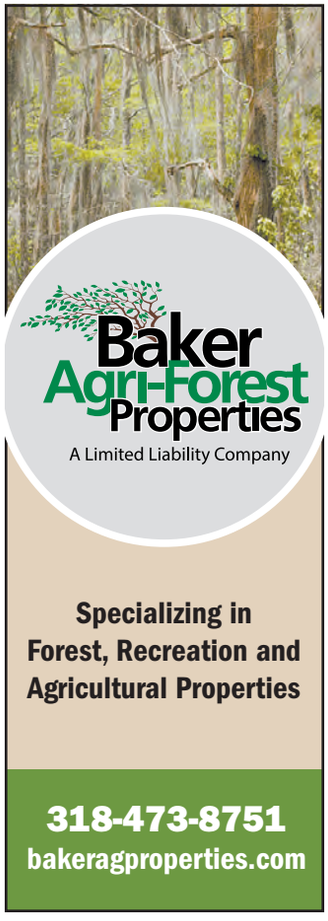
"It sounds like a motor speedway during duck season in the Plaquemines Parish marshes. The birds are constantly pressured. After they hunt, people ride and inspect other areas.

"It makes duck hunting unpleasant because all you hear is motor noise. They tear up the marsh and scare birds."

"It makes ducks more wary and harder to work," piped in Collin. "It creates more passing shots instead of in-your-face shots."

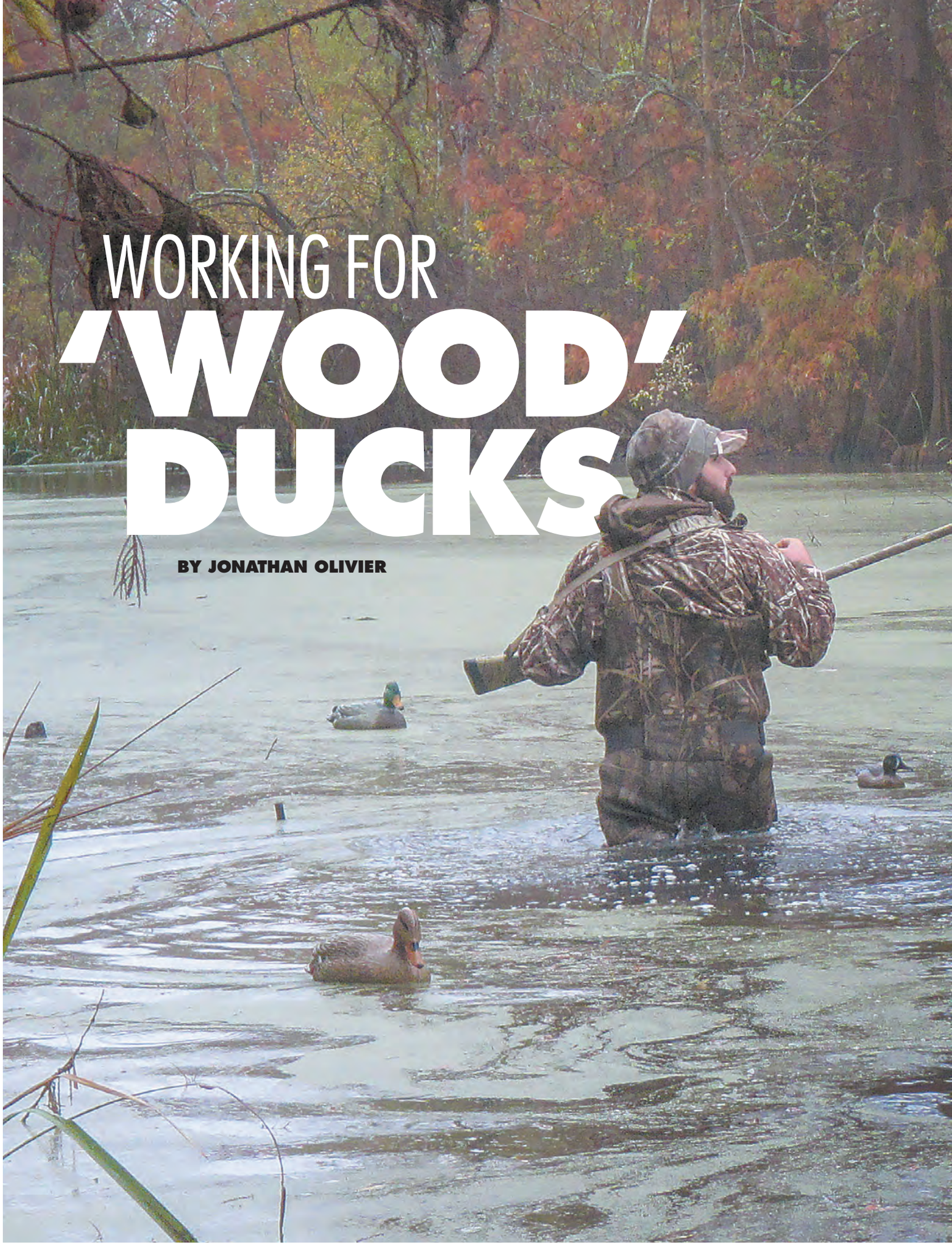
"Surface drives make it easy for people to access your lease when you are not hunting," the elder Ward said. "They 'check things out' on your lease and they run the lease to move birds so that their fellow hunters get more shooting.

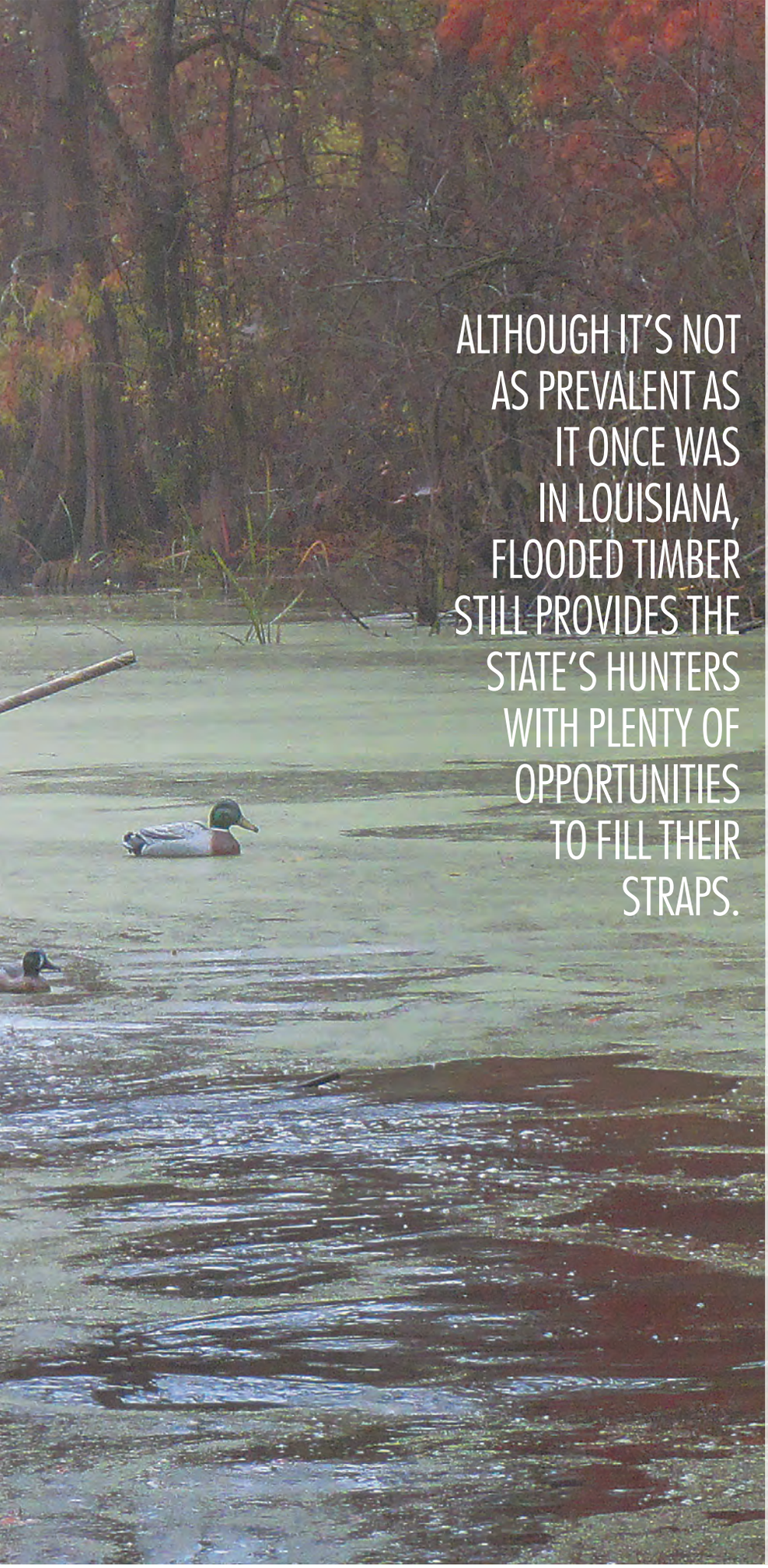
"It doesn't do much good for leaseholders to rest their leases with off-days or prohibit afternoon hunting." ▪

# WORKING FOR 'WOOD' DUCKS

BY JONATHAN OLIVIER





ALTHOUGH IT'S NOT AS PREVALENT AS IT ONCE WAS IN LOUISIANA, FLOODED TIMBER STILL PROVIDES THE STATE'S HUNTERS WITH PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES TO FILL THEIR STRAPS.

Warren Coco still reminisces about his days duck hunting in the swamp near Maurepas, back in the 80s and 90s when the vast network of cypress forests housed an impressive number of mallards during the winter migration.

Back then, he said he could hunt just about every day and come home with a limit.

"That was the best timber hunting in the state," said the 64-year-old Baton Rouge native and founder of Go-Devil Manufacturers.

But after giant salvinia invaded the area in the late 90s and blanketed open water, Coco said the ducks stopped showing up.

A timber hunting fanatic, however, wasn't going to hang up his gun that easily.

"I bought property where the Black and Red rivers meet — and I created my own timber holes," he said.

That was back in 2003 when all Coco had was old agricultural land in Central Louisiana, situated in a floodplain known for high concentrations of wintering waterfowl.

So he planted 6,000 willow trees, along with cypress and oaks, that could be flooded seasonally to provide habitat for migrating waterfowl. Ten years later, after the fingerling trees grew, he was routinely shooting stringers of ducks on his property.

"These are some of the best timber holes," he said. "The willows give you cover to hide in, and it also enhances the invertebrate growth for the ducks to eat."

Those large flights of mallards once reached down to the coast as well, near Thibodaux where cypress trees covered the marsh. >

Sloughs running through the woods or big, open holes can be good hunting locations, but so are some smaller areas: Just a fallen tree or two can do the trick.

Jonathan Ollivier

Roland Cortez recalled watching groups of greenheads swirl over the trees when he was a kid. "It was a mallard mecca," he said. "But the habitat changed, and the ducks don't come like that anymore."

Due to coastal erosion and invasive aquatic vegetation, Cortez's old hunting grounds are open marsh now, attracting more teal and gadwalls these days.

So, he turned to hunting the timber in Arkansas as a guide, and also guiding in Southwest Louisiana when the weather conditions are favorable.

"There are still good places to hunt near Monroe, and more seasonal spots in places like Sherburne, Indian Bayou and near Pierre Part," he said.

Louisiana's Mississippi River Alluvial Valley (MAV) was once home to a seemingly endless supply of bottomland hardwoods forest and cypress-tupelo swamps that flooded seasonally. While much of that has turned to agriculture today or has changed due to costal erosion, you can still find pockets of woods in the historical floodplain that offer superb duck hunting.

Take Coco's haunts in central Louisiana, for instance — only a few miles away from the Honey Brake Lodge, Catahoula Lake and a handful of wildlife management areas known for quality waterfowl hunting amongst flooded hardwoods and cypress swamps.

## PUBLIC POSSIBILITIES

Due to restoration efforts by the state's Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, public lands now boast new acreage featuring bottomland hardwoods that can support waterfowl and other wildlife — when just a few decades ago that land was planted for crops.

Folks engaged in federal initiatives like the Wetland Reserve Program or Conservation Reserve Program, which allows landowners to return agricultural property to wetlands or forest, have also worked to enhance the habitat in the state.

Up and down the MAV, there's still plenty of timber holes to go around. But any parcel of woods that floods in the winter, be it a slough or stand of trees in a low-lying area, can hold ducks on their way south.

Courtesy Roland Cortez

Roland Cortez holds up a stringer of mallards harvested late in the season. As winter progresses and Louisiana gets colder and rainier, more mallards make their way south.

"Lots of people want big, open holes, but just one fallen tree can be good enough to draw some birds in," said Mitch McGee, a WMA biologist supervisor with the LDWF.

"When we get the right conditions — cold weather up north and rain on the landscape — we still get mallards and have good hunts."

continues on page 62

## PUBLIC TIMBER OPPORTUNITIES

The LDWF manages units called greentree impoundments on several WMAs, where hardwoods can be flooded seasonally, mimicking the natural floods of the forests in the Mississippi floodplain. This gives hunters access to thousands of acres of flooded timber.

"We are on a five-year rotation where basically every fifth year we keep the woods dry to mimic natural flooding processes," McGee said. "We also stagger flooding to inundate new areas as the season progresses."

You can expect to find lots of wood ducks, McGee said, with mallards showing up seasonally. "Certain times of year when the weather is right we'll have a lot of mallards," he said. "Typically, sunny days with 15-20 mile-per-hour winds are good days to hunt."

### • RUSSELL SAGE WMA

One of the largest remaining tracts of bottomland hardwood forests in the MAV, there are 13 waterfowl management units that total almost 8,000 acres. Hunters can expect to find 2,550 acres of greentree impoundments available to hunt, surrounded by sloughs, bayous and lakes.

### • BOEUF WMA

The Boeuf River borders this WMA, where the state manages around 4,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forest for migrating waterfowl and other birds — there is an 1,800-acre greentree impoundment for hunters. The numerous sloughs and bayous running through the property also offer excellent waterfowl hunting.

### • DEWEY WILLS WMA

Opened in 2015, a 3,000-acre waterfowl impoundment north of the Catahoula Lake Diversion Canal provides excellent waterfowl hunting opportunities. In addition, there's also the 400-acre southern waterfowl impoundment, known locally as the Greentree Reservoir.

### • RICHARD K YANCEY WMA

Located between the Mississippi and Red rivers, winter flooding inundates the woods, which are surrounded by lakes and sloughs. There's also a 1,200-acre waterfowl impoundment that is available and seasonally flooded to support migrating waterfowl.

### • ATCHAFALAYA BASIN

At almost 1 million acres of bottomland hardwoods and cypress-tupelo swamps, hunters won't have a problem finding flooded woods in the Basin. There are opportunities on Sherburne WMA and Indian Bayou, but with several thousand acres of state-owned land dispersed around the Atchafalaya, there's plenty to choose from. ▪

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continued from page 60

## FIND THE RIGHT HABITAT

Finding flooded woods in the winter may not be hard — it's about finding the *right* parcel that's suitable for migrating waterfowl. The first thing to look for is a food source.

"In a cypress swamp, look for duckweed," Cortez said. "In a river bottom with hardwoods, look for oak trees dropping acorns."

Coco added that smartweed is another aquatic vegetation growing in swamps that is a quality source of food. On his property, he also grows sprangletop and millet.

When Coco is searching for food sources, he also keeps his eyes on the sky, analyzing the size of the trees around him.

"The short timber is easier for the ducks to get down and into shooting range," he said. "Thick, tall timber — they're not as responsive to come in."

Water levels make an impact, too.

While species like gadwall and teal prefer water levels that are a few feet deep, Cortez said mallards like it shallower. And keep your eyes peeled as rains show up, which can work to quickly flood sections of woods offering new habitat.

"When we get a hard rain, it can flood an oak bottom and the ducks will show up out of nowhere," he said.

continues on page 64

Stick to brown camouflage when hunting in the timber, better concealing you behind clusters of trees.

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continued from page 62

Mother Nature will tell you how much you should call. On clear, cloudless days you can be more aggressive, while on cloudier days the ducks might be more finicky.

Jonathan Olivier

## CREATE MOVEMENT

Movement in the timber is crucial to drawing ducks in. That's why Coco keeps a jerk string employed all season.

"We don't go hunting in the timber without one," he said.

The ducks key in on ripples in the water, letting them know other birds are nearby through the trees. That, in combination with the right decoy spread, has to happen perfectly to coax in mallards.

"In the timber I put out 100 decoys," he said. "In smaller holes, the most I use is two dozen and we'll pick those up after every hunt. Late in the season, less decoys are better."

When Cortez is setting up his decoys, he's aware of two things: the wind direction and position of the sun.

"You want the ducks to land in your face," he said. "So, you want the wind at your back. Put the decoys farther out in the hole with a few in the woods.

"And you always want to stand on the shaded side of a tree. You don't want the sun on you. As far as camouflage — try to use the darker type like bottomland or Natural Gear."

## KEEP CALLING SIMPLE

The weather will dictate how much calling you need to do. Cortez said on clear, blue sky days, he calls more.

"I can be very aggressive and get their attention, getting them down quicker," he said. "On cloudier days, I still call — but not as much. Mostly, I watch the ducks to see how they will react that day because every day varies."

Coco likens a duck's eyes to that of a wily turkey — with keen focus on your decoys and the woods below, the wrong calling sequence can scare them off.

"Never call when ducks are looking at you," he said. "When they turn away, hit your call hard to make them come back. When they start coming back, only use a light chuckle or quack — but not too much." ▪

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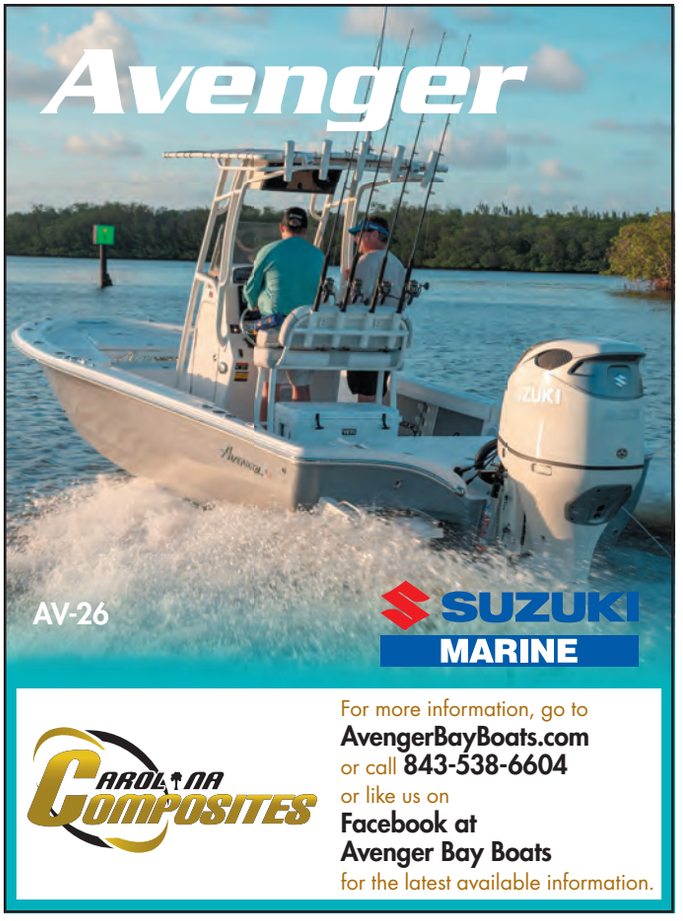
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The simplicity of fishing Geoghegan Canal makes it a perfect spot for anglers with small boats.

# *Going to* GEOGHEGAN

By Chris Ginn

## There might be sexier places to fish this winter, but this nondescript canal near Rigolets Marina is hard to beat for consistent speckled trout action.

Theodore Roosevelt once said that nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain or difficulty.

Well, the Trust Buster must not have ever fished Geoghegan Canal (pronounced go-HAY-gun) during the winter.

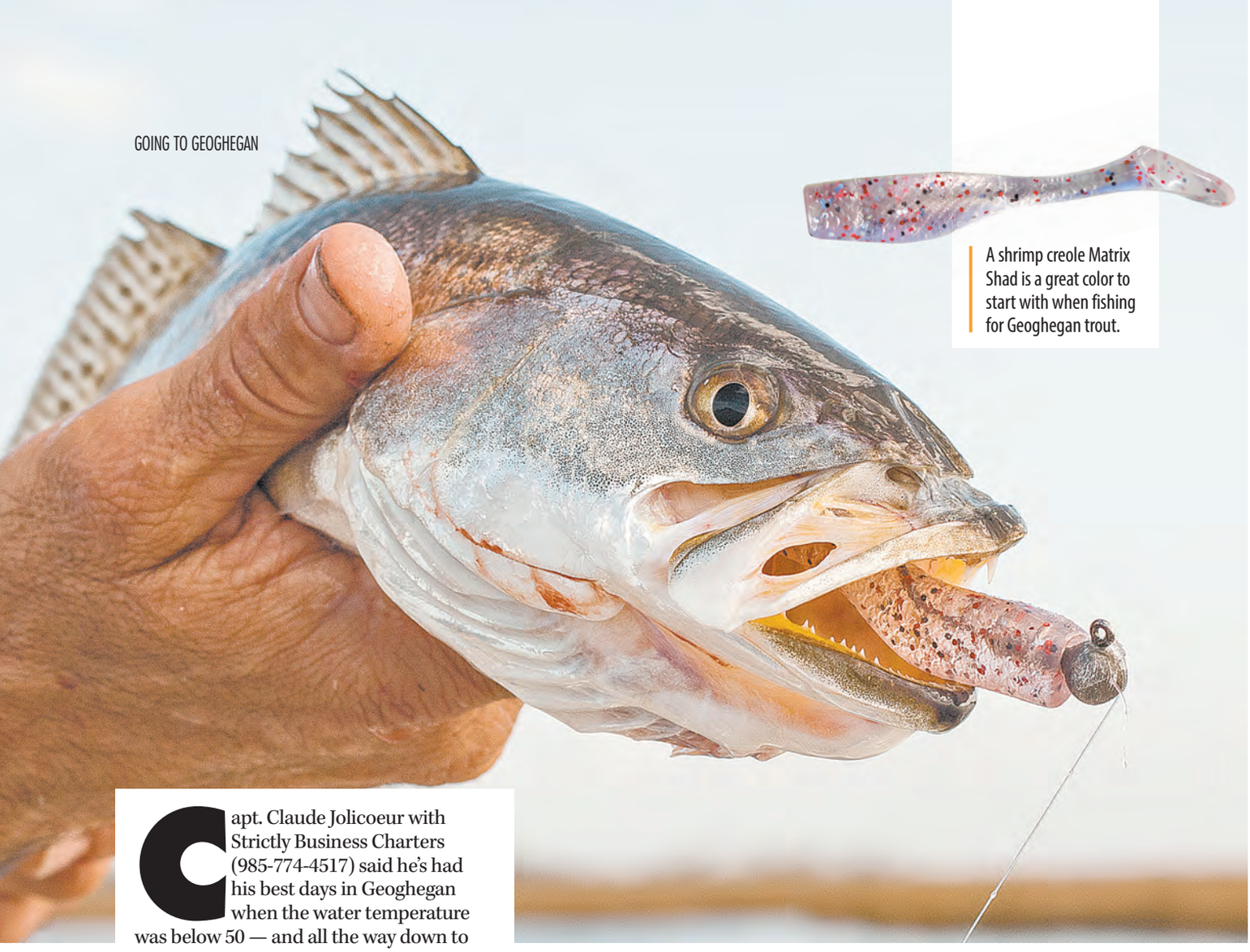
That's because the nondescript, straight stretch of water that runs parallel to Highway 90 on the north side of the Rigolets in Slidell requires little effort, no pain — and has a very low degree of difficulty to fish.

And if you've ever targeted the man-made canal during winter, you know without a shadow of a doubt that Geoghegan is definitely worth fishing during this time of the year.

"It's the perfect spot for somebody with a small boat or kayak," said Capt. John Falterman with Therapy Charters (985-649-FISH). "A lot of people fish it during the winter because it's a protected place to fish to catch a pile of specks or white trout. If you're looking for something to pull your string, this is the place."

Although there isn't a magic water temperature that sends trout to the deep holes in Geoghegan, Falterman said he's found them stacked up best when the water temperature is below 60 degrees.

"You'll be able to tell when they're on in there because the trollers will go in first," he said. "It's kind of like fishing the Trestle in that regard. They start fishing it, then everybody else will follow." >





A shrimp creole Matrix Shad is a great color to start with when fishing for Geoghegan trout.

Capt. Claude Jolicoeur with Strictly Business Charters (985-774-4517) said he's had his best days in Geoghegan when the water temperature was below 50 — and all the way down to 43 degrees. Because fishing Geoghegan is so easy, Jolicoeur said it's important to get there early in the morning to claim a spot before the rest of the boats pile in.

"It's literally the first left turn coming out of Rigolets Marina," he said. "You don't even have to crank the big motor if you don't want to. Just troll or paddle about halfway up the canal and start fishing. I may idle out if a lot of boats are launching, but there's definitely no reason to get up on plane."

## GET THE 'LEDGE EDGE'

Why the trout stack up in Geoghegan during the winter is anybody's question, but Falterman thinks it might have something to do with them just trying to stay warm.

"There's bait all over the Rigolets," he said. "It's not like the bait is just concentrated in Geoghegan. I know there are some deep ledges back there, so maybe they're just setting up on those ledges trying to ambush bait when the tide is moving."

