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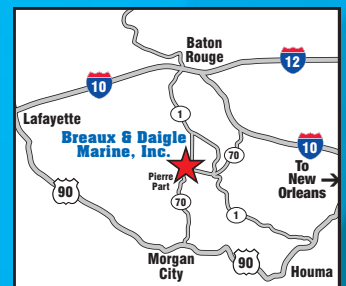
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EASY LIVING  
CRAPPIE FISHING

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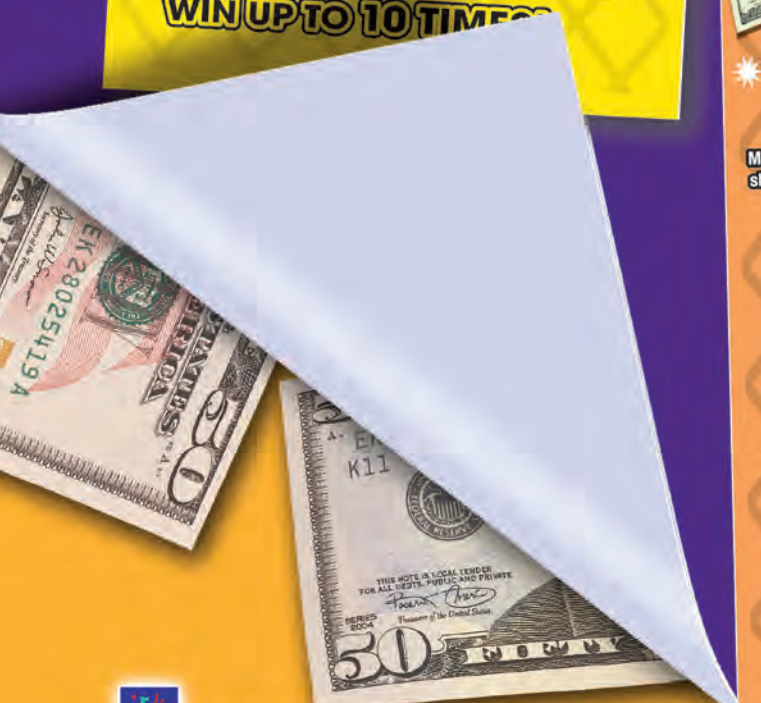
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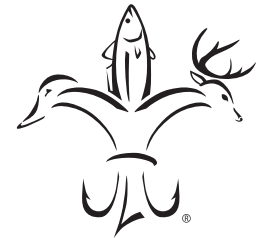
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MARCH INTO SPRING TROUT



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Trey Bayles of West Monroe had a dream day on Caney Lake on Jan. 31. He caught big bass on 15 consecutive casts; the biggest five weighed more than 36 pounds. Photo courtesy Trey Bayles.

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Trey Bayles with five lunker largemouths weighing more than 36 pounds caught at the end of January on Caney Lake near Chatham.

Outdoor  
**UPDATE**

# CANEY YIELDS MONSTER BASS LIMIT

## WEST MONROE ANGLER SACKS 36 POUNDS

**ON THE COVER**

By Kinny Haddox

**T**rey Bayles didn't have to make a cast to know he was, as he said later, "about to have a whole lot of fun."

Bayles, 31, from West Monroe, is always looking for big bass when he fishes nearby Caney Lake. As he rode to a familiar area on Jan. 29, watching his side-scan electronics, he eased up on a little creek hole where he's caught several big fish, a little drain with grass on both sides.

"As the area started to show up on my electronics, it was pretty remarkable," he said. "There wasn't just one or two big bass down there; there must have been 100. It was remarkable, pretty remarkable. I knew what was about to happen."

At the end of an hour's fishing, Bayles had put five of the biggest fish in his boat's livewell to see what kind of total weight he had. When a friend came by toward the end of Bayles' time on the water, they weighed the best five at 36 pounds "and some change," he said.

### NON-STOP ACTION

Here's the way it went down. When Bayles saw the fish, he stopped his boat, got in position and started throwing a deep-diving crankbait. On his first cast, he caught a big fish. On his next cast, he caught a big fish. That went on for 15 casts in a row.

"Every one of them was over 5 pounds. I just had to make myself stop casting," said Bayles, who had a tournament scheduled a few days later and didn't want to catch all of them. "I had

to leave them. That wasn't very easy to do. I was just catching fish and throwing them back every cast."

After he weighed the five big ones, he released them alive into the same spot.

If you aren't envious yet, there's more to this story. Bayles did this same thing last year about this same time, but his 5-fish bag weighed 38 pounds that day.

What stacked all those fish in one spot so close together?

"It was just like a dream come true," Bayles said. "These big fish are all over the area, but it turned really cold two nights earlier. I think that pulled the fish out of the grass and onto this little creek drain. It's a natural staging area for fish that are getting close to the spawn. In addition to that, there was a huge school of bait-fish showing right there as well. I just happened to roll up on the right spot at the right time."

And there wasn't another boat in sight, until his friend pulled up, helped him weigh the fish, took a picture and put them back in the lake.

"Pretty much every time I pull up to Caney, I'm looking for big bass," said Bayles, an offshore drilling rig worker. "The reason there are so many good ones right now is that the hydrilla has come back. I sure hope they don't start killing it, because if they do, they will kill this kind of fishing dead. I understand some people want the grass away from the piers, but if they try and kill grass in the whole lake it will be a real shame." ■

# CRAPPIE ANGLER NABS TROPHY BASS ON LAKE CLAIBORNE

By Glynn Harris

**J**eff Brown lives in a prime location in north Louisiana, between two quality fishing holes: Corney Lake and Lake Claiborne. Corney is his go-to honey hole for bass, while Claiborne is his crappie fishing hot spot.

On Sunday night, Feb. 2, the roles were reversed as he hooked and landed the biggest bass of his life, an 11-pounder, while crappie fishing on Lake Claiborne.

"A friend, Monty Walker, and I were on Claiborne that night fishing in a spot we can usually find all the (crappie) we want to catch," Brown said. "This time of year, night fishing works for us. There is an area up Horse Creek in pretty deep water, 18 to 20 feet, where there are lights mounted on poles 100 yards or so from the bank. We fish under the lights, usually with good results."

That night, the pair had already caught about 30 crappie when Brown felt a light tap on his Bobby Garland black/chartreuse jig. He assumed it was another crappie, but when he set the hook, it didn't move.

"I told Monty I was hung up, but then I noticed that the line began slowly moving," he said. "I knew then I had something pretty big; I figured it was probably a flathead catfish."



Jeff Brown and his 11-pound Lake Claiborne bass he hooked on a jig while crappie fishing.

## WHAT HE WAS USING

Brown was fishing with what he called his "Snoopy" rod; a 4½-foot Berkeley rod with a Lew's spincast reel. Just before heading to the lake, Brown had spooled the reel with fresh line, 8-pound Suffix.

"At first, what I was feeling was a dead, heavy pull," he said. "Then I heard a fish come up behind the boat, and Monty said he didn't know what it was, but it was huge. I figured it was another fish breaking water and didn't think it was the one I had on."

Brown still had no idea what he had hooked, and after at least

## TUNA SHOWING UP



The big yellowfin tuna are making their initial appearance of the year in the Gulf of Mexico, with Capt. Scott Leger of Paradise Outfitters in Venice hooking up and boating a 230-pound yellowfin on Feb. 8.

On the rod that day was Ohio native Mark Frazier, who outlasted the huge tuna after an 80-minute battle.

The fish was caught on a chunk of king mackerel in 250 feet of water around the Horseshoe Lump southeast of Venice.

"This is the beginning of our lump season; it's just getting kicked off," said Leger, who pilots a 41-foot catamaran for Paradise Outfitters. "We hope those big fish continue to show up through March."

You can book your trip with Paradise Outfitters at [www.venicefishing.com](http://www.venicefishing.com).

8 minutes, he was able to ease the fish closer to the boat. It was then that he realized it was no flathead catfish; he saw the head of a huge bass.

"I told Monty I had a big bass on and to get the dip net," he said. "Monty slipped the net in the water, but when the fish saw the net, it shook its head and took off. I knew there was no way in the world I would be able to get that fish in the boat; I figured it would break off."

## FISH OF A LIFETIME

Fortunately, the bass made another pass by the boat, Walker was able to lie down on the deck and stretch out and grab the bass by the lower lip and lift it into the boat.

"I have caught bass in the 9- to 10-pound range on Corney, and I knew this one was bigger than that," Brown said. "I was able to get a photo and text it to my son. I weighed it on some old scales I had in my boat, and it showed just under 11 pounds. I release all the big bass I catch in Corney, and I was planning to release this one, but my son said, 'Don't you dare; I'll pay to have it mounted because it was bigger than any I ever caught.'"

The next morning, Brown took the bass to Kel's Cove on Lake Claiborne, and owner Tim Loftin weighed the fish; the scales settled on 11 pounds.

"I'm 60 years old and have fished all my life," Brown said, "and I had to go crappie fishing to catch the biggest bass of my life." ■

# TOLEDO BEND LUNKERS MOVED SHALLOW IN JANUARY



Courtesy of Ronnie Moore/B.A.S.S.

LOUISIANA, TEXAS ANGLERS HAVE ARRIVED AT A TIME WHEN TOLEDO BEND IS IN HER PRIME FOR DELIVERING DOUBLE-DIGIT LARGEMOUTHS. *By Chris Berzas*

**T**he very best months for catching Toledo Bend's lunker bass has arrived. Already, in January, two great bass over 10 pounds were taken.

From now and into the early summer, Louisiana Sportsman readers will be treated to the stories of anglers who were successful in hooking, catching and landing these giants.

Both bass taken in January were entered into the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program under the auspices of the Toledo Bend Lake Association. The TBLA rewards anglers taking bass weighing at least 10 pounds free replica mounts when weighed at official weigh stations and released alive into the lake.

## KAHRS' LUNKER

It is fitting that the first 2020 Toledo Bend Lunker Program bass, a 10.9-pound fish, was taken by a high-school student, Matthew Kahrs, a 17-year-old senior at Barbe High School in Lake Charles.

On Jan. 26, Kahrs and his 14-year-old brother, Christopher, were among 174 teams participating in the 2020 Mossy Oak Fishing Bassmaster High School Series event at Toledo Bend. On the boat with the brothers was their uncle, Mark Van Winkle, serving as boat captain.

"The weather was bad in the morning,

so we stayed around fishing the Cypress Bend area," said Matthew Kahrs. "After not getting bites, we went back to where we pre-fished before the tournament."

The brothers were casting to all the stumps in an area near the Indian Mounds, fishing in 10 feet of water, at 11:40 a.m.

"I threw in between two stumps," Kahrs said, "and it was there for a while because I was fishing slow after that front came in."

Kahrs was fishing a watermelon candy, Zoom Baby Brush Hog, his line spooled on an Abu Garcia reel on a 7-foot, medium-action, 13 Fishing Fate Black rod.

"A fish hit it once, and my uncle and brother were ready to move up with the trolling motor, but the fish gave it a second hit," Kahrs said. "I knew it was there, and I set the hook."

The fish began immediately swimming toward the boat, and Kahrs said it felt small at first.

## THE BIG DISCOVERY

"Then it turned sideways and came out the water, and all you could see was the eye and the mouth," he said.

Kahrs fought the fish for at least 45 seconds as it peeled off line against the drag.

"After it came up, it went deep almost to the bottom and moved to the back of

Matthew Kahrs (left) displays his 10.9-pound Toledo Bend lunker, while his brother, Christopher, holds up two other bass taken Jan. 26 during the 2020 Mossy Oak Fishing Bassmaster High School Series event at Toledo Bend. The brothers placed second in the tournament with three bass weighing 15.6 pounds.

the boat toward the motor as it pulled drag," he said. "My uncle and brother were freaking."

Christopher Kahrs had the net up and ready as the fish tried a few more tricks. "After it went toward the motor, it came up a second time, and you could see the white on it," he said. "Then it ran all the way up to the trolling motor."

Matthew Kahrs described the situation as "scary close" — referring to the fish reaching the trolling motor.

As it came up the last time, Christopher Kahrs netted it.

"The net my uncle uses is a decent-size net," he said. "When I finally got it in the net, its tail lay on one side of the bar and its head on the other."

Matthew Kahrs said that once the fish was out the net and unhooked, it went directly to the livewell.

Ten minutes later, the giant bass was retrieved, and a few photos were taken.

"We stayed in the same area all day, finally caught a keeper, and I switched up to a candy Brush Hog," Christopher Kahrs said.

"Our last keeper was taken about 1:45 p.m., and we left the area at 3 and motored back to Cypress Bend for the weigh-in."

The brothers ended up with three bass weighing 15.6 pounds for a second-place

finish in the tournament.

Matthew Kahrs' lunker weighed 10.9 pounds and was admittedly his largest bass ever taken.

## JOHNSTON'S LUNKER

Stephen Johnston of Hemphill, Texas, was one of more than 120 anglers fishing the 2020 FLW Toyota Series event Jan. 30-Feb. 2 on Toledo Bend.

Johnston, 49, had a tremendous first day, when he scored on his third lunker that made the list for the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program.

"It was actually the very first day taking my new boat, a Vexus, out on the lake," said Johnston, who guides on Toledo Bend. "I didn't know what to expect, and then I catch this huge fish."

"After launching from Cypress Bend, I quickly ran to the south end of the lake and caught a quick limit of fish at 12 to 13 pounds."

Throughout the morning, he culled and upgraded his weight until about 12:30 p.m., when the double-digit lunker hit.

Johnston was fishing a Strike King Game Hog in Bama bug color on a Carolina rig with 20-pound Sunline Sniper fluorocarbon spooled to a Shimano Metanium bait-caster attached to a 7-foot-5 NRX G. Loomis Stick. He was fishing a spawning pocket in 7 feet of water.

"When she bit, I leaned on the fish and knew immediately it was not a 2-pounder," he said. "She made a run through some timber, then came out back to the boat, and I netted her."

"I have taken many over 10 pounds before and knew always to be ready," he said. "The co-angler was more excited than I was,"

At the weigh-in later that afternoon, Johnston's lunker weighed 10.7 pounds. It anchored a first-day bag of 23.8 pounds.

At the end of the tournament, Johnston's 4-day weight was 49.7 pounds; he finished fourth overall.

Johnston can be reached for guided fishing trips on Toledo Bend at 409-579-4213 or [www.johnstonfishing.com](http://www.johnstonfishing.com). ■



On Jan. 30, the first day of the FLW Toyota Series Event at Toledo Bend, guide Stephen Johnston scored on this 10.7-pounder fishing a spawning pocket with a Bama bug Strike King Game Hog on a Carolina rig.

Rob Matsuura/FLW

A close-up of a fishing lure with a tiger-stripe pattern in orange and black, a green eye, and a white bill. The lure is set against a dark, textured background. Text and logos are overlaid on the image.

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Tony (left) and Otis Taylor with some Bayou Des Allemands sac-a-lait.



# SAC-A-LAIT AT BAYOU DES ALLEMANDS

## Spawn won't be long in coming for crappie anglers

By Tony Taylor

**S**unday, Feb. 2, was not an ideal day to fish for sac-a-lait. It was stunningly gorgeous, without a cloud in the sky and a big high-pressure system firmly in place.

But sometimes, God works in mysterious ways.

My father, Otis Taylor, and I were fishing the Bayou Des Allemands area, and the fish were obviously not deterred by the less than ideal conditions. Clyde Folse, better known as the "Crappie Psychic" — the inventor and manufacturer of his popular baits — was also not deterred. Initially, he thought the sac-a-lait would be holding tight to the cut-grass edges of the canal, but they were actually holding off a ways in the submerged grass.

### WHAT WE USED

Folse's "Crappie Psychic" scented trailers have made their mark throughout the crappie fishing world, and of course, those were deployed on all our 1/16-ounce jigs.

The company has also just begun to release its first crappie lures called the "Crappie Weapon." They are different in a lot of ways from traditional plastic jigs: stiffer, creating a lot more air bubbles and are a little bigger than normal. We finished the day with more than 60 beautiful fish, some good eating! ■



**VIDEO:** Go to [louisianasportsman.com/sac-a-lait-at-bayou-des-allemands](http://louisianasportsman.com/sac-a-lait-at-bayou-des-allemands) to see Capt. Clyde Folse talk about The Crappie Weapon.

As the day wore on, the bite continued to move out, almost to the middle of the canal, which was probably 5 to 6 feet deep. We fished a bit deeper than usual on a weighted cork, probably 30 inches as opposed to the normal 18 or so. Folse thinks the fish have not quite ganged up yet and spawned, but the spawn shouldn't be far away.





# THE Rhythm OF LOUISIANA

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# SPORTSMAN'S BIG BUCK GALLERY

Outdoor  
**UPDATE**



Lacie Russell from Downsville, a student in kinesiology at the University of Louisiana-Monroe, was hunting with her dad, Greg Russell, on their property in Morehouse Parish on Jan. 4 when she took this 14-point buck that scored 166% inches.



Mickey Greer of Calhoun killed his biggest ever deer on Jan. 10 while hunting with his wife in Madison Parish. The 10-point buck green-scored 157% inches.



Jeremy Martinez of Prairieville was hunting in Concordia Parish on Jan. 10 when he killed this huge buck. The 14-pointer has been green-scored at 162 inches and estimated to be more than 7 years old.



On Dec. 8, Jerry Denman shot this big 15-point buck in Red River Parish. It weighed 238 pounds and scored 180% inches.

To read full stories about any of these trophy bucks, visit [louisianasportsman.com/bigbucks](http://louisianasportsman.com/bigbucks)

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# LOUISIANA DUCK SEASON OVER; CATAHOULA LAKE FIGHT IS NOT

By Kinny Haddox

**L**ouisiana's 2019-2020 duck season is a wrap, but the issue of who legally owns the sprawling Catahoula Lake area and the fight to keep it open for public waterfowl hunting isn't over yet, according to Jeff Landry, Louisiana's attorney general.

There was good news for the state's taxpayers in late January when the Louisiana Supreme Court ruled in favor of part of the state's request to reverse a lower court's decision in *Cooks & Crooks v. Louisiana Department of Natural Resources*. The ruling reversed a \$38.29 million damage award as well as an additional \$28.46 million in judicial interest regarding the case, Landry said.

However, Landry also said that the ruling did not reverse the issue of whether the famous and historic duck-hunting area will be available to the public as it has been in the past.

The high court's ruling let taxpayers off the hook for damages but did not make a call on the designation of whether the water was a lake or a river. The state can ask for a rehearing on that matter, and Landry indicated that, and other options, would be looked at.

While there has been no official word, that request is expected fairly soon.

"The fight is not over yet, as the Supreme Court did not reverse



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the lower court's reclassification of Catahoula Lake as a river, thus leaving some possible confusion regarding the accessibility of the lake for public hunting and fishing," Landry said. "We will evaluate all our options, including a rehearing and legislation; and we continue to do all we legally can to protect the rights of sportsmen to both access and harvest from our state's bountiful waters."

## CATAHOULA'S HISTORY

Catahoula Lake is a 30,000-acre lowland area that was historically flooded annually by overflow from the Red, Black and Mississippi rivers, along with direct flow from Little River. Controversy has surrounded the area since the 1960s, when lock construction on the Black River permanently raised the water level. However, the loss of the Catahoula area was mitigated by an 18-mile diversion canal to drain the lake into the Black River below the lock and dam each summer. A large, gated concrete control structure was placed on the channel where it left the lake to allow human control over water levels. That project was completed at taxpayer expense in 1972.

The legal dispute began in 2006 when landowners around the lake filed suit, saying that they, not Louisiana, own the lake. James Boddie, an ad-hoc judge in Rapides Parish, ruled in favor of the landowners, ruling that the state had unlawfully expropriated the river banks. That judgement originally included an award of \$38 million in damages to the landowners from the state and \$4.5 million in unpaid oil and gas royalties, plus interest.

The legal question remained that if it is defined as a lake, Catahoula Lake belongs to the state and is open to public access. If it is legally deemed a river, the land on each "bank" is private property.

Jack Montoucet, secretary of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, has been a strong supporter of overturning the ruling, which blocks public access to the area — contrary to more than 200 years of public access to Catahoula Lake.

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

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# LDWF OBSERVES BIG DECREASE IN FLOUNDER STOCKS

CAUSE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE OVERFISHING, BUT MAY BE ENVIRONMENTAL IN NATURE

By Chris Berzas

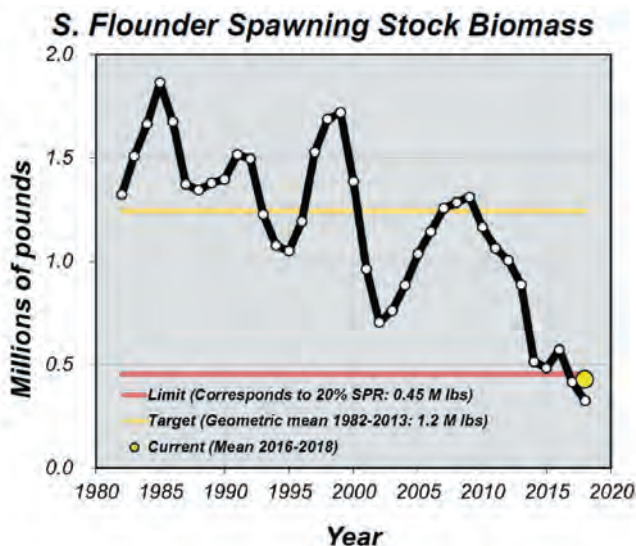
**D**uring their Feb. 6 meeting, members of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' commission heard some disheartening news about southern flounder stocks in Louisiana coastal waters.

"We have seen a dramatic drop in flounder stock biomass in recent years, and it has continued to decline," said Jason Adriance, LDWF's inland fisheries biologist manager.

## SPAWNING STOCK BIOMASS

Flounder stock biomass refers to the total weight of adult female flounder that can reproduce. For flounder, stock biomass estimates come from fishery independent sampling in all coastal basins through LDWF's inshore trawl survey and trammel net survey.

The current flounder stock biomass is estimated at slightly less than a half-million pounds, the lowest on record since the early 1980s. By comparison, 10 years ago, flounder stock biomass was



Courtesy of LDWF

approximately 1.7 million pounds.

In a draft copy of a report, the 2017 and 2018 recreational and commercial harvests of southern flounder were also the lowest on record.

According to Adriance, the flounder stock is not undergoing overfishing.

Flounder are a popular species for Louisiana anglers such as Craig Vidrine. Recently, however, there have been dramatic declines in southern flounder in Louisiana coastal waters.



Chris Berzas

"Fishing mortality rate is still within the limits between the target and the limit," he said. "It varied high recently, there's been some more variation than normal in recent years.

"However, it's still in that zone where it's under the limit but above the target. But it is overfished."

Although fishing mortality rates are not high, there are too few individuals in the stock above the minimum level established for this species.

## WHY DECREASING?

If not undergoing overfishing, what could be causing this decrease in flounder populations?

"That, we just can't put our fingers on," Adriance said, "and it's happening Gulf-wide. All the states are trying to figure out all the ways to deal with this one."

According to the Adriance, Gulf states are considering a couple of hypotheses to explain the decline.

"One (hypothesis) is temperature plays a big role in sex determination when those flounder recruit into the estuary," he said. "The higher the water temperatures, the more male flounder end up being in the population.

"There's also some work being done on survival of those (flounder) larvae when they come in. Those higher water temperatures may decrease survival as well."

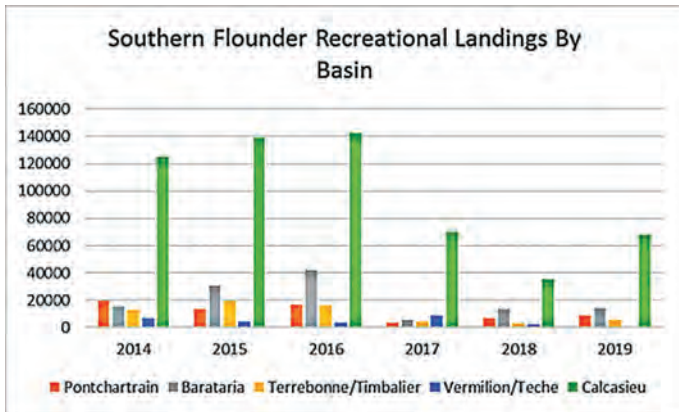
## FUTURE STEPS

"We will have to come back to this Commission at some point with some management recommendations," Adriance said, "or with ways to try to recover that stock."

Adriance ended his presentation by including a quote from Louisiana RS 56:325.4(D)2.

"If data indicate that a fishery is not meeting or is likely not to meet the established targets, the department shall provide for the commission's consideration management options to ensure that the species can meet the management targets established for that species."

After Adriance's presentation, Chad Courville, a Commission



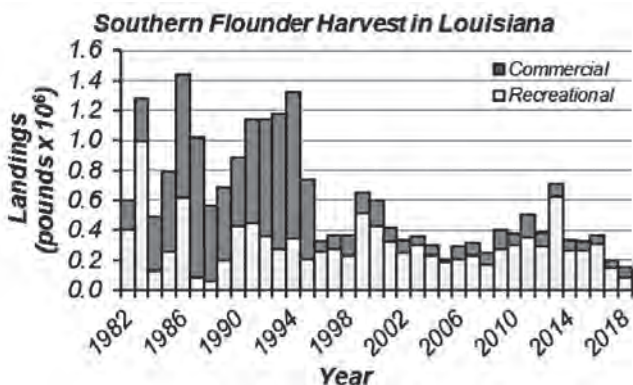
Courtesy of LDWF

LA Creel data: recreational harvest numbers by Louisiana basin. Recreational anglers in the Calcasieu Basin (including Sabine) harvest more flounder than those in other parts of the state. Many southwestern Louisiana anglers will make many annual trips — especially in the fall — to specifically target this species. The Calcasieu Ship Channel provides a very narrow funnel for the huge population of this estuary’s flounder to migrate to and from the Gulf of Mexico.

member from Lafayette, said, “If you recall that fishing mortality graphic, this is not one where fishing is an issue. There is something going on environmental.”

## CURRENT LIMITS

In Louisiana, the recreational creel limit for flounder is 10 per person per day with no size minimum. Fishing for flounder is allowed year-round in Louisiana waters. Possession limits for flounder are the same as the daily bag limit.



Recreational and commercial flounder landings – According to a draft copy of Assessment of Southern Flounder *Paralichthys lethostigma* in Louisiana Waters 2020 Report – the 2017 and 2018 combined recreational and commercial harvests of southern flounder are also the lowest on record.

The commercial limit for flounder is 10 daily, with no size limit, per licensed commercial fisherman. However, commercial shrimping vessels may retain and sell all flounder harvested as by-catch on a shrimping trip. Commercial fishing for flounder is also allowed year-round.

Adriance did not present proposed creel, limit or seasonal changes to the commissioners. Management recommendations from biologists will be delivered to commissioners in the future. ■

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- April 17-19 - Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration & Cultural Weekend, Grand Isle School
- April 24-26 - Blessing of the Fleet Festival, Tarpon Rodeo Pavilion
- April 25 - Blessing of the Fleet Ceremony, Sand Dollar Marina 1 p.m.
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# TROUT NUMBERS ARE DOWN, BUT HOW DOES LWDF KNOW?

THE STATUS OF LOUISIANA'S SPECKLED TROUT STOCK GOES FAR BEYOND DOCKSIDE INTERVIEWS AND EMAIL SURVEYS. HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:

By Chris Berzas

**M**ost certainly, the passion Louisiana anglers have for speckled trout is probably only second to the fervor associated with LSU football.

Anglers most always want a win with speckled trout, which means catching good numbers of these popular fish — and as many quality trout as can be taken.

That's because anglers know that Louisiana's trout habitat is second to none compared to neighboring Gulf states and the entire Atlantic coast.

That's why many anglers were quite taken aback at the results of the recently released 2019 Assessment of Spotted Seatrout in Louisiana Waters.

"Our spawning stock biomass is at the lowest levels we've observed," Jason Adriance, LDWF's inland fisheries biologist manager said in September 2019. "Our proportion of the older age, 3+ females, are at the lowest levels we observed. Our recreational landings are at the lowest levels we've seen since 1990."

In inspecting the data, estimates of spawning stock biomass (spawning females) have dropped from a high of 9.1 million pounds in 2008 to 4 million pounds in 2018 — the lowest levels observed in LDWF's 38 years of keeping data on speckled trout.

## ADVERSE REACTION

After Adriance presented those findings at a meeting of the LWDF Commission, commissioners made comments, some even offering their own hypotheses on why data demonstrated such a decline.

After the meeting, anglers began expressing their own comments on social media sites — and these ranged from total disbelief to even inviting biologists to see the many speckled trout they were catching.

Many complained that they had never been surveyed or their catches checked at the many public, LA Creel sites. There was much passion expressed in the comments

— and understandably so.

## COUNTING TROUT

So, how do LDWF biologists determine the abundance of speckled trout in Louisiana coastal waters?

It is not from the results of dockside surveys, as many anglers think.

When an angler is questioned by LDWF biologists or technicians at various public marinas, docks and landings, harvest data for recreational landings is collected — not numbers indicating the abundance of speckled trout.

Simply put, there is no way for LDWF to determine actual numbers of spawning trout in coastal waters. It's an impossible feat to count every live spawning female.

State biologists and universities nationwide rely on scientifically-derived sampling methods, and the LDWF uses gill nets to gather fish for samples. Plenty of gill nets are set in enough locations allow biologists to obtain a good estimate of finfish abundance.

"Our sampling is designed so that

we have enough spatial coverage and adequate samples to effectively cover a stock," Adriance said.

The rule of thumb is the more gill nets and locations used in stock assessments, the better the estimates of trout abundance.

"For the spotted seatrout assessment, the fishery-independent (objective) indices of abundance used come strictly from the gill net sampling statewide," Adriance said.

"There are a total of 972 individual gill nets samples taken statewide in a year (Five mesh sizes in each gill net = 4,860 samples across those five sizes of mesh per year).

"In (April through September), there are 108 individual gill net samples taken monthly statewide, and in (October through March) there are 54 individual gill nets samples taken monthly statewide," he said.

Monofilament gill nets are 750 feet long and are comprised of five 150-foot panels of 1.0-, 1.25-, 1.5-, 1.75- and 2.0-inch bar meshes.

For a detailed report on the 2019 Louisiana speckled trout stock assessment, read *Commission hears speckled trout stocks in trouble* on LouisianaSportsman.com.





Photo courtesy LDWF

LDWF biologists rely on objective, scientifically-derived sampling methods in determining trout abundance data, and the LDWF will use gill nets to gather these fish for samples. There are 972 individual gill net samples (5 mesh sizes in each gill net) taken statewide annually across all Louisiana coastal study areas (Basins) for a total of 4,860 samples per year.

## GILLNETS SET IN FIVE BASINS

There are five coastal study areas (CSAs) biologists use when setting gill nets statewide:

- CSA 1 – Mississippi State line to South Pass of the Mississippi River (Pontchartrain Basin);
- CSA 3 – South Pass of the Mississippi River to Bayou Lafourche (Barataria Basin);
- CSA 5 – Bayou Lafourche to eastern shore of Atchafalaya Bay (Terrebonne Basin);
- CSA 6 – Eastern shore of Atchafalaya Bay to western shore of Freshwater Bayou Canal (Vermillion/Teche/Atchafalaya Basins);
- CSA 7 – western shore of Freshwater Bayou Canal to the Texas State line (Mermentau/Calcasieu/Sabine Basins).

## SITES CHOSEN RANDOMLY

Biologists typically use a computer program that randomly selects locations in each CSA where gill nets are set.

Random selection of locations in each basin ensures that the data collected is unbiased. If gill nets are only set where anglers tell biologists trout are biting, this would serve to inflate abundance estimates and lead to faulty data indicating trout populations are larger than they actually are.

The number of sites available to be randomly chosen from in each CSA are as follows:

- CSA 1 Pontchartrain Basin – 32 sites;
- CSA 3 Barataria Basin – 24 sites;
- CSA 5 Terrebonne Basin – 24 sites;
- CSA 6 Vermilion/Teche – 15 sites;
- CSA 7 Calcasieu/Sabine – 15 sites.

**MONTHLY NUMBERS  
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This LDWF slide shows the number of locations in each coastal study area (Basin) where sites are randomly chosen for striking LDWF gill nets. The green dots on the slide are locations that were added in October 2010 allowing more spatial coverage in each coastal study area (Basin).

## MONTHLY NUMBERS SAMPLED

The monthly number of gill nets sampled per CSA are as follows:

### April through September

- Pontchartrain Basin (CSA 1) = 30
- Barataria Basin (CSA 3) = 28
- Terrebonne Basin (CSA 5) = 10
- Vermilion/Teche (CSA 6) = 20
- Calcasieu/Sabine (CSA 7) = 20

### October through March

- Pontchartrain Basin (CSA 1) = 15
- Barataria Basin (CSA 3) = 14
- Terrebonne Basin (CSA 5) = 5
- Vermilion/Teche (CSA 6) = 10
- Calcasieu/Sabine (CSA 7) = 10

## LA CREEL

Recreational landings are derived from LA Creel surveys — a combination of data gathered through interviews at public fishing areas and from weekly phone and email surveys.

Hindcast data of the previously-used Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP 1981-2013) are aggregated into the data.

LA Creel data is what is termed as fishery-dependent information since it is not objective data like numbers of trout counted in gill net surveys. The information is “dependent” on anglers’

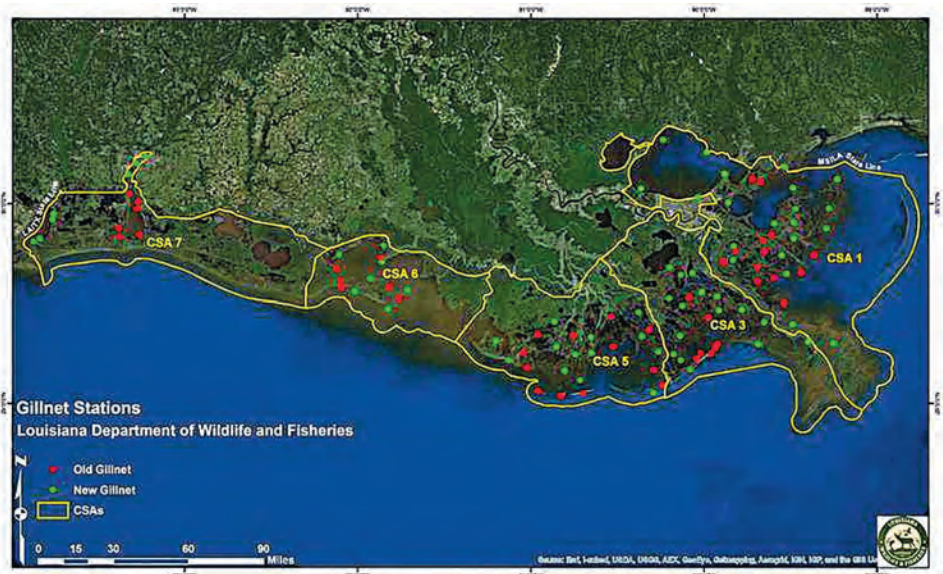


Photo courtesy LDWF

responses, either verbally or in response to surveys.

LA Creel surveys are done at public locations: marinas and landing. Surveys also reach out to anglers via phone calls and email.

“LDWF can only conduct fishery-independent sampling in publicly accessible waters of the state or fishery-dependent

sampling from publicly accessible marinas or docks,” Adriance said. “Also, anglers who fish in private waters that return to a public dock will be sampled as part of our creel and biological sampling.

“Also, anglers who fish in private waters but have a fishing license are eligible to be sampled as part of our effort survey.”

Adriance offered assurances that both the fishery-independent sampling and the fishery-dependent sampling are of such sample sizes to effectively monitor the stocks in terms of both abundance data and landings/effort information.

Visit [wlf.louisiana.gov/](http://wlf.louisiana.gov/) spotted-seatrout to learn more about the current status of spotted seatrout and potential management changes. ■

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# POINTE COUPEE HUNTER KILLS BUCK WITH UPPER CANINE TEETH

By David Moreland



**M**ost deer hunters are fairly familiar with deer skulls and the fact that the age of deer is determined by examination of the lower jaw. Deer aging has been done in Louisiana since deer seasons opened on public lands in the 1950s. When DMAP came around in 1980, clubs and landowners began collecting jawbones for aging, and many thousands of jawbones have been looked at over the past 40 years.

When Roy LeJeune killed a nice adult buck in Pointe Coupee Parish, it wasn't the antlers that got his attention, but rather the deer's small, peg-like teeth in the upper jaw. It is a rare find to get a deer with these upper teeth, technically known as maxillary canine teeth, and that makes this a unique trophy.

There really is not much information available about these teeth. They may be present in the upper jaw and simply do not

erupt as this buck's did. Some researchers see it as a genetic throwback in the evolution of deer. Researchers who have investigated this phenomenon have found that it occurs more frequently in southern than northern regions.

Leonard Rue mentions these teeth in his book, *The Deer of North America*, and Dr. George Lowery, in his book, *The Mammals of Louisiana*, has a photo of a skull with these teeth that the late Joe Herring took. If you want more information, check out the QDMA website, which has several stories about this rare find. ■



## LOUISIANA BOY WINS WYOMING ELK HUNT

In early July 2019, 12-year-old Ayden Fatherree of Prairieville got a call that he had won the Wyoming Elk Super Tag for the 2019 hunting season. It was a dream come true for a boy who has lived in south Louisiana his whole life and loves to hunt and fish.

He and his family chose Bruce Bolli at Wood River Ranch for a mid-October hunt, and Ayden took a big 6x6 bull that scored 343. He enjoyed the hunt of his lifetime with his dad, Jason Fatherree, grandfather Jamie Kennison, and grand mother Janet Kennison. He was guided by Mike Potas.

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This lunker largemouth has a unique pattern of black blotches, officially known as melanosis.

# SOME BASS HAVE ANGLERS SEEING SPOTS!

By Kinny Haddox

**B**lack spots on largemouth bass are nothing new, but it seems this year that more fish with these spots have been seen at marinas and on social media than usual. The random black blotches cause concern for some anglers, but they really shouldn't. In fact, they are just a fun feature that Mother Nature sometimes throws at fishermen.

"There are multiple causes for this in bass," says Mike Wood, the former inland fisheries chief for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. "The melanosis, which is simply black pigment blotches on the bass, is more than likely caused by excess sunlight or some genetic trait in the fish. It's more likely that those irregular black spots are just unique personality marks on healthy bass."

Some have suggested that the spots occur because fish has been caught and poorly handled before, or that specific water



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conditions contribute. Either way, Wood said, if the fish appears healthy, there's not anything wrong with it just because it has the black blotches.

Fish showing the black spots have been caught and documented at several reservoirs in February, including Toledo Bend, Caney Lake and Claiborne Lake.

"Over the years, I've had the opportunity to examine thousands of bass from water bodies across Louisiana," Wood said. "Some water bodies always seem to have a higher frequency of bass with the pigmentation. I believe that's due to localized genetic pools of the trait. To me, they are just neat beauty marks."

The technical explanation of melanosis is that it is caused by skin cells that cannot regulate pigment production normally. The melanin production in those cells is greatly increased, which causes the black spots, or more accurately, "hyperpigmentation."

It's important to know that this is not normally any kind of disease. If a fish is skinny or looks generally unhealthy, there may be something else wrong with it. Melanosis is also present on occasion in catfish and trout. The condition doesn't affect the fish in any way, other than make it look different. It also is not a "warning sign" that anglers should not eat the fish if they so desire.

Most cases of melanosis occur in bigger bass, those weighing 2 pounds or more. The spots are generally irregular and can appear anywhere on the fish from head to tail, or even on the fins.

Biologists have reported that "black bass blotching" has become more common in recent years in reservoirs or ponds.

The situation is similar to a common marking found in crappie, where a definitive black line goes from a crappie's "nose" all the way down its back. These fish are commonly referred to as "blacknose crappie." That is a genetic marking, and the specific trait is almost the same in all the crappie that possess it.

"Largemouth bass with melanosis are just kind of cool to look at," Wood said, offering a non-biological opinion just a fisherman. "Every time I catch one, or when we'd find one doing shock surveys, I hold them up a time or two and

look. They deserve a second look for sure."

Wood retired from LDWF four years ago but still manages private waters as a technical consultant. You can get in touch with him through his website, [mikewoodfisheries.com](http://mikewoodfisheries.com). ■

**“Largemouth bass with melanosis are just kind of cool to look at.”**

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## REGISTRATION OPEN FOR 2019 LOUISIANA YOUTH HUNTER OF THE YEAR CONTEST

From News Reports

**T**he Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) and the Louisiana Wildlife Federation are seeking submissions for the 2019 Youth Hunter of the Year contest. The contest, for the 2019 calendar year, is open to Louisiana boys and girls ages 15 and younger.

Did you have a special hunt this past year? Harvested your first game animal or bird? Maybe just a hunting trip made great by sharing time in the outdoor with family and friends? Regardless, you could be a candidate for our male and female Youth Hunter of the Year contest.

Youth Hunters of the Year will receive a plaque in recognition of their achievements and a gift certificate from Bowie Outfitters. The winners will also be recognized at a banquet in May. Contest sponsors include the Baton Rouge Chapter of Delta Waterfowl, Andrew Harrison with Harrison Law, LLC, Bowie Outfitters - Baton Rouge and Outdoor Roots.

To apply, download the registration form on the LDWF web site. Entrants must submit the registration form along with a photograph and story describing the hunt. Entries must be post-marked by March 14, 2020. Applications can be sent by mail or submitted electronically. ■



## HOMER MAN ARRESTED FOR ALLEGEDLY KILLING BALD EAGLE

From News Reports

**L**ouisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries enforcement agents arrested a Homer man for allegedly killing a bald eagle and other wildlife violations in Claiborne Parish.

Agents also arrested two other men and cited a juvenile for alleged hunting violations.

Agents arrested Daniel Smith, 18, for violating the Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle Protection Act, illegally taking a hawk, taking deer during a closed season, hunting from a moving vehicle, taking deer during illegal hours, discharging a firearm from a public road, intentional concealment of wildlife, hunting turkeys during a closed season, criminal mischief and hunting from a public road.

Agents also arrested Jacob E. Lee, 19, of Bernice, Jared I. Lee, 19, of Bernice, and cited a juvenile from Homer for hunting from a public road, hunting from a moving vehicle, taking deer during illegal hours and discharging a firearm from a public road. Jacob Lee and Jared Lee were also cited for taking deer during a closed season. The juvenile was also cited for intentional concealment of wildlife.

Agents received anonymous tips from two different sources in October and November 2019 that Smith had shot and killed a bald eagle in Claiborne Parish. Agents contacted Smith, and he denied the accusation.

Through the course of the investigation agents were able to secure a search warrant for Smith's truck and phone. Agents found a bald eagle feather in Smith's truck on Dec. 13. On Dec. 14, Smith admitted to agents that he shot and killed the bald eagle in February 2017 with a .223 rifle.

Agents also found photos and videos of Smith participating in several illegal activities, including some with Jacob Lee, Jared Lee and the juvenile. Agents found evidence that Smith killed a turkey in July 2019, killed a hawk in November 2018, shot out street lights in July 2019 and harvested three deer at night and dumped them over a bridge in November 2019. Most of these infraction occurred from his vehicle and on public roads.

Smith, Jacob Lee and Jared Lee were arrested and booked into the Claiborne Parish Jail. The juvenile was released back to his parents.

Violating the Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle Protection Act brings up to a \$100,000 fine and up to one year in a federal jail.

Taking deer during a closed season, intentional concealment of wildlife, hunting turkeys during a closed season and hunting deer during illegal hours brings a \$900 to \$950 fine and up to 120 days in jail for each offense. Taking a hawk carries a \$400 to \$950 fine and up to 120 days in jail. Criminal mischief carries up to a \$500 fine and six months in jail. Hunting from a moving vehicle carries a \$250 to \$500 fine and up to 90 days in jail. Hunting from a public road brings a \$100 to \$350 fine and up to 60 days in jail. Discharging a firearm from a public road carries up to a \$50 fine and 30 days in jail.

Smith may also face civil restitution totaling up to \$9,225 for the replacement value of the illegally taken bald eagle and three deer. Smith, Jacob Lee and Jared Lee also may face civil restitution totaling \$1,624 for the replacement value of an illegally taken deer. ■

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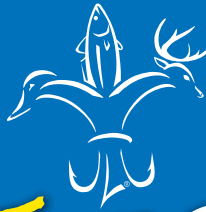




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2020  
**March 12-15**

Lamar-Dixon Expo Center  
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## March 12-15, 2020

Lamar-Dixon Expo Center  
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Louisiana  
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**MARCH 12-15**

**AT LAMAR-DIXON EXPO CENTER**

**2020  
LOUISIANA  
SPORTSMAN  
SHOW**

- **BIG BUCK CONTEST**
- **INTERACTIVE CASTING BOOTH**
- **SPLASH DOGS**
- **KIDS AREA**
- **SPORTSMAN ZONE**
- **FISHING & HUNTING OUTFITTERS**
- **FULL FOOD COURT AND MORE!**

41ST EVENT TO BE HELD MARCH 12-15 AT LAMAR-DIXON EXPO CENTER

**T**he 41st Annual Louisiana Sportsman Show and Festival, Louisiana's largest outdoor and boat show, will be held March 12-15 at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales.

The show features acres of boats, fishing and hunting equipment, ATVs, tractors and outdoor power equipment, plus activities for the entire family.

More than 250 vendors will be at the show, offering acre after acre of fishing tackle and hunting gear.

But there really are three shows — the

main show, a boat show and a power equipment show — held on the same grounds over the four-day run starting Thursday, March 12.

And all three are included in a single admission fee of just \$12 dollars per day.

Show hours are noon to 7 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

The main Louisiana Sportsman Show includes a variety of family oriented events:

- The Louisiana Sportsman Big Buck Contest, sponsored by Bowie Outfitters, will display of some of the largest bucks

killed this season in Mississippi, Louisiana and across the country. Assorted trophies and prizes will be awarded to the winners in each category.

- The Ann Taylor Memorial Kids Fishing Competition, where Trinity Outdoors Disabled Adventures, LLC and other nonprofit groups will be putting on a Youth Fishing Rodeo.
- The Shakespeare interactive casting booth will feature casting competitions Saturday and Sunday, with prizes presented to winners of the adult and kids divisions. And if you need to hone your

casting skills, experts will be on hand to help out.

- Splash Dogs, where dogs can be entered in retriever competitions.
- Scout Day is Thursday, March 12, with all uniformed Scouts and leaders getting into the show free.
- A Kids Area, with free admission to the show for kids on Sunday.
- Fetch & Fish, featuring a huge fish tank in which regular fishing seminars and retriever demonstrations will be conducted.
- The Sportsman Zone, brought to you by Bowie Outfitters, which houses everything fishing and more. Bowie's has bought truckloads of product just for this event, and huge discounts will be offered on many items.
- Fishing and hunting outfitters from across the world for the adventure vacation of a lifetime!
- A full food court.

In addition to the Louisiana Sportsman Show, the Louisiana Sportsman Boat Show is the place to be if you're even thinking about buying a boat.

This huge boat show, sponsored by Neighbors Federal Credit Union, will again provide one-stop shopping with special show pricing from all major brands of bass, bay and pontoon boats. Plus, loan officers will be on site for special financing offers.

And do you happen to be in the market for a new piece of power equipment? That's no problem, since the expanded Louisiana Sportsman power equipment area will feature products by Kubota, John Deere, Toro, Stihl, Husqvarna, Mahindra and many other brands, ATVs, UTVs, golf carts and other forms of power equipment. Again, special show-only pricing will be offered.

For more details and a schedule of events, visit [LouisianaSportsmanShow.com](http://LouisianaSportsmanShow.com). ■



**T**he Discount Zone is back for the 2020 Louisiana Sportsman Show, and you won't want to miss out on all the savings on the wide array of hunting and fishing gear.

The Zone, presented by Bowie Outfitters, will be full of incredible deals on all manner of outdoor equipment.

The folks at Bowie Outfitters are bringing trailer loads of items to be sold in the Discount Zone. They have been buying merchandise all year to ensure they don't run out of fantastic show deals.

Lea Benoit of Bowie Outfitters said the 3,000-square foot zone will be stuffed with all manner of fishing and hunting gear.

"We're still offering great deals on rods, reels, combos, baits and ice chests," Benoit said. "Shimano, Daiwa, Lews, Okuma,

Abu Garcia, Penn, Falcon, Costa, 13 Fishing and Kysek Coolers are the big boys we'll have in stock. We'll have lure companies, as well.

"We're probably up to five trailers of merchandise now."

And the incredibly low pricing will be available only at the Louisiana Sportsman Show, so be sure and purchase your tickets today. ■

- SHIMANO
- DAIWA
- LEWS
- OKUMA
- ABU GARCIA
- PENN
- FALCON
- COSTA
- 13 FISHING
- KYSEK COOLERS AND MORE!

**MORE SHOW NEWS >**



Louisiana  
**SPORTSMAN  
SHOW** & festival

**MARCH 12-15**  
AT LAMAR-DIXON EXPO CENTER

# SPLASH DOGS

**W**ith winter drawing to a close, dog owners are looking for ways to engage their dogs physically and psychologically. Retrievers are looking for something to chase. House dogs are tired of being indoors, and they too are looking for something to do.

This is what prompted Tony Reed to develop Splash Dogs, which allows dogs to stretch out and see how far they can jump. And this dock-jumping competition is fast becoming one of America's most-popular outdoor events!

The competition allows dogs to compete for distance, diving from a dock into a 40-foot-long pool. No other outdoor event brings families and people together better or puts more smiles on faces than Splash Dog events.

"Yes, we add an element of competition,

but we're more about the family fun," Reed said. "We have a set of rules, but we'll bend them. If a dog doesn't quite make it one time, it's not going to hurt to give them back the toy and let them try to experience getting off the dock and feeling confident.

"It's a great experience to watch people having fun with their dogs."

Pet owners travel to these events from all over the region to compete. It's a great new sport that everyone loves.

Competition is open to dogs of all breeds and ages, from lean Vizslas to shaggy Newfoundlands, all the way to Jack Russell terriers, Labradors and pit bulls. ■

# POWER EQUIPMENT SHOW

**T**ractors, farm equipment and lawn mowers and equipment will be displayed and available for sale at the Louisiana Sportsman Show and Festival, set for March 12-15 at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales.

Dealers from throughout South Louisiana will be on hand with all the latest offerings of most brands of tractors and other outdoor power equipment, with low pricing available only at the show.

You can find everything you need in the power equipment section to prepare and manage your food plots, maintain your hunting lease or fishing property, or just keep the grass cut.

Both residential and commercial models will be featured, with dealers offering a full line of accessories, and special pricing will be available. Choose from brands including Kubota, John Deere, Toro, Skagg, Stihl, Husqvarna, Mahindra, Kioti and more. ■

- KUBOTA
- JOHN DEERE
- TORO
- SKAGG
- STIHL
- HUSQVARNA
- MAHINDRA
- AND MORE

## FETCH-N-FISH TUB RETURNS



**B**ack at the show is the Fetch-n-Fish Tub, with nationally known Jason Reynolds combining fishing seminars with dog shows.

Throughout the show, Reynolds will be featuring his high-flying dogs that will be jumping into his 41-foot-long bass tub.

The show invites audience participation, particularly from children who help mark the longest jumps — and might get wet in the process.

“Basically, what we do is a family fun program,” Reynolds said. “We talk a little about obedience, then a little about dog training, and I mix it with some fun games and some dog tricks. And the ultimate of the show is when I have the dogs jump in the fish tank.”

“This is not just dog training — this is entertainment. This is something the whole family can relate to. The kids love it.”

But this show isn't all about dog jumping; the 4,000-gallon tank also is stocked with bass and is used to demonstrate fishing tactics.