For the speckled trout fishing, it is all about the ledges —where the shallow edges drop into the deep water in the middle of the canal. Sometimes the fish are sitting right on the bottom of the ledge, and sometimes they are suspended off of it.

Being able to figure out where they are is the key to loading the boat versus going home with just a few fish.

Jolicoeur believes the trick to fishing the ledge correctly is to position your boat right against the bank and cast out to deep water.

"This way you're sure to cover the entire ledge because you're fishing down the ledge then back up toward the bank," he said.

Both captains agreed that it isn't necessary to bring any live bait with you to fish Geoghegan Canal.

In fact, one time Jolicoeur had a customer bring some live shrimp with him but only wound up using five of them. The rest wound up in a shrimp fettuccine later that night.

Just about any soft plastic on a ¼- or 3/8-ounce jighead will work, but Jolicoeur said a shrimp creole-colored Matrix Shad is as simple and effective as it gets.

On the other hand, Falterman has been using the Crappie Psychic Trout Trailer on a drop-shot rig with great success.

"I use glow or pink and just thread the little ball part onto my treble hook," Falterman said. "This allows it to work freely in the current, and it just looks so natural. It flutters around and has a lot of built-in action, which is great on a drop shot. It kind of does all the work for you."

Because he uses a drop shot most of the time, Falterman bucks the conventional wisdom of positioning his boat on the bank and casting out toward deep water.

"For me, I've caught them better back there when they were up on the ledge," he said. "With my Humminbird GPS linked to my Minn Kota trolling motor, I can set it to follow whatever contour depth I want it to. Set up like this, I can consistently keep my drop shot in the most productive zone without having to worry about it."

**'BANK' ON IT** UP NEXT >

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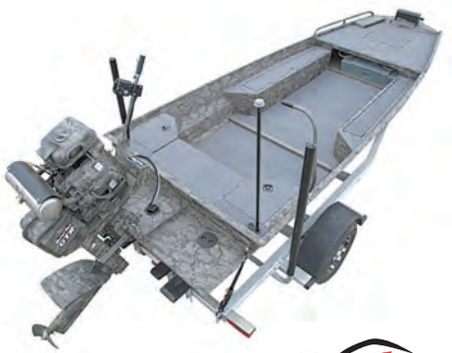

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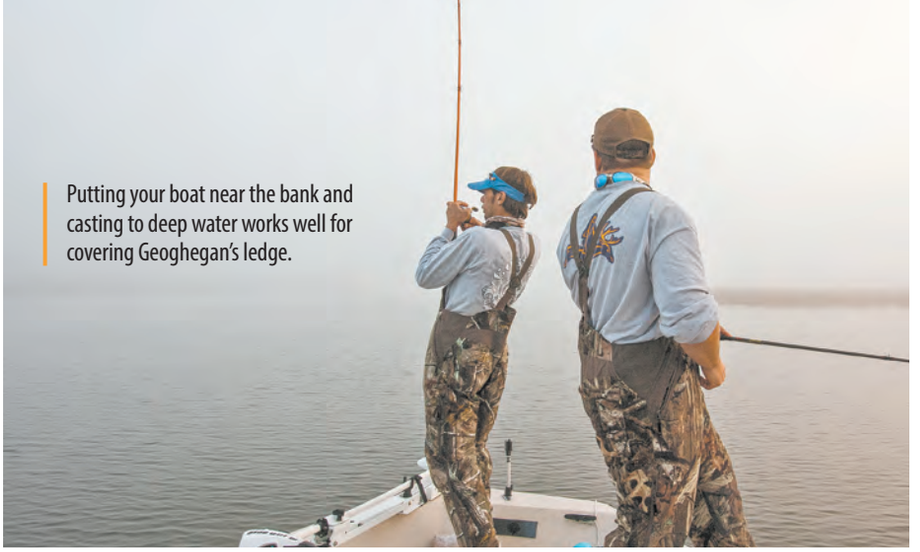

Putting your boat near the bank and casting to deep water works well for covering Geoghegan's ledge.

## 'BANK' ON IT

Since Jolicoeur pretty much sticks with positioning his boat on the bank, he has figured out a few tricks for putting more trout in the boat.

"You might be able to catch some slowly working a jig on bottom, but I've had way better luck ripping my baits off the bottom and letting them fall," he said. "I try to jerk my bait about 3 or 4 feet off the bottom and let it drop straight back down on a slack line."

Because he basically lets his bait free-line on the fall, Jolicoeur said a lot of times a trout will already be on his bait when he rips it again.

"Strangely enough, the more violently I pop the bait off the bottom the more bites I get," he said. "Other people might get bit fishing it another way, but the easier I pop it the fewer bites I get."

Jolicoeur also strips out a few feet of line after each cast to make sure his bait falls straight to the bottom.

Otherwise he feels like his bait will pendulum in toward him — which would prevent it from landing right on top of the ledge that runs the length of the canal.

## QUANTITY OVER QUALITY

While there are some decent-size trout that call Geoghegan home during the winter months, Falterman said he would approach fishing the canal more with an eye on quantity rather than quality.

"You'll probably have to pick through some shorts every now and then, but if you're looking for a bite, catch and release until you get a keeper is better than no catch at all," he said. "I'd say a good trout back there would be about 1 1/2 pounds, but it's definitely not the place I would go to try to catch a 3- to 5- pounder."

Although both anglers felt getting there early would ensure you get a good spot to fish, the best speckled trout bite in Geoghegan seems to be a little bit later in the morning the larger the gap between the sun and the horizon grows.

"That's not to say you can't get on them before the sun comes up," Jolicoeur said, "but you'll generally just be picking on them one here and one there. Then all of a sudden they'll turn on and you'll hit a stretch of some pretty fast action."

**LOCATION, LOCATION**
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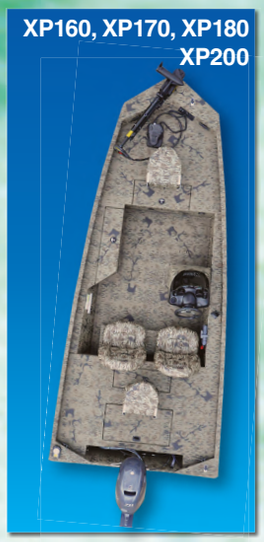

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Captain Claude Joliceur lands a typical Geoghegan Canal trout on a cold winter morning.

## LOCATION, LOCATION

And it's not the end of the world if all the best spots seem to be taken once you get to the canal. There are a few hotspots at the points of the cuts leading into some marsh ponds, but trout could be anywhere up and down the canal.

Jolicoeur said that he has caught them from about half way up the canal to about 100 yards from Rigolets Marina.

"It seems like the farther north you go in the canal the more you get into redfish," he added. "But that's not a bad thing either, especially if the trout aren't biting. In fact, if the trout aren't biting, the reds and white trout could still provide for a lot of fun."

Falterman agreed, and added that some of the ponds off Geoghegan have some 30-foot holes in the back of them where white trout will stack up as thick as he's ever seen.

"You can catch them 'til you're blue in the face," he said. "For some reason it seems like the whites like the deep holes in the ponds, while the specks like the ledge in the main canal. You could limit out on specks in Geoghegan, but if you're looking to do a fish fry it's hard to beat fresh-caught white trout.

"Just don't freeze them and try to cook them later."

There might be sexier places to fish this winter, but there are few spots that will be as consistent as Geoghegan Canal.

Trout will linger in the canal until February or March, and Falterman suggested they'll likely be there longer than that.

"I'm not too sure if we're the ones that leave the canal first just to go fish other areas," he said. "It's definitely worth fishing during December, because it's a straight shot to some really good cold-weather fishing." ▪

**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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Although this trout won't make the books, Ted Tedesco has placed 25 fish in the state records.

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**BY JERALD HORST**

At his camp on Grand Isle the night before the trip, when Victor "Ted" Tedesco III told me how early he wanted to get up, I shuddered.

The predicted low for the night was 30° F — and we were in kayaks.

Probably sensing my hesitation, the retired doctor and current Terrebonne Parish Coroner told me he wanted to be sure to beat everyone else to his favorite spots.

We launched the 'yaks into the Forbidden Hole off Highway 1 in total darkness. By starlight, he led the way to a shallow gap in the bank 100 yards or so wide. Later, by daylight, I could see that it was the largest cut in the southern bank of the hole.

On first cast, his rod bowed when a 13-inch speckled trout took the fly. On his third or fourth cast came another. Then another — and the sun was still well below the horizon.

Improving light let me see how he was set up. His kayak was anchored in 10 or 11 feet of water and he was casting to water 3 feet deep on the point formed by the eastern end of the cut, a point he pet-named "3-Pound Point."

>

The specks in the Forbidden Hole hit peanut bunker flies all day. **INSET:** Stripping is the process of retrieving a fly by pulling the line in with one hand through the fingers of the other hand, which also holds the rod.



The retrieve of the fly was made down a sharp drop-off by stripping back short strokes of fly line by hand. He held the rod in his right hand and the fly line was held loosely by the forefinger and thumb of the same hand.

He pulled the line in with the fingers of his other hand, a process called "stripping" by fly fishermen. The stripped line coiled lazily in the bottom of his kayak.

"Let your fly sink four to eight seconds, then start stripping," he advised. "Vary the speed until you find out what's working. Pause often during the retrieve. You get a lot of strikes when you start stripping again.

"And pause after missed strikes. Here again you get strikes when you start the retrieve again.

"When the fly gets close to the boat, don't rush to make another cast. Pick it up deliberately and slowly. I've gotten a lot of strikes picking up."

Before 7 a.m., three vehicles had pulled on the Hole's shoulder, with a total of five fishermen. By that time, the sun came out blindingly bright and the bite at 3-Pound Point withered.

Tedesco pulled anchor and moved westward (toward Fourchon) to a small cut on the same shore. The strategy was the same: anchor deep and cast shallow. The slope was even steeper here. He anchored in 11 feet of water and the fly was landing in 1 foot, retrieved down the shelf.

"Sometimes the trout are in the shallows," he growled. "Sometimes they suspend off the drop-off. But seldom are they very deep."

When he got a bite, he set the hook fly rod-style, not with the rod, but with a strong strip of the line, followed by picking the rod tip up on follow through.

From there he moved further west to open water between a small island and the highway. But the strategy was the same. He fished a drop-off that went from 6 to 13 feet deep. He seemed to know every trough, hole and ledge in the Forbidden Hole.

What he really liked about this spot was that even on a slow day, it had the potential to give up a really big fish. He casually called 100-fish days "not unusual when they turn on here." His best year was 1,758 specks.

Most of those were tagged and released, keeping only "enough for my wife."

But the spot didn't come through, so following his own rule to return to proven areas later in the morning when the early bite didn't materialize or played out, he paddled back to 3-Pound Point at 8:30 a.m.

By this time a kayak and a pirogue, each holding an angler soaking live bait, were anchored off the point in the same cut, but on the opposite side.

The bite started smartly for Tedesco and picked up until by 9:30 a.m., when it got ridiculous. He was literally catching a trout every cast. The live-bait soakers

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didn't have a fish, and the bank fishermen had long left discouraged.

"I expected to outcatch them," he grinned smugly, followed by a self-conscious laugh.

"You ought to see it when it's good," he mused.

"Waddya want, two fish every cast?" I cracked.

"Naw," he drawled. "I want a big fish. There's just something about a big trout…."

Tedesco is a fan of an anchoring system that has a 10-pound mushroom anchor clipped with a carabiner clip onto a trolley system that runs the length of his kayak. Once the anchor is set, he can slide it on the trolley for perfect casting position in the wind. The trolley system's black lines are clearly visible here.

## ANCHOR YOURSELF IN POSITION TO SUCCEED

Tedesco stressed over and over again the need for good anchoring to fish the Forbidden Hole successfully. The wind is almost always blowing when fishing is at its best in the hole. Often the wind will shift direction during the fishing day.

"If the wind isn't blowing, be prepared to deal with gnats," he cautioned with a chuckle.

By far his favorite anchoring system uses a 10-pound mushroom anchor clipped to a carabiner clip on a trolley system. With the anchor trolleyed next to his body, raising it is a simple process. Once the anchor is dropped, he uses the trolley to slide the anchor toward the front or the rear of the kayak so that the wind angles it just right for casting.

The system came installed on his Native kayak, but it can be ordered off the Internet or purchased at Pack and Paddle in Lafayette, where he buys his kayaks and kayak-fishing goodies.

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Ted Tedesco's biggest fly rod trout, a 27 ½-inch fish, came from the Forbidden Hole.

Photo courtesy Ted Tedesco

often used in shallow water are entirely ineffective in the pit's deep waters and hard sandy bottom, he said in a tone that didn't invite argument.

He did allow that a front and rear anchoring system using two anchors can be used, but that they must be heavy enough not to drag bottom.

Along with the proper weight, any anchors used must be equipped with enough rope. In strong winds and deep waters, an anchor dropped straight down from the kayak likely will not hold.

Tedesco recommended having at least 25 feet of rope on each anchor. The more anchor line is let out, the better the anchor will bite the bottom.

## FROM BRAWN TO FINESSE

Dr. Victor Tedesco III was born in New Orleans 75 years ago. He grew up fishing, recalling memories of fishing with Larry Brocato, a patient of his physician father. They used croakers that they caught with hand lines for live bait fishing in Lake Pontchartrain.

When he went off to medical school, he flirted with fly fishing. "Some of my fellow students were real good. We would go to Lake Cataouatche to fish for bass."

But fly fishing didn't really take on him at the time.

After graduation, he moved to Houma in 1973 to practice medicine, mainly because of the hunting and fishing opportunities the area presented. At first, his main quarry was speckled trout.

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Then he started offshore fishing with his father-in-law and brother-in-law. Father-in-law Roy Copeland was one of the founders of the New Orleans Big Game Fishing Club. Mostly they chased marlin, but the pair also introduced Tedesco to tarpon fishing.

In 1976, he got his own offshore boat and began fishing marlin. "I was real serious about the sport, and became a member of the New Orleans Big Game Fishing Club, too," he said.

"Probably a hundred marlin were caught off my boat. And in 1980 a 412-pound mako shark caught from the boat was recognized as the Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association Fish of the Year."

Then he abruptly sold the boat in 1988 and got out of bluewater fishing. Former med school classmates and another doctor nudged him back toward fly fishing, so he went to Costa Rica for sailfish and Alaska for salmon

He brought some of the salmon flies back with him and went offshore of Terrebonne with a buddy. "To my surprise, nine of the 11 lemonfish we caught that day were on flies.

"I found out that saltwater fly fishing is a lot of fun and I began teaching myself fly fishing for redfish and trout. I fell in with Dave Coignet, a businessman who was the best fly rod fisherman I've ever seen.

## TIP OF THE DAY

Ted Tedesco often resorts to using a hair brush to comb out a fly to give it a more natural shape. "If the fly's fibers snag on themselves, you are wasting your time to fish it," he said firmly.

"The first time I fished the Forbidden Hole with him, we both caught limits and he had five fish over 5 pounds. I built a camp in Pirate's Cove on Grand Isle in 1989.

"Now I fish mostly out of the island. I have a 24-foot bay boat and a kayak in Grand Isle, as well as a 20-foot surface drive boat custom built for fly fishing at my home in Houma.

"But probably 90 percent of my fishing is out of Grand Isle. I use a kayak in late fall and in the winter exclusively for fishing the sand pits like the Forbidden Hole. Fishing can be really good there."

According to Tedesco, speckled trout stack up in the deep waters of the sand pits, especially the one known as the Forbidden Hole. Fishermen, led by a heavy contingent of year-round Grand Isle residents, follow them to fish from the bank, barely off the shoulder of Highway 1.

"The ones that know what they are doing will use long spinning rods, up to 9 feet long and cast all the way over to the drop-offs on the back (south) side of the hole.

"My fly rod can't reach that far from the bank, so my best success is with my kayak. Plus there are often so many people lined up along the bank, I just let them have it.

"If I can't catch them now on a fly rod, I don't get a charge out of catching fish."

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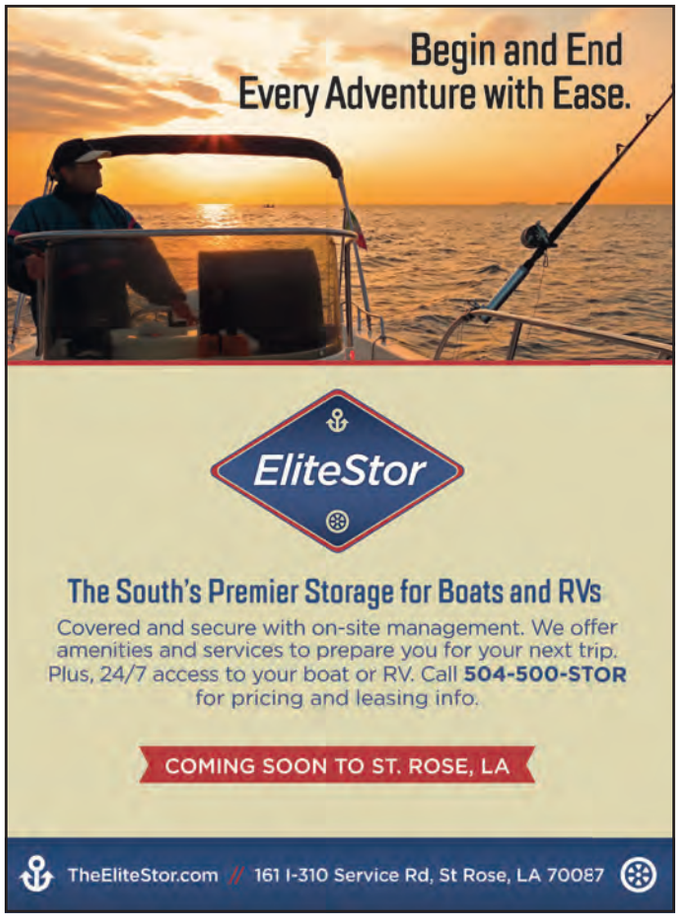

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Tedesco's three mainstay flies for speckled trout are, top to bottom: a Clouser minnow, a shrimp imitation and a Puglisi peanut bunker. Note the predominance of gray and black. **INSET:** Portable depth finders specifically made for mounting on kayaks are a valuable tool.

# GEARHEAD

Fly fishermen, as a rule, pay close attention their gear — and Ted Tedesco is no exception — starting with his flies.

If speckled trout are near the bottom, he likes the old standby, a Clouser minnow. It has large metal eyes that serve as weights to keep the lure fishing on the bottom.

Clouser minnows are very effective when the weather is really frigid and the fish are hugging bottom. Its hook rides with the point up, he said. With the other flies the hook rides point-down and often hang up.

"As effective as they are," he cautioned, "you are handicapping yourself if you only use this fly if the trout are not on the bottom — a Clouser minnow falls too fast through the water column to fish there."

A very effective lure (and the one he used most of the day in the Forbidden Hole) is an Enrico Puglisi peanut bunker (aka peanut butter) fly. These are tied to imitate bait minnows, most specifically menhaden, which are called bunkers on the Atlantic Coast.

He also ties shrimp imitation flies for speckled trout fishing. Whatever fly he uses, he has found grays and blacks to be "really good" in the Forbidden Hole.

He ties his flies in more than one size, and he noted that when he is not getting many bites, downsizing from a 2-inch fly to one as small as ¾-inch can trigger strikes.

For this fishing he likes 9-foot, 6- to 8-weight rods. Clouser minnows are heavy and an 8 weight rod is best for their use.

And reels ....

"For specks and reds, you don't need a real expensive reel. You can get a good one for $200. (That's cheap?). You are paying for the drag. Expensive reels have a super smooth drag and the line pulls out smoothly," he explained.

"For trout and most redfish, you will be fighting the fish by stripping. If the fish needs line, you can let it out through your fingers.

"Tippets, part of what rod and reel fishermen call leaders, are usually monofilament. If you are using a small tippet, like a 2-pound class, you may be more likely to need a smooth drag. With a 20-pound tippet, you don't need a smooth drag.

"I mostly use 20-pound tippets because trout are not leader shy here and 20-pound is abrasion resistant. I also don't use a shock tippet (a heavier leader piece between the fly and the tippet) for trout or reds. For toothy species they are

necessary."

He stated that for trout fishing, tapered leaders (with a butt section, an intermediate section, a class tippet section and a shock tippet) are not needed because speckled trout fishing doesn't involve sight-fishing, with a need for perfect fly placement.

Tedesco uses a 3-foot leader on a fast intermediate sinking fly line. For comparison he defined the rate of sink for a fast sinking line as 1 ½ inches per second, and a slow sinking line as a ½-inch per second. Some people do use floating lines here with 9- to 10-foot leaders, he added.

For the average fisherman, he recommended that the weight of the line be matched to the weight of the rod. Tedesco uses weight-forward lines for winter trout fishing rather than level or double-tapered lines.

Finally, on the subject of lines, he observed that fly lines develop memory in cold weather and recommended using cold-water line. "Its core is multi-filament and it has an external coating designed for cold temperatures."

Two final notes on equipment: The Forbidden Hole has a lot of structure, and it is important for fishermen to learn where the shelves and drop-offs are. A portable depth sounder is invaluable in learning the hole's bottoms.

The last piece is actually regarding apparel. He wraps ophthalmologists' tape around the middle finger of his right hand to keep the fly line from cutting into it. Over that he slips Buff fishing gloves that keep the tape in place.

"I can buy finger gloves made for stripping," he said, "but they lose elasticity quickly."

continues >

# IT'S THE PITS

Victor Tedesco's favorite winter fishing spots lie snugged up to the south side of Highway 1, between the Highway 3090 fork in the road leading to Port Fourchon and the town of Grand Isle.

From the surface they look like any other water-filled hole in the marsh, but they are very different. They are relicts of mining operations — abandoned sand pits. And they are deep; providential refuge for speckled trout in cold winter weather.

Great east-west running bands of sand lay in the area between the highway and the Gulf. Essentially they are beach dunes and deposits that were stranded inland during periods of marsh expansion (yes, marshes expanded instead of eroded in times past).

Higher ones grew strong stands of live oaks (now largely dead) and were called "cheniers." Lower ones were gradually submerged beneath marsh, as much of South Louisiana slowly subsided in elevation. But the sand, a valuable building material for humans, was still there.

>

Ted Tedesco

## ON RECORD

I met Ted Tedesco at a Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association banquet where he was being honored for catching the Fly Fish of the Year for 2015, a 46-pound alligator gar. (He had previously received the same honor in 2013 for a gafftopsail catfish.)

All told, Tedesco has placed 25 fish in the state record books, including (besides the two species above) bluefish, cobia, jack crevalle, dolphin, flounder, ladyfish, little tunny (bonita), Spanish mackerel, king mackerel, pompano, redfish, sheepshead, southern kingfish, black drum, red snapper and blackfin tuna.

"Myron Fisher the guide got me started in records when I caught the state record dolphin," Tedesco explained. "He did all the paper work and everything. I thought it was cool and started entering more fish.

"For me it was a matter of awareness. I think more people would enter if they were aware of the program. For the most part, I don't fish for records. They just happen."

*Author's note:* Complete information on the program and applications are found on the Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association website, laoutdoorwriters.com. ■

**ABOVE LEFT:** Most of the sand pits are snugged up very close to the south side of Highway 1, visible behind Tedesco, pictured here in the Forbidden Hole. **INSET:** Ted Tedesco caught the state record dolphin, which weighed 29.37 pounds, on a fly in 1993. The record still stands today.

According to Marco Picciola, who knows as much of their history as anyone alive, the first sand pits were dug in the mid-1960s by A. O. Rappolet, and the material was used to build the Port Fourchon Road and to feed sand dunes on Grand Isle itself.

The next excavations were by the Plaisance family, who concentrated on mining the cheniers.

In the late 1970s, Picciola himself, with his brother Larry, went through a seven-year process involving 13 agencies to get permits for them to mine sand. "These were old beach ridges like the cheniers, but without the trees," he explained.

"The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers didn't want any more mining on high, wooded cheniers." To get the permits, the Picciolas had to conduct approved mitigation elsewhere to improve wetland habitats.

This sand was used again at Port Fourchon and in construction of the "new" four-lane Highway 3235 between Larose and Golden Meadow. Their mining was done in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The deepest of the pits was the one that came to be known as the Forbidden Hole, which was originally dug to 45 feet deep. Seven sand pit cells were strung out along the highway, plus two or three smaller ones dug closer to Grand Isle by the Plaisances for a failed speculative waterfront property development. The best known of these today is called the "Snake Hole" by fishermen.

The Forbidden Hole, also sometimes called the "Telephone Pole Hole," for the lone telephone pole standing erect in it, is the best known of the pits. "It got its name from 'them' trying to run everybody out of there," grinned Tedesco.

The hole was and still is immensely popular with local, as well as out-of-town, fishermen. It was fenced, re-fenced and re-fenced from the highway multiple times with steel T-posts and barbed wire.

But the fences kept disappearing.

In candid moments, local anglers furtively repeat talk of midnight runs to tie the fences to their trucks' bumper hitches for "repositioning." Finally, facing the inevitable, the authorities gave up. While legally still private, they are treated as community property.

Now only about 22 feet deep, the Forbidden Hole is still the deepest water around. It is common to see up to 20 anglers lining the roadside bank of the hole and four or five kayaks, pirogues and even pontoon boats in it, Tedesco said.

"I always stay in the hole itself with my kayak and don't travel into the surrounding marsh. I don't want to trespass. I want to keep coming back."

Best speckled trout fishing in the pits is November through March — the colder the weather, the better. "The best day is the second day after a front comes through and the tide is still low" Tedesco said. "Tide range doesn't seem to matter as much as it does in speck fishing in the summer."

continues >

# WHY FLY?

"It's an art form," Tedesco bluntly answered. "Once you have some success, it's exhilarating.

"It's more of a challenge; it's more satisfying.

"Any fish you can catch with a rod and reel, you can catch with a fly. I've caught blue and white marlin, sailfish, dolphin and peacock bass. Catching a big speckled trout on a fly is as much fun as the more glamorous species.

"Not only is it more satisfying to use a fly, sometimes it is more effective. I was a serious fisherman before I was a fly fisherman. I caught a lot on artificial lures and slaughtered them on live bait.

"When you feel that bite and set the hook on a fly you tied yourself, it is a feeling that is hard to explain."

Tedesco ties most of the flies he uses, with the exception of spoon-flies. "Dupre spoons are so good, I can't tie better," he chuckled. "Some people are so good that their flies are works of art. I can't put mine in any shows, but they catch fish."

He encourages people to try fly fishing even if they don't yet know how to tie flies, citing many sources of supply, mostly on-line. But he says that learning to tie flies is relatively easy.

"Books and on-line videos provide excellent instruction. Joining a fly fishing club can also be helpful. There are clubs in Lake Charles, Baton Rouge, Lafayette and Shreveport — and probably others I don't know about," he said.

"You really feel like you accomplished something when you catch a fish on a fly. But, if you don't work at fly fishing, you won't be successful." ▪

**"It's an art form.**
*Once you have some success, it's exhilarating."*



**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 ANDY CRAWFORD

# BAYOU BLACK BASS BLAST

These bass anglers spend every available minute together on the water, and they know there's no place better for numbers of bites than Bayou Black.

A cold front had pushed through South Louisiana days before our scheduled trip to Bayou Black, and the worry was that the forecasted blue-bird day would wreck the fishing.

But Prairieville's Kurt Cook and his Gonzales nephew Adam Cook had to drive through pea-soup fog to reach Bob's Bayou Black Marina.

"Coming over the (Mississippi River), I couldn't see the bridge," Adam Cook said.

The fog wasn't quite as thick as the pair hit the water and eased minutes from the launch, pulling into a cypress tree-studded canal an hour after sunrise.

"We don't worry about getting out here early," Kurt Cook said of their late fall and winter trips. "We want to let the duck hunters get out.

"The launch is crazy when they are putting in."

And the uncle/nephew fishing team didn't need to be there at the crack of dawn — the bass were eating when they put the trolling motor down.

>

Adam (left) and Kurt Cook head to Bayou Black more often than not this time of year because they know the system holds numbers of bass that make for action-packed trips.

# IT ONLY TOOK A COUPLE OF CASTS FOR THE FIRST BASS TO COME OVER THE GUNNEL.

"THAT'S A GOOD ONE," SAID KURT COOK, THE ELDER OF THE TWO MEN.

The 2-pound fish went in the livewell to cool its heals for pictures. While these anglers do, occasionally, keep a few bass for the table, they release most of their catches.

"We don't keep any 3-pounders," Adam Cook said. "We let everything bigger than that go, and keep the smaller ones."

This was a catch-and-release day, although they caught about four one-man limits of bass before the fog burned off.

And they caught every fish just minutes from the launch in a complex of cypress-lined waterways called the Shell Canals.

He said that's something many anglers miss in their rush to find areas they believe are far enough away to be less pressured.

"You don't have to run far — you can fish right by the launch," Kurt said. "You can come out here and catch 20, 30, 40 fish.

"The population of fish down here is just awesome."

Bass were scattered along the canals, with some being in relatively shallow water but most setting up a bit farther out.

"They'll be on underwater stumps and stuff," the elder Cook said.

Exact positioning is largely related to weather.

"When a front comes through, they might be out deeper, in 6 to 8 feet of water," Kurt said. "When you have a warm spell, they'll pull up a little shallower."

Crankbaits, spinnerbaits and worms caught bass in equal number.

But Adam said they definitely have a preference.

"Flipping is our bread and butter," he explained. "We're making sure we hit every side of the tree.

"If you ain't hitting every cypress tree at least twice, there's something wrong."

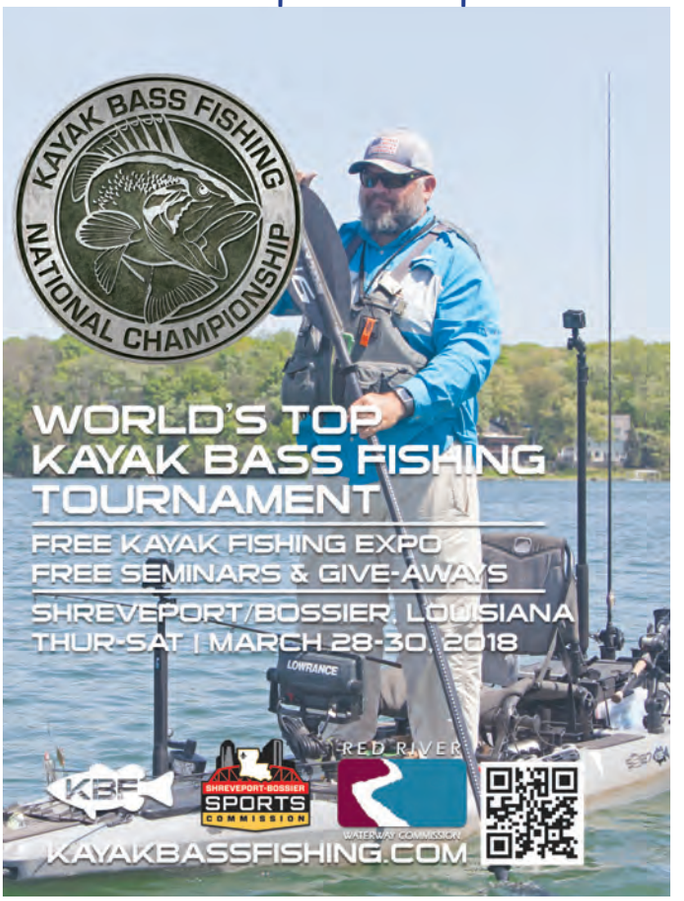
While this team often burns little fuel this time of year, bass can be caught in pretty much any part of the Bayou Black system — from the cypress swamps up north to the brackish marshes farther south.

But the pattern will be the same in December and January, no matter where you come off plane — bass leave the current of the main bayous in preparation for their springtime mating rituals.

continues on page 96

You don't have to run a long way from the launch in late fall and winter to find success. Adam Cook and his uncle Kurt Cook burn almost no fuel while catching 20 to 40 bass a trip.

Fish Shreveport-Bossier City this spring.
Check out these upcoming events and more at www.shreveportbossiersports.com.



"They're moving into these dead-end canals right now," Kurt explained. "They are positioning themselves for the spawn. We can come back in February and catch them right up on the banks.

"I think a lot of these fish are pre-spawn. In January, you can come in here and catch some really big bass."

In fact, bass in this southern region of the state can actually spawn in January, if the weather doesn't turn frigid.

On this day, surface water temps were in the mid-60s. And the bass were chomping like they hadn't eaten in a week.

Adam put down his crankbait fairly early, opting to start pitching a soft plastic creature bait. And he almost immediately set the hook on a chunky bass.

## OPTIONS ABOUND

The Bayou Black system isn't known for huge bass — a 5-pounder is a pretty big fish here — but it can produce a lot of very nice specimens. Michigan's Kevin VanDam, for instance, tallied 32 pounds, 5 ounces in the system to win the 2001 Bassmaster Classic.

And, while the Cook boys catch plenty of bass working cypress trees, stumps and laydowns very near the launch, the system offers anglers a wide variety of options.

Cypress swamps dominate north of the Intracoastal Waterway, but head south and the habitat gives way to willows and marshes.

That diversity — along with an extremely healthy bass population — appeals to the Cooks.

"Every form of fishing you want to do is right here," Adam Cook said. "You can flip roseau canes, fish grass, flip cypress trees, fish marsh ponds — whatever your strength is."

Of course, as a coastal fishery, it is at the mercy of tropical systems. Fortunately, there hasn't been a real blow to the area since Hurricane Rita swiped the region on its way to a Texas landfall — and that wasn't a gut punch.

"I think what helps this area is we haven't had a hurricane in a while," Adam Cook said.

Kurt agreed.

"I think it's the best its ever been since (Hurricane) Andrew," he said.

By 10 a.m., the anglers had tallied about 40 bass from the canal in which they started the day.

## DON'T PASS UP MUDDY WATER

Muddy water throws some anglers, who believe bass run from it.

That's a big mistake, according to Adam and Kurt Cook.

"We've caught some of our bigger fish in muddy water," Adam said.

Kurt said they do avoid the muddiest water, but heavily stained water can hold some really nice fish.

"We're not going to fish real muddy water," he said. "We're going to fish stained to green water." ■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A crankbait bounced off wood cover can be deadly in the canals of the Bayou Black system.

Check out the men's Facebook pages, and you'll find this isn't unusual: These guys more often than not put numbers in the boat.

But sometimes it takes time.

"People are, like, 'Wow, y'all are catching all those fish,'" Adam said. "What they don't realize is we stay out 10 to 12 hours (each trip).

"We're not ones to fish 30 minutes and leave. We wait them out."

Kurt said the temptation to leave an area you know holds bass when things slow down is anathema to success.

"Patience is a virtue," he explained.

That's especially true in systems like Bayou Black, which are heavily influenced by tidal flow.

"The first hour to three hours of that falling tide — it's just crazy," Kurt said. "You can be in a spot and not be catching anything, and that tide starts moving and you'll start catching fish.

"The fish just react to it."

Adam explained the effect of current can't be understated.

"When that water starts moving, the bass move, the baitfish start moving," he said. "Everything starts happening."

And you can go from twiddling your thumbs to wrestling bass after bass in minutes — if you don't spend your time running around.

"You've got to wait it out," Adam said.

## WEATHER WATCHER

When cold weather finally moves in, it's important to adjust to the conditions.

"You want to slow down a lot," Kurt said. "We're not in a hurry. We're not blowing through here.

continues on page 98

"The colder the water temperature, the slower you fish. The slower the better this time of year."

He also said larger-profile baits like jigs and large-bladed spinnerbaits work well.

Success also depends on their adjustment to sky conditions. On overcast or foggy days, bass tend to spread out and roam, but things change when there's not a cloud in the sky.

"They get very tight (to cover)," Adam said. "I'm fishing on the shade side of the tree.

"Fish don't have eyelids, so they're going to be looking for shade from the sun."

And when a genuine norther' blows through, the Cook boys adjust yet again.

"After a big front, fish might pull out deep in 6 to 8 feet of water," Kurt said. ▪

**Andy Crawford** *has spent nearly his entire career writing about and photographing Louisiana's hunting and fishing community. While he has written for national publications, even spending four years as a senior writer for B.A.S.S., Crawford never strayed far from the pages of Louisiana Sportsman. Learn more about his work at www.AndyCrawford.Photography.*

Don't be afraid to flip shallow during January warm-ups because some bass will actually move up to spawn.

## WATCH FOR JANUARY WARM-UPS

The relatively temperate climes of South Louisiana mean January can see Bayou Black bass begin the first wave of spawning.

So it's important to stay in tune to water temperatures.

"If you get some warm-enough days, they'll move up," Kurt Cook said. "A change of 4 or 5 degrees, and they'll start moving up shallow."

That's when Kurt and his nephew Adam Cook begin flipping the banks to catch big spawners.

But they said it's a mistake to focus solely on those shallow bass.

"It's 50/50," Kurt said. "Some fish will move up to spawn, but some will still be staging." ▪

## COOK BOYS' BAITS

For flipping, the Cooks use two soft-plastics:

- **Zoom Brush Hogs —** black/red and watermelon/red are two favored colors.
- **Zoom Speed Craws —** june bug and june bug/red work well.

Adam said heavy weights are the way to go to provoke lethargic bass.

"It gets down to them quicker and you get reaction bites," he said.

They also will slow-roll spinnerbaits. Kurt Cook said he likes big-bladed models.

"I like Colorado or Indiana blades rather than the willow leafs," he said. "They react to (larger baits) better."

And beefing up the blade forces you to slow down your retrieve.

"You normally use a No. 3 1/2 blade, but I like to move up to a No. 5 — it makes you fish slower," he explained.

He also increases success by trimming the skirts.

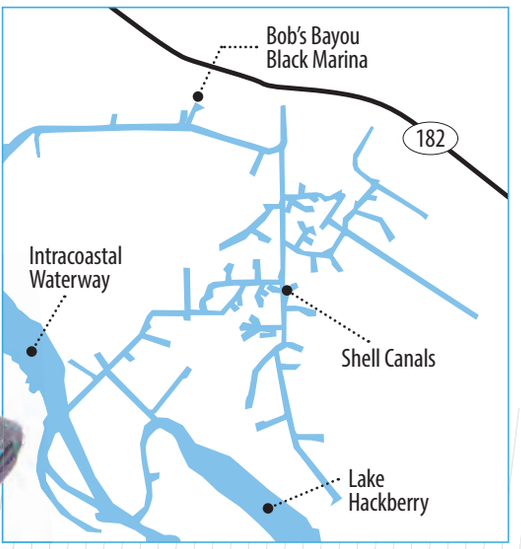
"I cut it right behind the hook," Kurt said. "Sometimes they nip the skirt, so trimming it saves you from those short strikes."

They also love to throw crankbaits, bouncing them off cypress tree, stumps and laydowns — anything around which bass will lie in wait.

"They get those reaction bites," Kurt said.

Zoom Brush Hog

Zoom Speed Craw



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By David A. Brown

# BEATING THE POST-FRONT FUNK

The days of rainy fronts, chilly temperatures and dreaded bluebird skies are upon us. But fish still have to eat — here's how the pros catch 'em.

The year's conclusion brings many pleasant moments, with Christmas parties, festive decorations, grandma's homemade holiday goodies and the like.

But bass fishermen know that amid all the seasonal cheer, meteorological factors can throw a monkey wrench into rod-bending pursuits.

Yep, we're talking about cold fronts — those blustery, sometimes rainy systems that stimulate the bite on the front side and all but stifle it once they've passed. Fishing offers few absolutes, but the inescapable truth of cold fronts is that the post-frontal conditions — flat winds, bright bluebird skies and a sharp temperature drop — can give bass a bad case of lockjaw.

Now, opinions vary on the severity and longevity of post-frontal impacts, but consider this point: Fish gotta eat.

Think of it like a set of balance scales: On one side, you have the fish's aversion to sharp temperature changes and on the other, you have its appetite. At the onset of post-frontal conditions, the scales are equally balanced and the fish doesn't need to budge — but as the fish's appetite increases, the scales tip toward feeding.

Just don't expect the fish to immediately return to full activity. Bass that were chasing down full-sized crankbaits and spinnerbaits are going to watch those baits go right by them. And the topwater bite will yield to long-pause jerkbait tactics.

Here's a handful of pointers that may convince those bass to warm up to your bait after a cold front.

**COVER IS KING** UP NEXT >

## COVER IS KING

Catching a post-front fish in open water is not impossible, but for most of that first day, the bright conditions and high pressure will have them tucked under lily pads, inside grass lines, or somewhere amid shady laydowns and brush piles. That means you'll do well by probing those cozy, dim areas. Major League Fishing pro Greg Hackney finds his Strike King Hack Attack Fluorocarbon Flipping Jig fitted with a Strike King Menace trailer does a good job of reaching into and out of cover. A scaled down version of the original Hack Attack jig, this one offers a smaller profile that's easier to sell post-front fish, a smaller hook diameter for easier penetration when using stealthy fluorocarbon and a narrow head for better movement in cover.

"Louisiana is a target-rich environment, and southern fish love heavy cover after a front," Hackney said.

## JUNK IN THE TRUNK

FLW Tour pro James Niggemeyer's also a devout jig fan, especially in post-frontal conditions. For him, trailer selection is one of the most important elements of this game.

For the active period before and during a front's passage, he likes a Strike King Rage Craw because it's ultra-limber pincers and side appendages wiggle with maximum motion. A larger profile trailer with lots of water displacement, this one's an easy sell to active bass.

However, as fish start to feel the impacts of a passing cold front, Niggemeyer tones down the action a little with a Strike King Rage Bug. The more streamlined form still gives a sizable

**ABOVE:** Next time the fish are finicky, try rigging a medium swimbait on a football head and rumbling it across the bottom. **BELOW:** Expect fish to tuck into laydowns during post-frontal conditions.

profile, but the appendages display less flair, so fish see a more subdued look.

As the water temperature falls and calmer conditions increase clarity, moving to the modest Strike King Menace grub is Niggemeyer's next step. And in the coldest, most difficult times, the Strike King Rodent offers him a good option for an appealing profile with minimal movement.

With this one, he may opt to thread the trailer on his jig hook or cut it down to within three segments from the appendages and pin it like a chunk-style trailer.

**JUST A LITTLE TEASE** UP NEXT >

Jig trailers like Strike King's Rage Craw (top), Rage Bug (middle) and Menace are some favorites for post-frontal conditions.

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Tiny crappie jigs can work wonders on post-front bass.

## JUST A LITTLE TEASE

Worm fishing is how we all learned to catch bass, but after a cold front, you need to choose wisely. Clearly, this is not the time for the foot long baits of summer, but FLW pro Kyle Cortiana offers some deeper insights. His favorite is a Gene Larew Tattletail worm on a homemade ⅛-ounce jighead with a wide gap hook.

"That entire bait is pretty motionless and it will not alarm a fish when it comes sinking down there," Cortiana said. "The whole bait is pretty much paralyzed except for the very tip of it. It's the perfect amount of movement to convince the fish that it's alive and he wants to eat the bait, it's easy pickings."

If he needs an even smaller profile with a slower fall, Cortiana switches to a Gene Larew Inch Worm on a Ned head jig. With a meatier head and stumpy body, this bait mimics bluegill and crawfish — both well-established in the bass' diet.

One more strategy: Cortiana typically uses the 7-inch Tattletail worm, but there's also a 10-inch version. When he needs to slow his fall rate, he'll rig that finesse jig with a 10-inch worm, cut down to the 7-inch length.

"Because that 10-inch worm has a wider diameter, it has a slower rate of fall," Cortiana said.

Beyond these two specialized worms, he offers this thought on other options: "If I had something working for me going into the front and it stops working, I'll try that exact same bait, but I'll downsize everything."

As a side note to this point, don't hesitate to reach into your crappie tackle box during the toughest post-frontal times. Often, that ⅛-ounce jighead with a little shad tail yo-yoing slowly in front of a weed edge or shot under a dock is just too easy for a bass to refuse.

## HOLD IT RIGHT THERE

Now, if there is one bait/rig with year-round applicability, it is the dropshot; and this modest finesse rig truly earns its keep during post-frontal days. Rig it with a small finesse worm or even a grub like the Strike King Menace that Hackney favors; just don't overwork the rig.

"You're fishing for inactive fish, so you want to use a bait profile that matches their mood," Hackney said. "A dropshot is not overpowering; it's an easy meal for inactive fish to eat."

Notably, Hackney said he avoids a round dropshot weight because it has "shoulders," which tend to hang up too often. The narrow cylinder weights or tear drop shapes are his choice, as both do a better job of sliding in an out of cover.

A key point to consider for post-frontal fish is that they might be pinned to the bottom. Therefore, unless you're marking fish higher in the water column, keep those dropshot leaders short. Maintaining a vulnerable presentation is the name of the game, so dial in where the fish are biting and that depth should remain fairly consistent until the weather stabilizes.

No doubt, the savvy angler has many tools at his/her disposal when post-frontal conditions make for tough fishing. Whatever you choose, keep it slow and outlast the fish.

They gotta eat — and reality rewards resolve. ▪

FLW Tour pro Kyle Cortiana likes the slow fall and subtle tail action of a Gene Larew Tattle Tail worm.



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

## STICK IT IN THE MIDDLE

One of the most popular baits for the post-front blues is a wacky-rigged worm.

Across the board, one of the most consistently productive rigs for any tough-bite scenario is the wacky rig — basically, a soft stick worm or finesse worm with a hook set through the center of the body, or tucked under an O-ring. When a cold front rocks the bass' world, meals have to be super easy or they ain't interested.

The wacky rig is designed to fall slowly and wiggle at both ends; kind of a dying or cold-stunned baitfish look. Highly vulnerable, not likely to dash away — the ideal snack on a day when excessive movement is not on the schedule.

Pro angler James Niggemeyer's a big fan of the wacky rig, but he swaps the traditional short-shank finesse style hook for a 1/0 Owner long shank, cutting point hook — which gives him better hook-up success. This beefier hook also gives him more confidence that he'll keep a fish buttoned up while he's trying to separate it from cover.

For pitching his finesse rig around brush piles, vegetation or laydowns, Niggemeyer fashions a homemade weed guard by forming a V-shape with saltwater leader wire, pushing both ends through the hook eye — front to back, wrapping the ends around the shank and securing the ends with fly tying thread. He'll seal the connection with Super Glue and finish with black fingernail polish. Cutting the bottom of that V creates a two-arm weed guard.

Now, if you want to give those fish a different look, add a nail weight to the head of the worm and now you have a Neko rig. The biggest variation in performance is a faster-sinking rig with a nose-down posture. Some feel this mimics a shad or bluegill feeding on the bottom. Let that image wander too close to a sulking bass, and it's an easy catch.

One subtle change that some anglers employ is to switch from a perpendicular hook alignment where the point pierces the bait laterally, to a parallel placement in which the hook aligns with the bait — backside facing forward. You can use an O-ring or run the hook directly into and out of the worm. Either way, this arrangement offers you the ability to fish this nose-down version of a wacky rig with an in-line orientation, similar to a Texas rig. ▪

– David A. Brown

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## TRY THESE TIPS FROM THE PROS TO STAY ON FISH AS CHILLY CONDITIONS SET IN.

# CRUSHING COLD WATER CRAPPIE

By David A. Brown

Cooler water means more active fish — and with the crappie gathering up for prespawn feeding, you can bet that schooling competition will motivate the fish to eat whatever they can catch.

That's good news for folks who favor artificials and jigs as their top options.

"In December, it's hard to beat live bait, but if I'm using artificials, I would be using a small-profile hair jig — a tube style lead head with craft hair," said crappie pro Matt Morgan. "A small minnow head jig with a small Midsouth tube is very effective, as is a Bobby Garland Baby Shad."

Toledo Bend crappie guide Dennis Tietje holds a similar mindset, with his preference leaning toward a Mr. Crappie Shad Pole or Lightning Shad. The idea, Tietje notes, is to mimic the crappies' number one food source — small threadfin shad.

"Those little, subtle baits just seem to work best," Tietje said. "Something that looks like a shad is most effective."

**FALL MOVEMENTS**
UP NEXT >

Crushing cold water crappie

## FALL MOVEMENTS

While we're talking about Mr. Crappie baits, we figured it would make sense to ask the man himself — Wally "Mr. Crappie" Marshall.

Having chased his quarry all over the South, Marshall knows the fish will be following migrating shad schools into the backs of pockets and tributaries where they find amenable conditions during harsh winter months.

"A lot of crappie stack up in creek channels in the winter; a lot of baitfish move in there and the crappie are following them," Marshall said. "What I do is go up those creeks and start using my Humminbird 360 to look for baitfish and submerged logs and timber that you can't find with the naked eye.

"I keep going until I don't see anymore baitfish or crappie. Usually, the crappie are with the baitfish, so if you don't see any baitfish, there's not going to be any crappie farther up the creek, so I turn around and start fishing my way out."

## PRESENTATION PRECISION

Wherever you find your crappie, consistent action depends on keeping your bait on the fish's radar. Favoring 1/32- to 1/8-ounce Mr. Crappie ball head jigs, Tietje said a 90-degree eye is essential for maintaining that vertical posture he needs for effective presentations.

"You want to present that bait as naturally as you can," he said. "We don't get really cold until late December or early January, so our fish are still really active; they're still close to the surface around the cypress trees and other cover."

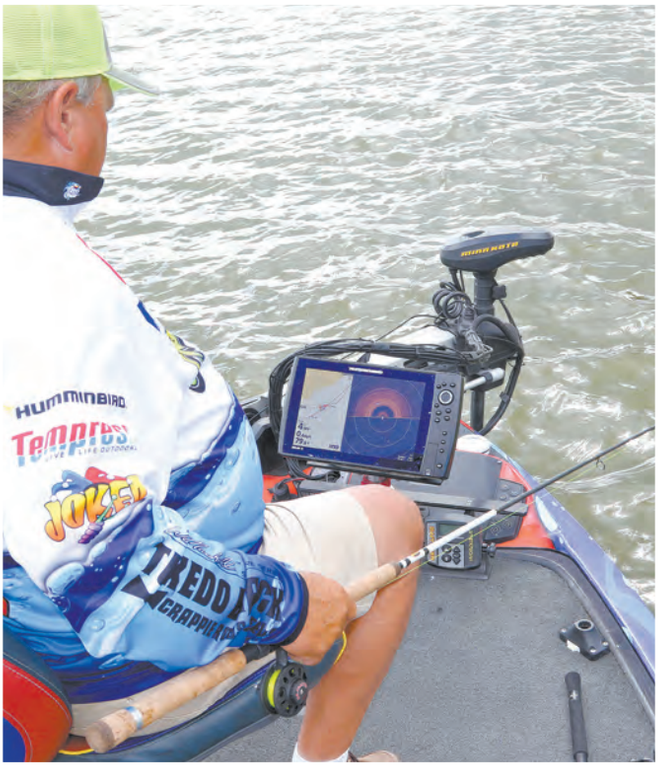
On Toledo Bend, D'Arbonne and other noted crappie locales, Marshall's a fan of one-pole, vertical jigging over the brush and wood he encounters. For this technique, he'll use his signature 10-foot jigging rod with his Mr. Crappie Solo reel — a large arbor reel that allows him to quickly pull out line, as needed.