“It's a home run,” Reynolds said of the combined dog and fishing shows.

Go to LouisianaSportsman-Show.com to find a schedule of events. ■



## EXPANDED BOAT SHOW

**T**he Louisiana Sportsman Show scheduled for March 12-15 will provide an even greater focus on the latest boat offerings.

The Sportsman Boat Show, sponsored by Neighbors Federal Credit Union, is being held at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales in conjunction with the Sportsman Show. It will include more than 20 boat dealers in a dedicated, 75,000-square-foot building, including brands never before at the show.

You don't have to drive all over the place to compare what's out there; you can simply walk through the Louisiana Sportsman Boat Show to look at all the features available in the current models of boats.

The show will include dealers' offerings for both freshwater and saltwater fishing applications, but that's not all. It will also have a full range of duck-hunting boats, along with

kayaks and pontoons.

Brands expected at the show include Alumacraft, Axis, Bayliner, Bentley Pontoons, Berkshire Pontoons, BlackJack, Blazer, Blazer Bay, Blue Wave, Carolina Skiff, G3, Gator Trax, Hanko Aluminum, Malibu, Nautic Star, Nitro, Phoenix, Premier Pontoons, Pursuit, Ranger, SeaArk, Sea Fox, Sea Pro, Shearwater, Silver-Wave, Skeeter, South Bay Pontoons, South Fork, Stratos, SunTracker, Tahoe, Tidewater, Tracker, Veranda, War Eagle, Xcel, Xcursion Pontoons and Xpress. Motor lines include Gator Tail, Mercury, MinnKota, Mud Buddy, Pro-Drive, Suzuki, Tohatsu and Yamaha.

And the best part is that entry to the Louisiana Sportsman Boat Show is included in the general admission price of the Louisiana Sportsman Show. ■

**MORE SHOW NEWS >**

Louisiana  
**SPORTSMAN  
SHOW** & festival

**MARCH 12-15**

**AT LAMAR-DIXON EXPO CENTER**

# BOWIE OUTFITTERS

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## BIG BUCK CONTEST: RACK 'EM UP!

- **BEST LOUISIANA GUN**
- **BEST LOUISIANA BOW**
- **BEST OUT-OF-STATE GUN**
- **BEST OUT-OF-STATE BOW**
- **BEST YOUTH**
- **BEST MUZZLELOADER/  
CROSSBOW**
- **BEST MISSISSIPPI GUN**
- **BEST MISSISSIPPI BOW**

**W**ith hunting season in the books, it's time to make plans to bring your bucks to the Louisiana Sportsman Big Buck Contest, scheduled for March 13-15.

Even if your deer mount isn't complete, you can make arrangements with your taxidermist to bring the antlers to the contest, which is being sponsored by Bowie Outfitters.

Deer may be dropped off beginning Friday, March 13, but must be entered no later than 6 p.m. on Saturday, March 14. No deer will be accepted before Friday.

It's free to enter — just bring your unscored deer from the 2019-20 or 2018-19 seasons to the show.

Winners will be named in the following categories:

- Best Louisiana Gun
- Best Louisiana Bow

- Best Out-of-State Gun
- Best Out-of-state Bow
- Best Youth
- Best Muzzleloader/Crossbow
- Best Mississippi Gun
- Best Mississippi Bow

All deer will be scored by official Boone & Crockett and Pope & Young scorers. Of course, only those past the mandatory 60-day drying period will receive final scores.

Bucks entered in any previous Louisiana Sportsman Big Buck Contest are not eligible.

Bucks killed in seasons before the 2018-19 hunting season can be entered for scoring but are not eligible for contest prizes.

All entries will be displayed on the Big Buck Contest wall until the winners are announced March 15. ■



## BIG BUCK CONTEST RULES

- All legally killed, free-range bucks shot during the 2019-20 season and those deer from the 2018-19 season that have not been officially scored or previously entered in this contest are eligible for entry in any of the eight categories: Best Louisiana Gun, Best Louisiana Bow, Best Out-of-State Gun, Best Out-of-State Bow, Youth, Muzzleloader/Crossbow, Best Mississippi Gun, Best Mississippi Bow.
- All bucks beyond the 60-day drying period will receive an official Boone & Crockett or Pope & Young score.
- Any buck killed within the previous 60 days will be scored and entered in the contest, but the score will not be official.
- Only free-range whitetails from any of the 50 U.S. states are eligible.
- Bucks killed with primitive arms that aren't true muzzleloaders will be entered in the gun categories.
- Youth category entrants must have been 15 or younger at the time of the kill.
- Bucks killed before the contest period may still be brought in for scoring but will not be eligible for the contest or the random drawing.
- Bucks must be brought in during show hours Friday or before 6 p.m. Saturday to be eligible for the contest. NOTE: No entries accepted before Friday.
- Racks must remain at the show until 2 p.m. Sunday, and may not be removed before that time.
- Louisiana Sportsman reserves the right to add or alter rules at its discretion.



## 1ST ANN TAYLOR MEMORIAL KIDS FISHING COMPETITION

Ann Taylor's main goal over the past 10 years during the Louisiana Sportsman Show was to promote youth education and fishing. Giving each kid a chance to be shown love, compassion and the beauty of the outdoors.

Therefore, Trinity Outdoors Disabled Adventures, LLC and other nonprofit groups will be once again putting on a Youth Fishing Rodeo, this time in Ann's name. It will take place on Saturday, March 14, 2020, at the Lamar Dixon Center in the pond located behind the registration building. The registration for this event can be done on Saturday morning, 8 a.m.–11 a.m., by the pond on the grounds.

Last year, more than 120 vendors participated by donating prizes to give out to kids.



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**March 12-15**

**Lamar-Dixon Expo Center**  
Gonzales, Louisiana

**SHOW  
TIMES:** Noon to 7 - Thursday & Friday  
9 to 7 - Saturday  
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*Louisiana*  
**SPORTSMAN  
SHOW** *& festival*

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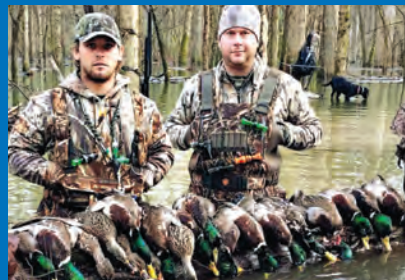


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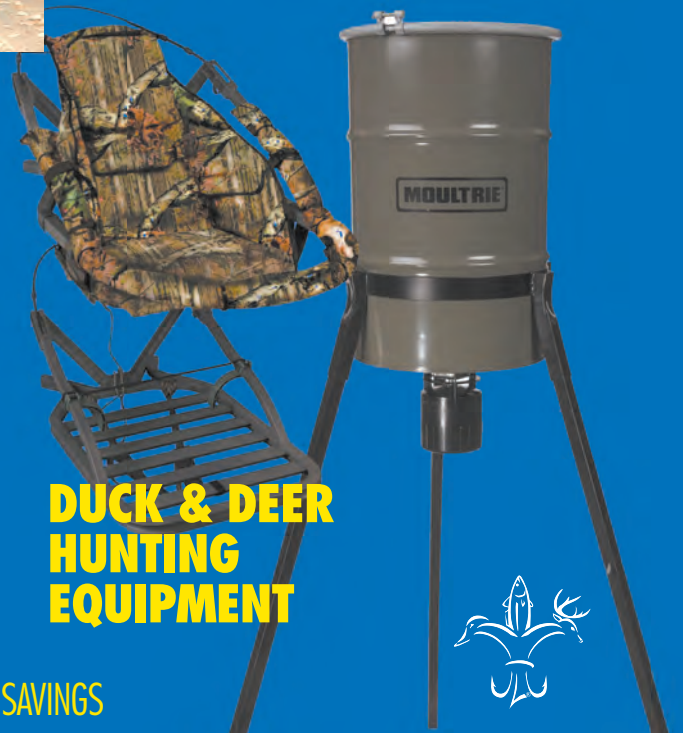


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# Louisiana **SPORTSMAN BOAT SHOW**

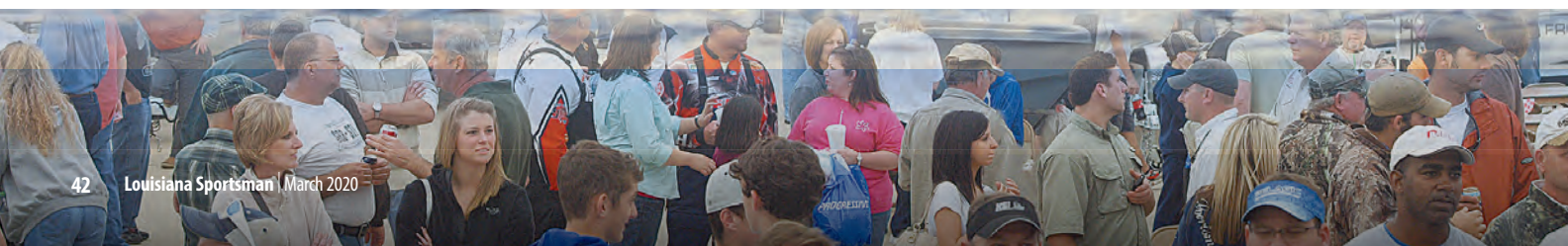
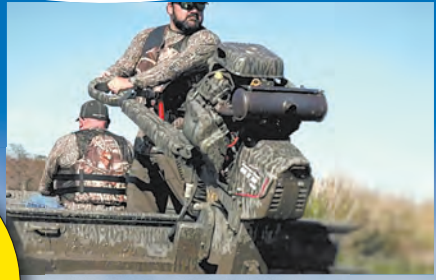


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# Louisiana Sportsman BIG BUCK Contest



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**Bring any legal rack from the 2018-19 or 2019-20 season and you're eligible to win.\***

Hosted by The Louisiana State Chapter of QDMA

## 8 GREAT CATEGORIES

- Best Louisiana Gun
- Best Louisiana Bow
- Best Out-of-State Gun
- Best Out-of-state Bow
- Youth
- Muzzleloader or Crossbow
- Best Mississippi Gun
- Best Mississippi Bow



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★ Dave Moreland will be heading up the team of official scorers. If your deer is at the taxidermist, tell 'em you need your rack for the contest.

For more information visit: [www.LouisianaSportsmanShow.com](http://www.LouisianaSportsmanShow.com) or contact Alicia LaFont, Contest Director 985.240.9548 / [alicial@lasmag.com](mailto:alicial@lasmag.com)





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**P**lural nouns are words used to indicate that there is more than one person, place or thing. Bass fishermen used to go “bass fishing” in the plural — targeting areas that held numerous bass and trying to catch one of many that might be there, including an occasional “hawg”.

But today’s new electronics have allowed anglers to change that approach and fish effectively for one big bass at a time. Bass fishing in the singular. One fish targeting, so to speak.

It’s a foreign concept to most anglers, but fishermen like Todd Risinger of West Monroe and Sontus Mitchell of Ruston have fine-tuned their skills to become big-bass stalkers with amazing success.

Two great fishermen. Two different approaches. One goal: catching the biggest bass possible. They often fish together, and when they do, it’s double trouble for the bass.

Mitchell is a Louisiana state trooper, and he knows speed kills, both on the highway and in fishing for big bass. Risinger has his own construction business and he knows you complete big projects one step at a time. He uses the same approach in fishing. Here’s more on how they do it.

**MITCHELL: SLOW IS BETTER >**

**HOW TO SINGLE OUT AND TARGET THAT ONE BIG BASS? THESE TWO LUNKER HUNTERS SHARE THEIR SECRETS.**

■ By Kinny Haddox

# BASS FISHING

## IN THE SINGULAR

## MITCHELL: SLOW IS BETTER

“Every time I hit the water, I am trying to catch that big one,” Mitchell said. “I don’t care much about numbers. It’s quality that I’m looking for, not quantity. It’s the same whether I’m in a tournament or on a trip just for fun. I think the biggest key to being successful is to just slow down.”

Mitchell slows down in his approach to planning out his strategy, finding fish and presenting a bait to try and fool them.

“I would honestly say that I’ve found the best days to catch really big bass are the bad-weather days, right before a front comes in or during the first part of the weather change,” he said. “I like to plan my trips where I can fish those conditions, and I fish slow. The bigger fish are just lethargic by nature, and they don’t want to have to chase after their dinner. I also like to use big baits to target big bass. I don’t hesitate at all to fish with a large crankbait, large creature bait or a large worm. I have caught a lot of big fish on 10- to 12-inch worms in all kinds of conditions. It’s just a mindset. You have to convince yourself that the bait isn’t too big for them.”

Mitchell uses his electronics to help him find big fish, but it wasn’t always that way. He learned where big bass hang out the hard way.

“When I started fishing, I couldn’t afford the kind of electronics that a lot of fishermen had,” he said. “I had to use land resources to pinpoint where big bass were, places like secondary points, old road beds, creek channels — things you can see on a map and visualize on the water. I studied everything

I could to help me learn more about the habits of big bass and applied it on the water.”

Today, he uses his graphs like everyone else, but he also combines what he sees with what he knows.

“Take for instance today, when I see a big brushtop with some big fish on it on the graph,” he said. “I may fish it for 30 minutes and not get a bite, but I know they are there. It can get confusing, but here’s what you do when you know they are there. Basically, fish a complete circle around that top — or whatever type of structure it is. There are times when those big fish won’t hit a bait unless it is coming in the direction or at the angle they are feeding. You’ve got to figure that out and present the bait just like they want it. Be patient. Slow down. Give them, and yourself, every opportunity to get that fish to bite.”

“My mental approach is simply figure out how long I’ve got to fish and do what I can to get five big bites. I’m either going to win big or lose big,” he said.

**RISINGER: TAKING A DIFFERENT APPROACH >**



Many anglers are scared to fish a 12-inch plastic worm, but this bass that Sontus Mitchell caught on one thought it was a good snack.

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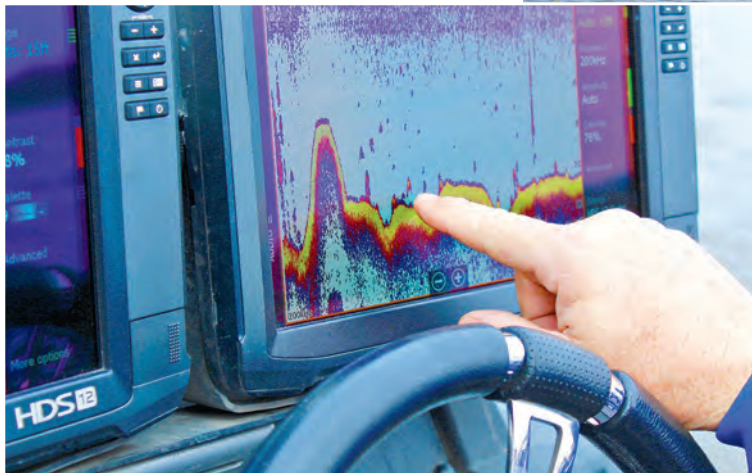
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## RISINGER: TAKING A DIFFERENT APPROACH

“One reason Sontus and I do so well fishing together is that I take a different approach sometimes than he does,” Risinger said. “While he’s mostly about big baits, I’ll often go smaller, especially until the water warms up and gets stable in the summer. And I’ll spend a lot more time on the graph to find that one fish, or several areas that have a big fish or two. I’ll mark them and then come back to them over and over again until I can get one to bite.”

Risinger pointed out that, especially on bigger lakes and reservoirs, you often see a lot of fishermen just idling around. What they are doing, he said, is finding fish, marking them on their electronics and trying to pick out the spots that have the biggest fish.



“You can definitely tell the big bass from the smaller ones on today’s units, especially with a little practice,” he said. “Frankly, a lot of people after big bass today spend more time idling around the lake than they do fishing. You spend your time marking fish, then when you do actually fish, you are in the prime spots, not just casting and hoping.”

Risinger has the same approach as Mitchell, however, when it comes to the target.

“I’m all about catching the big one,” he said. “The biggest bass I’ve caught is 11 pounds, 2 ounces. I’ve caught three of them that weighed that, so naturally, I want to catch one that is just a little bit bigger. It’s like deer hunting. You kill an 8-point, you want a 12. Then you kill a 12, you want a bigger 12. The same thing with bass. I’m not knocking an 8-pounder, but I want to catch one bigger than that. And in a tournament, if you don’t catch 5-, 6- or 7-pounders, you probably aren’t going to win.”

Risinger said the best time to catch the very biggest bass is in the spring, right when they are about to spawn. They are full of eggs and gorging themselves with shad to have the energy to

Todd Risinger patiently works a drop shot over a big bass **INSET:** Risinger points out a big bass shown here as a big inverted “V” suspended near the bottom and with several other smaller fish.



survive the spawn. But you can catch big bass all year-long if you target them.

“Remember this,” he said. “The big bass are going to move in along the points, creek beds and humps to the shallows to spawn in the spring. Then they are going to move back out to deeper water to the same type spots after the spawn. Bigger fish usually like deeper water. That’s a key. But there are really big bass that will stay in the grass most of the year, as long as it provides them cover and an abundance of baitfish.”

Both skilled anglers agree on another point. You can’t catch a big fish if you don’t go. You can never overlook the fact that sometimes, catching a big bass is just a matter of being in the right spot at the right time and getting a little bit lucky. To do that, you’ve got to have your bait in the water.

**BIG-BASS BAIT** ➤

# CATCH-AND-RELEASE

## LETS BASS GROW BIG

One thing that Sontus Mitchell and Todd Risinger agree on is that managing big-bass populations is critical to anglers catching more big bass.

"We owe it to the sport and to other anglers to protect the bigger bass that we catch," Mitchell said. "It's okay for people to catch bass to eat if that's what they want, but when they start getting 5 to 8 pounds, it's best for the sport to put them back. You can't have big fish unless you give them a chance to grow up. All the tournaments we fish in are catch-and-release, and we do that with all our fish. It's especially important in lakes that have heavy pressure."

Risinger agrees.

"Bass can't grow to be 8, 10, 12 pounds overnight," he says. "They have to have some age on them, no matter how much food they are getting or how great the lake is. Again, it goes back to deer hunting. Hunters that expect to kill massive 10- and 12-pointers don't also shoot their young 6- and 8-pointers. That just won't work." ■



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Go big or go home is the best way to describe Sontus Mitchell's worm selection

## BIG-BASS BAITS

If you spend a few hours in the boat with Mitchell, his front deck will probably look a little bit like a bait store, with lots of options laid out and tried at one time or another. But you can bet most of those baits will be big. Everything from 8- to 12-inch worms, big crankbaits and big swimbaits.

Colors will vary from purple to watermelon to brown to green flake. He doesn't let old preferences affect his decision about what today's bass want; he lets them decide. If he's on a big fish and it doesn't hit after a cast or two, he'll offer something else until the fish gives in.

Risinger, on the other hand, will try a larger variety of different types of baits, from lipless crankbaits to Chatterbaits to football jigs. If he's locked in on a big bass out in fairly open water, he won't hesitate to throw a whole school of baits at the big bass. He likes to add a Rage Craw trailer to his Chatterbaits and jigs.



"There are times when a big fish is out deep, and I just know I can catch him on an Alabama rig," he says. "An Alabama rig is a

setup with five wires angled like spokes of an umbrella, with plastic grubs attached to each end. It mimics a school of baitfish. It is a big rig, but it is actually a group of five smaller baits. Instead of just being one bite, though, it's like a whole buffet coming through the water."

If big bass are finicky, Risinger won't leave until he tries a small drop-shot rig or a Carolina rig. And he can be patient, too.

"I've seen a situation where you have to actually bump the big bass five to 10 times with your lure and just finally aggravate it into hitting the lure," he said. "But you've got to be keenly aware, because when it hits, it won't be a monster strike. It will usually just be the fish grabbing it just enough to move it out of her way. It's similar to bed fishing, only in deeper water." ■

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**Kinny Haddox** has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 45 years. He publishes a daily website, [lakedarbornlife.com](http://lakedarbornlife.com) and is a member of the Louisiana Chapter of the Outdoor Legends Hall of Fame. He and his wife, DiAnne, live in West Monroe.



## Louisiana's best **LUNKER HUNTER?**

JOHNNY WATKINS OF LONGVILLE HAS TAKEN A TREASURE TROVE OF HUGE LARGMOUTH BASS IN SOUTHWESTERN LOUISIANA'S RIVERS AND RESERVOIRS. COULD HE BE THE BEST AROUND?

■ By Chris Berzas

**No** doubt, *Louisiana Sportsman* readers have viewed multiple stories about Toledo Bend reservoir, the famous luncker-rich pools of Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge and other bass hotspots in southwestern Louisiana.

In many of these articles, Longville's Johnny Watkins has been featured, and in most cases, he is pictured holding one or more double-digit largemouths.

When recently asked about the number of bona fide Louisiana lunkers he has taken, Watkins, a 42-year-old captain in the Lake Charles fire department, was a bit hesitant.

Watkins is well-known among bass fishermen in the area as not being much of a braggart. In fact, he shares much of what he has learned about catching monster bass with just about anyone who asks.

When Watkins finally had the number of lunkers he's taken wrangled from him, his listing makes an argument that this humble, friendly fireman and beloved family man may indeed be one of the best luncker bass anglers in Louisiana — if not the very best.



# “That boy has always had a gift at catching big fish,”



said Steven Stroderd of Carlyss, a noted trophy speckled trout specialist in the area. “As long as I have ever fished with him in saltwater and freshwater, he’d catch a big one.”

Watkins has taken these huge bass: four 11-pounders; 21 10-pounders; more than 30 weighing 9 pounds or better, and at least 50 between 8 and 9 pounds.

And all these brute fish were taken in Louisiana waters to which any angler has access.

Asked about his secrets, strategies and patterns for catching so many impressive largemouths, the first words out of his mouth were to give credit where it was due.

“I met Mike Guinn of Lake Charles when I was fishing tournaments in the past, many of them dogfights on Sabine, Calcasieu and the Lacassine pools,” Watkins said. “He helped teach me how to mentally target big bass, and his instruction helped fuel a passion in me that has grown ever since.”

According to Watkins, Guinn taught him to mentally dissect a body of water and how to think about staying in a position to catch bigger fish.

Another angler that Watkins has spent much of his time fishing tournaments with is Bart Blakelock, formerly of Lake Charles and now living in Waelder, Texas.

“Bart and I fished many tournaments together in the past, and with so much time spent together, we really learned from each other,” he said. “We had a very memorable win on Toledo Bend in 2014 with 30.8 pounds of fish when fishing a Bass N Bucks event. The very first piece of advice I offer anglers is to simply find locations to fish where the big bass are.”

## TOLEDO BEND

No doubt, Toledo Bend has produced many double-digit lunkers over the years, and Watkins has scored on two of them. Only one was registered with the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program: a 10.28-pounder taken in March 2016. The other was a 10.0-pound bass that he immediately released after taking a few photos. He has also taken many 9s and 8s in Toledo Bend over the years.

His most memorable Toledo Bend trip was with his wife, Sara, and sons Kade and Garrett on Mother’s Day 2013. Sara landed an 8-pounder on a Stanley Top Toad, and Watkins caught a 9-pounder on the same lure a little later.

“A notion I learned when finding big bass is that it’s all in the details,” Watkins said. “All bass need nearby food and cover, yet I find big bass also need proximity to deep water.”

Watkins knows full well the problems at Toledo Bend: the absence of submerged grasses such as hydrilla. But there is other submerged structure situated just offshore that has provided many anglers in the know with hefty largemouths.

Even during the spawning months of March and April, Watkins advises anglers to spend a good bit of time fishing away from the shallow, spawning flats. During the spawn, Toledo Bend’s bass cycle in and out of the shallows and relate



The clear, rich waters of Lacassine NWR provide a great location to throw topwater frogs such as this Stanley Top Toad — one of Johnny Watkins’ favorite lures. **OPPOSITE:** These two Toledo Bend lunkers, an 8-pounder and one over 6 were taken by on Stanley’s Top Toad at the end of February in 2013.

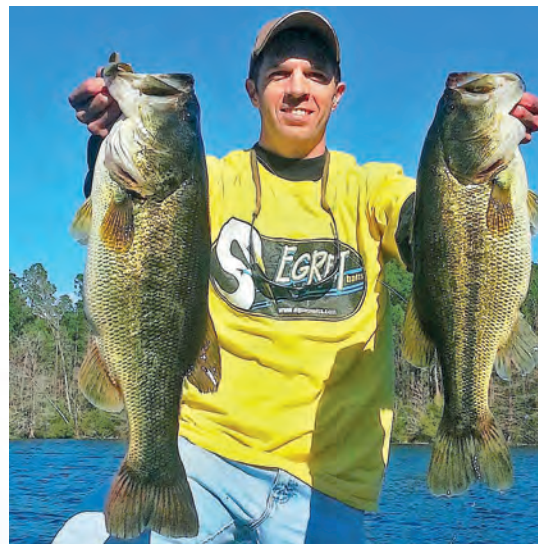
to structure just offshore — once before heading to shallow-water beds and again upon returning to deeper waters after spawning.

Watkins relies on his Humminbird Helix unit, which is critical for finding offshore structure and bass. Housen is one example of a location offering opportunities to fish submerged creeks and ledges where they intersect with wood structure such as the remnants of timber.

“In these areas, I will often cast ¾-ounce Stanley’s Stand Up jigs in black/blue/firetip with Hale Lure plastic trailers such as the Sidetrac Shad in natural colors: gizzard shad and bluegill,” said Watkins, who will also throw the 1-ounce Stanley Big Nasty jig in the same colors and with the same trailers. He may also work a Carolina rig with a Sidetrac Shad in the same colors.

“I love the way the Sidetrac Shads can be worked to glide exactly like an injured baitfish,” he said.

Other lures Watkins works along deeper ledges with timber are Strike King’s 6XD and 8XD crankbaits in barfish color.