Once he locates a suspected crappie attractor, Marshall tosses out a marker and works all around the structure; all the while monitoring his Humminbird 360 for signs of bait and fish. Snags happen, but Marshall knows a calm measured response usually salvages the moment.

"Don't panic if you feel your jig hit something," he said. "Don't jam the hook into the brush or wood; just wiggle your rod tip until it pops loose. Why break a $50 rod over a 10-cent lure?"

A couple more productive techniques:

**ON THE MOVE** UP NEXT >




**TOP:** Laydowns along the edges of creek channels are prime crappie spots. **ABOVE:** Wally "Mr. Crappie" Marshall closely monitors his electronics as he jigs over brush piles.

## PROBING THE WATER COLUMN

Stay on the fish. Keep it in the strike zone.

Yeah, we hear those phrases a lot, but saying and doing are not always congruent. Well, crappie guide Dennis Tietje has a technique for pinpointing December crappie — and it's just a matter of being patient and thorough.

"If the spot you're fishing is deep enough for you to be able to put your boat over the fish, drop down to the bottom and then slowly lift your rod; and I mean to the point where your rod is extended over your head," he said. "Crappie will always have a strike zone and they never feed down; they only feed up. So, if you're fishing below those crappie, you're not going to catch them.

The Mr. Crappie Shad Pole, Lightning Shad and Joker are effective selections for this time of year.

"By lifting that jig very slowly with your arm, you actually come up through that strike zone. As it's leaving, those crappie think that minnow is swimming away. This technique will double your catch rate, versus just putting your bait down there and jigging it."

While your jig is down there on the bottom, consider the value of drawing attention to your bait with visual and audible disturbance.

Specifically, let your jig hit bottom, raise it a few inches and then let it fall again. Doing this a few times creates a commotion that'll, at least, alert fish that something's on the way toward their strike zone. ■

— By David A. Brown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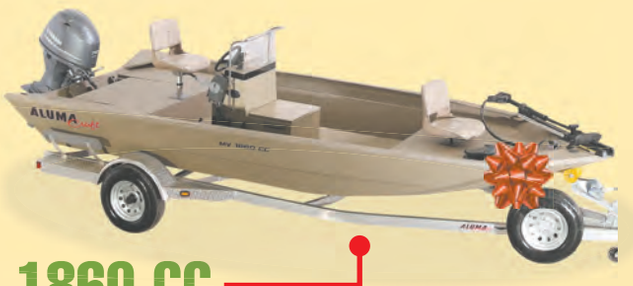

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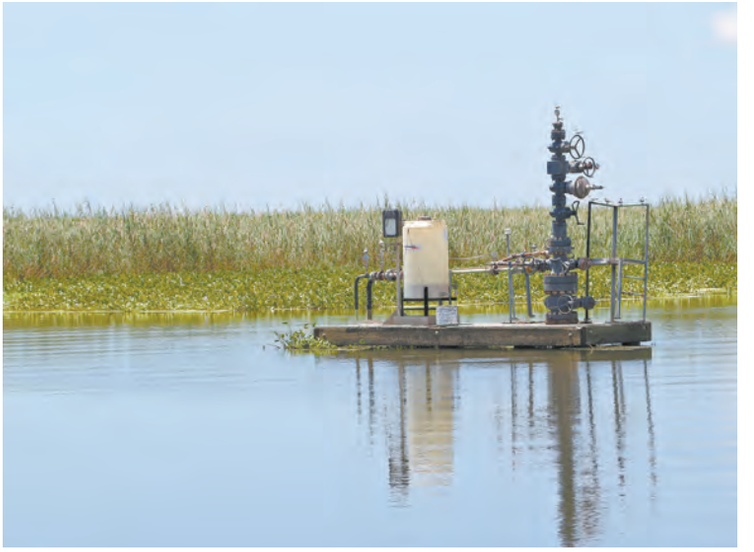

Drilling industry structures scattered throughout the marsh can be crappie magnets, as long as baitfish are present.

## ON THE MOVE

Noting that not all crappie utilize a lake's pockets and creeks, Marshall points to the tactic of tight-lining, aka "pushing," to cover water on the main lake. Here, he'd rig a ½-ounce weight about 12 inches below a 1/16-ounce jig and hang a second jig about a foot below that weight.

Marshall likes his Mr. Crappie Shad Pole for this deal, but he might also use a Mr. Crappie Joker for a little more motion to entice the fish.

He'll start by varying the colors and body shapes until he determines what the fish want. Once a preference becomes clear, he'll fish the popular choice on both of his double-rig segments.

## GO WITH THE FLOW

Now, moving to shallow rivers like the Ouachita calls for a little different strategy.

Here, Tietje drops to a 1/16- or 1/32-ounce jighead, compared to the 1/16- to 1/8-ounce range he likes in deeper lake habitat. He also prefers suspending crappie jigs below small corks.

"Basically, you're not able to put your boat over top of the fish like you can in a lake because of the water depth," he said. "So you either have to extend with a cane pole away from the boat, or you're casting away from the boat. A cork just offers you that ability to hold that bait in the strike zone."

Tietje employs a floating presentation in various river habitat, and he adjusts his cork rig to fit the scenario he's fishing. For example, a shallow brush pile affording minimal overhead clearance may require only a 1 ½-foot leader; whereas targeting the bases of cypress trees might require 2 to 2 ½ feet of drop.

The float strategy also works around the wellhead structures scattered throughout southern marshes. Casting to these spots can work, but crappie will hold close to anything harboring baitfish, so floating your jig is the more efficient tactic.

"With a lot of these wellheads, people have put brush around them," Tietje said. "These areas and any treetop in those oilfield canals are good, as opposed to the open areas. You're just not going to randomly catch many out in the marsh. By this time of year, they're going to be moving to the deep water canals."

Tietje finds 4- to 6-pound line fits his crappie work; with size decreasing as clarity expands. High-vis yellow or green line can be helpful in detecting those light bites that impart only a subtle twitch.

## FRONTAL EFFECTS

Keep in mind that December is likely to deliver cold fronts, so don't be surprised to see the fish push back into deeper water during tough post-frontal days. Marshall advised looking around deeper laydowns and docks with a lot of depth for sulking crappie. Switching to the super-subtle baits and employing minimal movement is the way to go.

"I would rather have not a lot of action on the lure," Marshall said. "A lot of times, you can just hold it there and they'll just knock the fire out of it."

Another option: Tietje adds a Berkley Powerbait Crappie Nibble to his jig hook to sweeten the smell/taste. Think of it like driving past a bakery and smelling that fresh bread; you may not have been in the munching mood, but a stimulus can make folks — and fish — do things they weren't initially planning to do.

Tietje's summary: "Most of the time, you don't need that extra incentive, but it never hurts." ▪

Crappie will be feeding heavily ahead of winter, so keep those baits in the strike zone.

*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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**CREATURE FEATURE**

Jerald Horst

Permit are the fabled creatures of gin clear flats over white tropical sands, consorts of bonefish. This 15-pounder was landed by Pierre Manseau on a fly.

# 'PERMIT' ME, PLEASE

## THIS POMPANO RELATIVE CALLS LOUISIANA WATERS HOME

Photo courtesy of IGFA

In June 2018, Aaron Pierce petitioned the Fish Records Committee of the Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association to add permit to its list of fish eligible for catch recognition. He had just caught a 4.81-pounder on the beaches of Terrebonne Parish.

It wasn't Pierce's first permit; and it likely won't be his last, either.

Permit, the glamor fish of tropical flats fishing, are more common in Louisiana than most people realize. Most who catch them pass them off as just another pompano.

Pierce's fish was modest-sized, considering that the IGFA world record is an even 60 pounds, compared to 8 pounds, 4 ounces for pompano. But it is likely just the first of more entries as people become aware of the fish's presence in Louisiana.

## KEYS TO ID

At first glance, permit do indeed look like their closest relative, the Florida pompano. Both are greatly flattened side-to-side, with a silvery body color, a small mouth and matching dorsal (back) and anal (belly) fins. But there are some major differences.

First is size. If your fish is 10 pounds or larger, you've either got a permit or the largest pompano on the face of the earth. A major tell is to look at the dorsal fin. On a permit, it is long and sloped back towards the tail of the fish. On a pompano, it is short and upright.

Then look at the belly color. A permit has a relatively small orange-yellow patch immediately in front of the anal fin. The entire belly of a pompano is colored and it's definitely yellow rather than orange-yellow.

A final feature is difficult to explain unless one has both fish side-by-side to compare, but a permit has a significantly deeper body than does a pompano.

## WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

Reference books show the range of permit to extend from southern Massachusetts through the entire Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean, on down the coast of South America to southern Brazil. But the coastal waters of Louisiana can never be confused with their prime habitat in the Florida Keys.

They are a warm-water species and as such, Louisiana fishermen can't expect to find them except during summer months. In Florida, they are seldom caught in the winter north of mid-panhandle on both Gulf and Atlantic coasts.

Within that framework, permit are where you find them. Exotic fishing tales lead many to believe that they are creatures only of the flats — in shallow, gin-clear water over glistening white sands.

But the truth is that, while permit occur there, they also haunt mud bottoms, grass beds, natural and man-made reefs, wrecks, oil platforms, deep channels, rock jetties and holes near the coast.

In deeper waters, up to 100 feet, they often form schools that circle outside (not over) a wreck or an artificial reef as far out as 100 yards from the outside edge of the structure. When it is calm, their dorsal fins can be spotted sticking out of the water.

Under these conditions, Florida fishermen cast a small live crab under a cork to them and hang on for action. They provide powerful fights with steady runs and many quick changes in direction. A 40-pound permit appears almost freakishly large in the boat.

Aaron Pierce holds his state record 4.81-pound Louisiana record permit.

Photo courtesy of Aaron Pierce

## WHAT ARE GOOD BAITS?

In their natural habitat, permit use their blunt noses to root in the bottom to hunt for supper — small clams, snails, crabs, shrimp, small fish and worms. If it's living and not a plant, it is fair game.

Experienced permit fishermen say bait choice is easy. "Permit will eat anything — as long as it's a live crab."

Most prefer to use the smallest crab they can get, nothing over 2 to 2 ½ inches measured point to point. Permit often turn up their noses at larger crabs, but seldom refuse a smaller one.

It is important that the crab be alive, which means that it should be hooked as close to the edge of its shell as possible. And leave the pincers on for a natural look: Permit have small mouths, but large and observant eyes.

Live shrimp is also a good choice of baits, and one more in tune with Louisiana fishing practices. Both shrimp and crabs should be presented as naturally as possible, with minimum or no added weight.

Soft plastic lures on ¼-ounce jigheads will also produce strikes, although not as many as live bait. And of course, there is the fly. Fly fishermen, who take a perverse delight in doing things the most difficult (challenging?) way possible, consider catching a permit on a fly rod the holy grail of saltwater fly fishing.

## HOW DO THEY TASTE?

Well, they look like pompano, so they should taste like pompano.

Right?

Indeed they do. Permit, pompano and palometa (but not African pompano) are closely related members of the jack family. They all have oily, but mild, white flesh, best suitable for broiling, grilling or baking, as well as for sashimi or sushi.

A caveat from one dedicated permit eater in Florida is that permit larger than 10 pounds have a slightly more "chewy" texture. His solution is to hold the fish on ice for a couple of days to let natural enzymatic processes tenderize it for him. He calls them "perfect for the grill." ▪

**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.*

**ASK CAPT. PAUL**

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# POINT AUX CHIEN KAYAK WAYPOINTS

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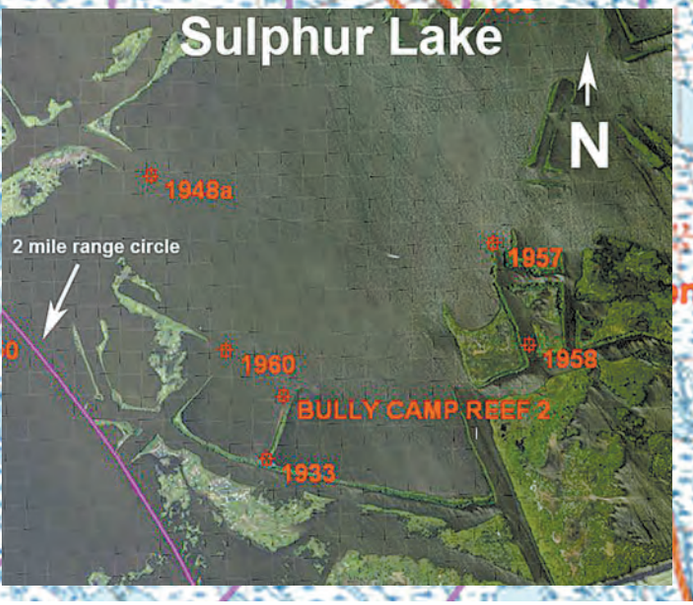


Lately I have been swamped to provide waypoints for kayak anglers. These requests generally ask for the distances from a launch location to a variety of various waypoints in the area.

## LOCATION

My latest request was for waypoints in the Point aux Chien area of the Pointe-aux-Chenes Wildlife Management Area.

The name of the WMA is interpreted as meaning "Point of the Oaks," or Oak Point. Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA is located in Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes, approximately 15 miles southeast of Houma.

For more information on the 35,000-acre WMA, go to http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/wma/2790.

The Point aux Chien area is generally described as an area west of Galliano and Highway 3235, south of Highway 24, east of Montegut and Highway 55 and north of Lakes Felicity and Courant.

Some locations in the area and south of the WMA were also listed and available in my Capt. Paul's Fishing Edge of waypoints for Leeville West. Some of you may want many or all of the 340 waypoints in this area.

## LAUNCHES

Besides the many roadside launches along the highways, there are some more sites that offer some protection for your vehicles.

One of the western side access points is PAC Kayak Rentals (http://packayakrental.com/; located at 179 Paw Paw Lane in Montegut. (Their email is packayakrental@yahoo.com, and the telephone numbers are 225-244-1547 or 225-573-4085.) Another one is located on Grand Bayou on Highway 665 south of the WMA headquarters. For more information, contact Vaughan McDonald at vmcdonald@wlf.la.gov, or call 225-763-8807.

And on the eastern side of the WMA is the Oak Ridge Boat Launch in Golden Meadow, located at 305 Oakridge Drive in Golden Meadow. The phone number is (985) 537-7603.

## SULPHUR LAKE AREA

One of the most requested areas is in and around the Sulphur Mine in Lafourche Parish west of Galliano, in the middle of the Point-au-Chien, Golden Meadow and Larose area. It is just northeast of Lake Bully Camp in the Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA.

The south side of the Sulphur Mine Lake, located in the Pointe aux Chenes WMA at a point where Bayou Bouillon (now a canal) enters the lake, is at or about 29º 27.465' N. Lat. ~ 90º 22.652' W. Long.

There is another canal that leads from the Sulphur Lake on the west side to Grand Bayou. Grand Bayou then leads southerly to Cut Off Bayou, which intersects Bayou Point aux Chien near the southern end of Highway 655.

The Sulphur Lake at the first mentioned canal is at or about 29º 27.751' N. Lat. ~ 90º 23.404' W. Long. The center of the Sulphur lake is at or about 29º 27.765' N. Lat ~ 90º 22.936' W. Long.

I do not believe that the center is the deepest part of the lake. The map that I have also shows numerous pilings and some small production platforms throughout the area.

Rings on the map indicate 2 miles as the crow flies.

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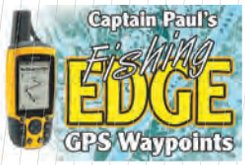

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## ADDITIONAL WAY-POINT LOCATIONS

**Name:** 1956 on Grand Bayou
**Coordinates:** 029° 23.0338' N, 090° 26.4126' W
*Comment: Wildlife headquarters.*
**Name:** 1959 break in the canal north of Sulphur lake
**Coordinates:** 029° 28.2074› N, 090° 22.5305' W
*Comment: Fish the break in the canal banks.*
**Name:** 1960 ~ beginning of where canal began at Sulphur lake.
**Coordinates:** 029° 27.3405› N, 090° 23.1928' W
**Name:** BYU6BLUE ~ near end of canal by BYU Blue
**Coordinates:** 029° 30.7801› N, 090° 22.3552' W
*Comment: Fish the cut for reds in a NW wind.*
**Name:** CHIEN ~ LK CHIEN BYU TO BYU JEAN LACROIX
**Coordinates:** 029° 20.8527› N, 090° 25.8468' W
*Comment: Fish the opening to the NW and the structure to the east.*
**Name:** COUPE- CREUSE ~A REEF LOCATED BETWEEN COUPE CREUSE AND LAKE DU DIABLE
**Coordinates:** 029° 15.9471› N, 090° 26.4128' W
*Comment: Fish north end of the reef to shoreline.*
**Name:** LK FELICITY WEST
**Coordinates:** 029° 19.0361› N, 090° 27.2955' W
*Comment: Fish the cove.*
**Name:** 13FTHOLE
**Coordinates:** 029° 04.1770› N, 090° 14.9086' W
*Comment: 13 feet in Timbalier Bay.*
**Name:** 50 DEEP HOLE
**Coordinates:** 029° 12.9950› N, 090° 31.4280' W
*Comment: Find the hole on depth finder and fish the sloping sides to the north.*
**-Name:** BARREN ~ USGS MARKER MARKING WHAT WAS A SHOAL
**Coordinates:** 029° 16.5165› N, 090° 32.3270' W
*Comment: Fish around the position.*
**Name:** CATLKS ~ CATFISH LAKE, SOUTHERN CUT
**Coordinates:** 029° 21.9048› N, 090° 17.8767' W
*Comment: Cut to Pipeline Canal, fish the points.*
**Name:** DEEPLK-CHINA ~ NAVAID GREEN #1 DEEP LAKE AT CHINOS PASS
**Coordinates:** 029° 17.6358› N, 090° 20.8906' W
*Comment: Fish the deeper channel marked by the Navaids - Also the points in China Pass.*
**Name:** G BYU WEST
**Coordinates:** 029° 21.1196› N, 090° 19.5413' W
*Comment: Fish the shoreline and the points.*

continues on page 116

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## ASK CAPT. PAUL

continued

**Name:** Golden M launch
**Coordinates:** 029° 22.4186› N, 090° 15.8320' W
**Name:** BYUBLUE 3 ~ BYU BLUE AREA
**Coordinates:** 029° 29.9157› N, 090° 21.9798' W
**Name:** CATL-BLUE CATFISH LK @ GRAND BYU
**Coordinates:** 029° 22.5603› N, 090° 19.7672' W
*Comment: Fish the points at each canal.*
**Name:** CATWEL2~ ONE OF MANY, MANY WELLHEADS
**Coordinates:** 029° 23.0175› N, 090° 18.6642' W
*Comment: Fish the structure on the current side.*
**Name:** CATWELL ONE OF MANY, MANY WELLHEADS
**Coordinates:** 029° 22.6505› N, 090° 18.3383' W
*Comment: Fish the structure on the approaching current side.*
**Name:** 1957 ~ Sulphur lake where canal ends
**Coordinates:** 029° 27.5978› N, 090° 22.4532' W
**Name:** 1958 ~ CANAL SOUTH OF SULPHUR LAKE
**Coordinates:** 029° 27.3529› N, 090° 22.3539' W
**Name:** OLD LADY-CREUSE ~A PASS BETWN OLD LADY LAKE AND COUPE CREUSE
**Coordinates:** 029° 14.7655› N, 090° 26.8292' W
*Comment: Fish the pass and island to the south.*
**Name:** OLDLDYS ~ UNDER WATER SHOAL IN OLD LADY LAKE
**Coordinates:** 029° 12.4411› N, 090° 25.9791' W
*Comment: Fish south of Old Lady Lake.*
**Name:** BULLY CAMP REEF 2
**Coordinates:** 029° 27.2290› N, 090° 23.0349' W
**Name:** 1933 OPENING BETWEEN REEF
**Coordinates:** 029° 27.0770› N, 090° 23.0773' W
*Comment: Fish the cut on both sides.*
**Name:** 1935 ~ canal north of Sulphur lake
**Coordinates:** 029° 29.4418› N, 090° 23.1384' W
*Comment: Fish the break in the canal, and fish both sides.*
**Name:** 1948 ~ canal opening west side of Sulphur Lake
**Coordinates:** 029° 27.7584› N, 090° 23.4007' W
*Comment: Fish the bank on both sides.*
**Name:** 1949 ~ canal end north of Bully Camp Lake
**Coordinates:** 029° 27.2415› N, 090° 24.1427' W
*Comment: Fish the break.*
**Name:** 1950 ~ Island north of Lake Bully Camp
**Coordinates:** 029° 27.3732› N, 090° 23.9551' W
*Comment: Once land, fish the north side of the island.*
**Name:** 1951 ~ North of Bully Camp lake.
**Coordinates:** 029° 27.3745› N, 090° 24.4646' W
*Comment: Fish the break in the canal.*
**Name:** 1953 ~ a rock dam.
**Coordinates:** 029° 26.1778› N, 090° 26.3122' W
*Comment: Fish the small break.*

Note: Some of these waypoints may now be listed as private property. Please obey all trespassing laws.

Unless otherwise specified, all positions are stated as H,DDD,MM.mmm and were determined using WGS 84 DATUM. All Headings/bearings/courses are stated in magnetic degrees.

All of Capt. Paul's Fishing Edge files can be found in Louisiana Sportsman's Outdoor Store (www.sportsmangear.com). Remember that you must state your brand of GPS unit, your email address and the selected area.

NOTE: Edge files are NOT brand name interchangeable, so be sure to make the correct GPS unit brand 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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Catch Cormier

# LAST MINUTE GIFT IDEAS FOR THE STINGY SANTA

## THESE WILL PUT A SMILE ON A FLY FISHERMAN'S FACE

Gaiters are useful for any outdoor activity, protecting the neck and head. They come in beaucoup makes and designs.

While traveling through Wisconsin back in September, I stopped at a Christmas-themed store. The parking lot was full.

I asked the owner if they were having a sale. She responded that Christmas is now a year-round business, and business was booming.

Holiday shopping seems to get earlier every year. Call me "old fashioned," but I still wait until December to buy gifts.

Are you a late shopper who has a fly fishing friend or family member to get something for — with a budget under $50? There are literally hundreds of non-tackle gift options, with items ranging from artwork to books to clothing to fish-themed dog bedding and even fly-themed wind-chimes.

But if you're looking for something of practical use, here are a few sure-fire suggestions.

### STRIPPING GUARDS

Fly anglers retrieve line by stripping it through their index and middle finger. After a day of fishing, line abrasion can leave cuts or burns on these fingers — especially while in the salt, or on sandy creeks.

Stripping guards fit over the fingers. They're lightweight, quick-drying and breathable. Most are SPF-rated as well. Guards come in a pack of five, and prices range from $6 to $9. These have become as important to my fishing as caps and sunglasses.

### FLOATING SUNGLASSES

We all love our Costas, Smiths, Oakleys, etc. But lanyards can be a royal pain at times. It's one thing to drop your Costas while wading a creek: It's another to lose them in 15 feet of water.

Fortunately for those situations, floating polarized sunglasses have arrived. Makers include Wave, Rheos, Floating Eyewear, Mako and others. Best colors for fly fishing are amber, yellow and vermilion. Prices range from $25 to $50.

More expensive models are available, but from experience with two brands under $50, there's no need to spend more.

### GAITERS

Sometimes known by one of the brand names (Buffs), these lightweight, UV-protected fabric tubes fit around your neck. But they can be worn in a multitude of ways to protect your head, ears and face from the cold, or harmful sun.

Many fly fishers own one — just one. Trust me, every fly angler needs several. I keep one each in my cold water, warm water and saltwater bags. I also keep a spare in my camping backpack, and one in my glove compartment. I use them for fishing, hiking, mowing grass and any other outdoor activity.

Gaiters come in an infinite number of colors and skins. Fly shops sell the ones most popular with fly anglers, featuring images of redfish, bass, tarpon, trout, etc..

Makers include Buff, Simms, Huk and many others, and prices range from $10 to $30.

## SIMMS CHALLENGER POUCH

This might be the most useful item I own. This 8-inch by 7-inch pouch is great for holding spools, tippets, a camera, finger guards or any other items I don't want loose in my large gear bag.

It can also hold up to four fly reels.

The pouch features dual zippers for better access and a transparent front that makes it easy to identify what's inside. MSRP is only $15.

## SEAL LINE 4L HIP PACK

I absolutely love my Orvis lumbar pack — except when it rains. Waterproof hip packs have only recently entered the market, and can be pricey.

The exception is the Seal Line 4L Seal Pak. It's small (3 x 8 inches), lightweight and PVC free. It sells for just $49, in part because it uses a roll-top closure instead of high-priced waterproof zippers. However, it does have a front zippered compartment for quick access to items.

The Seal Pak comes in five colors, and can also be converted to a shoulder sling.

I don't own the Seal Line brand, but a similar one that has been discontinued. It's been invaluable on hiking trips, and on frequent kayak fishing trips, to save my camera and phone.

## RUBBER NET

If your loved one does any catch-and-release fishing — as they should — then they owe it to the fish to use a smooth rubber net. According to biologists, those knotted-string-and-nylon nets we've used for decades removes a lot of fish slime — slime that protects against parasites and fungus.

Like anything in our sport, rubber nets can be pricey. Fortunately, there are numerous options under $40. Most have wooden frames, but a few have anodized aluminum frames for use in saltwater. I prefer the clear nets, as they're more UV-resistant.

## LED CORDLESS FLY TYING LIGHT

If you have a loved one who ties flies, check this out. Sold under several brand names, this lightweight gooseneck light clamps to a standard 3/8-inch vise stem.

The light that comes with it is often the Nebo brand that runs on AAA batteries. I switched out my Nebo 180 lumen circular 4x zoom for a Nebo Lil Larry (linear, 250 lumen) and it works even better. Using rechargeable batteries, I get about six hours of strong light.

If you sometimes tie in situations where electricity isn't available or an extension cord isn't practical, then this is a must-have. Prices range from $20 to $30. ▪

**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.*

## TIPPETS

Another cold and wet winter is forecasted for Louisiana. That's okay, because crappie love crappy weather. So find those deep brush piles and hit 'em with Fluff Butts, Silli Butts and Crappie Candies on a long leader.

For redfish anglers, dark days and clear water mean dark and neutral patterns will be the rule. Bottom flies like the LaFleur's Charlie in purple or black, Haleys Comet in purple, Bissett's Cajun Crustacean and Borski Slider will all be good choices.

In calmer conditions, bring out the poppers. There's nothing like seeing those pumpkins blow up on a surface fly. While any popper or gurgler will work, the new Double Barrel Popper from Flying Fishmen Company is proving to be deadly on the poisson rouge.

Speckled trout will be hitting those same poppers on calm days, either early, late or in overcast conditions. On sunny days, go with the LSU Clousers (purple, gold, white) under a VOSI.

Another kind of trout gets lots of attention this month — the "rain-beaux" trout.

Sometime before Christmas, ponds across the state will get stocked with cold-water rainbow trout. Those include several in East Baton Rouge and statewide under the LDWF "Get Out and Fish" community fishing program. Nothing is as exciting as hooking these colorful fish and watching them jump.

Until they get used to the insect life of the ponds, minnows will be their main diet. For this reason, woolybuggers in olive and black are a sure bet.

While rainbow trout can get very big, the ones stocked will be mostly 9 to 14 inches. A 5-weight outfit is all you need. But for more fun, try a lighter rod like a 2 or 3-weight. ▪

The Simms Challenger Pouch is great for storing all sorts of small items and is priced at only $15.

David Moreland

William and John Guidry enjoyed their squirrel opening day outing on Pearl River WMA. This cypress tree is one of the giants left around from the good old days.

# SHOOT - DON'T SHOOT: DECISION TIME IS NOW

DEER SEASON IS IN FULL SWING, AND IT'S TIME TO DECIDE WHETHER TO DROP THE HAMMER

## DAYS GONE BY

Way back when, when Baby Boomers were growing up, deer herds were being established around the state and deer numbers were low. As hunting seasons began to open, we would go out and look for deer sign. Tracks, droppings, trails, maybe a buck rub or scrape; this sign gave us an idea that deer were in the area and it might be a good place to hunt. We would check the acorn trees to see what was available, and then check the ground for feeding sign as acorns began to drop. Squirrel hunting was probably the No. 1 hunting activity that Louisiana hunters participated in, and many hunters used that time to scout for deer. Deer observations were cataloged in the old brain, and recalled as the season approached.

I took my 9-year-old grandson William and his 4-year-old brother John to Pearl River WMA for opening day of squirrel season. My goal was to show the boys the swamp, let William have the opportunity to kill a squirrel and to check the Cow Oak acorn crop, which by the way was very good and will be my location for deer season.

## SCOUTING TODAY IS SOMEWHAT SIMPLE

I was the state deer study leader when trail cameras first came on the scene. They basically were a box with a cheap 35mm camera and a sensor unit, but my oh my, how they changed the activity of scouting. Now all a hunter has to do is set up his camera, hook it up with his phone and sit back and let technology do the work.

No doubt many of you use trail cameras to monitor your deer herd and see what is out there. Back in August, I had a 5-gallon bucket of pears that we were not going to use so I dumped them out and set the camera up. Three adult bucks immediately came to the site: Two of them looked like 2 ½-year-olds, and one was a mature shooter. They ate up the pears and disappeared, and I did not photograph them at all in September and October. I did get photos of some does, and then a couple of yearlings (1 ½-year-olds) showed up and pretty much stayed there in October. One was a spike, and the other had not grown any antlers, just big nubs the antlers grow on. The spike is an OK deer that should grow larger over time, but the antlerless yearling needs to be removed.

Up in DeSoto Parish, a large 6-point adult buck showed up at the sawtooth oak trees in September — and it certainly is a buck that should be targeted. A buck that is 3 or 4 years old and has

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a rack with only six points is probably never going to grow larger. The deer season has been open in Area 2 now for over a month, so many of you have made decisions about pulling the trigger. November is the key rut month for Area 2 ,and most hunters target bucks first and then use December for shooting does. December is the rut month for Area 4, and January will be the rut month for Areas 1 and 6.

Generally the pre-rut period is the time to use cameras and check the status of the deer herd. Bucks are feeding heavily and beefing up for the rut days, and cameras provide good information on the buck age structure. Once the rut starts, cameras could be moved to the active scrapes to continue documenting who's who in the population.

Most hunters these days have adopted the "let 'em go, let 'em grow" philosophy of Quality Deer Management. Many simply use the antler point criteria as the method for deciding what to shoot and not shoot. Many a good young buck has hit the ground because of this.

The best method is to combine both the body characteristics and the antler characteristics, and then make the decision. Length of the main beam and beam circumference are the best antler traits to look at, but these can be hard to determine in the field.

## REPORTING HARVESTED DEER IS IMPORTANT

Deciding what does to target is basically a crap shoot. Many try to target large does without fawns, but in the early season the adult does that are producing fawns may be out feeding by themselves. The bag limit has been reduced in Area 4 to just three deer because many have complained of low deer numbers. If an area does have a low population, then certainly it would be wise to pass up adult does that are producing fawns. For the most part, clubs and landowners should simply try to harvest the recommended number of does needed to keep the herd in balance with the habitat and produce healthy deer. Keeping records to monitor the harvest is a must. And tagging and reporting harvested deer is the law.

On wildlife management areas, biologists use doe days to try to achieve the recommended harvest for a location. This works well on an area where hunter numbers remain constant and the hunter effort is good.

On an area like Pearl River, where hunter numbers have dramatically dropped over the past 20 years, it probably would be best to simply let hunters hunt deer during the entire season and not restrict it to just a few doe days. Because hunter numbers are low on the area, the deer kill is low — which leads some to believe that the area has a low deer population.

continues on page 122

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This large mature 6-point buck will never be a wall-hanger, and should be on the target list for this season.

Most management areas operate under the self-clearing check system, with hunters checking in and out and reporting what they harvest. Bag checks are an integral part of a sound wildlife management program, consequently it is a must for hunters to accurately report their harvest. Poor information will only lead to biologists making poor decisions. In days gone by, biologists and area specialists would be on the area checking hunters and their harvest. Information gathered would pertain to species of kill, sex and age of kill, weights, etc. All of this data was used to determine season success and evaluate the management work being applied to the area.

So whether you hunt on public or private land, reporting harvested deer is a must. These harvest decisions will be used to evaluate the state's deer herd — and to make deer management decisions.

Hunt hard and be safe, and maybe you will be blessed to drop the hammer on a good one. ▪

**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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**LURE REVIEW**

Don Shoopman

# CODE-RED VIBRAWEDGE SPINNERBAIT

## TAPERED-WIRE SHAFT LETS BLADES RUN TRUE

Give Texas angler William Flournoy a spinnerbait with a red head — and he'll catch bass.

Give Flournoy a spinnerbait with a red head *and* a tapered wire shaft that goes from .041 to .018, and he'll put even more bass in the boat — which he does with Stanley Wedge's new "Code-Red" VibraWedge spinnerbait manufactured by his great-uncle, Lonnie Stanley of Huntington, Texas.

Stanley has reintroduced the tapered wire shaft spinnerbait that was such a force in the 1980s for Tommy Martin, John Torian, Larry Nixon and even Rick Clunn, who won a U.S. Open with it in 1983 at Lake Mead, Nevada.

And the legendary artificial lure manufacturer has added a red head, which, as far as his great-nephew is concerned, is the coup de grace.

"I've been made fun of for years by people. I just like to throw red-headed spinnerbaits. It seems it doesn't matter what skirt I put it on," Flournoy said. "I've got my different (skirt) colors, different head sizes and different blade combinations."

The accomplished bass pro said some bass anglers like to match a spinnerbait head to a skirt color.

"Well," he said, "I learned a long time ago if you try to get the head to match the skirt for every color, you'll never get (the boat) on plane. The red head, to me, seems like a very versatile head, seems like it has caught more fish. A lot might be personal preference or confidence."

The 35-year-old Texan, who lives in Diboll, said he was using the red-headed, tapered-wire shaft spinnerbaits with their hand-tied skirts to catch quality bass around cypress trees and edges of hydrilla beds at Lake Sam Rayburn.

Soon, the Code-Reds will be in stores in many southern states. Bass anglers in the region should start having as much success with them as their counterparts at Lake Sam Rayburn and nearby Toledo Bend.

"Once you throw the red spinnerbait with the tapered wire, it feels so much better than any spinnerbait made," Stanley said, noting it's the only artificial lure he knows about that had three patents (since expired) for the tapered wire, wedge-tapered blade and hand-tied skirt.

"We did all that (acquire the patents) back in the 80s. It's still something we're proud of," he said.

Martin and Clunn, he said, still throw the spinnerbait they first started casting in the early 80s. Now everyone else has a chance.

Lonnie Stanley grabs a big bass that bit his new, reintroduced "Code-Red" VibraWedge spinnerbait.

"That's our old-time spinnerbait we've reintroduced," he said.

According to Flournoy, the tapered wire (shaft) is the key to the spinnerbait's success.

"Well, the tapered wire actually serves many purposes. No. 1, it allows the blades to pull back a little bit and run truly. With the blades running with less resistance from a tapered wire they get more vibration. The biggest thing to me is it (tapered wire shaft) lets the blades run true and you can slow-roll them better," he said.

Also, the tapered wire is more flexible, and collapses easier.

That's important, he said, because when a large bass inhales the spinnerbait, blades and all, the flexibility allows the fish to get hold of the hook — and the hook set is rock solid. Also, if a bass doesn't get the whole spinnerbait, the tapered wire shaft allows it to get the hook easier, he said.

"In my opinion, it's the way a spinnerbait's supposed to be made," he said.

He also favors the "R" bend as opposed to the twist wire to tie the "Code-Red" VibraWedge to the business end of his fishing line.

"It's a personal preference. Everybody's opinion is different," he said, adding that he has caught as many as 70 to 80 bass on one of the new spinnerbaits.

On the rare occasion one broke, he said, it was because he was hauling hawgs out of thick brush this past spring at Toledo Bend.

If one broke, it would break just above the head, where it was bent often from the weight of bass being pulled out of heavy cover, and not at the "R."

For more information on the "Code-Red" VibraWedge spinnerbait and other Stanley Lures products, go to www.fishstanley.com or call (936) 876-5713. ▪

**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

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# GIFTS FOR THE HUNTER

## GREAT IDEAS THAT WON'T BREAK THE BANK

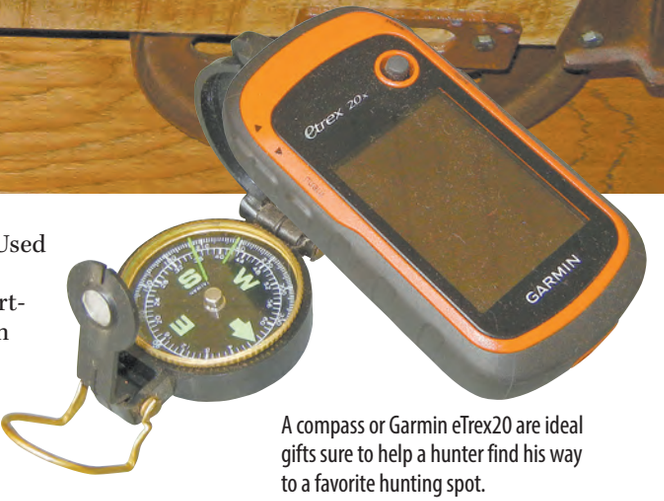
Christmas will soon be here, and finding the right gift for the outdoorsman can be tough, particularly for those unfamiliar with hunting.

If any of the hunters reading this think shopping for you is easy, remember the last time you went to the mall gift shopping for your wife or girlfriend. If the memory still causes you to cringe, think about how she feels.

So in the spirit of giving and sharing during this special time of year, here are some gift ideas sure to bring a smile on Christmas morning. Our gift selections are not hard to find and won't wreck the budget; but they are useful and enjoyable items every hunter will appreciate.

### LAND NAVIGATION

Look in any good hunter's day pack and you will find a compass. It's a must for any outdoor activity. My favorite is the Lensatic Military- Style model, which sells for about $10. Used properly, a compass is all that's needed for most short-distance hunt situations on familiar ground.




A compass or Garmin eTrex20 are ideal gifts sure to help a hunter find his way to a favorite hunting spot.

Modern electronic navigation devices can take the hunter anywhere and back. Prices for high-end models can run into the thousands, and are worth every penny on remote wilderness adventure hunts. But basic models for the beginner and for those of us hunting in less remote locations are priced reasonably, while offering great reliability. The Garmin eTrex 20 model, for example, goes for $200. I know both hunters and fishermen who own this model and are very happy with it.

### FIELD FIRST AID KITS

On the job, we were issued good first aid kits — and I no longer feel comfortable without a small one in the day pack and a bigger one in the truck or at the camp. They have come in handy for both people and dogs. Academy Sports and Outdoors offers some very reasonably priced ones, and homemade kits can be easily assembled.

My picks are the Sportsman Series by Adventure Medical Kits. The Whitetail Medical Kit weighs a pound and fits in any pack. It sells for $50. The Bighorn is a camp model with a detachable field trauma kit for day trips away from camp,

which sells for $75. They are made for treating frequently sustained hunting/fishing injuries.

## SAFETY HARNESSES

The best way to avoid needing the first aid kit is to not get hurt. One of the best ways I know to accomplish that is a tree stand safety harness. Every fall we hear stories of hunters who fall from tree stands. Yet there are many deer hunters who still don't bother with a safety harness. Some end up paying the price with serious injuries or death.

Harnesses range in price from $100 to $200 or more. Ask the hunter you are shopping for if he or she uses one. If the answer is no, move the harness to the top of the gift list. And be sure to make your hunter promise to always use it when climbing.

## GOOD HUNTING READS

Books are among my favorite gifts. Two on my wish list this year are *"A River Runs Through It,"* by Norman Maclean and *"Lord Grizzly,"* by Frederick Manfred. (Just saying.)

We have no shortage of great books for hunters of any age. For the young hunter, I can think of none better than *"The Old Man and the Boy"* and *"The Old Man's Boy Grows Older,"* both by Robert Ruark. Since it is hard to quit Ruark once you start, "Horn of the Hunter" is one hunters of all ages should read.

J. Scott Olmsted wrote "We all like to think we are pretty good with a rifle in the field, but we all have limits."

Boy, is he right. But anyone wanting some of the best help to be had with surpassing their limits should get his book, *"Make Every Shot Count!"* Olmsted shares a wealth of information on every aspect of rifle shooting — anyone who hunts with a rifle needs this book.

My favorite rifle and shooting writer is Craig Boddington. He combines a vast amount of worldwide hunting experience with a healthy measure of common sense to give the reader sound, reliable advice on rifles and shooting. *"The Accurate Rifle and Rifleman"* and *"American Hunting Rifles II"* are two of his must-haves. Check out Safari Press (safaripress.com) for other hunting and shooting books.

These are just a few gift ideas for the hunter and outdoorsman. But don't hesitate to ask another hunter for gift ideas, or go to a sporting goods store and ask an associate about the current hot selling items.

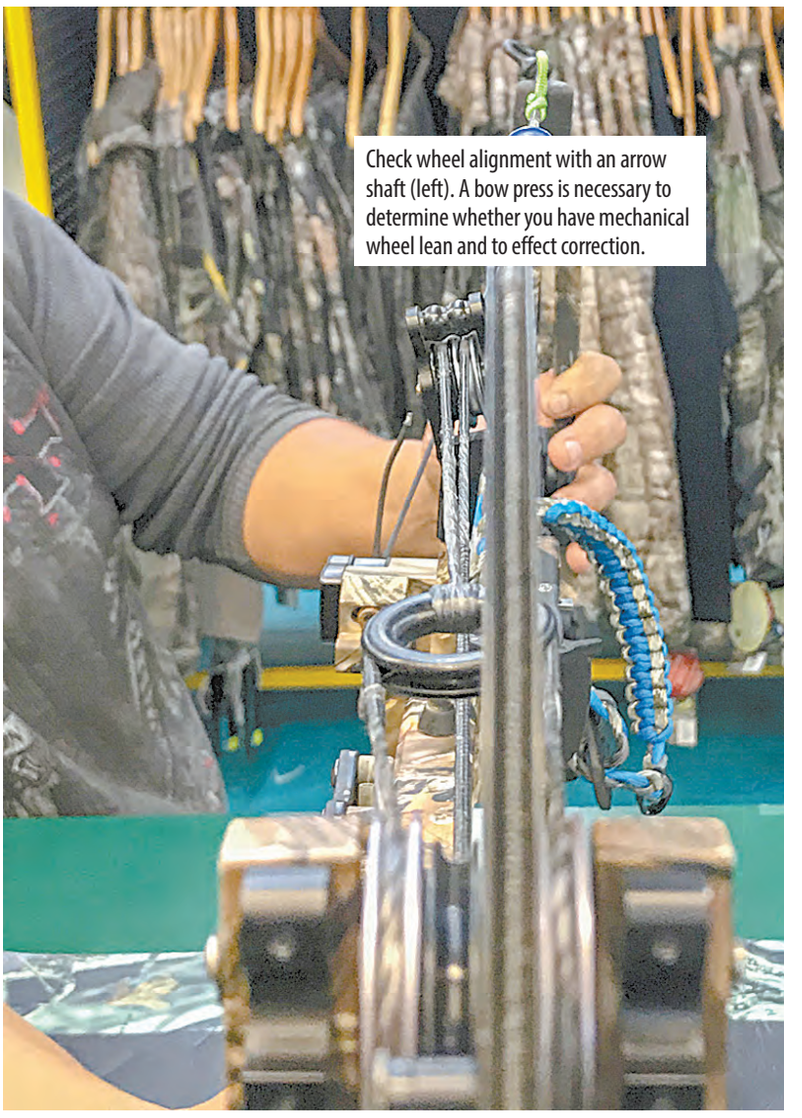
Hunters, remember to be good — and Santa just might be good to you. Merry Christmas. ▪

*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.*

Sammy Romano

# DON'T LET WHEEL LEAN HURT YOUR SHOOTING

MECHANICAL OR SHOOTER-INDUCED, IT CAN AFFECT YOUR ACCURACY, CAUSE DAMAGE TO BOW



Check wheel alignment with an arrow shaft (left). A bow press is necessary to determine whether you have mechanical wheel lean and to effect correction.

The advent of the compound bow changed archery for the better. The addition of wheels allows more people to participate in our sport by making it easier to draw and hold heavier draw weights.

Higher let-off at the back end of the draw cycle makes it easier to aim and hold on target longer. Wheels also provide a lot more arrow speed than traditional bows are capable of at the same draw weight.

So it's ironic the very thing that gives compound bows all of their advantages can also rob you of perfect arrow flight and accuracy. With the addition of wheels, cams or pulleys comes the additional costs of wheel timing and wheel lean.

Many archers are now familiar with wheel-timing issues. If your bow's wheels are not synchronized perfectly, they fire out of sync, causing the arrow to whip at release and fly horribly. Not many people are familiar with wheel lean, however. This can be as big — or an even bigger problem — as wheel lean not only drastically affects arrow flight, but it can also cause excessive wear to many parts of your bow.

There are two types of wheel lean: Mechanical wheel lean and shooter-induced wheel lean. Inherent wheel lean is caused by one or more of several mechanical issues that can occur. Shooter-induced wheel lean is caused by improper sight alignment and/or improper shooting form. Either way, accuracy is drastically affected, and not for the better.

## STRING-STRETCHING

In cases of mechanical wheel lean, severe damage to both the string set and bearings (both wheel and cable roller) can occur. In the case of shooter-induced wheel lean, the arrow impacts the target horizontally out of line with the bullseye. The groupings of arrows will drift progressively in the direction of lean of the bow's top wheel, becoming more severe as distance increases.

A common cause of mechanical wheel lean is unaddressed string and cable stretch. All modern compound bows use either a cable rod with a slide or rollers to pull the cables out of line and provide clearance for the arrow's fletching as it passes them. This creates uneven pressure on the limb tips, which causes severe wheel lean.

In order to correct this, one side of the yoke or harness is often twisted more than the other to compensate. As the bow is shot repeatedly, this stretches, along with the rest of the string set, allowing the cam or wheel to lean again. This is corrected by adding additional twists as necessary to bring the wheel back in line. Sometimes, the limb itself becomes warped, and the yoke is not able to be twisted enough to level the wheel. This requires a new limb to fix the issue.

On split limb bows, the four limbs have to be synchronized to the same strength or deflection. A good analogy for this is that of fishing rod actions: If the left limb is medium-fast action, and the right limb

is medium-heavy action, the left limb will bend more than the right limb, causing the wheel on that end of the bow to lean.

## MAKE IT RIGHT

There are several ways to correct this issue, depending on the cam system. They include twisting the yoke, swapping limb position and changing wheel spacing to affect wheel alignment. Twisting the yoke works the same as with a solid-limb bow. In rare cases, swapping limb position will help, but the best system is a top-hat limb bushing system such as that used by Mathews on the Halon, Triax and several other models. By changing the top-hat bushings, wheel lean is easily and perfectly corrected.

In instances of severe mechanical wheel lean, it is not hard to diagnose, but in many cases, a well-trained eye is required. In nearly every case, a bow press is required to correct the problem. For these reasons, it is best to have your bow examined by a professional. Further complicating diagnosis in some of the newer models, it is necessary to have some pre-shot wheel lean in order for the cams or wheels to be straight in-line at full draw.

On most single cam models, the idle wheel (top wheel) must be aligned straight when the bow is at rest. This is easily checked by placing a straight edge — an arrow shaft works best — on the shelf (outboard) side of the wheel. The gap between the arrow's shaft and the bow's string should be even for the entire length of the arrow. Dual cam and cam-a-half systems are harder to judge.

## SIGHT, FORM PROBLEMS

Shooter-induced wheel lean is often caused by improper leveling of the bow sight's second and third axis adjustments. Many archers are not even aware of these features, but if improperly adjusted, will cause the shooter to lean the bow at full draw. Also, poor shooting form can cause this problem. Have your bow sight's second and third axis checked by a pro shop to prevent this issue. If your issue is form, working with an instructor for an hour or two should correct it.

Although wheel lean causes many issues for the archer, it can be corrected fairly easily. A quick trip to your local pro shop can diagnose and fix this issue, often without breaking the bank. So don't let wheel lean rob your accuracy and cost you a buck this season. ▪

**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.*

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**SEAFOOD BIBLE**

Jerald & Glenda Horst

# 'MARSH MAN' MASSON MASTERS THE KITCHEN

Todd Masson is known for many things. For 18 years, the journalist was editor of this very magazine. After that he was the outdoors writer for the New Orleans Times-Picayune.

Now he is "Marsh Man Masson," the YouTube hero who spends time chasing down and videoing denizens of the marsh — critters like speckled trout, redfish, blue crabs, bass and shrimp. All of his adventures are chronicled on his own channel.

Almost everyone that fishes in Southeast Louisiana has heard his name — but never for cooking. He estimates he cooks 99 percent of the meals that wife Brandi, son Joel and he eat at home. But it wasn't always that way.

"I cooked zero — nothing ever when I married Brandi. It started when Joel became extremely interested in cooking."

"I would watch cooking shows on TV 24-7," interjected Joel, with some exaggeration.

"So I began to pick up things by osmosis," Todd continued. "I tried new things. I love good food…."

"And he hates fast food," Joel said, finishing the sentence. The 19-year-old now serves as his father's chief taste-tester.

Ironically, Joel has for the present time quit cooking, mainly to concentrate on fishing — and writing.

He also is a regular contributor to *Louisiana Sportsman*, with monthly fishing reports and three or four feature stories appearing annually.

Todd's flexible schedule offers him ample cooking opportunities, so Brandi typically comes home from work to a warm meal every evening.

"I cook more seafood than anything else, probably 75 percent of the time," he said. "I'm a big fan of the *Louisiana Seafood Bible* cookbook series, especially the shrimp, crab and crawfish volumes.

"It is instantly gratifying when people rant and rave about your cooking." ■

Todd's seafood stew is a meaty blend of Louisiana's coastal offerings. **INSET:** The trained journalist turned professional videographer spends time in the kitchen every day cooking full meals.

TIP!

Flour in bacon fat browns quickly, so watch the roux closely.

## INGREDIENTS:

3/4 lb. Wright bacon, cut into 1-inch pieces
Flour in an amount equal to the bacon fat
1 onion, diced
2 stalks celery, chopped
1/3 bell pepper, chopped
11/2 tbsp. bouillon
1 tsp. chopped garlic
1/3 cup chopped fresh basil
11/2 tbsp. creole seasoning
1 lb. small peeled shrimp
1 lb. peeled crawfish
1 lb. crab claw meat
3 bay leaves

## PREPARATION:

**Serves 6-8.**

Fry the bacon in a large pot until it's crispy. Remove the bacon and set it aside. Add the flour to the bacon fat over high heat and stir constantly, making a medium-brown roux. Stir in the onion, celery and bell pepper, and sauté over reduced heat until tender. Add cups of water and mix well. Stir in the bouillon, garlic and basil. Add creole seasoning and return the bacon to the pot. Add shrimp, crawfish, crabmeat and bay leaves, and stir well. Simmer until desired thickness has been obtained. Serve over rice.