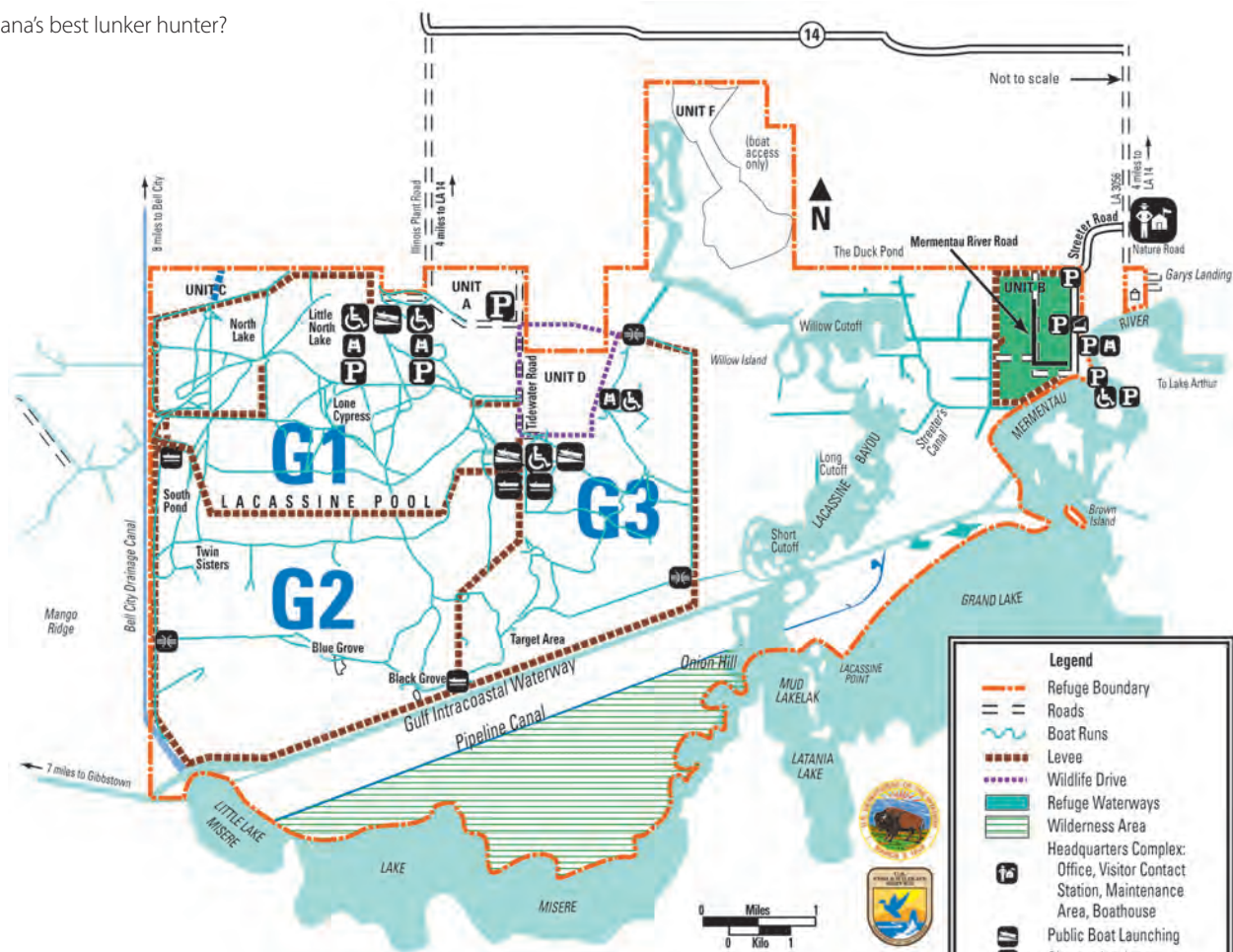


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“I find that bass especially hit these lures as they are deflected off the stumps,” said Watkins, who also enjoys running spinnerbaits in Toledo Bend’s shallow and deep water — but chooses to use one quite large and heavy.

“The lake gets quite a bit of pressure, especially the areas that are noted to hold big bass,” he said. “I find that I often have to fish differently than many other anglers, and I have taken quality fish on a 1-ounce, white Stanley Big Shot spinnerbait with tandem gold and silver willow-leaf blades. I’ll fish them 2 to 6 feet deep.”

## LACASSINE NWR POOLS

It is no secret the majority of Watkins’ double-digit largemouths and other hefty lunkers were taken in the pools of Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge. Here, he has scored on his largest lunkers taken — four weighing 11 pounds and better.

The pools consist of 16,614 surface acres of grassy waters, part of the refuge’s 34,866 acres near Lake Arthur.

A multitude of lunkers from 8 to 12 pounds have been taken there since

the 1990s, the current Lacassine record bass, being a 13-pound, 2-ounce fish taken in March 2013 by Luke Bouillon of Grand Lake.

The Lacassine pools are open for fishing from March 15 to Oct. 15. In the pools, only boats with motors 40 HP or less may be used. In Lacassine Unit D, however, small, only non-motorized craft with or without electric motors are permitted; they can be launched by hand from Tidewater Road.

Boats are allowed in the refuge from one hour before sunrise until one hour after sunset. Fishing activities, however, begin at sunrise and end at sunset.

Sean Kinney, a fisheries biologist with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, has very good news for anglers seeking trophy bass.

“Our sampling in 2019 showed the Lacassine pools with the following genetic percentages: pure Florida, 34.6%; and Florida-native hybrids, 42.2%,” he said.

By comparison, overall Florida genetics appeared in only 34.5% of Toledo Bend bass in 2019.

“As a result, we haven’t stocked Lacassine in several years,” Kinney said. “It is important for anglers to understand that we don’t stock for numbers throughout the

state. We stock to influence the genetics of our bass to increase their size.”

Kinney had a bit of bad news about the pools; there are efforts underway combating apple snails in one of the pools.

“We also have way more aquatic vegetation in the pools than what is ideal,” he said. “As a result, we have less spawning habitat and a problem with bass reproduction.

“We can’t draw the pools down because they are shallow, and our recent winters have been mild. (Baitfish) production is also lowered, and our larger 8- to 10-pound fish are healthy, but our smaller bass are not.”

Kinney strongly advises anglers to take smaller bass out to assist with efforts to increase the health of the pools’ largemouths.



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## FISHING THE POOLS

Watkins has serious advice for bass anglers fishing the pools. "I will spend more time fishing the deeper pools; these include South Pond, Little North Lake and North Lake," he said. "And very often even in the heat of the summer, I will push-pole my small boat in these pools, as I find that the larger bass are very wary due to the noise of motors and all the clear, shallow waters in the pools. It's very hard, grueling work, but the rewards of bigger bass are certainly worth it."

Watkins concentrates on areas with multiple kinds of structure; he finds they are magnets for larger bass.

"I will look closely at an isolated piece of cover, a few lily pads, as opposed to a 300-yard stretch of lily pads," he said. "And when these small pieces of cover are near slightly deeper depressions, usually that's where the big ones may spawn or just hang around. A third piece of structure such as a small vegetation mat floating nearby makes (that) area a sweet spot for lunkers."

In these areas, Watkins will throw soft plastics, including Stanley Ribbits and Top Toads in natural colors: black/red flake (Ribbits) and watermelon red pearl (Top Toads). He will cast and work them on the surface using a rod with backbone: a heavy action 7-footer with green, 65-pound PowerPro braid spooled on a 7:1 fast Curado reel.

When fishing for bedding bass in the pools, Watkins will tinker with his Top Toad, plugging up its back side so when it reaches the bed, it stands vertically, a presentation he said infuriates bedding lunkers. All of his Top Toads carry Stanley's Double-Take hooks.

When not fishing for bedding bass, Watkins will punch through vegetation with a Sidetrac Shad in natural colors: bluegill and gizzard shad. He raves about the ability of anglers to control the left or right movement of the Sidetrac Shad, especially to get the lure under vegetation mats and lily pads.



Jhunny Watkins caught this 10.28-pounder at Toledo Bend. **BELOW:** Watkins' favorite plastics at Toledo Bend and Lacassine are (r-l): Hale Lure Sidetrac Shad, gizzard shad color; Hale Lure Sidetrac Shad, bluegill color; Hale Lure Sidetrac Cobra; Stanley Ribbit, black neon red pearl; and the Stanley Top Toad, watermelon red pearl.



“When it’s windy, I will often cast spinnerbaits,” he said. “If you can find clusters of five to six lily pads, these are choice places to cast spinnerbaits, as bass will often ambush baitfish from these locations.”

When fishing spinnerbaits, Watkins prefers natural colors, using a ¼-ounce CW Custom Baits bluegill spinnerbait sporting a single, copper willow-leaf blade.

“It’s very difficult to work spinnerbaits with more than one blade in all the vegetation,” he said.

In the deeper, ring canals, Watkins will fish Sidetrac Shads and spinnerbaits along the edges of the perimeter.

“On the outside edges of the canal, where it starts to drop off — that’s when I usually get strikes,” he said. “I find smaller fish in the canal, but every now and then you can catch a 6- or 7-pounder.”

Watkins is very careful when handling lunker largemouths everywhere he has taken them. He believes that such fish are precious, and he most always practices catch-and-release. ■

Fishing information, rules and maps of Lacassine NWR can be downloaded at <https://www.fws.gov/southeast/pdf/regulations/lacassine-national-wildlife-refuge-fish.pdf>



Chris Berzas has fished and hunted in the Bayou State ever since he could hold a rod and shoot a shotgun. Berzas has been a freelancer featured in newspapers, magazines, television and DVDs since 1989.



Johnny Watkins caught these two 11-pounders in Lacassine Pool the same day in 2017.

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# 4 BASS PROS, 4 FAVORITE BAIT'S

By Don Shoopman

**T**hree of four bass anglers who make it their business and livelihood to fish for bass at the highest levels of competition agreed on a certain soft-plastic bait for March that has many looks from different artificial lure manufacturers.

Clark Rheem, Greg Hackney and Derek Hudnall turn to their own preference for a soft-plastic stickbait in March. Nick LeBrun, meanwhile, chooses a swim jig to trigger bites.

For most waters in Louisiana and the surrounding region, March is the time when bass are more vulnerable as they spawn, get ready to spawn or leave the spawning site. These four bass anglers talk about their picks and how they fish them.

## LOVE WINS IN LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP RHEEM HAS WITH THE DEADLY SENKO

**C**lark Rheem of Elk Grove, a veteran pro bass angler, hates to slow down while fishing tournaments, which explains why he hates to fish with the soft-plastic bait that he uses to catch bass consistently when the money's on the line, particularly in March.

Say what? You read it right.

"Man, I hate to say this and admit it. It is hard to say. It's a 5-inch Senko. I hate throwing it, but I like cashing checks. It's always on the deck of my boat. I'll have one rigged up every single tournament this year," Rheem said.

That's the gospel truth, and what's more, Rheem admitted candidly, he isn't sponsored by Gary Yamamoto Custom Baits, which manufactures the Senko. It isn't his go-to bait in March; it's his must-have bait.

Rheem, 40, said he saw the handwriting on the wall years ago after an exchange on the water with an accomplished bass pro. The other angler chided Rheem for mocking his reliance on a Senko and pointed out that he had caught all but three bass he weighed that year on Senkos.

Rheem got the message and became a believer. He'll throw a Senko on his Doby's 703 Fury spinning combination any time of the year, but especially in March.

"I didn't like slowing down, but this time of year you have to



Photo courtesy FLW

**“ I hate throwing it, but I like cashing checks.”**

slow down," he said.

The results impress him, which explains why he consistently fishes a Senko.

"I go by percentages," he said. "The more bites I get, the more fish I catch. I absolutely get more bites. If I can get 30 bites throwing one thing and catch the same caliber fish."

That's the advantage he wants.

Rheem — who fished the Bassmaster Elite Series for six years, qualifying for two Bassmaster Classics, before fishing the FLW Tour the past six years, qualifying for three FLW Cups — has always liked Senkos. He remembers as a boy hooking Senkos on a gold Aberdeen hook in the middle of the egg sack or in the nose and catching plenty of bass. It was "wacky worming" in its earliest stages — a presentation that evolved into a special technique.

Rheem often rigs a Senko wacky-style with a penny nail in the nose. He skips it deftly under docks and other structures.

Rheem, who once fished a Beetle Spin on 6-pound test line to finish in the Top 10 of a Bassmaster Open even, ties a 1/0 Gamakatsu Split Shot Dropshot hook to a 3-foot leader of 12-pound fluorocarbon, which he ties with a Double Uni knot to 20-pound braid on his reel. He has no qualms about using the Double Uni knot because, he said, it doesn't break if you lean back on the hookset and don't slam it home.

"The biggest thing is, all you have to do is lean, and the hook's thin enough and sharp enough, you rarely lose a fish," he said. "I do not horse fish. You know, I've got the lighter setup. When you use a spinning rod, you learn how to land a fish without horsing it."

Rheem's favorite colors are green pumpkin, black/blue, watermelon/red and junebug. He relies on the green pumpkin in clear water, particularly around rocks, the black/blue in stained (dirty) water, the watermelon/red around grass in cleaner water and junebug in river systems and tidal waters. ■



Photo courtesy baits.com

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**V&M SWIM JIG >**

## IF BASS HAVE A PULSE IN MARCH, THEY'LL HIT LEBRUN'S V&M SWIM JIG

**N**ick LeBrun looks for any advantage he can get over the wily, often-stubborn bass he spends many hours targeting for fun and money.

At this time of year, LeBrun believes he has to have his favorite swim jig tied on, one that has given him that advantage he's seeking and on which he's hooked countless bass.

"Man, ummm, in Louisiana and really just all over the country, it's the V&M Pacemaker Pulse swim jig. They make a ¼-, ⅜- and ½-ounce. I very rarely throw the ¼-ounce. It's just my personal preference. I throw the ⅜- and the ½-ounce," LeBrun said.

"I can't think of any place I haven't caught them on it: Rayburn,

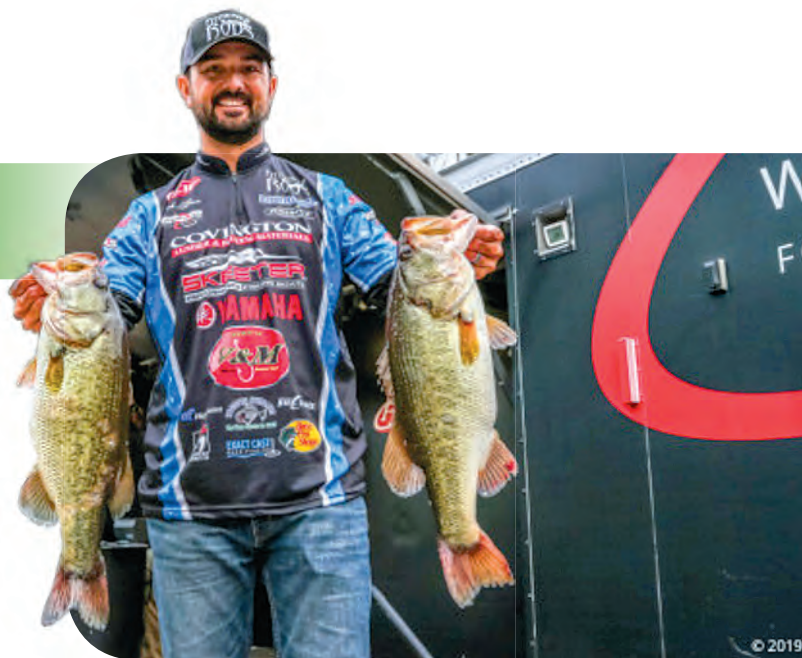


Photo courtesy Nick LeBrun

Toledo, Caddo, Caney, I've caught a lot of good fish in Caddo on that swim jig."

LeBrun, 25, from Bossier City, has been fishing on the pro level in regional tournaments since 2010 and fished his rookie season on the FLW Pro Circuit in 2019. He said the swim jig is his meal ticket in March because bass generally are in the shallower water.

"In March, you have the prespawn, spawn and post-spawn," he said. "The swim jig catches all three phases. I like to throw it when there's a little bit of grass and fish are spawning. When they're on their bed, V&M has a white one that catches fish."

LeBrun said a swim jig has paid off for him over the years, especially in March.

"It's really good. It's always been a player, and I've weighed a lot of fish on it," he said. "I've caught fish up to 9 pounds. It catches quantity and quality."

LeBrun said the Pulse swim jig has a custom-built, oversized, "strong" 30-degree, flat-eye hook that allows for improved hooksets and stands up to braided-line use in heavy cover. The V-shaped bottom of the head is shaped to direct the hook point away from cover when it comes into

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contact. Also, he said, the head is custom-painted to match the skirt.

LeBrun likes two colors: white that imitates a shad and bluegill patterns that imitate a bream.

The soft plastic trailer LeBrun uses plays a critical role, he said. V&M's J-Bug, a 3½-inch creature bait many bass anglers fish by itself, Texas-rigged, is his choice.

"It has just the right profile to add a lot of action to the bait," he said. "They come in a wide array of colors. You can put a white one on shad imitations or a green pumpkin on bluegill imitations."

LeBrun ties the Pulse swim jig to 18-pound Sunline FC Sniper flourocarbon spooled on his Fitzgerald Stunner Series reel with a 7:1 gear ratio.

"The swim jig has no drag, so you can go to a high-speed reel. And a lot of times when you use a swim jig, fish run to the boat. You just have way more advantage," he said.

That reel is mounted to his medium-heavy, 7-foot-6 Fitzgerald Stunner Series rod.

LeBrun said he doesn't tweak the swim jigs.

"I just take it out of the package and throw it," he said. ■

“ I’ve caught fish up to 9 pounds. It catches quantity and quality.”



Photo courtesy academy.com

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## EIGHT REASONS WHY HACKNEY RELIES ON STRIKE KING'S OCHO IN MARCH

**W**hile he fishes in heavily pressured waters in March, especially at or around the height of the spawn, bass pro Greg Hackney of Gonzales catches more bass than others. Other bass anglers can have that kind of success, he said, if they fish with one of his favorite soft plastics, the Strike King Ocho.

"You can make people think you're using live bait. It's a great way during the spawn to catch fish. I've been catching on it forever. It'll be good this year, next year and forever," said Hackney, who is fishing the Major League Fishing pro tour.

Hackney fishes the Ocho from late February to early April, as well as other times throughout the year. An Ocho is a Senko-style, soft-plastic stickbait that, according to Strike King, boasts an exclusive blend of ingredients that make it the softest, saltiest on the market. Plus, it has Coffee Scent, exclusive technology that masks human scent and attracts fish, and its shape is unique.

"They call it the Ocho because it has eight sides, which, honestly, gives it a hair more action," he said.

Hackney said bedding fish will strike an Ocho. He targets those bass and any others with a three-pronged attack.

"It's really, really good on the spawn. It generates bites when most people are throwing creature," he said. "It gives you the opportunity to finesse fish and power fish. Any time they move shallow, it's a good bait. If the weather's conducive, I start throwing it in February."

Hackney, host of *Sportsman TV*, throws the Ocho Texas-rigged with a 3/16- or 1/8-ounce weight, proving its effectiveness of a finesse bait while power-fishing with a 7-foot-3, Lew's Hack Attack all-purpose rod on 16- or 20-pound Gamma flourocarbon. He'll also throw an Ocho on the same rod, Texas-rigged but weightless, on a 4/0 or 5/0 offset worm hook on 14- or 16-pound Gamma. His favorite, however, is fishing the 4-inch version of the Ocho wacky style on a 6-foot-10 Hack Attack spinning rod, which is ideal for skipping under docks and tree limbs.

"(That) is really, really good on the spawn. Typically, there's a lot of pressure in March," he said.

When Hackney fishes an Ocho wacky style, he uses 15-pound braid with a 4-foot, 10- or 12-pound flourocarbon leader. He



connects the two fishing lines with a Crazy Alberto knot.

"I can tie it as quickly as a blood knot; it's much smaller and a lot more user-friendly," said Hackney, who shared this tip for hooking the Ocho wacky style. Don't put the hook in the middle. Place it a little toward the front, slightly past the middle, a position that gives it a little more glide, slightly accelerated.

Do the same if you use an "O" ring, which he likes because he can often catch 10 bass, or even more, on one Ocho.

His favorite colors are magic craw, candy craw, green pumpkin, junebug and watermelon, the "standard greens," he said.

"Junebug's hard to beat because of the color of water in our area," he said, noting in some situations he will apply chartreuse dye to the tip of any of the Ochos. ■

“They call it the Ocho because it has eight sides, which, honestly, gives it a hair more action.”

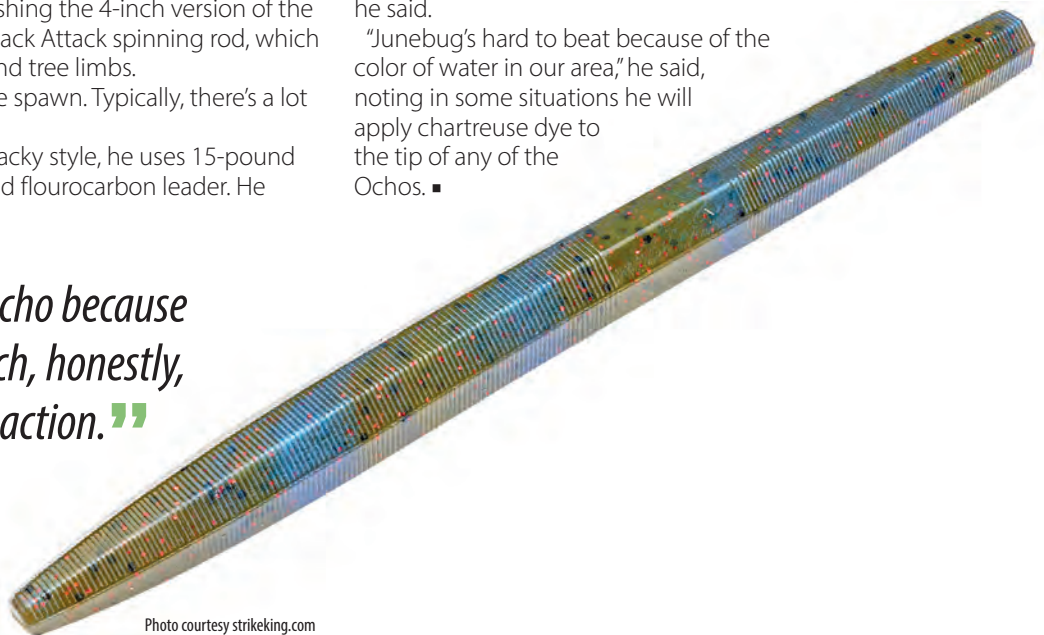


Photo courtesy strikeking.com

## MISSILE BAITS' 48 ZEROES IN ON BASS FOR HUDNALL IN MARCH

**If** Derek Hudnall of Baton Rouge had just one artificial lure to use during March, what would it be?

"One? Only one? Oh, man, if I had one bait in Louisiana in March? A Missile Bait 48. They call it the 48 because it's 4.8 inches long," he said.

The 48 stick worm looks different from other soft-plastic stick-baits because it's a little thicker on each end, a physique, Hudnall said, that gives it a different profile and presentation as it falls in the water column. He said the heavily salt-impregnated soft plastic has an "enhanced fluttering action as it falls super-slow, super-subtle.

"It's super-dense. When it falls, you're going to have enhanced wobbling," he said. "Oh, gosh, I've thrown those since really since they released them, probably three, four years."

Hudnall planned to fish the 48 in the first Bassmaster Elite Series tournament of 2020.

"Hey, (this) time of year, it's hard to beat. It's hard for the fish to stay away from it," he said, adding it triggered key bites in several tournaments for him throughout the year.

Hudnall, 39, boated an 8-pound bass on a junebug 48 in an Elite event last year on Florida's St. Johns River the second week of February. He saw and missed the bass a day earlier and made a beeline for it the next morning. He offered the 48, which he had Texas-rigged under a 1/8-ounce weight, on his first cast and set the hook.

Hudnall caught another 8-pounder on the 48 in an Elite tournament six months later on New York's Cayuga Lake.

Most of the time, he said, he fishes it wacky style on a 2/0 Gamakatsu G Finesse Dropshot Hook. It's rigged without a weed guard 99 percent of the time; if one is required, he'll make his own light-wire weed guard. He'll fish it on a



Photo courtesy Derek Hudnall

spinning outfit: a 7-foot, medium-light St. Croix Legend Extreme rod and a Shimano Stradic C14 reel. He loads the spinning reel with 15-pound braided, usually Seaguar.

"I'll put like an 8- or 10-pound fluorocarbon leader on the braid, depending on where I am. I tie an Alberto knot. It's super small, pretty easy to tie. I think we all have a little different variation of the Alberto rig, but basically they're all the same," he said.

Hudnall Texas-rigs the 48 for certain water and structure conditions. On the St. John's River, for example, the water was dark and, for the most part, bedding bass were difficult to see. The bass were on certain weed clumps; Hudnall he would fan-cast with a Texas-rigged 48.

"If I can see them and the water's clear enough, I can back off and use a wacky worm," he said.

Hudnall's favorite colors are junebug or black, especially in stained or dark water, and green pumpkin or some "more natural" color in clear water under sunny skies.

According to Missile Baits, the 48 with a nail weight in the rear produces a revolutionary backwards descent with shimmying when rigged weightless Texas-style. ■

**“**Hey, (this) time of year, it's hard to beat. It's hard for the fish to stay away from it.**”**

**NEW IBERIA BASS PRO >**

Bass pro Caleb Sumrall said March is the best month to catch the biggest bass around.

# NEW IBERIA BASS PRO READY FOR BIG FISH THIS MONTH

By Brian Cope

**T**he spawn is on for largemouth bass this month in the South. For Caleb Sumrall of New Iberia, La., a Bassmaster Elite Series angler who's teamed up with Xpress Boats and Kysek, it's one of his favorite months. He said catching big numbers of March bass is often a struggle, but the ones you catch will be among the biggest you'll see all year.

"This time of year, finding the fish is the key. They will be in different stages of the spawn throughout the month, and March has some pretty unpredictable weather. So the fish can be anywhere on any given day, and in a totally different area the next," said Sumrall.