# SEAFOOD STEW

"I think this dish evolved from crawfish étouffée, but I really don't know," Todd said, furrowing his brow. "The basil and bacon in it are kind of unusual additions — garlic, too.

"I used to use olive oil for my rouxs, then because everything tastes better with bacon, I began using bacon fat. I add the bacon back into the dish later. Basil entered the recipe because I grow it and I like it.

"I use basil a lot in pestos and meat sauces, what I believe Italians call 'red gravies.'"

He has been cooking the dish for at least five years. This version used shrimp, crabmeat and crawfish tail meat, but Todd noted that the dish is good with just one or two of the "proteins," as he called them.

This is a solid stew — it's not a soup. You can eat it with a fork.

**TODD'S BROILED FISH** UP NEXT >

# TODD'S BROILED FISH

This dish is one of Todd's favorites. "We cook this all the time. It's a staple and has been for eight or 10 years," he said. "Everybody needs to make this dish. It's so easy and so good.

"When you come home from a fishing trip, you're tired, but you have plenty of fish. You're hungry and you want to eat quickly without a whole lot of effort. This takes 10 minutes, counting prep time.

"It's so easy, I didn't know if it was worthy of being called a recipe. Every cook will have every ingredient on hand — absolutely."

Todd usually makes this with speckled trout, and secondarily bass. Redfish, he claims, won't work. ■

## INGREDIENTS:

Olive oil
2 lbs. speckled trout or bass fillets
Creole seasoning to taste
Butter
Italian bread crumbs

## PREPARATION: Serves 4-6.

Move the rack to the top of your oven. Set the oven to broil/high, and preheat. Generously pour olive oil into an oven-proof dish. Place the fish fillets in the pan. If the olive oil doesn't reach about halfway up the sides of the fish, add more. Sprinkle with creole seasoning to taste. Cut small pats of butter and place them on the top of each fillet. Top with Italian bread crumbs. Broil for nine minutes exactly: 10 minutes is too long. The fish should be golden brown. Serve on pasta.

Todd's broiled fish is one of the easiest recipes imaginable.

**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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**PADDLES 'N PUDDLES**

Chris Holmes

# 'SALTY CHICKS'

## LADY 'YAKERS SKILLED, DETERMINED AND DRIVEN

**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.*

The Salty Chicks gathered for a group photo after a successful mothership trip to the marsh in Point Aux Chenes.

There is no doubt that the number of female kayak anglers is steadily growing.

Having noticed small groups of women getting together for all-girl adventures, I was intrigued to see if anything went into their trips that was starkly different from their male counterparts.

I can tell you the answer is a resounding "no."

I contacted my favorite kayak catfish queen, Robyn Bordelon, and told her of my idea to simply tag along as a fly-on-the-wall for one of their upcoming fishing trips. Well, Robyn took the ball and ran with it. Soon the trip morphed into a group of seven female 'yakers, complete with an overnight outing ( I only participated in the kayak trip) and a mothership to ferry everyone further from the launch in Point Aux Chenes.

A Facebook private message group was formed and the plans started taking shape. I have to say it was quite interesting monitoring the banter that began as ideas and schedules were tossed around in the group. Unlike most guys planning such a trip, there was talk of nail polish colors and even whether one prospective participant's cat would make a suitable fishing companion. (She nor the cat was ultimately able to participate.)

The excitement of these lady anglers was palpable. They arranged accommodations, planned meals and adult beverages, as well as talked fishing strategy and gear. >

More than anything, I sensed their eagerness for the opportunity to show they could hold their own in the kayak fishing world. They coined the name 'Salty Chicks' for their small group — but the bottom line was they planned for a serious fishing trip.

After a night of friendship and successful fishing off the pier at PAC Kayak Marina, the anglers awoke to strong winds and a flooded parking lot.

However, they had pre-loaded four kayaks on Capt. Eddie Mullen's mothership and couldn't wait to get to an area near Lake Felicity that he called the "promised land."

The first trip saw Kalley LeRoy, Sara Giles, Jessica Thompson Bryant, Robyn Bordelon and Tricia Lewis onboard. After dropping them off, Capt. Eddie returned for Joycelyn Boudreaux, Stella Drewes Bourgeois and myself.

As we arrived and launched, the first group had wasted no time and already had caught a couple of rat reds. While everyone stayed in the same general vicinity, the anglers spread out and pursued their own preferred areas and techniques.

We met back before pickup time to take a group shot with some of the fish caught. The high water had the reds scattered deep into the flooded marsh, but these skilled anglers caught a variety of species using dead bait, gold spoons, Gulp lures — and even a fly rod.

It was an honor to accompany this group, which was self-sufficient, knowledgeable and determined to catch fish.

I asked each angler to send me a couple of thoughts on the experience:

## ROBYN BORDELON

*Destrehan, kayak fishing eight years.*

"We sort of became our Salty Chicks T-shirts. I really wasn't expecting the level of pure joy and happiness on this trip," she said. "All everyone could talk about was when we were going again.

"Kalley was sitting on the bow of the mothership with the wind in her hair for the ride back in. She simply said, 'I love this. Everything about this. I love this place.'"

Author's Note: Bordelon is a beast at catching giant catfish from a kayak.

## STELLA DREWES BOURGEOIS

*Belle Chasse, kayak fishing two years.*

"It was great to be around other women with the same passion as me, but also to get advice and learn from other females that have been doing this for many years," she said.

As the mother of four girls, Drewes Bourgeois is excited that the trip has instantly grown into much more than anticipated.

"We're launching a Facebook Salty Chicks Kayak Fishing Group page that is only for women kayakers in an attempt to grow the community, and have a place for those that may feel intimidated or simply need a place to ask questions," she said.

Author's Note: Bourgeois did not quit. She fished to the bitter end.

## SARAH GILES

*Mandeville, started kayak fishing with her dad when she was 9 years old.*

"I started fly fishing out of my kayak about three years ago and haven't looked back since. It's my passion and I love it," she said. "I think the biggest barrier to women getting into kayak fishing is the

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Jessica Thompson Bryant shows off a big sheepshead that couldn't resist a dead shrimp.

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myth that you have to know what you're doing and have everything figured out before you can start.

"You don't have to be an expert to get out there. Find a friend to go with, start close to the launch and throw any bait you're comfortable with. Being able to go out into the marsh in your own boat, that you power yourself, and catch fish, can be a huge source of confidence — especially for women," she said. "We're not out here for the image, or to look cool. We're out here to fish, and all of these women are more than capable of going up against any of the guys I know in a tournament. I always tell people, 'The fish don't care that there's a female at the other end of the line.'"

Author's Note: Watching the dedication and success Giles had throwing the fly rod from her tiny kayak was humbling.

## KALLEY LEROY

*Denham Springs, kayak (mostly paddle board) fishing for seven to eight years.*

"Women in kayak fishing is a growing sport. I am so glad my two girls will have this to get into. I hope they enjoy all the serenity and beauty nature has to offer as I have. I had so much fun with this group of lady anglers. Lots of laughs were had, fish were caught, and new bonds formed," she said.

Author's Note: LeRoy made her mark on the paddle craft fishing world a few years ago by winning Ride the Bull, the world's largest kayak fishing tournament held every August in Grand Isle — from her paddle board.

## TRICIA LEWIS

*Gonzales, kayak fishing since 2002.*

"This trip made me so happy because finally I was with a group who could talk fishing ... or not. We could talk about anything, and it was never weird or awkward even though the age span was 27 to 51. Every one of us has some fear or difficulty when it comes to fishing in a kayak, with or without a male partner to help or protect us, and I think now we realize that we can rely on each other — or even ourselves," Lewis said.

Author's note: Lewis is a regular tournament participant, and is a member of the Hobie Kayak Fishing Tream.

With high water conditions, Robyn Bordelon found redfish by tight-lining dead shrimp in the edges of flooded grass.

## JOYCELYN BOUDREAUX

*New Orleans, kayak fishing for 20 years.*

"The thrill of my day was fishing close to Kalley and watching her methodically stalk and hunt a redfish with rifle-like precision. It was a lot like my own fishing methods and confirmed that, 'Yeah, I really do know what I'm doing,'" she said.

Author's note: Boudreaux recently began participating in tournaments, and already has three trophies to show for it.

## JESSICA THOMPSON BRYANT

*Columbia, Mississippi, kayak fishing more than 10 years.*

"I've made many new friends from all walks of life through kayak fishing. From the moment I met all of the ladies I knew we would become friends and hopefully plan many fishing trips together. Kayaking is thought of a solitary sport, but I find that kayak-fishing folks are very willing to share information, lend a helping hand and extend a fishing invite. It's even more special to find these traits in such a varied group of ladies," she said. "It was very refreshing this weekend to be among ladies who are both confident in real life and in a kayak.

"Our camaraderie as a group was almost instant. Sharing tips and tricks that men may not consider on the water was comical."

Author's note: Bryant is an officer in the South Mississippi Kayak Fishing Club, and is a member of Native Watercraft Pro Staff.

For more info on the group, go to Facebook: Salty Chicks Kayak Fishing Group. ■

# 'YAK TOURNAMENT TACTICS

Devon Beltz gets the traditional ride in his new kayak as the winner of BCKFC's Fall 'N Tide kayak fishing tournament.

Two major kayak tournaments were recently held in Southeast Louisiana. The Bayou Coast Kayak Fishing Club's Fall 'N Tide was held in Venice, and the Inshore Fishing Association's Kayak Fishing Tour Championship was held in Grand Isle.

We caught up with the winners to see how they did it.

## FALL 'N TIDE

When it was all said and done, Devon Beltz came out on top with a Cajun Slam weighing in at 9.31 pounds. Beltz scouted the day before the tournament and set his plan in place. He started casting a Skitter Walk topwater nearly an hour before sunup. "The key was water moving through a narrow ditch. I was in a small pond that drained into deep water," Beltz said. His decision to go after his red first paid off. "I couldn't see the bait, but I heard a red smash it about 20 yards away. With the help of a headlamp and a ruler, the fat red turned out to be 27 inches on the nose," he added.

Sticking to his plan, he then moved to more open water in search of trout. Although he had no bites for the next four hours, he was not discouraged. "This is exactly what happened during my scouting day. The trout didn't turn on until 1 p.m. or so," he said. Even with the bright midday sun, Beltz continued to throw his topwater. "Come 1 o'clock, it was like a light switch turned on and I had topwater trout blowups on every other cast in sunny conditions," he added.

With a trout and red in the bag, it was time for the elusive flounder. Beltz pointed his 'yak toward the grass lines. "I tightlined a Berkley Gulp on an 1/8-ounce homemade jighead in search of flounder. The familiar strike luckily came on my third cast, and I had a solid Cajun Slam in the bag," Beltz said. For his efforts, Beltz took home a nice plaque and a brand new Hobie Pro Angler 12 kayak as his first place prize.

## IFA CHAMPIONSHIP

With qualifying divisions in Louisiana, Texas, Florida and South Carolina, the best of the best in saltwater kayak anglers headed to Grand Isle to vie for the championship. No one was surprised when Benton Parrott of Navarre, Florida added another title to his list- the fourth he's captured. Although the win was narrow, his two-day, four-fish score (two reds and two trout) added up

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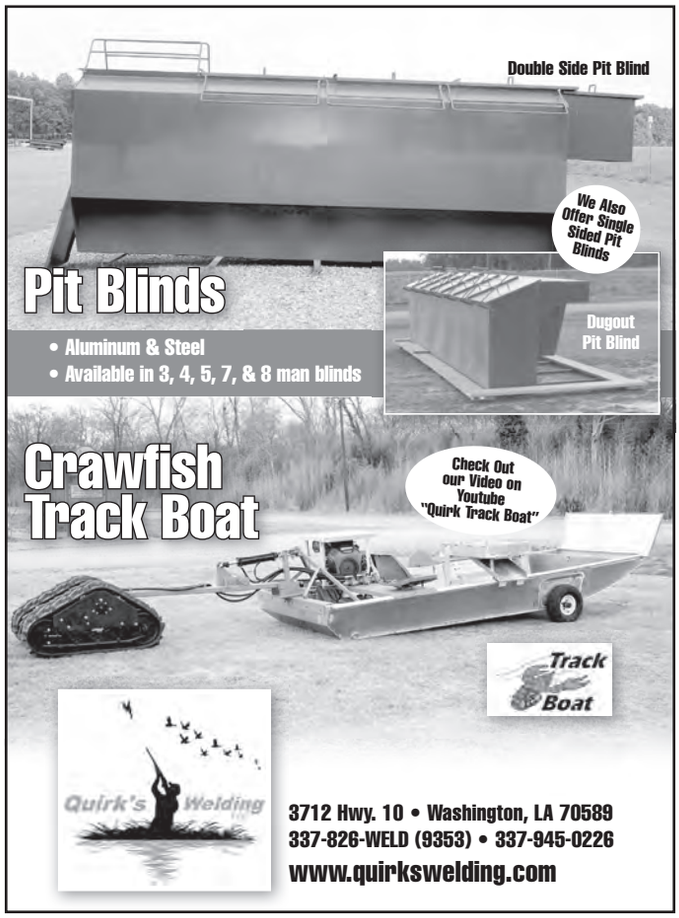

to 120.375 inches, barely beating out Aaron Clay, who took second place with a total of 120.125 inches. Winning more IFA Kayak Tour Championships than any other competitor is no fluke: Parrott is a serious competitor, with serious skills.

The weather the day before the tournament thwarted his plans to pre-fish, but relying on knowledge of the area, he was able to put together a trout and red that landed him in third place at the end of Day 1 with a total of 60 inches. "On Day one, I started in the marshes by working points, flats, and reefs. The key was jumping spots, hitting seven different areas and working baits through the three main areas of the water column," Parrott said. With a 16.25-inch trout on the board. Parrot headed from the Highway 1 marsh down to Barataria Pass in Grand Isle in search of a bull red. He landed a 43-inch brute with three hours left until weigh-in, so he went back to the marsh to upgrade his trout. He succeeded by adding three-fourths of an inch, and bumped his trout to 17 inches.

"Day two of the tournament saw conditions greatly improved with reduced wind and drastically improved water visibility. I decided to start in the marsh, strictly fishing for trout. But the trout bite was almost non-existent," he said. However, as a proven champion, Parrott kept trying different lures and locations. "I made the decision to go and fish an old camp with lots of old pilings and oysters, and working a Rapala Ripstop through the pilings, I was able to pull out a 19-inch trout," he added. It was then back to Grand Isle in search of a bull. He spent the rest of the day weeding through several big reds, and ended up adding a 41.375-inch bull to his total.

No stranger to the stage, Benton Parrott scored his fourth IFA Kayak Tour Championship win recently in Grand Isle.

Parrott is a skilled angler and his wide variety of tournament wins bares that out. "It was an amazing weekend fishing the IFA Kayak Fishing Tour Championship with friends in Louisiana. I'm grateful to pull off the win with such great competition." He racked up a Hobie Pro Angler 14, a Power Pole Micro and $420 in Angler's Advantage cash — bringing the total value of his championship win to more than $4,000. ■

*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.

# DECEMBER'S BEST BETS

## FRESHWATER

**WHERE:** Venice

**WHAT:** Bass (with some bonus redfish)

**HOW:** With the Mississippi River nearby, Venice is known for having a great bass fishery. While kayakers cannot get to some of the more popular areas, there are many under-fished spots accessed by easy combat launches off the side of the road. A wide variety of basic bass lures will do the trick, including Texas-rigged plastics, spinnerbaits and topwater baits, including frogs. Look for bass piled up in small schools near the mouths of drains and ditches. Work weedless frogs and plastic worms near grassy areas and the edges of roseau cane patches. Use lures with beefy hooks, as redfish are in the area and will destroy lighter ones.

**LAUNCH:** Find a spot along the road to combat launch into the marsh. The marsh and canals of the famed Wagon Wheel off of Tidewater Road are always a good bet.

**INSIDER TIP:** Although you don't want to tangle with the offshore fishing vessels or worse, giant oilfield supply boats, launching later in the morning and fishing the confines of both Venice Marina and Cypress Cove Marina can lead to an easy limit of bass by targeting docks, pilings and shorelines.

## SALTWATER

**WHERE:** Port Sulphur

**WHAT:** Speckled trout, redfish

**HOW:** With lots of protected marsh, deep canals and larger bays, the Port Sulphur area offers good wind protection and deeper areas for fish to congregate if water temperatures drop significantly. Although usually considered more of a redfish spot, trout move in for the winter, offering an opportunity for a good mixed bag. Look for reds along grass banks, which will continue to thin as the water cools. Plastic tails, weedless gold spoons and dead shrimp under a popping cork are good choices for reds. Look for trout in the deeper canals leading to larger bays. Throw suspending hard baits and plastics under a cork to target trout. MirrOLure Soft Dines are a good choice when the bite turns subtle in colder water temperatures.

**LAUNCH:** There is an unimproved launch behind Port Sulphur High School off of Highway 23. There is no fee, but be sure to park your vehicle on the river side of the levee to keep the launch area clear. *Note: There are two launches in this area, the one to the left is private and cannot be used by the public.

**INSIDER TIP:** The area is popular for duck hunters. Launch later, and give hunters space to avoid any conflicts.

From the left, Jessica Thompson Bryant, Joycelyn Boudreaux, Sara Giles and Stella Drewes Bourgeois enjoy the ride back to the launch during their trip out of PAC Kayak Marina.

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TARGET TRAVEL ROUTES FOR

# LATE-SEASON DEER

## SKIP THE FOOD PLOTS, WHERE DEER ARE ARRIVING AFTER DARK

By Brian Cope

We've spent all season perched in stands overlooking food plots and other well-known grazing areas, waiting for deer to get their feed on.

With the end of hunting season just around the corner, it's time to try a new approach.

While hunting from those stands has many advantages, it's common for late-season deer to wait until just after dark to slip into those feeding areas. That's a fact of hunting that we often ignore, with the hope that on some days, deer will slip in just a little earlier than they should.

Modern optics gather so much more light that we can often see far better and later than a buck would believe. Still, it's a game of chance that we should abandon at this point.

Throughout the year, we strive not to break a buck's habits when it comes to travel routes. We find where the deer are going, and we don't want to disturb how they get there. But this late in the season, we have fewer opportunities to hunt — so if we push the deer away from their normal travel paths, we aren't messing things up for very long. Deer season will be over soon anyway.

Those travel routes should now be where hunters focus their attention. Deer will be on those paths before last light, and with so little new growth in the woods that it's easier to identify the most well-worn paths.

Roy Windham has been using this tactic for years.

"I usually kill three big bucks a year: one early in the season, one during the rut or pre-rut and one in the last week or so of the year," Windham said. "Those first two are always from stands overlooking food plots, and the last one is always from the ground while hunting travel routes."

Trail cams help Windham identify the best travel routes and the deer that utilize them.

"I have trail cams at all my grazing areas, but I put some on animal trails, too," he explained. "By the end of the year, I know which paths are best to hunt."

Once a hot trail has been identified, it's a matter of timing your hunts.

"You want to be on those travel routes before dark," Windham said. "These animals have their timing down to reach the clearings just past dark, so they'll be on these trails with plenty of light."

And this is a ground-hunting deal.

"Don't put up a new stand — just scent-proof yourself really well, find a good spot with natural cover and pay attention," Windham said. "They slip up and down these routes quiet as a mouse, but they will be there." ■

Transition from watching food plots to travel routes to catch wily late-season bucks.

# TOP 6 SHOOTING TIPS TO KNOCK DOWN MORE DUCKS

BE READY IN THE BLIND WHEN BIRDS APPEAR

By Darren Digby

Safety is paramount — but being prepared with your gun loaded and readily accessible when birds do show up — is key to successful hunts this fall.

1. Keep your gun at the ready, with the butt on the side you shoot from and the barrel pointed in a safe direction.

2. Always keep the safety engaged when not shooting.

3. When getting settled in the blind, make sure the area around your feet is clear of objects or holes, giving you a stable platform from which to shoot.

4. Make sure your gun has a clear path to your shoulder without getting caught in blind material like netting or grass.

5. Ensure you have a clear path to swing the barrel once shouldered.

6. Always be mindful of your shooting zone, and if a bird leaves your zone, don't follow it to your buddy's — no matter how many leg bands the duck sports.

# STEVE GERMAN'S TAXIDERMY ART

If you're a Louisiana hunter headed to Texas and you're wondering how to get your trophy mounted back home with all the confusing chronic wasting disease import regulations, Steve German's Taxidermy Art in Westlake has you covered.

They've partnered with Ty's Taxidermy, conveniently located just off I-10 in Vidor, Texas (409-504-5818), to care for your trophy whitetail or exotic and prepare it to legally enter Louisiana.

"It's going to be a very efficient for hunters and clients heading back into Louisiana if they want to use our services," Josh German said. "We want people to know that we're working with Ty's Taxidermy in Vidor — and you can just drop off your animal there.

"They just need to make Ty's aware their deer is coming to Steve German's Taxidermy Art — that way they can properly tag it, put it on our invoices and notify us. But they'll make it legal to cross the state lines."

No money will change hands in Vidor — those transactions will take place at Steve German's facility in Westlake once the animal is back in Louisiana and specifics of the mount are determined.

If possible, German suggested Louisiana hunters call his office at 337-436-0210 before their hunt so Ty's can be notified in advance. Regardless, the key is to make sure that the staff at Ty's knows your animal is ultimately headed for Steve German's in Westlake for taxidermy services.

**For more info and a map specifying Ty's Vidor location, visit: stevegerman.com**

# VERSAMAXX BOLT POPPING CORK

If you get frustrated by constantly having to stop fishing to adjust the length of the leader under your popping cork, the VersaMaxx Bolt is exactly what you're looking for. Changing/experimenting with different depths as you fish has been proven to produce better results, but wired cork fishermen have hesitated to do this in the past because of the time it takes away from fishing. Not any longer — the VersaMaxx Bolt solves this problem.

The key to the cork's effectiveness is its patented Leader Line Lengthening system — which allows you to load several feet of mono, braid or fluorocarbon on a small spool featuring a locking eyelet on the leader side of the cork.

Once it's loaded, your leader length can be adjusted literally in seconds and you'll be back to fishing in no time — without fumbling with spools of line, retying hooks or searching for snips.

The Bolt — which features a no-kink titanium wire, a stainless steel swivel and brass beads — comes in three colors which are solid to the core, so it won't ever get discolored, chipped or cracked. And the foam material used in the cork (unique to any other cork on the market) aids in producing the perfect sound of popping shrimp with deadly accuracy. It's not just about making noise — it's about making the right noise.

The VersaMaxx Bolt sells for $6.99.

**For more information or to purchase any cork in the VersaMaxx lineup, visit www.versamaxx.com.**

Sportsman Showcase submissions can be emailed to **Mark Boyd** at **markb@lasmag.com** or call 601-829-8080.

# MAHINDRA'S ROXOR

ROXOR is a new side-by-side off-road vehicle from Mahindra Automotive North America, headquartered in Auburn Hills, Michigan.

Unlike its plastic-bodied, tubular-framed, belt-driven competitors, ROXOR features a steel body on a boxed steel frame and comes with a turbo diesel 4-cylinder engine and a 5-speed manual transmission. And its wheels, tires and brakes are far larger than conventional side x sides.

It also features a 9-inch ground clearance, has a towing capacity of 3,490 pounds and holds 12 gallons of fuel. And the wheelbase is 96 inches, with ROXOR coming in at 62 inches wide and 75 inches high.

The ROXOR is not street legal on any street or highway, but it's absolutely perfect for the camp. The MSRP is $15,499 for the base unit — you can check one out in person at Outdoor Powerhouse, located at 2323 Florida Boulevard SW in Denham Springs, or go to www.outdoorpowerhouse.com for details.

**For more info, call 225-791-2277, or visit www.roxoroffroad.com.**

# ABU GARCIA'S REVO ROCKET BAITCASTING REEL

Talk about a fast baitcasting reel. ABU Garcia's Revo Rocket takes retrieve ratio to an unheard of level at 10:1. You get 41 inches of line back in for every turn of the reel handle, which will result in dozens of extra casts over the course of a day on the water.

And speed isn't all you get. The low-profile reel comes with 10 stainless-steel ball bearings and one roller bearing, an alloy frame and sideplate, ABU Garcia's Carbon Matrix Drag System, an Infini break system and D2 gear system.

The reel weighs slightly more than 7 ounces and has a line capacity of 190 yards of 20-pound braid, and 175 yards of 10-pound mono. MSRP is $299.

**For more info: www.abugarcia.com**

# PATRIOT BOATS' DUCK BLINDS

Tired of fighting the mud and the muck to rebuild your duck blind every couple years? Patriot Boats in Chauvin has exactly what you need.

Their floating blinds, built on Patriot's boat platform, not only offer a great place to hunt, but the blinds are mobile — allowing you to move with the birds all season long.

Custom options are available, but Patriot offers both 8-foot and 12-foot models. All blinds come with two spud poles and a camo canvas cover, plus shelves inside for hunting gear and cup holders for that early-morning coffee.

Basic models come with olive paint. The 8-foot model can hold three hunters comfortably, and costs $4,500. The 12-foot model seats four to five people, and costs $6,500.

Camo paint and hydro turf flooring are available at an additional cost.

**For more information on blind options, call Brooks Pellegrin at 985-594-5832, or visit www.jandbmanufacturing.com.**

Katherine and Alexandra Moustoukas were in from Chicago visiting family when Katherine caught her first-ever fish in Lacombe — while her little sister watched in amazement.

## GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

Send us your photos, and you may appear on the pages of the most widely read outdoor magazine in the Bayou State. Send clean, sharp shots of you with your fish, deer, ducks, rabbits, squirrels, etc. to:

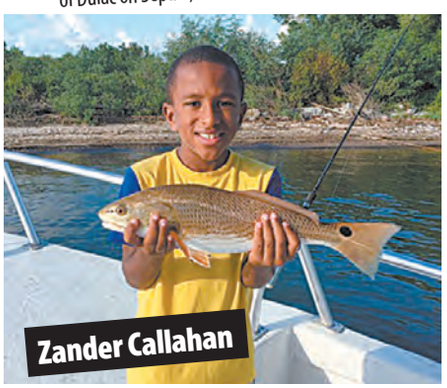
**images@louisianasportsman.com**

Digital images must be at least 200KB and in jpeg format.

Kelly Jones with a big red caught at Redfish Bayou out of Dulac on Sept. 3, 2017.

Troy Hibbard of Sterlington killed this 11-point at Russell Sage WMA on Dec. 26, 2017 with daughter Roseanna Freeman. The deer weighted 210 pounds, measured 152 inches and had an 18-inch inside spread.

Nicole Peterson caught this bass all by herself, with no help from her Papi.




Zander Callahan caught his first redfish on a trip to Grand Isle — now he's hooked, too.

Eli Guidry, 9, and his buddy Rhett Louviere, 6, with some woodies on their first public land duck hunt in Louisiana.

Wes Higgins, with Rat-L-Trap lures, reeled in a nice red down in Buras.

Noah Broussard hauled in this huge bull red near Marsh Island, along with his brother Joel.

Josh Trahan II, 4, shot his first hog on the morning of Jan. 15, 2018. Now he's on the trail of a "big boy deer," since a hog is checked off his list.

Kenny Spahn with a giant bull red caught in Breton Sound.

Beau Forrest and the guys from Entergy at the River Bend Nuclear Plant had an awesome spearfishing trip out of Fourchon.

Rodney Williams with a nice trout caught at Delacroix Island.

Julie Watson with a big red she caught on a trip to Cocodrie.

John Storey killed this hog with a knife in the Bogue Chitto NWR while hog-dogging.

# 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<br>Oct. 6 - Nov. 25<br>Dec. 16 - Jan. 14 | Sept. 1 - 23<br>Oct. 6 - Nov. 11<br>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<br>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<br>May 4 - 26** | | 8<br>3 | 24<br>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<br>Dec. 15 - Jan. 27 | Nov. 10 - Dec. 2<br>Dec. 15 - Jan. 20 | Nov. 10 - Dec. 2<br>Dec. 15 - Jan. 20 |

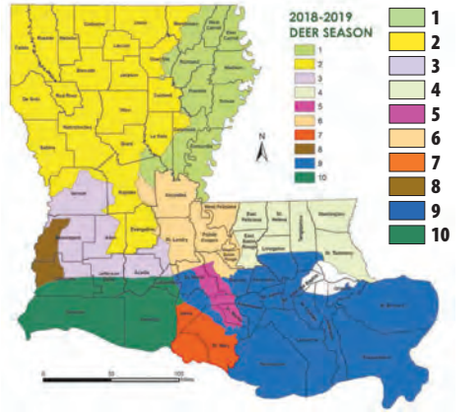
The daily bag limit for ducks is six and may include no more than four mallards (no more than two of which may be females), two canvasback, one mottled duck, one black duck, three wood ducks, three scaups, two redheads and two pintails. Daily bag limit for coots is 15. Daily bag limit for mergansers 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** | (Statewide) | |
| (snow, blue, Ross & white-fronted [specklebelly]) | Nov. 3 - Dec. 2<br>Dec. 15 - Feb. 10 | Daily bag limit for light geese (snow, blue, Ross') is 20, with no possession limit.<br>The daily bag limit for white-fronted geese is two, with a possession limit of six. |
| **CANADA GOOSE SEASON** | (Statewide)<br>Nov. 3 - Dec. 2<br>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<br>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<br>Jan. 21 - 31 | Nov. 17 - Dec. 7<br>Jan. 7 - 20 | Dec. 8 - Jan. 6 |
| 2 | Oct. 1 - Jan. 31 | Oct. 20 - 26<br>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<br>Jan. 21 - 31 | Nov. 17 - Dec. 7<br>Jan. 7 - 20 | Dec. 8 - Jan. 6 |
| 5 | Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only)<br>Oct. 16 - Feb. 15(either-sex) | Nov. 10-16 (either-sex)<br>Jan. 21 - 31 (bucks only) | Nov. 17-18, Nov. 23 - 25 (either-sex)<br>Nov. 19-22, Nov. 26 - Dec. 7 (bucks only) | Dec. 8-9, Dec. 22-23 (either-sex)<br>Dec. 10-21 (bucks only)<br>Dec. 24 - Jan. 20 (bucks only) |
| 6 | Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only)<br>Oct. 16 - Feb. 15(either-sex) | Nov. 10 - 16<br>Jan. 21 - 31 | Nov. 17 - Dec. 7 | Dec. 8 - Jan. 20 |
| 7 | Sept. 15 - Jan. 15 | Oct. 13 - 19<br>Nov. 3 - 9 | Oct. 20 - Nov. 2<br>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)<br>Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex) | Nov. 10-16 (either-sex)<br>Jan. 21 - 31 (bucks only) | Nov. 17-18, Nov. 23 - 25 (either-sex)<br>Nov. 19-22, Nov. 26 - Dec. 7 (bucks only) | Dec. 8-9, Dec. 22-23 (either-sex)<br>Dec. 10-21 (bucks only)<br>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 | |

# December 2018

| Date | Sunrise | Sunset |
|---|---|---|
| 1st | 6:39 a.m. | 5:00 p.m. |
| 2nd | 6:39 a.m. | 5:00 p.m. |
| 3rd | 6:40 a.m. | 5:00 p.m. |
| 4th | 6:41 a.m. | 5:00 p.m. |
| 5th | 6:42 a.m. | 5:00 p.m. |
| 6th | 6:42 a.m. | 5:00 p.m. |
| 7th | 6:43 a.m. | 5:00 p.m. |
| 8th | 6:44 a.m. | 5:01 p.m. |
| 9th | 6:45 a.m. | 5:01 p.m. |
| 10th | 6:45 a.m. | 5:01 p.m. |
| 11th | 6:46 a.m. | 5:01 p.m. |
| 12th | 6:47 a.m. | 5:02 p.m. |
| 13th | 6:47 a.m. | 5:02 p.m. |
| 14th | 6:48 a.m. | 5:02 p.m. |
| 15th | 6:49 a.m. | 5:02 p.m. |
| 16th | 6:49 a.m. | 5:03 p.m. |
| 17th | 6:50 a.m. | 5:03 p.m. |
| 18th | 6:50 a.m. | 5:04 p.m. |
| 19th | 6:51 a.m. | 5:04 p.m. |
| 20th | 6:51 a.m. | 5:05 p.m. |
| 21st | 6:52 a.m. | 5:05 p.m. |
| 22nd | 6:52 a.m. | 5:06 p.m. |
| 23rd | 6:53 a.m. | 5:06 p.m. |
| 24th | 6:53 a.m. | 5:07 p.m. |
| 25th | 6:54 a.m. | 5:07 p.m. |
| 26th | 6:54 a.m. | 5:08 p.m. |
| 27th | 6:55 a.m. | 5:08 p.m. |
| 28th | 6:55 a.m. | 5:09 p.m. |
| 29th | 6:55 a.m. | 5:10 p.m. |
| 30th | 6:56 a.m. | 5:10 p.m. |
| 31st | 6:56 a.m. | 5:11 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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## 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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#2: ***Same as #1, plus Software...$47.95*** (plus $6 s&h).

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**2018 DEC**

| | BEST DAYS POOR FAIR GOOD EXCL VALUE | MOON RISE | PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD | MOON SET | PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sat 1 | 30 | 1:07 am | 6:20 am - 8:50 am | 1:56 pm | 6:45 pm - 9:15 pm | |
| Sun 2 | 26 | 2:11 am | 7:20 am - 9:28 am | 2:29 pm | 7:45 pm - 9:53 pm | |
| Mon 3 | 22 | 3:13 am | 8:15 am - 10:07 am | 3:03 pm | 8:40 pm - 10:32 pm | |
| Tue 4 | 28 | 4:15 am | 9:10 am - 10:48 am | 3:37 pm | 9:35 pm - 11:13 pm | |
| Wed 5 | 35 | 5:17 am | 10:05 am - 11:31 am | 4:14 pm | 10:30 pm - 11:56 pm | |
| Thu 6 | 42 | 6:17 am | 11:01 am - 12:13 pm | **4:54 pm** | 11:26 pm - Midnight | |
| Fri 7 | 45 | **7:15 am** | 11:55 am - 1:01 pm | 5:37 pm | Midnight - 12:38 am | NEW |
| Sat 8 | 34 | 8:11 am | 12:47 pm - 1:49 pm | 6:24 pm | 12:20 am - 1:26 am | |
| Sun 9 | 22 | 9:03 am | 1:39 pm - 2:37 pm | 7:14 pm | 1:12 am - 2:14 am | LOW |
| Mon 10 | 13 | 9:49 am | 2:26 pm - 3:28 pm | 8:07 pm | 2:04 am - 3:02 am | |
| Tue 11 | 8 | 10:32 am | 3:11 pm - 4:19 pm | 9:01 pm | 2:51 am - 3:53 am | |
| Wed 12 | 10 | 11:09 am | 3:51 pm - 5:09 pm | 9:56 pm | 3:36 am - 4:44 am | Apogee |
| Thu 13 | 13 | **11:44 am** | 4:31 pm - 5:59 pm | 10:51 pm | 4:16 am - 5:34 am | |
| Fri 14 | 21 | **12:16 pm** | 5:07 pm - 6:49 pm | 11:46 pm | 4:56 am - 6:24 am | |
| Sat 15 | 34 | 12:46 pm | 5:42 pm - 7:40 pm | | 5:32 am - 7:14 am | HALF |
| Sun 16 | 28 | 1:16 pm | 6:16 pm - 8:32 pm | 12:42 am | 6:07 am - 8:05 am | |
| Mon 17 | 26 | 1:47 pm | 6:54 pm - 9:24 pm | 1:39 am | 6:41 am - 8:57 am | |
| Tue 18 | 29 | 2:20 pm | 7:34 pm - 10:20 pm | 2:39 am | 7:19 am - 9:49 am | |
| Wed 19 | 43 | 2:56 pm | 8:16 pm - 11:18 pm | 3:41 am | 7:59 am - 10:45 am | |
| Thu 20 | 56 | 3:38 pm | 9:06 pm - 12:18 am | 4:46 am | 8:41 am - 11:43 am | |
| Fri 21 | 68 | **4:26 pm** | 10:00 pm - 1:22 am | 5:53 am | 9:31 am - 12:43 pm | Winter |
| Sat 22 | 74 | 5:22 pm | 11:00 pm - Midnight | **7:00 am** | 10:25 am - 1:47 pm | FULL |
| Sun 23 | 66 | 6:24 pm | Midnight - 2:26 am | **8:04 am** | 11:25 am - 2:51 pm | HIGH |
| Mon 24 | 56 | 7:32 pm | 12:04 am - 3:26 am | 9:04 am | 12:29 pm - 3:51 pm | Perigee |
| Tue 25 | 44 | 8:42 pm | 1:09 am - 4:25 am | 9:56 am | 1:34 pm - 4:50 pm | |
| Wed 26 | 37 | 9:51 pm | 2:13 am - 5:19 am | 10:42 am | 2:38 pm - 5:44 pm | |
| Thu 27 | 33 | 10:59 pm | 3:16 am - 6:06 am | 11:22 am | 3:41 pm - 6:31 pm | |
| Fri 28 | 34 | | 4:17 am - 6:49 am | **11:58 am** | 4:42 pm - 7:14 pm | |
| Sat 29 | 42 | 12:04 am | 5:14 am - 7:30 am | **12:33 pm** | 5:39 pm - 7:55 pm | HALF |
| Sun 30 | 28 | 1:07 am | 6:11 am - 8:09 am | 1:06 pm | 6:36 pm - 8:34 pm | |
| Mon 31 | 20 | 2:09 am | 7:06 am - 8:48 am | 1:39 pm | 7:31 pm - 9:13 pm | |

25 50 75 AVERAGE

LUNAR PERIODS — TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED

*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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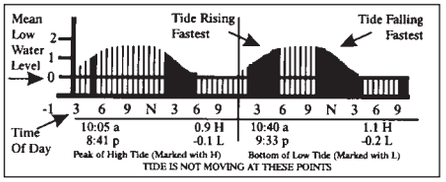
# How to use the SPORTSMAN Tide Guide




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<br>1:17 pm 0.3 L<br>9:05 pm 0.6 H |
| 2<br>5:02 am 0.4 L<br>7:57 pm 0.7 H | 3<br>5:14 am 0.2 L<br>7:35 pm 0.8 H | 4<br>5:50 am 0.0 L<br>7:44 pm 1.0 H | 5<br>6:29 am -0.2 L<br>8:08 pm 1.0 H | 6<br>7:09 am -0.2 L<br>8:39 pm 1.1 H | 7 NM<br>7:48 am -0.3 L<br>9:13 pm 1.1 H | 8<br>8:28 am -0.3 L<br>9:48 pm 1.1 H |
| 9<br>9:07 am -0.3 L<br>10:23 pm 1.1 H | 10<br>9:46 am -0.3 L<br>10:57 pm 1.0 H | 11<br>10:23 am -0.2 L<br>11:29 pm 0.9 H | 12<br>10:56 am -0.2 L<br>11:57 pm 0.8 H | 13<br>11:21 am -0.1 L | 14<br>12:16 am 0.7 H<br>11:35 am 0.0 L | 15 FQ<br>12:07 am 0.6 H<br>11:29 am 0.1 L<br>9:57 pm 0.5 H |
| 16<br>10:43 am 0.2 L<br>7:44 pm 0.5 H | 17<br>6:52 am 0.2 L<br>6:58 pm 0.6 H | 18<br>5:03 am 0.0 L<br>6:53 pm 0.7 H | 19<br>5:17 am -0.2 L<br>7:11 pm 0.8 H | 20<br>5:51 am -0.3 L<br>7:42 pm 1.0 H | 21<br>6:34 am -0.5 L<br>8:23 pm 1.1 H | 22 FM<br>7:23 am -0.6 L<br>9:09 pm 1.1 H |
| 23<br>8:16 am -0.6 L<br>9:57 pm 1.1 H | 24<br>9:09 am -0.6 L<br>10:46 pm 1.1 H | 25<br>10:02 am -0.6 L<br>11:33 pm 1.0 H | 26<br>10:50 am -0.5 L | 27<br>12:16 am 0.8 H<br>11:29 am -0.3 L | 28<br>12:41 am 0.6 H<br>11:48 am -0.1 L<br>10:28 pm 0.3 H | 29 LQ<br>11:11 am 0.1 L<br>7:29 pm 0.3 H |
| 30<br>4:44 am 0.0 L<br>6:30 pm 0.5 H | 31<br>4:38 am -0.2 L<br>6:23 pm 0.6 H | | | | | |

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## Calcasieu Pass Lighthouse Wharf

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1<br>4:33 am 0.8 L<br>10:26 am 1.4 H<br>4:17 pm 0.6 L<br>10:49 pm 1.7 H |
| 2<br>5:18 am 0.5 L<br>12:16 pm 1.6 H<br>5:30 pm 0.8 L<br>11:11 pm 1.7 H | 3<br>6:00 am 0.2 L<br>1:25 pm 1.7 H<br>6:33 pm 1.0 L<br>11:32 pm 1.7 H | 4<br>6:39 am -0.1 L<br>2:25 pm 1.8 H<br>7:28 pm 1.1 L<br>11:56 pm 1.7 H | 5<br>7:16 am -0.3 L<br>3:22 pm 1.9 H<br>8:19 pm 1.2 L | 6<br>12:23 am 1.7 H<br>7:53 am -0.4 L<br>4:12 pm 1.9 H<br>9:08 pm 1.3 L | 7 NM<br>12:50 am 1.7 H<br>8:29 am -0.4 L<br>4:54 pm 1.9 H<br>9:53 pm 1.4 L | 8<br>1:16 am 1.6 H<br>9:06 am -0.4 L<br>5:33 pm 1.8 H<br>10:32 pm 1.4 L |
| 9<br>1:40 am 1.6 H<br>9:43 am -0.4 L<br>6:13 pm 1.7 H<br>11:08 pm 1.4 L | 10<br>1:58 am 1.5 H<br>10:19 am -0.3 L<br>7:01 pm 1.7 H | 11<br>10:56 am -0.1 L<br>7:50 pm 1.6 H | 12<br>11:36 am 0.1 L<br>8:29 pm 1.6 H | 13<br>12:21 pm 0.2 L<br>8:57 pm 1.5 H | 14<br>1:16 pm 0.4 L<br>9:18 pm 1.5 H | 15 FQ<br>4:30 am 0.8 L<br>8:24 am 1.0 H<br>2:17 pm 0.6 L<br>9:35 pm 1.5 H |
| 16<br>4:41 am 0.6 L<br>10:15 am 1.0 H<br>3:16 pm 0.7 L<br>9:52 pm 1.5 H | 17<br>5:02 am 0.3 L<br>11:53 am 1.2 H<br>4:19 pm 0.9 L<br>10:12 pm 1.5 H | 18<br>5:32 am 0.0 L<br>12:48 pm 1.3 H<br>5:28 pm 1.0 L<br>10:36 pm 1.5 H | 19<br>6:06 am -0.2 L<br>1:33 pm 1.5 H<br>6:26 pm 1.1 L<br>11:05 pm 1.5 H | 20<br>6:44 am -0.5 L<br>2:19 pm 1.6 H<br>7:14 pm 1.1 L<br>11:37 pm 1.5 H | 21<br>7:24 am -0.8 L<br>3:09 pm 1.7 H<br>7:59 pm 1.2 L | 22 FM<br>12:12 am 1.6 H<br>8:07 am -0.9 L<br>4:00 pm 1.8 H<br>8:44 pm 1.2 L |
| 23<br>12:48 am 1.6 H<br>8:53 am -1.0 L<br>4:49 pm 1.8 H<br>9:31 pm 1.2 L | 24<br>1:28 am 1.6 H<br>9:41 am -1.0 L<br>5:38 pm 1.7 H<br>10:19 pm 1.2 L | 25<br>2:13 am 1.6 H<br>10:30 am -0.8 L<br>6:31 pm 1.7 H<br>11:12 pm 1.1 L | 26<br>3:11 am 1.4 H<br>11:22 am -0.6 L<br>7:25 pm 1.6 H | 27<br>12:21 am 1.0 L<br>4:27 am 1.3 H<br>12:20 pm -0.3 L<br>8:11 pm 1.5 H | 28<br>1:52 am 0.8 L<br>6:03 am 1.1 H<br>1:30 pm 0.0 L<br>8:46 pm 1.4 H | 29 LQ<br>3:02 am 0.4 L<br>8:53 am 1.0 H<br>2:47 pm 0.3 L<br>9:14 pm 1.4 H |
| 30<br>3:57 am 0.1 L<br>11:15 am 1.1 H<br>4:05 pm 0.6 L<br>9:40 pm 1.3 H | 31<br>4:47 am -0.2 L<br>12:42 pm 1.3 H<br>5:25 pm 0.8 L<br>10:06 pm 1.3 H | | | | | |

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Sportsman
# FISHING HOTSPOTS

# WILL SHELL BEACH SHINE THIS MONTH?

## Arrival of cool fronts is key factor, marina owner says

Campo's Marina in Shell Beach has seen quite a few winters in its time, and owner Robbie Campo said this should be a great December — provided one thing.

"If it doesn't get too cold too fast, we're going to have a fall that's going to be second to none," he said.

When the weather is mild, Campo suggested anglers fish areas like Lebouf's Ditch and Lena Lagoon.

Also, the marina owner said the fishing technique isn't extremely complicated when the weather is relatively warm.

"If it stays mild, you'll catch fish 3 feet under a cork 'til the temperatures drop," Campo said. "Once that water gets below that 53-degree mark — that's when you're bottom fishing."

On the flip side, Campo recommended anglers fish on the bottom in areas near a certain major lake when the weather is cold.

"Lake Eugene is the heartbeat of that marsh," he said. "All the little bayous off Lake Eugenie, Goose Flat, Bayou Pete and Crooked Bayou are good."

Campo said the key to having success in those deeper bayous is to fish them on a light tide.

"You can't fish those with a screaming falling tide," he said. "It's always better to fish that stuff when the tide's just starting to fall, bumping a plastic along."

Campo said live shrimp is the best bait to use for catching trout this time of year, but he recommended anglers also have some soft plastic lures in the boat, as well.

"More than likely, if it gets cold like it did last year, you're going to be fishing some kind of plastic bait because we're not going to have live shrimp," he said. "Even though the season stays open for us to catch them, if it gets too cold, they're just going to blow out.

"That's what happened last year." ■

- Joel Masson

Aub Ward of Baton Rouge with a nice trout he caught at The Rocks in Shell Beach.

# CHALMETTE PICKS UP IN DECEMBER

## Cool weather means hot action

Some truly prime winter fishing waters are accessed by three Chalmette area launches, all located along Paris Road — and all three will play host to a bevy of boats throughout the upcoming colder months.

"This is when our area here really shines, when the weather turns cooler," said lifelong 'Chalmation' and avid fisherman Joey Jeanfreau, owner of Jeanfreau's Cafe, Meat Market and Supermarket, also located on Paris Road in Chalmette.

"It's harder to find fish during the summer months since all the walls and dams were constructed, but thankfully from October through April we'll catch trout and redfish and bass from Chalmette to Violet," he said.

Jeanfreau said the cool weather action concentrates fish in three main areas.

"First, the Castle," he said. "Falling tides in the morning have water pouring out of the MRGO and flowing into Lake Borgne all around the Castle. Find a spot along the deeper channel in Lake Borgne, and anchor up and fish the bottom with live shrimp or Matrix plastics in the lemonhead color. You can also try along the rock wall or over around the Castle itself (which is actually only a rockpile since Katrina). Always look for birds and be prepared to fish friendly around a lot of other boats, especially on weekends.

"Second, fish the drains and cuts and washouts along the Intracoastal Canal."

Jeanfreau said he'll fish the bottom in the deeper water of the ICW on colder days, and under a cork where it's shallow along the washouts, around the Pumping Station or other shallow areas.

Third, Jeanfreau said as the December air and water temperatures cool, fish the bottom on the down-current side of the gate where The Wall crosses Bayou Bienvenue. He said you may have to use a heavy sinker to get to the bottom on days with a strong current, but that's what you have to do to catch fish.

"And you'll catch a variety of fish this month. That includes trout, reds, drum, sheepshead and some very respectable-sized bass," he said. ■

- Rusty Tardo

Joey Jeanfreau shows off a nice speckled trout, and said Chalmette locations typically get hot from October through about April.

# IT'S A 'GRAND' TIME FOR BIG CRAPPIE

Grand Bayou can be a tough lake to fish. It's 2,700 acres of rolling, wide open clear water near Coushatta in Red River Parish, with no timber and no stumps. In fact, when the lake was created in 1996, the state not only cut all the trees, they ground up the stumps and hauled off the tops.

"That's true. No kidding," said Brother Warren Maxwell, a Baptist preacher by trade and a new resident on the lake's shores. "The only regular structure is tops and cane buckets that people have put out."

That being said, the lake is also full of big, broad-shouldered crappie. And this is a grand month of the year to catch them: Colder temps are congregating the shad, and turning on the fish. But to make the most of catching them, there's something you need to turn on, too: Your electronics.

Warren Maxwell with two nice Grand Bayou winter crappie.

continued >

**Grand Bayou** continued >

"We love to fish the flats," Maxwell said. "That's where we have our best success. But man, you've got to have some good electronics. If you aren't able to spot the big schools of shad, you'll be spending lots of time not catching anything. You don't want to depend upon luck here. The key is finding those shad and staying with them."

When you find and follow the big shad balls, you'll catch fish. Maxwell likes to spider rig on 14- to 17-foot deep flats. And this time of the year, he catches fish right on the bottom. He said he isn't sure why that's the case, but the only time they come up is to run through one of those shad balls. Then, it's back close to the bottom — especially the bigger slabs.

"We love fishing for them with popsicle, blue thunder and monkey milk-colored plastics," he said. "One thing we do is use ¾-ounce weights to keep the baits down. We troll about .2 to .5 miles per hour. They want it moving, but not very fast this time of the year."

For December, Maxwell recommended pink or orange jigheads.

The lake only has one public ramp, but it's a great one at the full-service, state-run Grand Bayou Resort, located just south of Highway 784 on the west side of the lake. Fishermen need to be aware that duck hunting is allowed on the lake. But that usually isn't an issue because the good duck hunting is north of the bridge, while the good December crappie fishing is south of the bridge.

Maxwell left us with one more good Grand Bayou Reservoir tip.

"When I find the fish, I like to slow troll through the area, then loop around and make another pass. As long as I'm catching them doing that, I just keep doing it. When they quit, I look for a new spot, then do the same thing all over again." ■

- Kinny Haddox

Capt. Nick Rando (right), owner of Fishaholic Fishing Charters, with Allen Buckley and a 45-pound black drum caught on shrimp under a Four-Horsemen popping cork in the Lost Lake area.

# MAKE IT A DELACROIX DECEMBER

## Trout aplenty and redfish galore

The word from Capt. Nick "Fishaholic" Rando (504-281-8287) is that the fishing is fantastic and there's action to be found all over the inside waters of Delacroix Island.