One thing's for sure, he said: "Bass will go shallow to spawn at some point this month, which is why I run with confidence my new Xpress X21 Pro in really thin water in search of these ladies.

"Big rains and the muddy water they create may push bass out of the shallows for a short period of time, but they're going to spawn in the shallows," he said. "March can also have some extreme cold fronts move through. That will push them off the shallows too. But they won't venture too far. When those weather conditions push them out, they still have that goal of coming back to the shallows. They'll just wait it out until the weather normalizes.

"I focus on places where the fish will be spawning: dead-end canals, steeper banks and any type of hard cover like cypress trees, laydowns and stuff like that."

Sumrall said anglers can get by with just a few lures in March. He said the key to presenting lures this time of year is keeping it in the strike zone as long as possible.

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"The key to this time of year is rate of fall," he said. "You want a real slow fall. The fish aren't trying to feed that hard, so you just want something slow and in their face as long as you can get it. You want anywhere from 20- to 30-pound braided line, depending on the surrounding cover. This time of year, if you put a bait in their face with the right presentation, you will get some bites.

The handful of lures Sumrall uses this month includes the Missile Baits D Bomb creature bait, a Missile Baits 48 stick worm and a Cajun Boss spinnerbait.

"You want to cover water and try to locate the fish. And you want to go with a light weight. I like a ¼-ounce weight on the D Bomb and the spinnerbait. And I go with ⅙-ounce on the 48," he said.

Sumrall watches the weather and makes sure to be on the water during any warming trend, especially around the full moon and after a cold spell.

"The biggest dictator this month is the weather. If you hit the day right on a warming trend when the fish are spawning, you will have a good day," he said.

Sumrall chose to run the Xpress X21 Pro this year powered by Yamaha and has fallen in love with the boat, its performance, its storage and the Xpress Boats family.

"Caleb has become part of our great family and it is obvious that his passion, talent and skill set fit perfectly into our team," said Clay Connor, Director of Marketing for Xpress. ■

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## PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

Chris Holmes



Chris Holmes has kayak fished in the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and many places in between. He can be reached at [cholmes@att.net](mailto:cholmes@att.net).

# CHASE BASS IN A PLASTIC BOAT

OPPORTUNITIES FOR KAYAK BASS-FISHING ABOUND

**T**hey're not sparkly or fast, but kayaks make excellent bass-catching machines. With the ability to be rigged with nearly all the accessories and comforts of their larger and much more expensive cousins, kayaks are becoming a mainstay of weekend warriors and serious bass anglers alike. With bass available in almost all areas of Louisiana except the extreme coastal regions, kayak anglers are finding unlimited areas to fish for these hard-fighting acrobats.

Depth finders, livewells, Power Poles, padded decks, tackle storage and even trolling motors can be added to fishing kayaks to make them rival your favorite pro angler's bass rig.

Speaking of pro bass fishing, there's a reason the famed Bassmaster Classic tournament has been held in Louisiana six times. We have the bass. Kevin Van holds the record for the heaviest Bassmaster Classic weight (5-fish daily limit): 69 pounds, 11 ounces caught in the Lake Salvador area in 2011.

Due to the increasing popularity of kayak bass angling, three major national tournament series are held annually. The YakAttack KBF National Championship, The Hobie Bass Open Series, and, the new this year, Huk Bassmaster B.A.S.S. Nation Kayak Series. All of these tours hold regional qualifiers, culminating in a championship tournament at the end of the season. Although KBF held its 2019 championship in the Shreveport-Bossier area and will hold a South-Central Regional final in Monroe in 2020 on a yet-to-be-determined date. These are serious fishing tournaments with cash payouts in the multi-thousands of dollars.

Even if you have no desire to participate in competitive kayak fishing, you can easily pick nearly any area of Louisiana to pursue bass in a kayak. The mid-to-northern reaches boast a variety of lakes and rivers that provide excellent bass fishing for kayak anglers. The southern and some coastal areas have bayous and marshes that teem with hungry bass.

Many of the larger lakes and impoundments hold true, lunker-size bass tipping the scales with double-digits. Familiar names like Lake D'Arbonne and Caney Lake have easy kayak access and great bass fishing. These two lakes, along with Lake Valentine, have produced eight of 10 biggest Louisiana bass. Caney accounts for, including the state record, a 15.97-pound fish. Many of these lakes have been regularly stocked with a variety of gamefish and bait species to enhance the populations and fishing opportunities.





With a 10-fish creel limit and no size restrictions in most state waters, bass are popular in Louisiana as both a game-fish and for taking a few home for dinner. However, some areas have lower creel limits as well as minimum/maximum lengths and/or protected slot limits. Check LDWF regulations for specific area regulations.

# PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

continued

Of course, there is also storied Toledo Bend Reservoir, along with others like Lake Chicot and Poverty Point Reservoir, which are all productive bass fishing areas that kayak anglers can fish. Most of these bodies of water are full of creeks, draws and drains that carve out small pockets and fingers, with many varied coves that are great for exploring with a kayak.

In the southern end of Louisiana, many areas have seen an influx of freshwater that have spread bass populations into areas where they have never been — or at least haven't been for many years. Many areas of the Pontchartrain Basin fit this bill. While bass have always been caught on the northern side of the lake and on the fringes around the south shore, hurricane protection projects, coupled with multiple openings of the Bonnet Carre Spillway in recent years, has freshened up the marsh in many areas that were previously much more saline. This blurring of the species line has anglers reaping the rewards. It is not uncommon to catch speckled trout, redfish, flounder and bass and freshwater catfish all in the same location. It is generally more common to find bass, freshwater cats and redfish in the same areas, since reds are more tolerant of freshwater than speckled trout. However, trout can often be found in nearby deeper water.

The good news is that there is not a huge learning curve to go from catching most inshore saltwater species to catching bass.

## NATIONAL KAYAK BASS TOURNAMENT INFORMATION:

[www.bassmaster.com](http://www.bassmaster.com)  
[www.hobie.com/bos](http://www.hobie.com/bos)  
[www.kayakbassfishing.com](http://www.kayakbassfishing.com)



This chunky lake bass fell for a red and white spinnerbait slow-rolled through the lily pads.

Bass and redfish seem to have the most characteristics in common. In fact, most redfish lures are born out of the bass-fishing world, with the main difference being the use of stronger materials, wire and hooks due to the generally larger size, strength and crushers with which redfish are armed. That being said, topwater baits, spinnerbaits, soft plastics and even live shrimp work equally well on bass or redfish. With minimal changes, anglers can adapt their lures and techniques to maximize their chances of catching both species.

Bass are thriving in these now-brackish waters. If you normally fish for trout and reds, your current rods and reels are pretty well-suited for bass. If you're primarily a bass fisherman, you should consider upgrading to heavier rods and line. Bass tend to orient to cover more than trout and reds, so pay particular attention to any stumps, grass beds or other structure you encounter.

Whether you want to try your hand at bass tournament angling, catch a few for dinner or catch-and-release, a kayak makes a great platform to chase bass. Louisiana offers a multitude of water types with easy kayak access where anglers can catch a limit of school-size bass or possibly the trophy of a lifetime. ■

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March 2020 | Louisiana Sportsman

# EAST PEARL MEANS BIG BASS THIS MONTH

Look for hard bottoms, clear water in March

**C**hris Basey has been fishing the Northshore all his life, and he said March is when bass anglers can take advantage of big bass moving into the shallows.

Basey, tournament director for Bass Assassins Tournament Trail, said the biggest bass and heaviest bags routinely come out of the East Pearl River in March.

"On this river system, it's not uncommon to see bags over 14 pounds and kicker fish weighing over 6 pounds this time of the year," he said.

Plastic lizards and craws are staples for anglers targeting bass during the spawn. Basey said the Pearl River system is loaded with crawfish, so triggering a strike from a hungry bass will be easy if you match what's in the shallows this month.

"During this time of the year, I go bigger with my craws because the water is warming up and because the bass are looking to feed before the spawn, so a big meal is what they're looking for," Basey said.

## HARD BOTTOMS

The Pearl River system consists mainly of cypress-lined banks,



Pearl River system bass are concentrating on bigger baits as the spawn approaches.



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which provide spawning bass with a hard bottom. Basey focuses on hard foundations during the spawn.

"With a hard bottom, bass can clear an area for a bed, making it easier to guard the eggs. Also, I find that hard bottoms with some sort of aquatic vegetation nearby is preferred because it gives the fry a place to hide after hatching," he says.

As the East Pearl River approaches Lake Borgne, the trees disappear, and the canals look more suitable for redfish than bass. This isn't exactly what anglers think of when they are targeting spawning bass, however, Basey said not to count out the marsh canals south of Hwy 90.

"Some of those canals in the marsh have hard bottoms, making them a gem to bass and fishermen alike," he said. "In the marsh, a lot of times you'll find beds everywhere in the bayou if it's shallow enough, unlike upriver where the beds are only along the bank."

Basey said a simple way to see if the bottom of a canal is hard is to lower your Power Pole; if the poles stop abruptly when it reaches the bottom, it's a hard bottom. If the spike takes more than 2 seconds to sink into the mud, then it's a soft bottom.

## CLEAN WATER

For most rivers and bayous along the Northshore, sight-fishing for spawning bass is an option because of the clear water. However, when fishing the muddy Pearl River, sometimes you'll have to cover a lot of water to find clean areas.

"When I am searching for spawning bass, first I drive around looking for the cleanest water," Basey said. "Then, I put the trolling motor down and on high, and I cruise the bank, keeping a lookout for activity as I chunk and wind a spinnerbait or crankbait."

Basey recommends fishing a spinnerbait or crankbait at different depths to gauge if the bass are in the shallows or staging.

Although the harsh cold fronts are finished in March, the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain can still see cold temperatures after a front. Basey said to keep an eye on water temperatures.

"If the water temperatures reach the 60s, then drop into the 50s, the fish that are in the

shallows are going to be stunned. Those fish won't be interested in eating anything, so a reaction bite is what you'll be looking for," said Basey, who recommends throwing a square-bill crankbait or smaller spinnerbait around and wood or rocks that you can find. ■

— Keith Lusher Jr.

Find more fishing reports from Keith Lusher Jr. at [NorthshoreFishingReport.com](http://NorthshoreFishingReport.com).



**VIDEO:** Go to [louisianasportsman.com/east-pearl-big-bass](http://louisianasportsman.com/east-pearl-big-bass) to see Chris Basey share some more tips!

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# MARCH BASS MADNESS STARTS IN THE MARSH

## Canals, Orange Grove area cranks up early

**T**he area near Gibson, below Bob's Bayou Black Marina, is a familiar piece of marsh that year-in and year-out is a go-to location for bass anglers. The Bluebird Canal, 70 Mile Canal and the Orange Grove areas along the Intracoastal Waterway have, at one time or another, given up winning tournament stringers of largemouths. What's more, March is the time to be there to put some weight in your livewell.

Gerald Foulcard of Patterson, president of Bullet Bass Club in St. Mary Parish, is an angler who has caught his share of bass in this region, particularly during March.

"What makes those locations hot spots is the water is usually clearer than most other places around the area," Foulcard said. "Therefore, any sunlight can warm the water quickly. We all know, when the water is warm it triggers the fish to start migrating to the points of potential spawning bayous and canals such as Bluebird and 70 Mile."

## PLACES AND BAITS

Though the 70 Mile and Bluebird canals are close to each other, Foulcard said their makeup is different. There is lots of hydrilla in the Bluebird Canal, while 70 Mile features reeds and rouseau cane.

"In Bluebird, you'll quite often have small pockets of open water between the hydrilla and the bank to fish," Foulcard said. "In 70 Mile, you're flipping roseaus and reeds. But for both canals, you'll want to concentrate on points at the end of February. Going into March, fish will migrate to the middle and back of the canals looking for that 62- to 65-degree water to start laying eggs."

## FISHING WITH CONFIDENCE

Foulcard suggests using your confidence baits and confidence colors when fishing these two hot locations.

"My confidence baits for Bluebird are Senkos in blue laminate or



The author with a good month of March bass caught below Bob's Bayou Black Marina.

junebug fished both wacky or Texas-style," he said. "In 70 Mile, I'll flip the roseaus and reeds with Speed Craws, and sometimes I'll toss a lipless crankbait. They work well. It's sometimes trial-and-error, but the key is to use your confidence baits."

During the spawn, Foulcard has had success with square-billed Catch 5 Lures in a color called "jolt." He said you can never leave out a 6- or 8-inch lizard in your confidence color. His preferred colors are junebug or junebug/red.

## LATE MARCH IS POST-SPAWN

Spring came early to Louisiana's coast, with daytime temperatures in the mid- to high-70s by mid-February. Anglers found water temperatures in the low- to mid-60s, which in all likelihood had bass spawning early.

Matt McCorkle of Houma grew up fishing the Orange Grove and both Bluebird and 70 Mile canals. After learning the area and fishing there for more than 15 years, he feels it's almost post-spawn by March in this area.

"I find it's not so much a reaction bite they're looking for as it is, they're looking for something to eat after the spawn," McCorkle said. "There's been many, many times I've gone there with Senkos — with watermelon red being my best color — and just fish anywhere around grass, and that seems to be what they want."

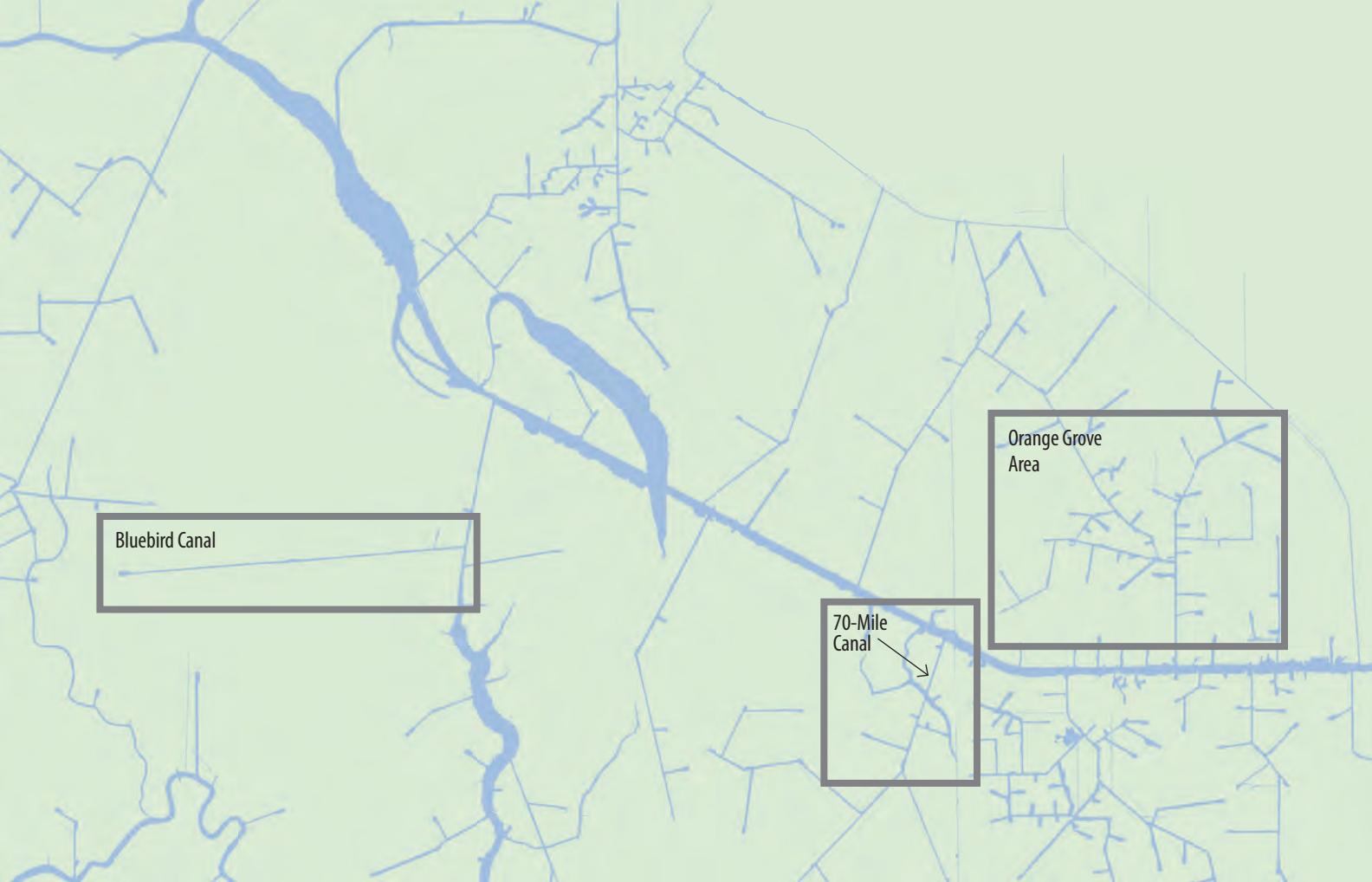
The Orange Grove, Bluebird and 70 Mile canals see a lot of pressure from both Terrebonne and St. Mary Parish anglers, but they are known to produce consistently.

"I've seen some beautiful fish come out of those areas," McCorkle said. "I've gone and struck out before, but it's always been an area you could put together a decent bag of fish." ■

— John Flores

Gerald Foulcard lands a good marsh bass below Gibson.





Bluebird Canal

Orange Grove Area

70-Mile Canal

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John Dean III grips the lip of a 6-pound bass he caught while fishing with his father in March 2019. The bass, his personal best, hit a Carolina-rigged Zoom Super Fluke in 3 feet of water.

## DOUBLE-DIGIT BASS MONTH AT THE BEND

Rising water, water temperatures, have big largemouths on the move all month

**W**hether you target Toledo Bend's bass in the back of creeks in March or on the outside ridges in late March, it'll be time to feed them a steady diet of soft plastics such as Senkos and Super Flukes, the former either Texas- or wacky-rigged and the latter either Texas- or Carolina-rigged.

And if you intend to intercept them going to or coming back from their spawning sites in those areas, offer a bladed jig, a lipless crankbait or a jerkbait. You can't go wrong. If I had my druthers — and I do — I'll be fishing a Senko or Fluke from late February into April.

The biggest and best thing about this time of year is that the odds swing in your favor as far as hooking and boating a double-digit bass. This, my friends, is the time to spend more time on the water if you want to catch a bass weighing 10 pounds or better. It's the golden opportunity afforded every year at this time.

Heck, a 10-pound, 9-ounce hawg made the day for Matthew Kahrs of Barbe High School in Lake Charles on Jan. 26 during the Bassmaster High School Series. Kahrs, who was fishing with his brother, Christopher, said the lunker bit on a watermelon/candy Zoom Baby Brush Hog in 10 feet of water. The brothers finished second overall with 15 pounds, 6 ounces.

That's the kind of bass, and bigger, I'm talking about in this border lake shared by Louisiana and Texas. As January gave way to February, the lake was at its highest level in months — 167.37 — and slowly rising, which bodes well for even more bassing success in the spring. With the pool hovering around 165 for what seemed like forever, some winter rains started the rise, and more are on the way, based on weather patterns. It's been a strange winter — damp and fairly cold, unlike last year when there was a two-week Indian summer and bass stormed the beaches from west to east.

The prolonged low-water period did give green stuff time to grow on exposed ridges and flats. About a week ago, I told an outdoor writer it needed to come up 3½ feet to get on top of most of the new greenery on ridges, flats and shorelines, and that would be 168.5 feet, perhaps a little higher. It'll be around 168 by mid-February, but it's a slow process based on the weather patterns. It's possible it'll get to 169 or 170.

With the lake rising like this — and when it gets heat on the water — the bass will come up. The water needs to rise to the point it's in the haygrass and bushes, which is where most of the bass will be found.

Remember the full moon, March 9. That first full-moon cycle of the spawning period will trigger bass, particularly in warmer water. But remember, the fat girls don't have to have prime water temperatures to spawn. When the biological clock ticks to zero, they go.

Still, many bass will be caught wherever the water's warmest,



Photo by John Dean

and that's why bass and anglers hit the back end of major creeks like Six Mile, Housen, Negreet and others. Two or three degrees makes all the difference in the world, even if the water's stained, which has its advantages.

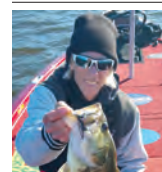
The first week of February, for example, the average water temperature was 56 to 57 degrees inside and 54 degrees outside. As the air warms with each succeeding week, the water temperature rises on the main-lake ridges to the point where it's the same as the inside. When the whole body of the lake falls into the same water temperatures as the back end, the ridges are the place to be. Late March should be offshore time, and I really won't have to travel inside that much if at all to catch bass.

It's no secret I love to fish a wacky-rigged Senko in green pumpkin or watermelon or a similarly colored Fluke on a Carolina rig. Often, that's all I need from March all the way through April and into May.

When I use a wacky rig, I use the O-ring and insert a ⅞-inch galvanized roofing nail in the nose of the Senko, then clip off the head. The bass seem to like it falling nose-first better.

White perch (crappie) fishing should be great in March. Look for them in around channels and ditches that run into coves and eventually into flats. You can find them with soft plastic tube jigs and/or Blakemore Roadrunners, then focus on that area with minnows. ■

— John Dean



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



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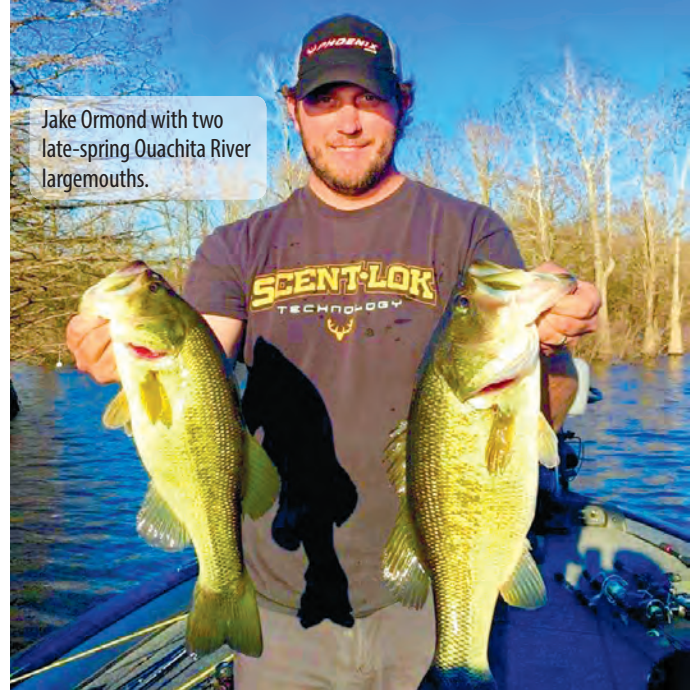
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# BASS SEASON IS OPEN IN OUACHITA WOODS

**To** catch a bass, head for the woods. If that sounds a little strange, that's okay. Fishing the backwaters of the meandering Ouachita River is anything but normal this time of year. The river floods way out of its banks in late winter and spring, creating a mecca of backwater bassing opportunities in the flooded woods.

"It's not your ordinary fishing for sure," said bass pro Jake Ormond of Sterlington, who is in his rookie season on the FLW Tour.



Jake Ormond with two late-spring Ouachita River largemouths.

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"The water level is subject to changing pretty often in the river and the river lakes, but the fish basically follow two patterns," he said. "When it's still way back in the woods, the best approach is to find your way through the woods and get to the bank. That's what the fish will do. As long as the river isn't falling, they are going to follow the water, and that means they'll go all the way up until they find a bank."

"There's a lot of water back there, and all of it won't hold fish, but there are a couple of things you can do to find the bass. First, you can just find some good-looking water and start fishing. Sometimes it's a process of elimination. The best water in the river is the slightly off-color, but not muddy. You won't catch many in areas that have black-looking water."

Once Ormond locates some good-looking water, he starts looking for baitfish jumping or any activity on or around the water, including shorebirds on the lookout for an easy meal. Bass spawn on the river a little bit later than they do in other area waters, said Ormond, one of the leaders of the original University of Louisiana-Monroe bass team, which has



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Jigs like Ormond's own JO jig are great in the Ouachita River's backwater areas.



produced several anglers who are on the pro circuit today.

If the water is falling out or has dropped significantly, he focuses his approach on the cypress trees in the backs of the dozens of river lakes. Some of his favorites are Moon, Hamilton and Horseshoe lakes. Bass also relate to current in the deeper areas, especially the eddies, where they can lie in wait to ambush bait-fish. In Louisiana, the Ouachita runs all the way from the Arkansas state line to the Black River near Jonesville. Bass fishing in the entire system is good this time of year.

When the bass are on the banks, Ormond loves to throw a white or chartreuse spinnerbait or buzzbait, and even makes his own custom spinnerbait: the Arkansas version of the Hawg Caller spinnerbait. He also relies on his own JO Custom Jig in black/blue or green pumpkin with a touch of orange. Soft plastics like Baby Brush Hawgs in the same colors work, too. When the fish are on the trees, he likes running the Rat'L Trap MR-6 crankbaits in crawfish or shad colors. He fishes those lures on Cast King rods and reels and also uses Cast King line.

"The bass are pretty aggressive in the river," he said. "If you fish a spot for 20 to 30 minutes and don't get bit, go try another spot. If you get on them and nothing crazy is going on with the weather or the water, they'll bite."

Ormond warns boaters to be careful in the backwaters. There are a lot of underwater objects, including gas well-heads in the pipelines. Good boat ramps allow access to the river along it's length as it passes through Sterlington, Monroe, Riverton and Columbia. ■

— Kinny Haddox

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# Introducing Grosse Savanne Lakeside on Calcasieu Lake

*The former lodge and dock of Big Lake Guide Service has been acquired by Grosse Savanne Lodge in Cameron Parish. Renamed Grosse Savanne Lakeside, this location offers anglers a quality stay with opportunities for fishing Calcasieu Lake's speckled trout, redfish and flounder.*

By Chris Berzas

The great southwestern Louisiana outdoors paradise, Grosse Savanne Lodge, is nationally acclaimed for its 50,000 acres of brackish and freshwater marshes, cypress-studded swamps and native coastal prairies in coastal Cameron Parish.