"December forces us to fish according to what the fronts give us," he said. "They blow through with some frequency, and we adjust accordingly. December is generally a mixture of moderate days and some cold ones, so fish the bottom on the colder mornings in deeper water like Oak River and False River, and any of the deeper water choke points where the water funnels in and out of larger bodies of water. The key to success on those days is two-fold: One, make sure you get your bait all the way to the bottom. Use a heavier sinker or jighead than usual, and remember this: If you don't get to the bottom, you won't catch fish — period. And two, once you get to the bottom, fish even slower than you think necessary. Don't reel in, don't do huge hops off the bottom with big lifts of your rod, just make small lifts and then let the bait settle to the bottom again. Slow down and catch fish. And a free tip: Braided line and a sensitive rod will really help you feel the softer, cold water trout bite.

"Then, on moderate weather days or as the cold morning warms, move to shallower bays and nearby ledges and flats. This is when you want to fish areas like Pointe Fienne, Bay Jack Nevette, Bakers Bay and Little Crevasse; areas that hold 3 to 5 feet of water. Now you switch to a Four-Horsemen cork rig and hang a live shrimp, or try a Matrix plastic in either shrimp creole or the lemonhead color. I've also had great success with the double-rigged H&H Glass Minnows in clear or white.

"If we get a warm December, you'll be able to catch fish closer to the dock in Little Lake, Bayou Long, Alligator Pass and Grand Lake. I like to fish 50 to 100 feet off the bank with the wind to my back and just cast and drift or troll, with those same baits under a cork. You should bump into some trout and possibly reds, as well. Stick your anchor and try to sit on the action when you find it, and resume your drift when the action dies."

Capt. Nick said reds are plentiful along the shorelines in those same lakes and bays, and also in areas like Lake Batola and Lost Lake.

"The key to finding reds this month is to let them find you," he said. "You'll catch some trolling and casting, but you'll catch more fish and you'll catch them more consistently when you park at a cut or cove or point and soak a live or dead shrimp under a cork. Give it 15 minutes to pay off. If you catch reds, stay longer. If not, move. Keep at it and you'll have a successful day." ■

- Rusty Tardo

# WATCH THE WIND OUT OF LAFITTE

## Tune into the forecast a few days before your trip, guide says

Although it's not as front-laden as January and February, December sees more than its fair share of hard cold fronts. That can make fishing tough, but the key to overcoming the fronts is to pay attention to the conditions prior to your trip, according to Lafitte guide Capt. Theophile Bourgeois.

"The biggest thing a person can do for the month of December to help them be productive if they're an artificial fisherman is pay attention to the predominant wind three days prior to their trip," he said.

Bourgeois said it's not a problem if the winds are up, but it's important they're out of the same direction.

"If it's blowing out the northwest, you want to go to the northwest," he said. "If the winds flip-flops from the south to north or north to south, stay home. But if you can get three days of continuous, steady wind out the same direction, it's the best fishing in the world."

Soft plastics and spinnerbaits are both effective if you're targeting redfish out of Lafitte this month, according to Capt. Theophile Bourgeois.

Courtesy of Theophile Bourgeois

Bourgeois is a soft-plastic enthusiast. He almost never brings live or dead shrimp on his boat, and he loves throwing a Yum soft plastic on a ¼-ounce jighead to the redfish. However, if temperatures increase, he makes sure to try a Bomber Drumbeater spinnerbait.

"If it warms up a little bit, I do like throwing spinnerbaits if they accept it," he said. "If you visually see redfish and you throw at them and they refuse it, put it back in the tackle box and go back to chunking plastic."

When he's using spinnerbaits, Bourgeois particularly likes using the Bomber Drumbeater.

"It's a No.4 blade, which has a lot of vibration," he said. "If the fish are really spooky, it's probably going to hurt you. If the fish are aggressive, and it warms up and they want to start eating, it's a plus."

If you don't mind throwing bait, Bourgeois said you can especially load up on redfish if you have the stinky stuff this time of year.

"If you want to just catch fish in the month of December, hit your (cuts) on a low tide," he said. "If it's going to be low tide, find some deep cuts, and shrimp under a cork is no doubt the most productive way if you want to get numbers." ▪

- Joel Masson

**Toledo Bend** up next >

**ABOVE:** Noah Jarrett of Hallsville, Texas, caught this chunky bass while fishing in the FLW High School Open on Nov. 4 at Toledo Bend. Jarrett, who fished with Davis Butrum, is the son of Ben Jarrett. The father-and-son found bass in the same patterns as guide John Dean — in shallow areas around pepgrass and milfoil — on buzzbaits, plastic frogs and Flukes in the middle section of creeks keying on channel swings in 2- to 10-foot depths.

# ACTION AT THE BEND SHOULD IMPROVE

## When shad move shallow is key, guide says

I was hoping against hope, along with so many other bass anglers, that bassin' as we know and love it would return to normal when the cold fronts started pushing across Toledo Bend this fall. This year's cool down was going to be critical because it would tell us if something was amiss on this great border lake — or if the past six months or so of subpar bass fishing was just a hiccup. People, including me, were concerned after struggling much of the time through the hot summer months and, even into late summer. Grass was gone where it once was prevalent, and bass bites were hard to come by — even with deepwater patterns that were so effective in the past.

Knock on wood, but as of the first week of November I believe bassin' will be improved in December. I've caught bass on jerkbaits in drains and creeks with new, lush green peppergrass and milfoil in a place that was devoid of underwater vegetation the past two or three years.

That was at the Indian Mounds. And I'm sure other areas are greening up, so to speak.

That's a positive. The fact that there are a bazillion shad in the lake would be a big plus right now, too — except it's weird they haven't moved up into the 5-foot depths as they traditionally do now. At this writing, they still are in 20-foot-or-so depths, which is very unusual with the water temperature in the mid-60s. Maybe before long they'll get jammed up in the creeks — it seems like everything's been late this year.

When the shad and bream do move sooner or later, bass will follow them into shallower depths for one reason — to forage so they can fatten up for the winter (or what passes for winter these days in Northwest Louisiana and Northeast Texas.) Sure, there'll be some icy days, but how many times this past decade or so have we walked around with shorts on Christmas Day?

A week ago I went to the Indian Mounds, forced there by high northwest winds — and I'm glad it turned out that way. I caught nine bass, about half of them keepers, on a gold/orange Rogue worked over the grass in creeks and drains. Things definitely are looking up, and I'm going to keep checking spots.

Like I said, the whole key to getting bass where we want them is getting the baitfish up.

I'll stick to moving baits, as will many others, and should catch plenty of bass. Jerkbaits, Chug Bugs, Yellow Magics, plastic frogs, buzzbaits, ChatterBaits, swimbaits and Flukes will be effective for the next six to eight weeks.

December's bass fishing success should be fair to good, weather permitting. Yeah, there probably will be days you can't get on the lake, but when you do, enjoy it.

I anticipate an overall mild December. I basically don't see much difference than early fall, other than bass fishing should get better and stronger with the presence of more grass and baitfish moving to where they're supposed to be.

The pool stage now is around 168. Don't expect to see it change before May because repairs are being made down at the dam, and officials are going to keep it there through April. Bass fishing in the spring will be different next year without water in the bushes and other traditional spring-time cover.

Crappie fishing has been fair at best, and the crappie guys are hopeful it turns a corner, just like the bass fishing. Some are averaging 25 to 30 per trip on minnows in and around deep brushtops.

If you want to catch bass in December, when the bassin' should be fair to good, I've been guiding on this lake most of my life and you're welcome in my boat. Give me a call at (936) 404-2688. ■

- John Dean

**Lake Mechant** up next >

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

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Chris Lake holds a nice Lake Decade speckled trout.

# LAKE MECHANT IS A TROUT HONEY HOLE

## Swimbaits effective now

When it's time to go fishing for speckled trout in December, Capt. Bill Lake of Houma knows where to go.

So do dozens of other anglers who want to catch speckled trout during the last month of the year.

The destination for many will be the northeast corner of Lake Mechant, where there are not one but two bayous that year after year consistently give up speckled trout in December.

Lake, a veteran charter boat captain who owns Dularge-based Bayou Guide Service, warmed up to the subject of December fishing while recounting a recent successful trip when his clients limited out on speckled trout and redfish in Lost Lake.

"We're smashing the trout in a few places. It's starting off good," Lake said about the onset of winter fishing.

The uptick was welcomed after a fairly frustrating speckled trout run this summer. He's expecting to catch more and more trout as the calendar turns to December.

There's a reason anglers shift their attention from open waters of the marsh to more confined areas, he said.

"In December we pretty much fish the bayous and pipeline canals. Usually, the cold weather forces the fish out of the lakes and bays," Lake said.

Two of those bayous are Deer Bayou and Fred Bayou, both within a short boat ride of each other in the northeast part of Lake Mechant. The average depth in those bayous is 6 to 8 feet, which is plenty enough for that time of year, he said.

Speckled trout fishing there and in other popular bayous and pipeline canals will be good, weather permitting, until the water temperature drops below 48 degrees. After that, redfish will bite until the water temp gets to around 42 degrees, he said.

To catch speckled trout in those two bayous, tie on Vudu Vixen swimbaits, or use a Vudu Shrimp under a popping cork for the days when the speckled trout are suspended 2 to 3 feet below the surface. Top colors are bunker, shrimp dip and blueback, according to Lake.

Swimbaits are effective because by this time of year most of the shrimp have vamoosed and the speckled trout's diet is mostly baitfish.

Other places to try this time of year are Bayou Raccourci and Lake Decade.

The best time to fish the former is when the current isn't so swift, when the tide range isn't that far apart or at the end or beginning of low tide and high tide, he said.

The best way to fish Lake Decade this month is to drift. Keep moving, the veteran fishing guide said. When you put one in the boat, you can drop the anchor or Power Poles, fish some more and then move on again. ■

- Don Shoopman

# BUMP A STUMP FOR D'ARBONNE CRAPPIE

## The bayou - not the lake - offers up some slabs this time of year

When most crappie fishermen think of D'Arbonne, they immediately think about the big lake. But a growing number of anglers are moving Bayou D'Arbonne up the list of top crappie spots in North Louisiana. The old bayou flows from the lake spillway all the way to the Ouachita River.

"I like fishing the lake, but I love fishing the bayou," said Brittney Naron, a Ouachita Sheriff's Department employee who got thumped by crappie a few years ago and never looked back.

"I had always been a bass fisherman, but

Big crappie like this is why Brittney Naron loves D'Arbonne Bayou.

a few years ago a friend's dad took me crappie fishing," she recalled. "I caught about a 2 1/2 pounder, and I haven't been bass fishing since."

To fish the bayou this month, Naron said three things are key. First, weather conditions this time of year quickly change the color of the bayou's water. On days when rain has made it almost chocolate color, she likes to use bright colored jigs, like electric chicken in the mo-glow and bright color painted heads with big eyes. On clearer days, she uses a more subtle color, or her favorite black-and-blue 1/16th-ounce hair jig.

As the weather gets colder, she turns to live minnows and fishes them extremely slowly — regardless of water color.

Second, she stays on stumps. Many people try to follow the crappie into the channels in colder weather, but unless it's an extreme cold spell, she fishes the stumps all year long. The key is to fish all round the stumps when it's cloudy, and find the shady side when it's sunny.

The third tip is to find the deeper side of the bayou. The bayou winds and turns, and those outside banks that have been cut away and have deeper water seem to have more productive stump lines, she said.

From day to day, fish seem to like different presentations. Some days, she will bounce the jig aggressively, but some days she just lets it fall with very little movement.

"You just have to see what they want that day and then stick with what they tell you," she said. "I fish a 10-foot Wahali pole with one bait, and a light 8-foot B'n'M with the other. I usually bounce the lighter pole a little more."

Fishing on the bayou is good all the way from Joe Bob's Landing near the river to the Lake D'Arbonne Spillway. You just have to find an area you are comfortable with — and a bait, too.

"The best advice of all is to be patient and find a bait or two you are really confident in. Stay with it, because sometimes you go an hour without a bite, then they just turn on," she said. "This time of year, it's worth the wait." ■

- Kinny Haddox

**Pontchartrain** up next >

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# TARGET DEEPER WATER FOR PONTCHARTRAIN TROUT

## Water temperature dictates plan of attack, guide says

The Lake Pontchartrain estuary provides a lot of different types of fishing, and that can be super advantageous this time of year when conditions change so much.

Lake Pontchartrain guide Capt. Mike Gallo has many options when he leaves his lodge this month, and on colder mornings, he heads for deep water.

"Once (the water temperature) gets below 55 degrees, I think you need deeper water — the dead end canals like Geoghegan Canal, Lakeshore (Estates), Eden Isles and Venetian Isles," he said.

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**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Capt. Mike Gallo targets specks in deeper spots when water temps hit about 55 degrees.

Gallo said there are certain elements of those areas that are appealing to specks in the cold weather.

"They all have consistent depth, and those fish can get down on the bottom and get used to the temperature," he said. "They don't have a lot of current to swim against; they don't have to waste a lot of energy. If food happens to come by, they'll go get it."

The specks' lethargic attitude is quite a stark contrast from the warmer months, Gallo said.

"In the summertime, we say they'll go 20 feet to find your popping cork and plastic," he said. "In the wintertime, they'll barely go 20 inches. Once you find them, if you find them in 12 feet of water or 18 feet of water, that may be the biggest part of your pattern right there — finding 18 feet of water."

Gallo said a good depth finder is a must-have in cold weather months.

"I really use my electronics a lot in the wintertime," he said. "Get that thing zoomed in. You're obviously using your depth finder for temperature and looking at the bottom to see if you can see areas that you think are fish."

In the deep canals, Gallo throws 3/8- and ½-ounce jigheads teamed with Matrix Shad, Deadly Dudley or Gulp lures.

"I'm going to use light colors when the shrimp boats are around," he said. "When the shrimp boats kind of move out, then I switch colors. I'll still try them, but I won't try them first."

When water temperatures climb above 55 or so, Gallo fishes the Trestles, and also shorelines in Lake Pontchartrain that have grass.

When fishing the shorelines, a lot of times Gallo reaches for a popping cork, but he changes up from his normal cadence.

"I don't pop it as quickly as you would in the summertime," he said. "I might pop it once every 20 seconds." ■

- Joel Masson

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# HEAD TO STEPHENSVILLE DOCKS FOR DECEMBER SACS

Morgan City outdoorsman Bill McCarty said docks were definitely the ticket this month for slab sac-a-lait feeding up for the winter.

McCarty, who's also an avid bass angler in and around the Spillway and an accomplished bowhunter who hunts deer on the Atchafalaya Delta WMA, has his favorite docks for sac-a-lait fishing — and didn't mind sharing the locations with *Louisiana Sportsman*.

"A lot of times the sac-a-lait will bite around the docks around Bayou Magazille and Four Mile Bayou and up and down Bayou Melhomme," McCarty said.

And McCarty doesn't target just any dock: The docks in deeper water, he said, always seem to hold more of the slabs averaging ¾- to 1 pound.

He likes to fish docks with at least 4 feet of water under them, and prefers those in 6-foot depths — especially in Bayou Melhomme. With colder water temperatures the norm, sac-a-lait tend to position themselves closer to the bottom away from the cooler upper-layer of the water.

But as the sun comes up and warms the water, the sac-a-lait move closer to the surface to feed, which is why McCarty and others in the know don't go after them at the crack of dawn — or even before 8 to 9 a.m. most of the time.

Sac-a-lait can be caught in those and other areas this month on shiners, but for those who prefer fishing with artificials like McCarty, a blue/silver, blue/white or gray/white (in that order) Luck-E-Strike soft plastic tube jig about 4 feet deep, always tipped with a chartreuse Crappie Nibble, consistently gets the desired result — weather and water conditions permitting.

"If I can't catch them on a jig, I'll use a shiner," he said.

If sac-a-lait turn their nose up at natural bait and artificials, McCarty turns to an old reliable and casts a 1/16- or 1/8-ounce white or yellow Beetle Spin, which he slow rolls like a spinnerbait.

"You can get bit that way," he said.

If the docks in those areas don't produce, try Doiron's Canal. It's a deep canal but as the day warms, sac-a-lait move shallower to feed, he said.

Other prime sac-a-lait fishing destinations around Stephensville include wellheads in the Oxy Field, and also try Bayou Charamie and Bayou Sherman.

He's even been catching some in the evenings right off his houseboat in Land End Park Campground & Marina at Lake Palourde, so also give the marina waters a try this month. ■

- Don Shoopman

Bill McCarty holds two slabs caught in the Stephensville area.

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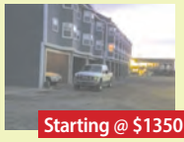

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## ADVERTISERS INDEX


ACE'S RETRIEVERS ..... 32
AMERICA MARINE ..... 165
AMERICAN DIESEL POWER PRODUCTS ..... 76
AMERICAN HONDA MOTOR CO., INC. ..... 62, 63
ASCENSION EQUIPMENT & RENT ALL ..... 4
ASCENSION GOLF CART ..... 96
BAKER AGRI-FOREST PROPERTIES ..... 57
BATTERY WORLD ..... 13
BAYOU OUTBOARDS, INC. ..... 54
BENT MARINE ..... 85
BLACKWELL AUTOMOTIVE, INC ..... 55
BLANCHARD TRAILER SALES ..... 89
BLANCHARD'S REFRIGERATION ..... 121
BOAT STUF ..... 71
BOATS UNLIMITED ..... 74, 75, 77
BOSS DRIVES ..... 36
BOURGEOIS MEAT MARKET ..... 47
BREAUX AND DAIGLE MARINE ..... 24, 73, 103, 109
BROOKHAVEN HONDA ..... 130, 131
BRYAN'S MARINE ..... 161
BUS SUPPLY COMPANY INC. ..... 129
CAJUN OUTBOARDS ..... 165
CAPTAIN PAUL TITUS ..... 64, 153
CAROLINA COMPOSITES, LLC ..... 65
CASE LAND CO, LLC ..... 25
CHRIS' CAJUN BOILER / STEAMER ..... 29, 46
COTTONMOUTH BOATS ..... 21
COVER'S UNLIMITED ..... 163
CUSTOM CORRUGATED AND SUPPLY ..... 87
CUSTOM MAPPING SERVICE ..... 161
DAGATE'S MARINE ..... 81
DEEP SOUTH GOLF CARS ..... 127
DEER VIEW WINDOWS CO. ..... 25
DESSELLE'S FIREARMS AND SPORTING GOODS ..... 46
DIXIE RV ..... 68
DOWN EAST GUIDE SERVICE ..... 29, 163
DUVIC'S BOATS ..... 115, 147, 170
ELITE STOR ..... 84
FANE SAFE COMPANY ..... 46
FIRST SOUTH FARM CREDIT ..... 171
FRED NETTERVILLE LUMBER ..... 21
GATOR TAIL OUTBOARDS ..... 3
GATOR TRAX ..... 61
GEORGIA BOOT ..... 19
GIBSON REALTY/UNITED COUNTRY ..... 42
GO DEVIL ..... 53
GULF COAST AQUATRACTION ..... 99
H&H MARINE ..... 78
H&M MARINE ..... 97
HANKO'S ..... 83
HATCHIE INC. FORMERLY LLANO CREEK ..... 47
HENDERSON ..... 56
HOUSEBOAT OUTLET ..... 115
HUGHES WELDING AND MFG ..... 87
HUNTERS FOR THE HUNGRY ..... 31
HYDRO TURF ..... 72
J & B MANUFACTURING, LLC ..... 149
JERRY'S MARINE ..... 9
LAKE AREA MARINE ..... 62
LEMANN'S FARM SUPPLY, INC. ..... 135
LOUISIANA LOTTERY ..... 15
M&L ENGINE, LLC ..... 82
M&L INDUSTRIES ..... 48, 49
MARINE LIFT AND DOCK SUPPLY COMPANY ..... 91
MCM LUMBER ..... 153
METRO BOATING ..... 73
MIKE GERALD'S TRAILER ..... 84
MOLPUS TIMBERLANDS MONROE OFFICE ..... 54
MOSSY OAK PROPERTIES LAND INVESTMENTS ..... 33
NIKON SPORT OPTICS ..... 122, 123
OUTDOOR POWERHOUSE ..... 66, 67, 149
PARISH TRACTOR ..... 8
PELLEGRIN MARINE ..... 113
PERFORMANCE OUTBOARDS SALES & SERVICE INC. ..... 153
PERINO'S BOILING POT ..... 20
PRO DRIVE ..... 125
PUGLIA'S SPORTING GOODS ..... 44, 45
QUIRK'S WELDING LLC ..... 141
R. SCHEXNAYDER & SONS ..... 23
REALTREE OUTDOOR PRODUCTS ..... 172
REED'S METALS, INC. ..... 6
ROAD AND TRACK POWERSPORTS ..... 106
SCOTTYS CAMPER SALES ..... 5
SCULLY'S ..... 91, 154
SEA TRAC OFFSHORE SERVICES ..... 47, 50
SERVICE CHEVROLET ..... 11
SHREVEPORT -BOSSIER SPORTS COMMISSION ..... 95
SOUTHERN OUTDOORS & MARINE,LLC ..... 84, 140
SOUTHERN OUTDOORS AND MARINE ..... 159
SOUTHERN POWER AND EQUIPMENT, LLC ..... 43
SPORTS CENTER ..... 41
STERLING'S UPHOLSTERY ..... 99
STEVE GERMANS TAXIDERMY ART ..... 148
STIHL SOUTHWEST ..... 32, 111
TERREBONNE MARINE ..... 142
THE CRAPPIE PSYCHIC, LLC ..... 57
THE ISLAND (BLAKE OFFSHORE) ..... 7
TIM'S MARINE ..... 34, 35
TOHATSU AMERICAN CORPORATION ..... 116, 117
TOWN & COUNTRY MARINE ..... 39
UNDERWATER FISH LIGHT LLC ..... 105
VENABLE FABRICATION ..... 47
VERSA MAXX CORKS ..... 148
WHITE OAK PLANTATION ..... 121
WHITETAIL PROPERTIES ..... 39
WILCO MARSH BUGGIES, INC. ..... 122
XPRESS BY ALUMA-WELD, INC. ..... 2



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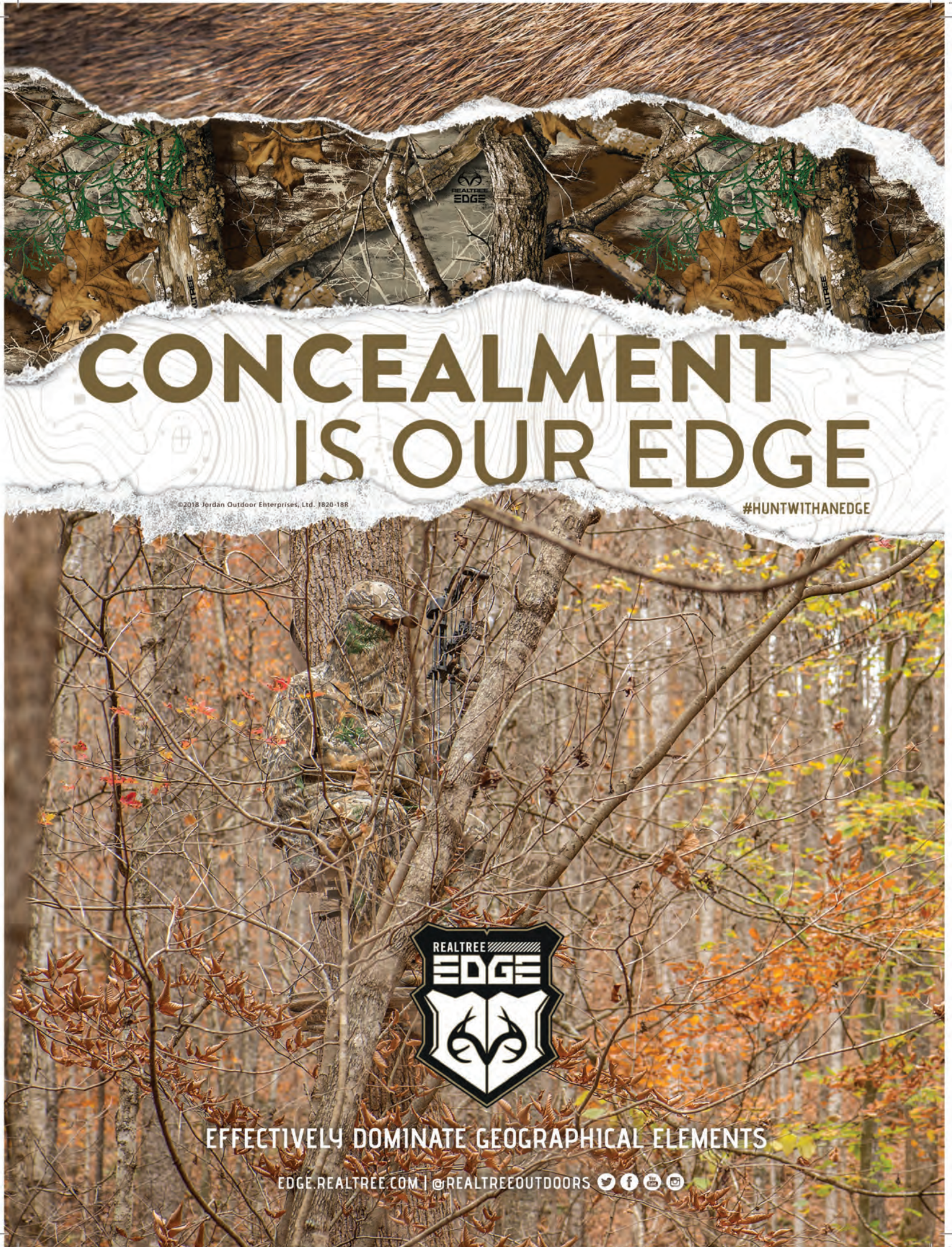
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