Such rich habitat offers some of the finest fishing and waterfowling in the U.S., as well as a wetlands wonderland for birders from all over the world.

According to Doug Miller, director of operations and development, Grosse Savanne Lodge has just completed a sig-

nificant purchase of additional property to enhance its venue of offerings to visiting clients.

"We have recently acquired the Big Lake Guide Service lodge and wharf, formerly owned by the Poe family: Jeff, Mary and their son, Nick," Miller said.

The Poes have relocated and moved their operations to Dauphin Island, Ala., reopening under the name "Real Gypsy Fishing." They will offer clients some of the finest fishing the Alabama salt coast has to offer.

Grosse Savanne Lodge's acquisition of

the Poe property on Calcasieu Lake has been aptly renamed Grosse Savanne Lakeside.

The lakeside lodge itself is a duplex of 3,000 square feet with the capacity to sleep six guests on each side, the Redfish and Bluefish, each furnished with three bedrooms and two baths with living room and kitchen. Both also offers television service, Wi-Fi access and outdoor grills. A covered porch and screened patio with excellent views of Calcasieu Lake are shared by both units.

"Besides comfortable lodging, Grosse



All photos courtesy of Grosse Savanne Lodge  
**ABOVE:** Redfish are also taken in Calcasieu Lake in locations near the weirs and jetties. Schools of redfish will often move throughout the lake from Turner's Bay southwards to the jetties. **INSET:** Grosse Savanne Lakeside is on the eastern shore of Calcasieu Lake. Speckled trout are one of the most sought-after inland species on the lake.



Grosse Savanne Lakeside also boasts of an impressive dock where anglers can be picked up for guide service.



Grosse Savanne Lodge in Cameron Parish recently announced the acquisition of the former Big Lake Guide Service lodge and dock. Now named Grosse Savanne Lakeside, this duplex will offer clients 3,000 square feet with the capacity to sleep six guests on each. Client anglers will have access to fishing Calcasieu Lake waters with local experienced guides.

Savanne Lakeside will also offer guided fishing trips for its clients on Calcasieu Lake from experienced local guides,” said Bobby Jordan, Grosse Savanne Lodge and Lakeside biologist.

“Anglers will experience opportunities at catching speckled trout, redfish, southern flounder, sheepshead and black drum in the interior of Calcasieu Lake,” he said. “Big Lake is also well-known nationally for its quality and trophy speckled trout opportunities.



A combination of speckled trout and redfish catches can be the reward for visiting Grosse Savanne Lakeside anglers.

“Calcasieu Lake’s jetties at its southern terminus are locations where anglers can find redfish action — both slot fish and bulls. And just offshore, the close rigs and other structures present anglers with great fishing for tripletail, cobia and numerous speckled trout,” Jordan said. Local guides will offer client anglers

access to the lake’s most famous fishing locations to include the jetties, West Cove, the southeastern weirs, Big Jack Reef, Joe’s Cove, Long Point, Commissary Point and Turners Bay.

In the fall, fishing for the estuary’s southern flounder heats up as these fish make their annual migration in grand numbers to the Gulf of Mexico. As a result, flounder fishing is excellent along the ship channel, weirs, points and the mouths of marsh cuts entering the lake.

Prien Lake in the northern part of the Calcasieu Estuary offers fine speckled trout action in the fall along the edges of the ship channel.

Lake Charles itself also offers suburban speckled trout action in the fall and winter in waters near I-10.

In the winter, guides will often make trips to the Calcasieu Estuary Saltwater Barrier where client anglers can battle brute redfish, hefty hybrid stripers and a host of other species to include large-mouth bass in brackish waters in the area.

Grosse Savanne Lakeside is minutes away from the city of Lake Charles, known for its southwestern Cajun hospitality and exquisite seafood cuisine.

Lake Charles also offers quite an entertainment industry to include Cajun/Creole music venues and lakeside casinos offering slot machines.



The Calcasieu Lake Estuary also offers visiting anglers at Grosse Savanne Lakeside opportunities to catch flounder which are noted near the mouths of marsh cuts, points and edges of the weirs.

For more information regarding Grosse Savanne Lakeside and Grosse Savanne Lodge, call 337-598-2357 or by email: info@grossesavanne.com. Visit their website at www.grossesavanne.com/



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■ By Phillip Gentry

# CRAPPIE 102: SINGLE-POLE TECHNIQUES

**SINGLE-POLE TECHNIQUES CAN PUT PLENTY OF SLABS IN YOUR COOLER IF YOU UNDERSTAND HOW TO GET YOUR BAITS IN THE RIGHT PLACES OR TO THE RIGHT DEPTHS.**

**In** the world of crappie fishing, tactics for catching these tasty panfish probably outnumber those for almost any other fish species. Last month, “Crappie 101” covered things you need to know about fishing with multiple rods, all set in rod holders, with the boat providing locomotion to the baits.

This month, “Crappie 102” discusses strategies where you hold a single pole in your hand, where you have to provide all the motion yourself.

**CASTING >**

## CASTING

Most anglers learning to fish started out by casting a rod. Casting works great for crappie as well, but moreso if you are able to control how long your bait stays in the depth zone where the fish are holding.

Two methods for controlling a bait's depth while casting are using a slip cork to suspend the bait at a prescribed depth or counting a bait down.

Slip corks work great with either live minnows fished on a light-wire, No. 2 Aberdeen hook or with a crappie jig in the 1/32- to 1/16-ounce range. Set a bobber stop at the desired depth and cast the bait or lure. Pulling and stopping will cause the bait to swing and not only adds more action to the bait, but covers more water.

Crappie jigs can be fished at a prescribed depth by counting down the jig as soon as it hits the water. Leaving the bail on the reel disengaged, count seconds until the bait reaches the desired depth. Typically, a bait will free-fall an average of one foot per second on 6-pound line. At that point, engage the reel and slowly and steadily reel the line in to keep the bait at the desired depth. Bear in mind, crappie tend to feed in an upward direction, so stop the bait a foot or two above the level at which you have marked fish on your sonar.

## JIGGING

Jigging for crappie entails a traditionally long, limber rod to reach out to place the bait, usually a 1/32- to 1/8-ounce crappie jig, around visible, fish-holding structure like standing timber, stumps or a pier.

Jigging implies an up-and-down movement of the bait, but in essence, most strikes are elicited by simply placing the bait in the vicinity of the fish. As with any presentation, the bait should be at or slightly above the level of the fish, since crappie are generally inclined to look up and feed up.

For this reason, the most-effective jigs for using a jig pole have static action, meaning that the rubber, plastic, hair or other material comprising the bait tends to "shimmer" in place, giving the bait a lifelike action while sitting still.

Another effective presentation for jigging involves swinging the jig forward above the surface and allowing it to swing back toward the angler under the surface, like a pendulum. If the jig swims past structure on its circular fall, all the better.

Depth of presentation is key to jig fishing, as mentioned crappie feed and face up. Jig fishermen frequently measure the depth of presentation by the amount of line out. Some pole manufacturers even assist in this endeavor by placing marks at one-foot intervals down the length of the rod.

## DOCK SHOOTING >



Docks are natural hiding places for crappie, so learning to get your bait or lure under the structure is important.

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## DOCK SHOOTING

Dock shooting refers to holding the bait, typically a small crappie jig, in one hand, while using the other to hold the line tight to the spool of a spinning reel with the bail open.

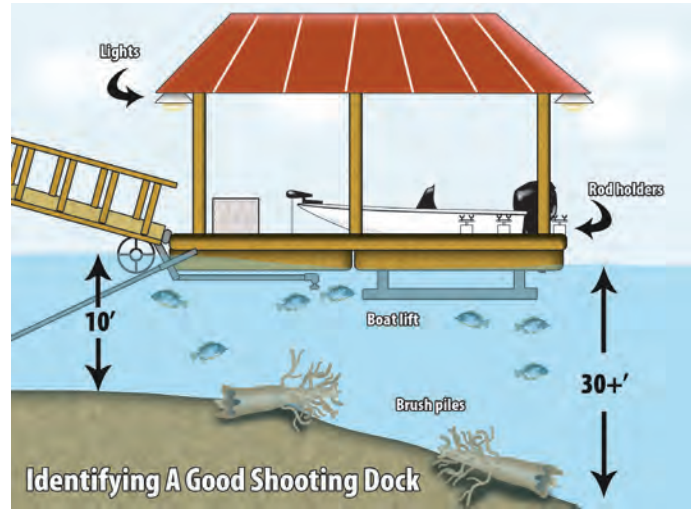
To execute the shot, bend the rod over and hold the jig between your thumb and forefinger, under the reel. Release the jig and simultaneously release the line, which sling-shots the bait forward, parallel to the water, causing it to skip up under the boat or dock or other overhead structure.

Boat docks come in two basic styles: floating docks and piers or pier docks. The big difference is a floating dock has little or no support structure attaching it to the bottom. A pier dock has vertical, and more often than not, supplemental diagonal and horizontal supports, for stability. The two styles of docks fish differently.

Some dock shooters prefer floating docks because there's no support structure under the dock to cause hang-ups. If the fish are under there and you feel any kind of catch or tension on your line after you shoot the jig, you'll know pretty well it's a fish.

Piers can be more aggravating to shoot because of support piers and cross members, which may snag the jig on the fall or retrieve. However, more structure often means more fish.

Making a good shot is important, but what happens after the shot is just as important to detect bites. By using a 1/32-ounce rubber bodied jig, the bait sinks slowly and gives the fish a long time to look at it falling under the protected area. Any movement of the line — a pause, twitch or shudder — signals a crap-



pie has inhaled the bait and the angler should set the hook.

The next few seconds are important to get the fish's head turned around and begin guiding the fish out of the heavy structure. ■



Phillip Gentry of Simpsonville, S.C., is host of "Upstate Outdoors," a weekly radio show that can be heard on Saturdays at noon on WORD 106.3 FM.

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# WINTER FINESSE TACTICS

According to Tom Mundy, owner of Fish Stalker Lures in Laurens, S.C., the science behind finesse fishing for crappie in cold water is understanding that the colder the water gets, the tighter crappie will school on structure such as rocks, bridge pilings, submerged timber and brush piles.

Crappie won't move very far to take a bait, but some years ago, Mundy discovered that if you put that bait right in the fish's face, again and again, the action can be non-stop. Along with designing a whippy, lightweight rod for crappie rod manufacturer B'n'M, Mundy also began producing tiny, shrimp-like slabtail finesse baits that could be fished on tiny 1/64-ounce jigheads.

Mundy uses the finesse tactic any time crappie are found in deep water, both spring and summer, but he has better success, in terms of the size of crappie caught during the winter.

"Boat positioning is real important," Mundy said, "You want to be right over the top of the brush. Some people frown on fishing under the trolling motor, but I'm fishing in 20 to 25 feet of water, and the trolling motor only goes down about 3 feet, so I don't view that as a potential disturbance to the fish below."

Mundy pays close attention to the line and his pole's sensitive tip as the jig sinks. Once it settles, he retrieves it using a slow, continuous turn of the reel handle.

Philip Gentry



Slow and subtle is not just a bass fishing tactic when it comes to winter or deep-water fishing; it works on crappie, too.

"It took me a long time to distinguish between a bite and the jig bouncing off a limb," Mundy said. "The secret is watching the rod tip. When a crappie sucks the jig in, the rod will go from a limber bounce to a stiff look; that's when it's time to set the hook."

"You can also watch the line," he said. "The line will twitch long before you feel it with the rod, or it will start piling up in the water, which says the crappie sucked it in and is holding still while the line's still sinking." ■

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# EASY LIVING. Crappie fishing

■ By Kinny Haddox

**CATCH POST-SPAWN  
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YOUR 'EASY CHAIR'  
WITH THIS EFFECTIVE  
TECHNIQUE**

**O**ne reason crappie fishing is growing faster than a 90-mile-an-hour fastball is that fishermen are learning more and more ways to catch the tasty fish.

Using new techniques not only provides enjoyment, but it also increases the angler's chance for a livewell full of fish.

## Enter long-lining.

"I was in Mississippi fishing with some of the B'n'M Poles pro staff and got to see them do it one day," John Godwin said. "I'd never seen it before, but it worked. I thought it was going to require a lot of fancy equipment, but you can do it very simply."

Godwin, one of the stars of the Duck Dynasty TV series and long-time Duck Commander team member, said the reason you should learn to long-line is simple.

"You can cover a lot of water and a lot of fish with a minimum amount of effort," he said. "It takes a few minutes to get set up, but once you are, you've got eight baits in the water going right where you know the fish are."

And, he reminds us, it gets back to why we fish in the first place.

"Look, it's just a fun way to fish. It's an easy way to fish," he said. "I mean, here I am, sitting in my big Millennium easy chair, feet propped up, watching my big-screen Humminbird TV with my Minn Kota remote control in my hand, and I'm pulling in crappie for supper. I'd say that's pretty awesome."

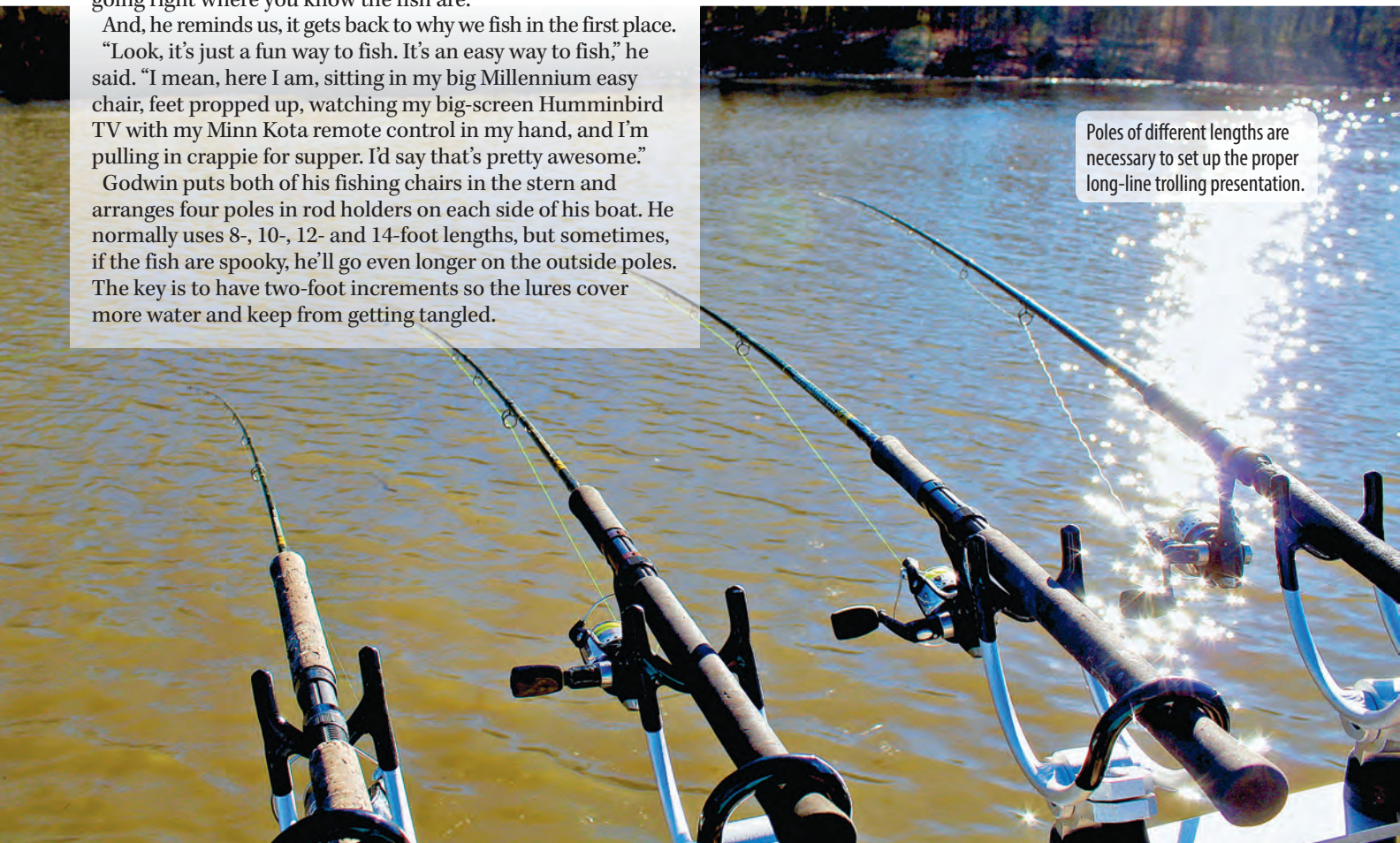
Godwin puts both of his fishing chairs in the stern and arranges four poles in rod holders on each side of his boat. He normally uses 8-, 10-, 12- and 14-foot lengths, but sometimes, if the fish are spooky, he'll go even longer on the outside poles. The key is to have two-foot increments so the lures cover more water and keep from getting tangled.

"Here's what the deal is," he said. "These fish are moving off the beds and onto the flats this time of year, and you want to find flats with some sort of contour change like an old ditch, stumpline or small variation in depth. You can see on your electronics where the fish are holding and about what depth they are.

"At 1 mile an hour — the speed I usually go this time of year — I use different-size jigs for different depths. I use a 1/32-ounce to keep the bait at 3 feet deep, a 1/16- to keep the bait at 4 to 5 feet and a 1/8- to keep the jig at 7 to 8 feet. It's important to vary depths until you get on the fish, then key on that one depth. And remember, crappie will swim down to eat, but they prefer to feed up. Always keep your bait about a foot above the crappie, 'cause when he's hungry, he's looking up."



Poles of different lengths are necessary to set up the proper long-line trolling presentation.



# Godwin's pick for long-lining



Godwin and his favorite long-lining lure, the Fin Commander Slab Curly in the new mardi gras color.

It should come as no surprise what's at the top of the list of John Godwin's choices for long-lining crappie. It's the B'n'M Duck Commander series crappie rod, one he helped design. He uses two sets of rods, one for each side of his boat, in 8-, 10- and 12-foot lengths.

His favorite reel is the Pro Series 100 spinning reel because it is smooth and has a great drag system, which is important when dragging in slabs while the boat is moving. His favorite lure for long-lining is the Fin Commander Slab Curly. He likes it because it has a curlytail that will work as slow as .3 miles per hour. It took some work to get that developed, but a slow, spinning tail is something crappie can't resist. His traditional favorite colors are monkey milk and mermaid, but the new mardi gras color has fast moved up the list. One color that seems to work all across the country is black/chartreuse.

Godwin uses 6-pound test line and likes Crappie Magnet SOS line. You need to use the same line on each reel so you know your lures are running the same depth, because lures run deeper on lighter line. One point he makes is that if you are in clear water, you should use clear line. Everywhere else, he uses hi-vis line. His rod holders are Millennium Marine, but he likes DriftMasters as well. ■

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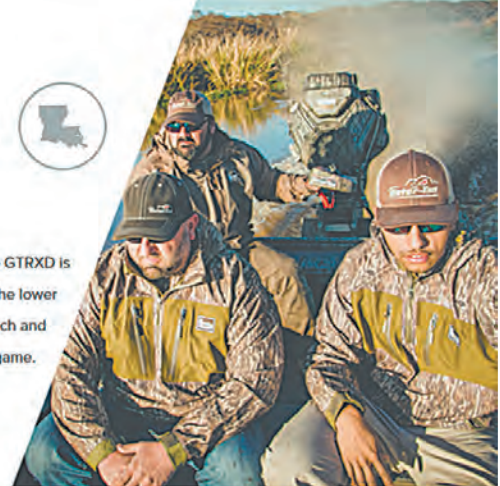


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**T**here are charts online that show the depths many popular lures run, based on speed and line size. Some anglers long-line with crankbaits; again, the key to making the lure work is keeping it in the strike zone.

Godwin uses his remote-control trolling motor to keep the boat on course, and he tries to keep it over where he sees fish on his depth finder as he passes by. Often this time of year, the outside poles will catch the most fish; some fish spook as the boat passes overhead.

While rod holders on the gunwales are the easiest and most-productive ways to set out rods, Godwin said you can fish a modified long-lining rig out of any boat.

“I know people that sit up front and put their variable-speed trolling motor on low, hold one pole in each hand and long-line like that. Obviously, the more poles you have in the water, the more bites you usually get, but you can catch them with just two poles,” he said.

The keys are keeping the bait at the right depth, staying in areas holding fish and going the right speed. This time of year, some fish are a bit timid, and you have to slow your speed just a bit. When



This post-spawn crappie fell to one of John Godwin's long-lined baits.



John Godwin and the author with four nice crappie caught long-lining curlytail spin jigs.

you do, you can adjust the amount of line you let the bait out behind the boat to keep the lures from going too deep. Just turn the reel handle a few times. Jigs are best for long-lining, but when the bite is slow, you might want to try tipping the jig with a live shiner or a crappie bite to add a little more incentive for the fish.

This technique will work anywhere you can find crappie. While it is ideal for the flats this time of year, it also works in all kinds of water. The easiest fishing is when crappie are scattered in areas where there aren't too many stumps, but long-lining

is designed to fish anywhere. Godwin said any lake or river is prime long-line territory.

When fishing deeper water at other times of the year, Godwin said to look for shad pods, then troll right below the wad of baitfish. That's where the fish will be hanging out, waiting to swim up and get a bite of dinner.

“Never be scared to try something new like long-lining,” he says. “With just a little time and practice, you can learn new ways to catch fish. That just adds more fun to the trip and more fish to the grease at the house.”

And as he said in one of his funny lines on the Duck Dynasty show,

“This is funner than chuckin' rocks at a sign.” ■



**Kinny Haddox** has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 45 years. He publishes a daily website, [lakedarbornellife.com](http://lakedarbornellife.com) and is a member of the Louisiana Chapter of the Outdoor Legends Hall of Fame. He and his wife, DiAnne, live in West Monroe.

# We're going to do what?

I've been fortunate enough to spend several days crappie fishing with John Godwin of Duck Dynasty and Duck Commander fame. We usually fish with a single pole or maybe a spider rig, but the last time, he had me baffled.

"Now let me get this straight, John," I said. "We're going to put the two fishing seats in the back of the boat, throw out curlytail Fin Spin lures in various colors from two sets of crappie poles, each set containing a 6-, 8- and 10-foot rod. Then, we are going to troll four poles apiece out of the back of the boat, even though the trolling motor is up front? Who's going to watch where we are going?"

"That's it," Godwin replied, guiding the boat with his trolling motor's remote control straight across a big flat where the water was 8 to 9 feet deep, surrounded by a 14- to 15-foot deep natural sloughs on each side. "I'll keep an eye out up front and make sure we don't run into anybody. You keep an eye on the poles. If they twitch, you set the hook. And we are going to go 1 mile an hour. That's the key. Throw out the bait closest to the motor first, the middle one second and then the long pole last. If you get hung, just pull it straight to you. We can't stop or all six baits will get hung. Hey, I bet you a ham sa'mich we catch a fish before you even get that last pole set."

Okay, I did. And then we did. The last bait had just hit the water when the first pole started jerking and bending. It was a nice pound-and-a-half crappie.

What we were doing is called long-lining. It's not really new, but not many folks use it in Louisiana. It isn't for the faint of heart; it's sort of like spider-rigging in reverse, and it takes a special knack. You get hung up some. Fish bite and swim across the other lines and tangle them on occasion. But it catches fish. And isn't that why we go?

"I love long-lining because we can cover a lot of ground and, I can actually watch the Humminbird and see when we pass over fish. You can know when you are going to get a bite a lot of the time," Goodwin said.



John Godwin sets and adjusts four poles on each side of the boat, giving him eight baits in the water when he long lines over suspended crappie.

Sure enough. He said a minute later, "Look at the fish on the depth finder. We should catch one in about 10 seconds." Nine... eight...two...one..Thump! We did.

Godwin became famous for his role on the Duck Dynasty TV show, but he is just as passionate about crappie fishing as he is duck hunting — maybe even more so. And going on a trip with him is as much fun as watching an episode of the show on TV. And he even won a ham sa'mich.

And we both ate fresh crappie for supper. I'm in. ■

## LURE REVIEW ➤

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## LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman



# THE CRAPPIE WEAPON

CRAPPIE PSYCHIC'S LATEST LURE OFFERING WILL DEBUT AT LOUISIANA SPORTSMAN'S SHOW

**A**widely known Raceland sac-a-lait fisherman and artificial lure manufacturer kept talking over the winter about a secret weapon coming out in the spring of 2020.

Capt. Clyde Folsé's unbridled enthusiasm stayed revved up between 5,000 and 6,000 rpm, mostly on the high end, as he anticipated introducing the lure to the public at the annual Louisiana Sportsman Show and Festival at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales March 12-15. He's had the prototypes in his hands since September, and they haven't disappointed him.

Meet the Crappie Weapon. By now, the word probably has spread like wildfire among those who love to fish for crappie, aka sac-a-lait and white perch in many areas of Louisiana.

"I've caught a lot of fish, a massive amount of fish, with it already," Folsé said in late January. "I've had the prototype since September. I've been keeping it hush-hush.

"It's about to be released in eight different colors. We will have a ton of them at the Louisiana Sportsman Show," said Folsé, who gave a sneak preview of the soft-plastic bait around the first of the year to friend Otis Taylor of Grand Point. At first, Taylor wasn't happy as the outing got underway on Hackberry Lake. Folsé, meanwhile, was on Cloud Nine.

"I was using the Crappie Weapon.... He was using a black and white Crappie Psychic Crappie Ringer. I had six before he had one. I was having goose bumps. I was thanking God. It was way above expectations," Folsé said after seeing his new bait perform against a tried-and-true lure.

Taylor, naturally, was miffed.

"Well, I'm excited, and I'm mad. I'm sitting in the back of the boat and catching one fish and he's catching seven," said Taylor, 81, who asked for and received



one of the prototype Crappie Weapons. Taylor tied it on and, suddenly, twice as many big sac-a-lait were going into the ice chest.

What took the cake, Taylor said, was as he was about to put away his fishing rod after the spectacular trip, Folsé asked to see it and snipped the new lure off his line, guarding the secret.

Sac-a-lait fishermen everywhere will get to see the Crappie Weapon, part of a strategically planned line for Crappie Psychic



**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.

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Capt. Clyde Folse holds two slabs caught on Crappie Weapons at Hackberry Lake while fishing with Otis Taylor of Grand Point.



a line that's still missing one part for reasons beyond his control, according to Folse. He introduced the Crappie Trailer, then Crappie Ammo, and developed a Crappie Mag(azine) to attach to a fishing rod and make it easier to attach Crappie Ammos to the Crappie Weapons. The Crappie Mag, which experienced unforeseen delays in its production, fits in a tiny holster, but it isn't available yet.

Folse designed the Crappie Weapon to make a disturbance in the water. Its body has ringed segments and bulbous eyes that add to the wobble as it falls under a cork or is tight-lined. It also has a split or fork tail, with two tails that are diamond-shaped. Where that forked tail meets the hook, add a Crappie Ammo bead and a similarly diamond-shaped Crappie Trailer and, bingo, there's more action and color, more for the fish to see.

How long is the Crappie Weapon? Folse measured it at 2¼ inches long.

The eight color combinations that will be available immediately are: black/white, blue/white, chartreuse/glow, black/chartreuse, pink sparkle/chartreuse, pumpkinseed/chartreuse, junebug/pink and Christmas tree/pink.

For more information about The Crappie Weapon and other Crappie Psychic products, visit [thecrappiepsychic.com](http://thecrappiepsychic.com) or call 985-790-0862. ■



**VIDEO:** Go to [louisianasportsman.com/sac-a-lait-at-bayou-des-allemands](http://louisianasportsman.com/sac-a-lait-at-bayou-des-allemands) to see Capt. Clyde Folse talk more about The Crappie Weapon.

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Jay Stone shows the bottom two 1/16-ounce jigs and 2-ounce bell weight of a kitchen sink rig. **BELOW:** A Styromfoam noodle can be used to keep prerigged kitchen sink rigs ready for action.



## HOW TO BUILD A KITCHEN SINK RIG

By Kinny Haddox

**W**ant to try the kitchen sink? Here's how to tie the rig that angler Jay Stone came up with to put the maximum number of baits in the right spots to catch suspended crappie.

"I start out with about 6 feet of line and tie a loop knot around one 1/16-ounce jighead, then go down about 1 1/2 feet and add another jig," he said. "Then, repeat that twice about a foot-and-a-half lower until you have three jigs in tandem.

"Next, I skip down a foot and run the line through the eye of a 2-ounce egg weight. I run the line through six times with no knots — that secures it and doesn't leave another knot to weaken the line. At the end of the line, I tie on another 1/16-ounce jighead."

He finishes off the rig with soft plastics.

"I put a plastic curlytail jig on each one," Stone said. "I like to use Kalin or Big Bite curlytails. They have good action; the tails spin at a slow speed, and they aren't expensive."

For this rig, Stone uses clear 10-pound line and attaches it to his main line with a snap swivel.



Photos by Kinny Haddox

He uses 12-pound Hi-Vis line on his jiggling reels so he can see it better. He uses clear line on the leader that's tied to the jigs because some people think the crappie can see Hi Vis — and although he isn't sure, Stone isn't taking chances.

He fishes the rig on a B'n'M Duck Commander crappie trolling rod and B'n'M Pro Staff spinning reel with a 5.1:1 gear ratio.

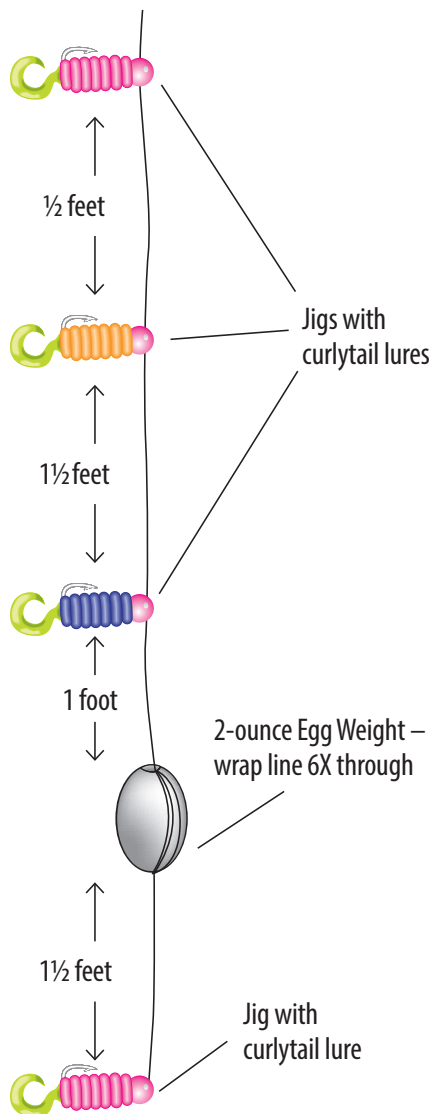
Stone's favorite lure colors are white/chartreuse, black/chartreuse, blue/chartreuse — get the picture — or anything and chartreuse.

He keeps different-colored jigs on each pole, and if one starts producing better, he ties on more of that color. Unlike many anglers, he does not use crappie bites.

"I've just got too many baits in the water to keep up," he said. "It would just take too much time, and I like leaving the jig in the water. "When you take the jig out of the water, that's time you know you won't catch a fish."

His favorite place to fish is Lake D'Arbonne, but he also said this rig will work in creeks and the Ouachita River, areas like Lake Claiborne and Poverty Point, and in big-crappie waters just about anywhere.

When the fish do move shallow, Stone goes to more-conventional jig setups, but he still prefers spider rigs with larger jigs unless they are up shallow in cover, where he switches to single rigs and often fishes small spinners like Road Runners. ■



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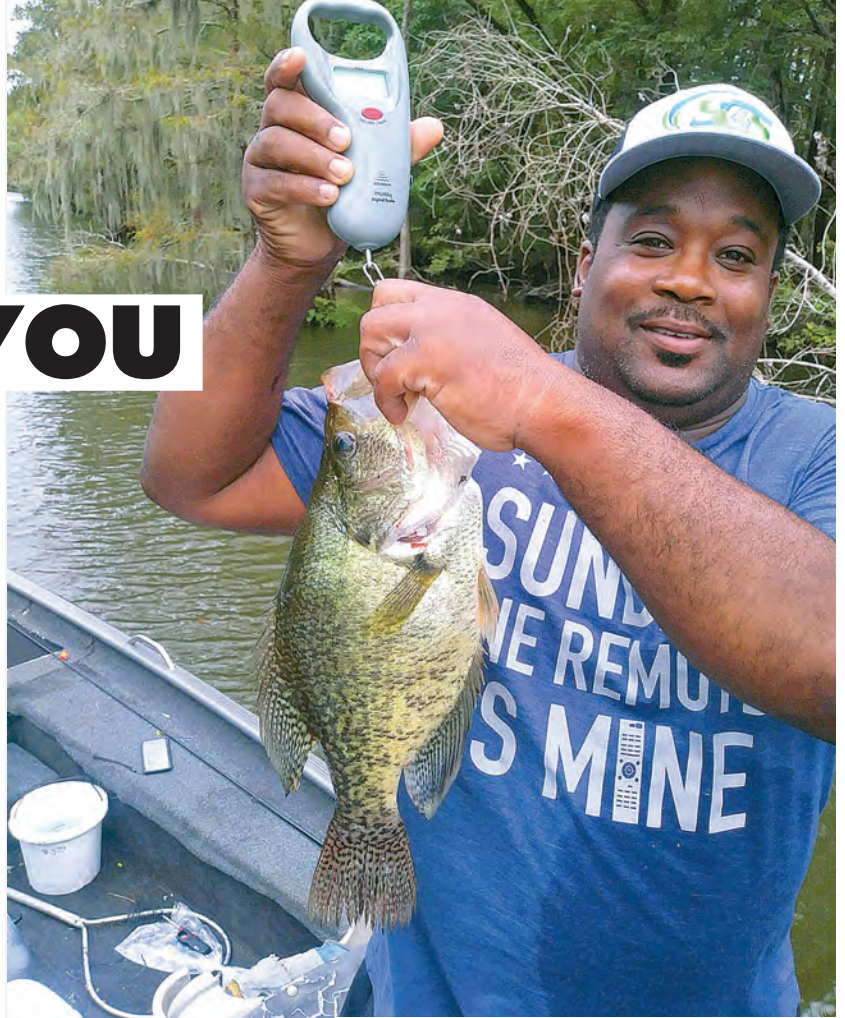
# THE TREE YOU CAN'T SEE

By Kinny Haddox

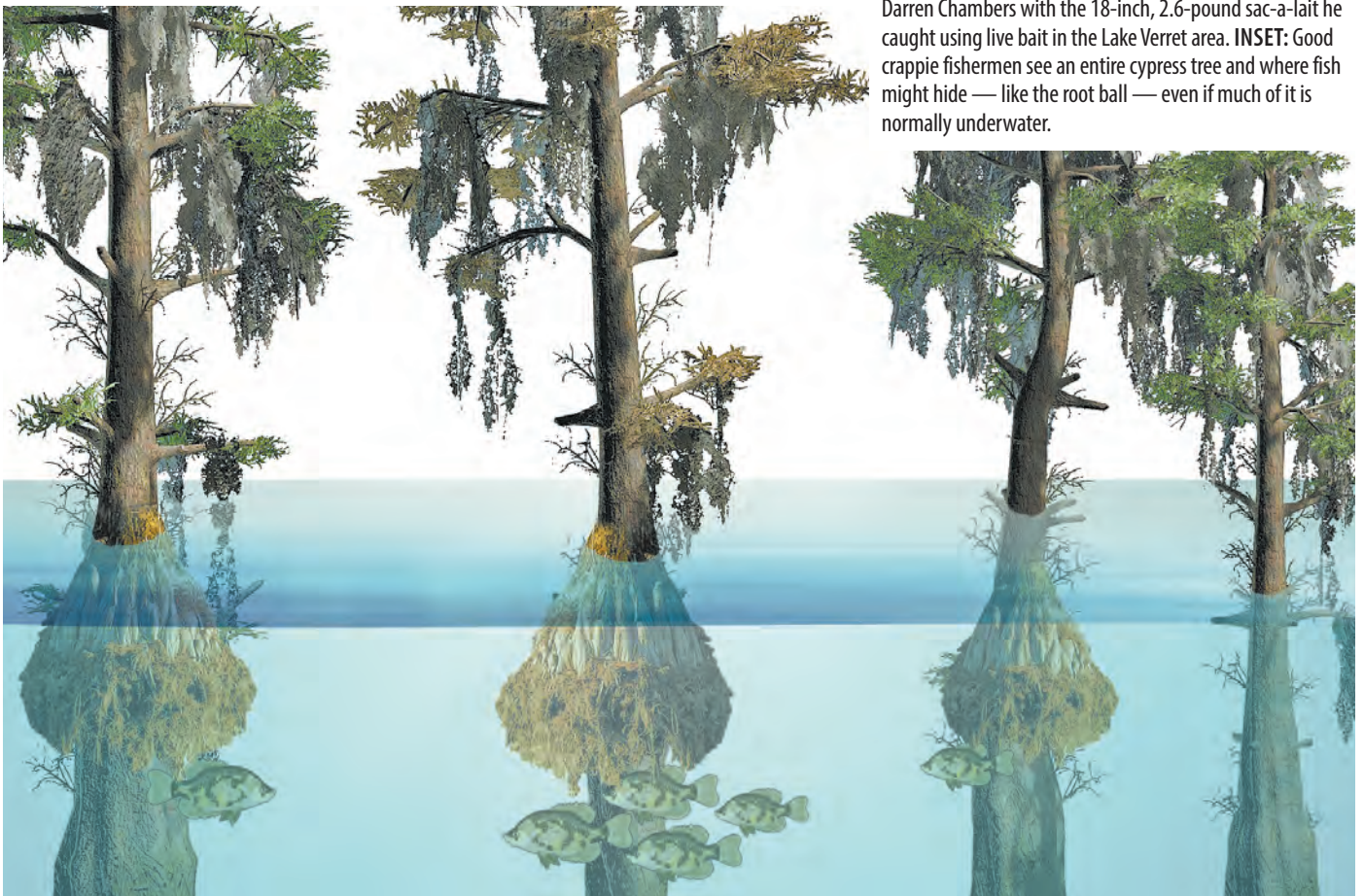
**W**hen fishermen approach a cypress tree, they see the trunk, limbs and maybe the top of the root system. When crappie swim up beside a cypress tree, they see it in a whole different light.

A typical cypress tree has a huge ball of roots under the water that stick out a foot to 18 inches from the trunk. Under that big ball is more tree trunk. When the water level is normal, this area is a prime spot for crappie to spawn.

To catch those crappie, you've got to get your lure as close as you can to that area for them. If you just swim a lure past the root ball, you may not even have it where the fish are. That's why "tree hugging" is an important technique to have for spring crappie. ■



Darren Chambers with the 18-inch, 2.6-pound sac-a-lait he caught using live bait in the Lake Verret area. **INSET:** Good crappie fishermen see an entire cypress tree and where fish might hide — like the root ball — even if much of it is normally underwater.



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Josh Neville of Bubba Blades with both 110V and battery operated Bubba Blades electric knives. **INSET:** Bubba is ready to take on a mess of fish, whether its freshwater crappie or saltwater snapper.



# LEAVE IT TO BUBBA

SOMETIMES ALL YOU NEED IS A POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND A SHARP KNIFE

By Kinny Haddox

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**W**ant to impress hundreds of your fishing buddies and neighbors with your fancy new electric knife? Just toss a big 70-pound tuna up on an ice block and let Bubba filet it.

In this case, however, Bubba isn't someone's brother or a really close friend. Bubba is the brand name for one of the hottest new electric fishing knives on the market. It's produced by Bubba Blades, which is owned by American Outdoor Brands.

That 70-pound tuna was the showpiece of the launch of the new knife at last summer's International Convention of Allied Sportfishing Trades (ICAST) show where the 110V Electric Filet Knife won the Best In Show award for cutlery.

The electric knife is on the market and is becoming a popular choice for fishermen. It's available in sporting good stores and online for around \$100.

Bubba's Josh Neville pointed out that the knife's best features start with the feel: a soft, thermoplastic polymer handle wrapped with a special synthetic rubber plastic that has non-slip features that are apparent when you pick one up. It doesn't slip, even when wet. On the inside, a fan keeps the knife cool enough to operate for long periods of time.

"That's really important when you have big fish or need to clean a lot of fish," Neville said "The ventilation system is also the best on the market, made to maximize motor transmission output and give you an incredible amount of torque."

That became evident as they took on the big tuna.

"This knife will have you stacking filets until you're out of fish," Neville said.

Other features include an 8-foot cord — important when an electric outlet isn't close by. If there is no outlet, the knife also comes in a rechargeable Lithium battery.

There's a trigger guard for safety and a molded carrying case that's needed because the knife comes with four different blade styles, including one 7-inch, two 9-inch and one 12-inch tapered carbon stainless steel blades coated with titanium nitride to fight corrosion.

Bubba Blade got into the outdoor knife market with similar fixed-blade knives, using the same handle and super sharp Teflon-coated blades that slide right through fish.

"We got started because, as our ads say, as fishermen we were sick and tired of our fillet knives going dull, rusting, pitting, slipping out of our hand and not being able to hold up in a harsh saltwater environment," Neville said. "We wanted a knife that could handle a rigorous life at sea. After searching for this perfect knife, we found that one did not exist anywhere, for any price. That's when we set out to make the best fillet knife possible."

The straight-blade Bubba products are also highly popular. They have a full tang, which means the blade is actually part of the handle. The handle is also big and easy to grip, and the blade is super sharp. It works well for any type of freshwater fish and smaller saltwater species. And you can even take on a tuna, if you've got the time.

There's an old saying that "Sometimes all you need is a positive attitude and a sharp knife". The Bubba Blade electric knife seems to fit both those bills. ■

**CRAPPIE HOTSPOTS >**

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# BIG CRAPPIE ON THE FEED AT TOLEDO BEND

With spawn likely covering much of March, veteran guide targets fish moving in and out

**M**arch is prime time to ambush crappie, aka white perch or sac-a-lait, on the flats in almost any cove, preferably the northern side of each, on Toledo Bend.

After nearly 20 years targeting crappie as a full-time guide, Jerry "J.T." Thompson of Livin' the Dream Guide Service in Many has crappie right where he wants them this time of year. Like bass, the tasty panfish head to the shallows to spawn, and he and his eight full-time guides head them off at the pass, so to speak.

"In March, when the major spawn takes place, you've got fish coming and going," Thompson said. "The opportunity to catch fish varies. What we try to do that time of year is catch on the flats. We try to intercept them coming in or out. We do that more than try to catch them on their beds.

"Just about any cove has some kind of ditch or channel (that is) a little deeper. At some point, the coves flatten out, and that's where we try to target them. It makes it a lot easier if grass is there," he said, noting that won't be the case this year.

"The best fishing will be just prior to the full moon in March."

Those fish stay up, too.

"They don't leave 'til they finish up the deal," he said. "And they don't do it at the same time all over the lake."

Anyone who thinks Toledo Bend crappie fishing is on a decline should understand that when Thompson started guiding 19 years ago, he left the ramp with a ¼-pound bag of minnows. Today, he and his guides leave with a ¼-pound bag of minnows per person and a 60-quart ice chest on each boat.

The best part about this time of year is proof that size matters.

"March is the best time to catch the biggest fish," Thompson said.

It's a time to catch quality crappie, for sure, but not necessarily 25-fish limits.

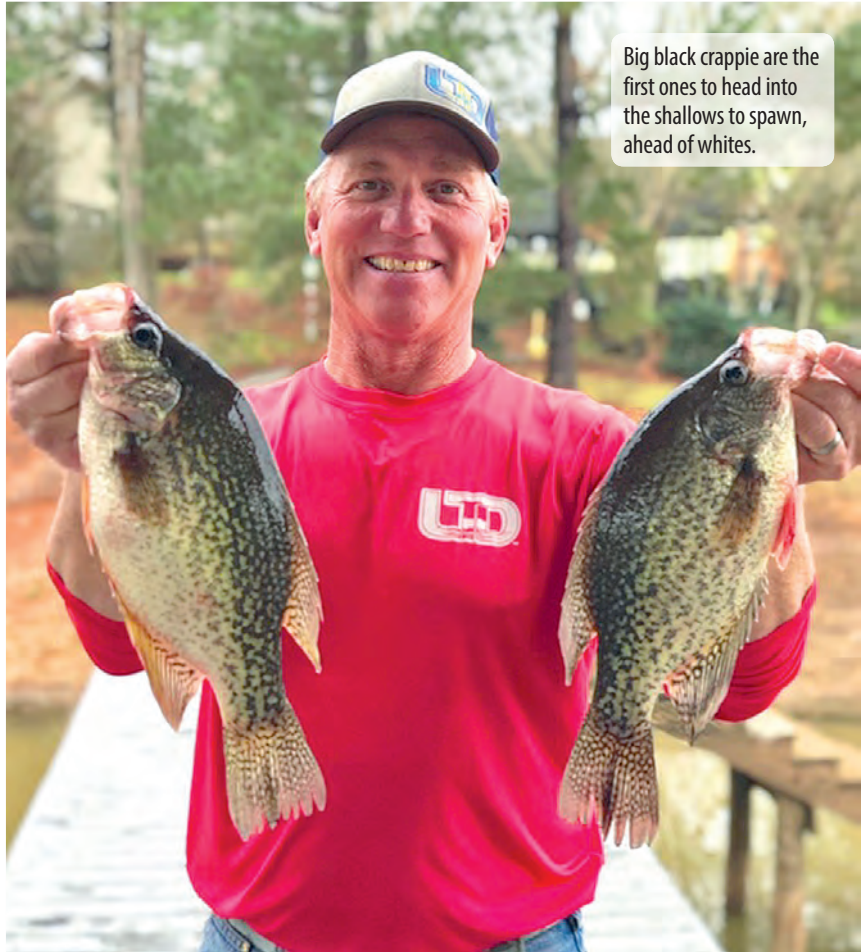
"If you hit them right, you'll catch a limit, but that's not really the norm. Two people in a boat, 50 fish, it can happen," he said, nothing that 20 big slabs per angler will fill an ice chest.

Most of the fish that are shallow are black crappie. White crappie usually spawn a little bit later and in deeper water.

Thompson's approach is simple but effective. He uses either a spinning combination or a spincast combo to cast a ½-ounce black/chartreuse Blakemore Roadrunner.

"People around here say two colors: black/chartreuse, chartreuse/black. If they don't bite black/chartreuse, they're probably not going to bite," Thompson said.

The idea is to locate the fish that are either staging somewhere or on the move. After finding fish, they drop minnows to them.



Big black crappie are the first ones to head into the shallows to spawn, ahead of whites.

He uses a gold Aberdeen hook, the size depending on the size of his minnows. If they are very small, he uses a No. 4 hook. If they're average size, he uses a No. 2. He hooks minnows through the lips or eye sockets and uses a No. 7 split shot.

Thompson, 55, doesn't give an area very long to produce. If there are no takers after so many minutes, he goes to another cove.

"If conditions are right, there are fish in every cove this time of year," he said. "The bigger the flat, the bigger the creek, the more fish it'll hold. We catch fish in the lake in every one of the creeks."

Water temperature also plays a critical role in successful sac-a-lait fishing in the spawning period, he said. The north sides of coves and flats usually warm earlier than other areas. An ideal water temperature is between 62 and 65 degrees.

Surprisingly, March is also the best time to target and catch crappie at night, according to Thompson. Bridges with lights are the hottest of the hot spots. Other structures with lights also give up crappie.

"Night fishing with lights is a really big thing in March," he said. ■

— Don Shoopman

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# TAKE CRAPPIE TO THE BANK IN BLACK LAKE

**W**hen it comes to catching crappie this month, at least on one northwest Louisiana lake, here's something you can "take to the bank."

Your bait — and your ice chest.

"Every year about the first of March, the crappie on Black Lake at Campti leave that old river channel and make their way shallow," says long-time guide Charlie King. "And when I say they head shallow, I mean they usually go all the way to the bank."

King looks for fish in 2 to 3 feet of water, just about anywhere around the bank in certain areas.

"When you start catching one or two, work that area good, because they are there," he said.

When they leave the old river channel and head to the bank, they'll usually stop along the cypress tree break lines that you find close to the bank. King likes to float shiners under a cork, always fishing 6 to 8 inches above the depth at which he thinks the crappie are holding.

"You can also throw out a jig under a cork, twitch it or pop it slowly and catch crappie, too. If they are being a bit sluggish, I always add a crappie niblet to the hook and try again. Sometimes that makes a difference," he said.

King's favorite jig colors are pink head/chartreuse tail. Gray Ghost jigs with plain silver heads are also good, especially when the water is more clear. Anglers shouldn't expect to catch fish everywhere and have them bite all day-long. The fish are, as he said, "time and depth" sensitive.

"They head in shallow and get at a certain depth when they are ready to spawn," he said. "They sometimes bite early and late and sometimes in the middle of the day. But they don't hardly ever bite all day long."

King ([www.redriverfishingla.com](http://www.redriverfishingla.com)) has one other method he uses, and he gets to cover a lot of water. He fishes an ultralight spinning or spincast outfit and throws a Beetle Spin in caterpillar color or a Road Runner in shad color. He'll sometimes throw a Mr. Twister Teenie tail or larger Meeny tail plastic tail. He retrieves



Big old slab crappie up in the shallows like these are what makes Black Lake "hot" this time of year.

those slowly and tries to come as close to the structure as he can get. The old Black Lake hair jigs are also a lake favorite.

And never forget a plain old minnow. Sometimes the fish just like a live bait, and fishing a minnow is one of the most-popular ways to catch Black Lake crappie. They take a little extra work, but sometimes it pays off.

King has a special rig he uses for minnow fishing. He fishes the minnow under a cork with a small, No. 1 split-shot to hold it down and ties on a No. 6 Aberdeen bream hook, impaling the minnow in the eye socket to allow him to swim better and live longer.

"An old man who has fished here forever told me about that," he said. "You don't have to have a huge hook to catch crappie. When they bite that minnow and feel the hook, they are less likely to hold on. With that small hook, they hit it better and hold on better."

Some of the best areas to target crappie this time of year include the Cloud's Crossing area north of the Hwy 9 bridge and the Bull Run and Public Boat Ramp areas to the south. If you don't know where to go, just keep your eyes open and follow the other boats. Usually, when they are biting, they'll be plenty of boats in the areas where there are fish.

"This goes on for a month or six weeks each spring, varying a little bit each year because of weather and water conditions," King said, "but it's time." ■

— Kinny Haddox

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# BET ON BLACK

## Henderson Lake sac-a-lait can't resist a black jig during the spawn

Two of the most-likely places to catch sac-a-lait consistently in March at Henderson Lake are over the mounds adjacent to and on either side of I-10, as well as the cypress-lined shore on the south end of Lake Bigeux.

One particular lure, a hair jig, in one particular color, solid black, has historically produced the most-savage reaction bite from sac-a-lait with spawning on their minds around cypress trees.

Why? Black, either a hair jig such as Mire's D&M Custom Jig or a soft plastic tube jig, infuriates sac-a-lait during the spawn because they hate spiders.

"If you throw black in there, they'll destroy it. Fish 6 inches deep with solid black, and they'll come out of the water to destroy it. An old man told me that story (many years ago)," said Daniel Mire, 65, who manufactures D&M Custom Jigs and has caught loads of sac-a-lait shallow around cypress trees.

Black isn't the only color that sac-a-lait bite, but it's a dominant one, said Mire, whose other favorite March in March are black/red (another spider-themed color), black/blue, black/chartreuse and black/green.

### WHERE TO FISH

Sac-a-lait gravitate to cypress trees in March, Mire said, and they also leave the deeper waters along I-10 for the mounds and flats along the concrete ribbon that crosses east to west over Henderson.

Kern's Pit, a perennial early spring hotspot, and George Dupuis Pit are proven options, too, according to Mire.

"I've been fishing Henderson Lake for years," he said. "I know it like the back of my hand. It can be tough to fish, very much so. (But) I tell you what, sometimes it's so good it's remarkable."

All bets are off, for the most part, if the Atchafalaya River stage at Butte La Rose is higher than 16 feet as March arrives. If the water's that high or higher, the chances for fair to good success are few and far between, Mire said. Two of the best bets during high-water conditions would be Kern's Pit, the levee side, and the submerged grass along the levee from Cypress Cove Landing to the bridge at Butte La Rose.

In a best-case scenario, if the BLR stage is 10 feet and falling, the sac-a-lait fishing would be "awesome," Mire said. Heck, even a slightly higher river stage on the fall helps.

"If it stays like this (15 feet at BLR) or comes down a little bit, it's going to be good. If it comes up like last year, in March, you're not going to be able to catch them. They'll be so far back in the woods you can't get to them," he said.

"March is very unpredictable, being the lake fluctuates by the river. If the water cleans up a little bit, the sac-a-lait usually start moving up in the shallows," he said. When the fish get shallow, they often can be found under the hyacinths. Just scoop out a hole in the vegetation and drop in a hair jig.

### CLEAR WATER IS GOOD WATER

Water clarity plays a key part in any success on a sac-a-lait



If the water isn't too high in Henderson Lake, crappie will be shallow around cypress trees.

fishing trip on the lake in March.

"If you can see your jig falling about 6 inches, that's good. You'll probably not catch many if you can't see it 4 inches," he said.

Typically, the farther west you go in the lake, the clearer the water, he said.

That's why another area often pays off with fat and sassy slabs on his 1/2-ounce jigs fished 4 to 6 inches deep under a small cork. Mire pointed sac-a-lait fishermen to the waters over the mounds between I-10 and the private boat landings along the West Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee. ■

— Don Shoopman




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**T**he word “march” is more than the name of a month. It’s also a military command that, in essence, means to MOVE! It is a verb and therefore, an action word, and according to Nick Rando, a Delacroix-area charter captain, it’s what you’re going to have to do to put together a decent box of fish this month.

“March really begins the trout transition, so they’ll be on the move, and anglers will have to do the same to catch them,” Rando said. “By now, winter is dying, but it’s usually got enough life in it to send a few last gasps of colder air our way. This month, the days do get longer, but even with the increasing period of March sunlight, it takes a while for the water temperatures to get back up into the trout’s comfort zone. It means the trout will hover in deeper water on chilly mornings and in colder weather, and then move into shallower water whenever we have milder temperatures, because shallow water warms up faster. But they won’t wander far from their deeper-water retreats, just in case winter shoots us a blast of cold air.”

**WHAT’S TO LIKE ABOUT MARCH >**

■ By Rusty Tardo

**DELACROIX-AREA GUIDE COMMANDS ANGLERS TO ‘MOVE’ IF THEY WANT TO FILL THEIR COOLERS WITH SPECKS, PLUS SOME BONUS REDS.**

# MARCH INTO SPRING TROUT

## WHAT'S TO LIKE ABOUT MARCH

Through the years, I've found that many anglers dread transition months because trout are scattered and often scarce. But Rando welcomes them, saying March really kicks off a great spring run of speckled trout in the Delacroix area, and he considers it a great time to chase them.

"I actually like fishing this month, because March is generally too early in the season to have to worry about a high river inundating our area with muddy, river water," he said. "We'll have to deal with that possibility by mid-April or May if upriver rains are heavy, but we sure hope the (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) won't have to open the spillway again this year. Last year's extremely high river and two spillway openings devastated our trout fishing, so we definitely don't want to see a repeat of that."

Rando also said you can get a little extra sleep before heading out on the water.

"In March, I actually prefer to fish a little later in the day; preferably late mornings and early afternoons," he said. "From about mid-February until early April, I find the bite is better when you leave a little later, so March gives you some bonus sleep."

## IF WINTER CLINGS TO LIFE

"If winter weather resurrects, you'll have to hunt reds and trout in the deeper bayous, like Bayou Batola, Bayou Robin, Crooked Bayou, False River and Oak River," Rando said. "The good thing is, winter tactics are simple: get into a sharp turn in the bayou where the water is typically deeper, anchor off and fish the ledges with either soft plastics on a  $\frac{3}{8}$ -ounce jig, or with live shrimp on a drop-shot rig, or with dead shrimp."

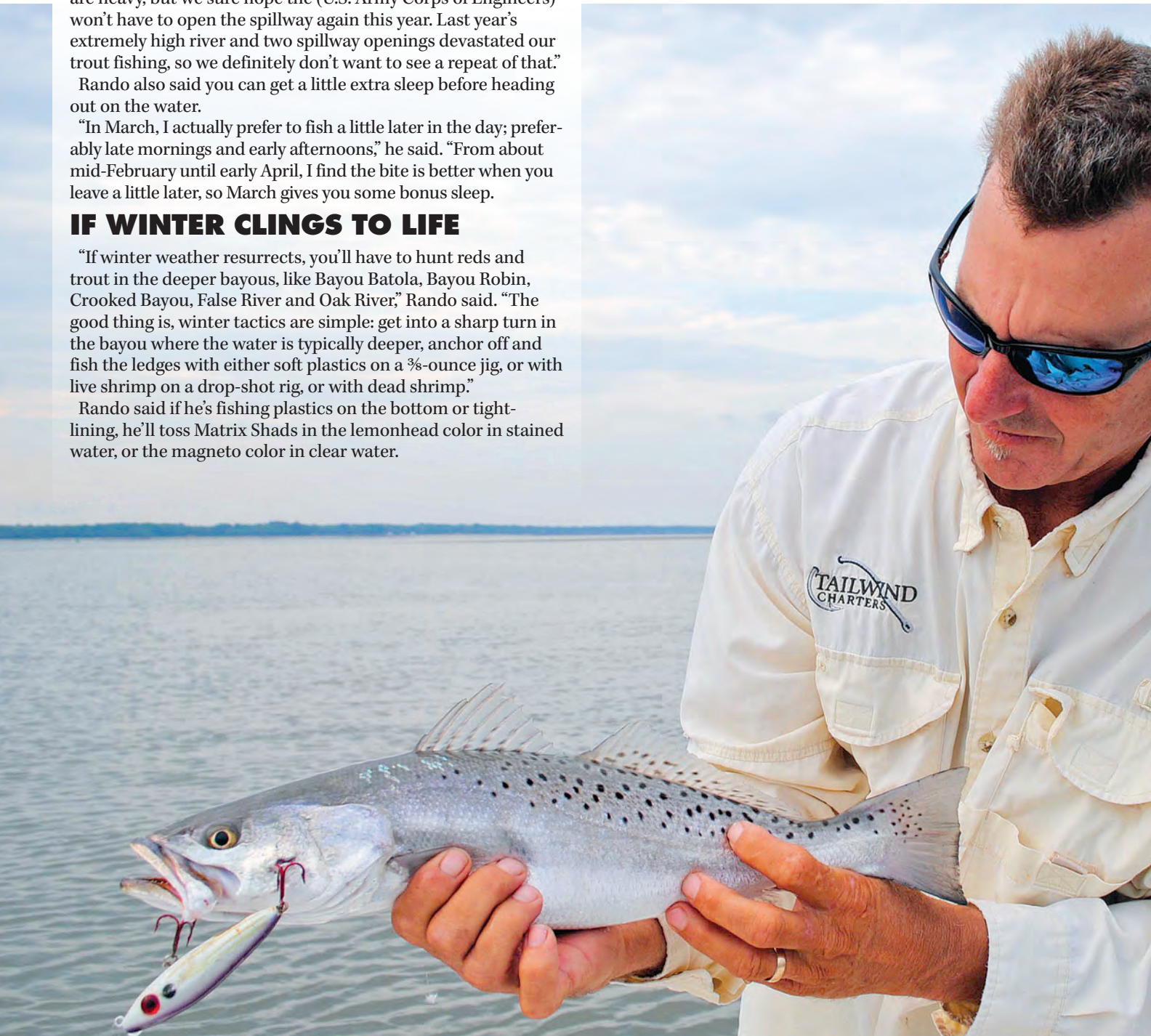
Rando said if he's fishing plastics on the bottom or tight-lining, he'll toss Matrix Shads in the lemonhead color in stained water, or the magneto color in clear water.

For fishing live shrimp on the bottom, he much prefers using a drop-shot rig rather than the usual sliding-sinker rig because he can feel both the bottom and the bite much better.

## MARCH MIDDLE GROUND

Rando said anglers want to target any of what he calls the "middle-ground" bays.

"By now, with the weather beginning to warm up, those trout will spread over the lakes and bays near those same, deeper bayous, so that's where you want to hunt this month: "Lake

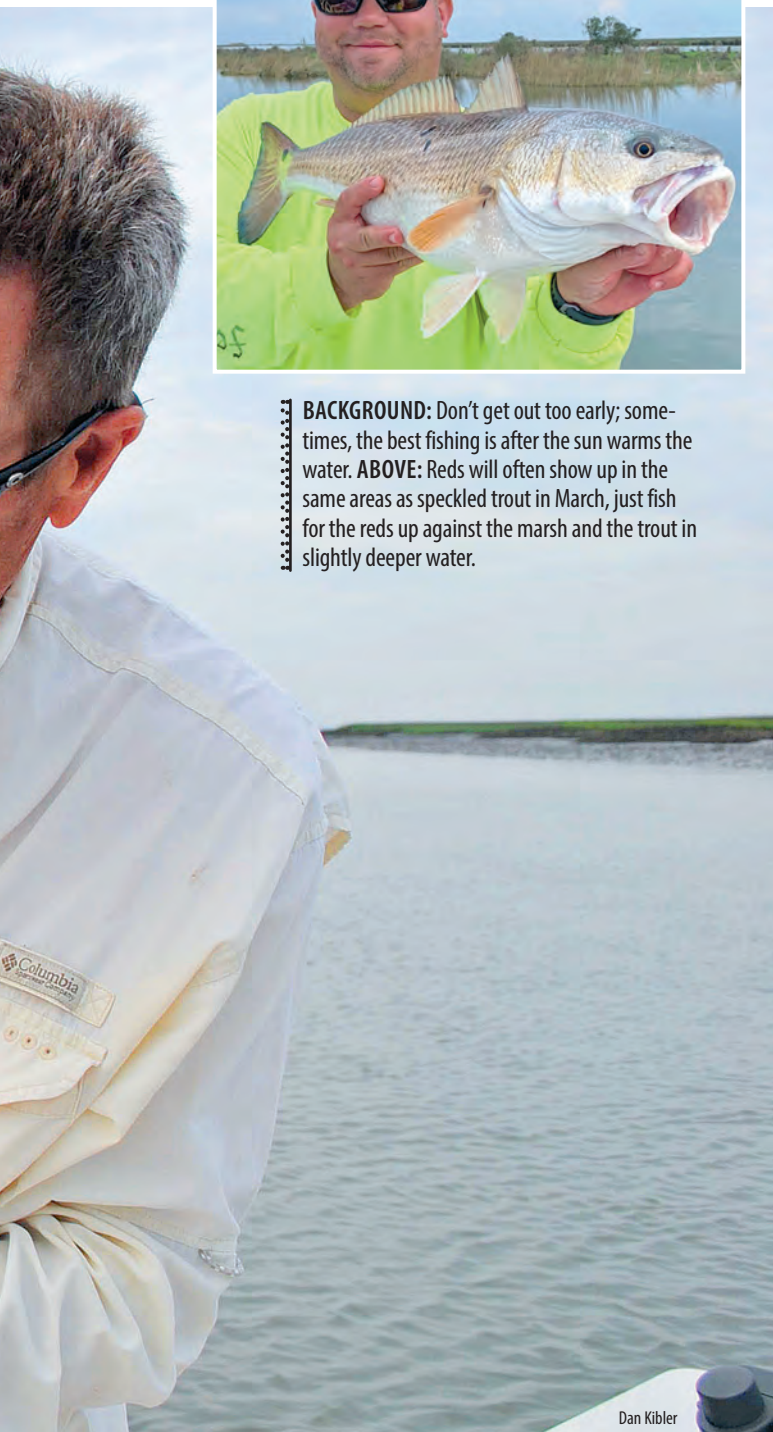


Batola, Pointe Fienne, Bay Jack Nevette, Skippy Lake, Bakers Bay, Lake John, Four Horse Lake, Pato Cabello, Grand Point Bay, Branville Bay, Bay Lafourche or really anywhere with deeper water nearby," he said.

**RANDO'S ROUTINE >**



BACKGROUND: Don't get out too early; sometimes, the best fishing is after the sun warms the water. ABOVE: Reds will often show up in the same areas as speckled trout in March, just fish for the reds up against the marsh and the trout in slightly deeper water.



Dan Kibler

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## RANDO'S ROUTINE

"I pick a lake or bay to fish, one I know usually holds trout this time of year, and I work it over thoroughly," Rando said. "I drift or troll off points and along the shoreline, and I look for current lines and bait activity. You just have to pick an area and work it. Position your boat so you can throw towards the bank for reds and towards the middle for specks. Yes, you can actually catch both in the same area this month.

"Give a spot five or six casts to produce some action. If you get none, move 25 or 30 yards down and try again. Don't run too far or you could pass up the fish. Just keep repeating that process until you've worked the bay over thoroughly."

## BAIT/LURE CHOICES

Rando keeps it simple. Either live shrimp or the 3-inch Vudu shrimp in glow/chartreuse or the natural color, fished about 3 to 4 feet under a 4-Horsemen cork. He said the extra-noisy cork does draw more attention to your bait in bigger bays and the windy conditions common to coastal marsh fishing.

Later in the spring, as the water temperature rises, Rando will shallow up to fish 2½ to 3 feet under a cork.

"Overall, I find I catch more fish by fishing just a little deeper this month, because the fish are staying closer to the bottom, even in the shallower bays," he said. "Fish shallow enough to keep your bait off the bottom, but deep enough to reach the fish that are hovering just off the bottom."

## WIND, WEATHER

Anglers have to watch the wind and weather forecasts and pick the better days. The normal average high temperature in March is 72 degrees, and average lows are in the mid-to-high 50s. Winds tend to be more from the north and northeast early in the month, but they become more easterly by mid-month, and by late March, mostly east and southeast. Wind speeds can vary widely from 0 to 15 mph on average.

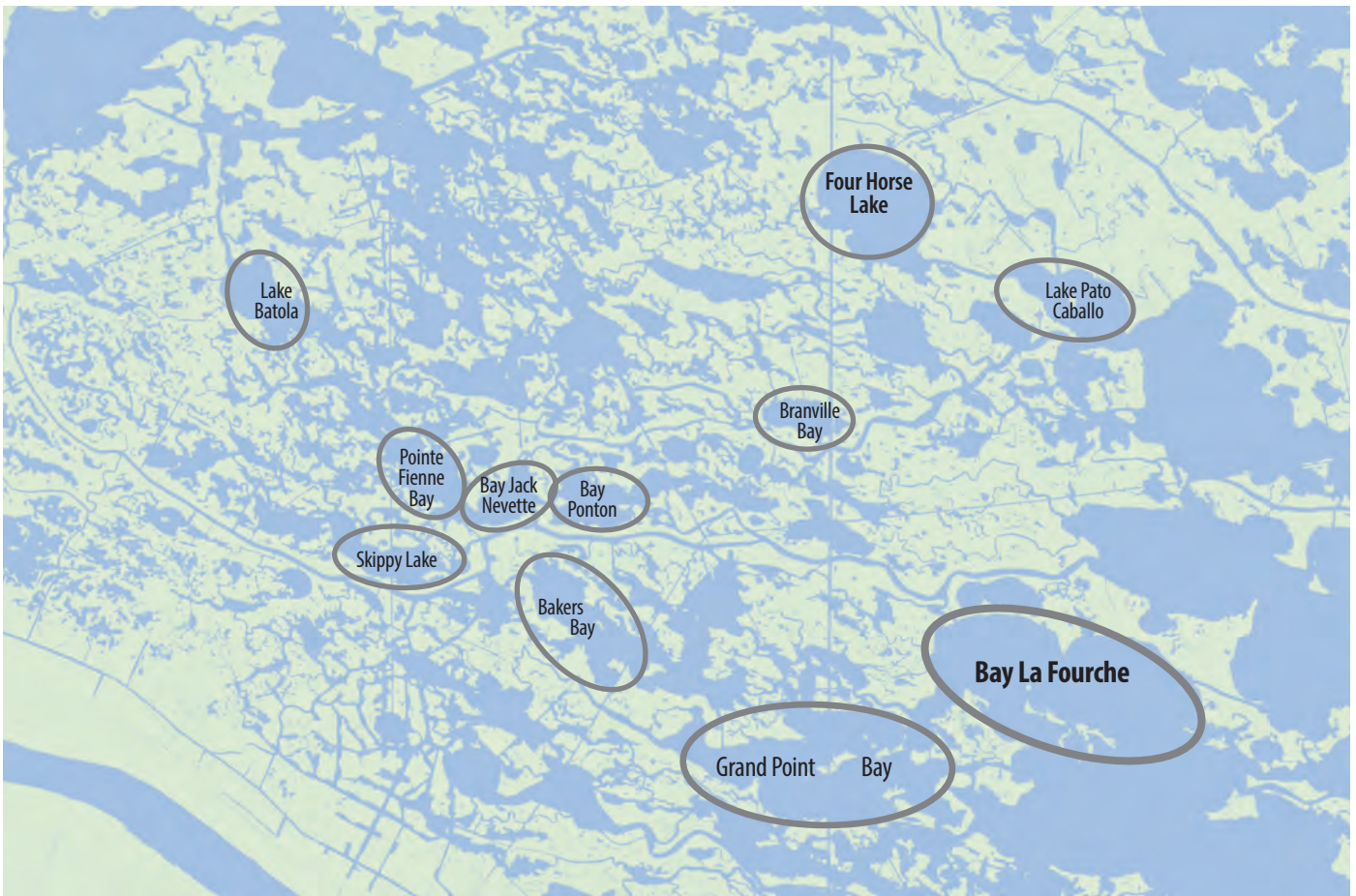
If you're in an area that holds promise for specks, work it thoroughly and don't leave if you're catching fish, however scattered.



Nick Rando and Rick Raymond admire a nice Delacroix-area redfish, a common spring catch.

Dan Kibler

## CHOKE POINTS >



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## CHOKE POINTS

Trout begin their annual transition from the deeper bayous of the interior marsh toward outside waters, so they could be almost anywhere from those bayous to nearby lakes and bays. Keep in mind that main bayous and canals that funnel water in and out of the marsh are natural highways they'll travel, so find a choke point — the mouth of a bayou or anywhere the water narrows down to flow into a bay — and fish there. But remember the Rando rule: five or six casts, if nothing bites, move. Try under a cork and cast-and-retrieve. If you are getting enough bites to keep you in that spot, then stay.

"As long as you are putting fish in the box, even if the action is not fast and furious, it's better to catch fish slowly and steadily than to leave fish to look for fish," he said.

Another favorite tactic of Rando's is to fish any of the bigger bays that have grass beds along the shore.

Nick Rando put Grant Wiederhold on this nice spring redbfish, which was pushing the top end of the slot.



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"Troll right along the edge of the grass bed and cast out away from the grass towards the middle," he said. "I often find some bigger trout hanging outside those grass beds and they'll smack those small MirrOdine lures. You might only catch five or six fish there, but they'll be big."

And if nothing is happening in the inside bayous and bays, burn some fuel and try the same techniques in the bigger bays nearer the outside waters. After all, it's March, so you gotta move.

It's the same routine Rando said he'll follow in April. ■

*Capt. Nick Rando can be reached at 504-281-8287.*

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**Rusty Tardo** grew up in St. Bernard fishing the waters of Delacroix, Hopedale and Shell Beach. He and his wife, Diane, have been married over 40 years and live in Kenner.

**SPECKLED TRUTH** ➤



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## SPECKLED TRUTH

Chris Bush

Persistence and patience both had a role in the author landing this huge Texas trout on a terrible weather day.



# NEVER GIVE UP! THAT BIG SPECK WON'T

TROPHY TROUT SOMETIME TAKE A VERY SPECIAL EFFORT ON THE PART OF A PERSISTENT ANGLER

Terry Madewell

**W**hether young or old, freshwater or saltwater, if you're a fisherman, chances are you remember Mike Iaconelli's 2003 Bassmaster Classic victory.

Screaming "Never give up!" at the top of his lungs, little did Iaconelli know those words would not only permeate the marsh around Venice, La., but would ripple their way into present day.

I bring this up to introduce this month's topic: common traits among big trout anglers. Michael Salinas, a big-trout specialist from Corpus Christi, Texas, beautifully described the process of targeting trophy fish as "ugly" in a Speckled Truth podcast. Going even further, notable big-trout legends like Jay Watkins, Mike McBride and Doc Bob Weiss unanimously agree that the three qualities a

big-trout angler should have are persistence, patience and a heavy dose of mental toughness. In other words, it's not easy, and the pursuit for a giant will test the nerves of any angler — sometimes even for a lifetime.

## PERSISTENCE

Persistence is a noun that means a firm or obstinate continuance in a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition. A friend who was once asked about one of her most-valued qualities, without hesitation, responded, "A person who keeps showing up." For fisherman, that equates to, "There is no substitute for time on the water."

On that same podcast recording with Salinas, I had every intent of fishing the next day despite a hard northwest wind accompanying a mid-winter front.

Cold, misty, windy conditions greeted my 4 a.m. wake-up time, and the palm trees outside his apartment complex tried to talk me into going back to bed. Fortunately, I don't understand their language, and with Salinas' help, I got my gear in the truck and off I went, even if that meant "just showing up."

## PATIENCE

If you Googled "Top 10 Traits of highly successful people," patience is perpetually atop most lists. I would argue that as anglers, it's probably one of our most-



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

undervalued qualities, but most important. More often than not, patience in letting a bite develop or changing techniques to target certain parts of the water column, has directly led to success. On this particular day it was the latter.

After getting set up, I realized that wind and water conditions refined my lure selection to slow-rising jerkbaits. With capping waves the norm, I knew a free-floating Fat Boy or Slow Sink would not reach my targeted depth. Also, a jighead and soft-plastic would be a little heavy and not afford the castability I was looking to achieve, so I stayed patient with a jerkbait.

Starting with a Rapala Shadow Rap Shad, I worked hard to no avail. Wanting to change ascent profile and speed, I switched to a Megabass Vision 110 to get a little deeper, and not long after that, I caught my first fish. The bite was picking up, but unfortunately, it was short-lived. To try to keep the bite alive, I switched to an IMA Flit 100, a Jackal Rerange 110, then ultimately a Rapala Shadow Rap.

After three cold hours, I only had four fish for my efforts, but I decided to press on and be patient fishing the lower half of the water column. So, I stuck with a Rapala Shadow Rap.

## MENTAL TOUGHNESS

Time after time, we hear elite-level athletes talk about their level of performance in times of adversity. Paraphrasing slightly, you will often hear, "We had to put mistakes behind us, be mentally tough and execute better." Mental toughness is about blocking out adversity and zoning in on the task.

With rain pelting the hood on my jacket, thoughts of calling it a day started to evolve, especially with the air temperature hovering around 50. Knowing that I'm on the front side of a mid-day major, a day before the full moon, if a giant were to eat, it would be the time. Encouraged by that thought, I blocked out the environmental noise and my own inner voice and instead focused on my cadence and my movement. Being as precise as I could, despite shivering, I made a long cast like so many other failed attempts that day, except this one didn't come back empty.

Instead, with savage simplicity, my bait rushed to the roof of a willing predator. Anchored by the two remaining trebles on the back of the bait, an enormous trout emerged from the water with polarizing head shakes.

Discontent with her decision, she decided to continue her violent, on-the-water display. Unsuccessful in her previous attempts, she decided that making long runs would present a suitable alternative.

On the other end of the line, I hung on for dear life. Whispered offerings to the Man Upstairs turned to audible coaching of the situation at hand. Understanding that I was alone, I decided to work the fish to shallower water to help with the landing process. After a 10-minute fight, my second double-digit trout lay comfortably in the net,

and I gawked at her.

Realizing I did not have my seamstress tape, I took some spare line from my pocket and measured her length and girth. After a few quick pictures and the Boga grip bouncing on 10 pounds, I figured it would be a good time to watch her swim away. After a tense drive home with a wondering mind, I measured the leader lines and she taped out at 31½ inches long, with close to a 16¾-girth — a true Texas giant.

## NEVER GIVE UP

For years, I've compared the similarities of trout fishing to the lives we live. Whether that's being persistent in a job, patient in a relationship or mentally tough through financial struggles, the parallel between man and fish extend way beyond the banks.

As I stood there on a cold, windy flat after watching her swim away, I couldn't help but be inspired — not only by her existence, but inspired by her willingness to validate my persistence, patience and mental toughness.

So I encourage you, regardless if its your life or angling journey, to never give up. Never, ever give up. Thanks Ike...we owe you one. ■

## MATCH BAITS, TECHNIQUES ➤



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# MATCH BAITS, TECHNIQUES

By Jon Miller

**D**ifferent jerkbaits work better when fished with different retrieves or techniques. Here are seven popular jerkbaits and techniques that match their strengths. These aren't the only jerkbaits around, but they cover the range of styles and functions of jerkbaits regularly used.

- **RAPALA X-RAP M08.** The M08 is a 3½-inch jerkbait that suspends and has a dive rating of 3 to 5 feet. It has a profile closely matching the inland silverside minnow or a bay anchovy and will catch trout weighing upwards of 4 pounds regularly. Work this lure with hard jerks and short pauses. It's great in spring and fall, and especially when rapidly fishing a shoreline looking for scattered trout.

- **RAPALA SHADOW RAP M11.** This is a suspending, lipped bait, 4¾ inches long, with a shallow-diving depth of 2 to 4 feet. Because it's a shallow diver, use it in warmer water around rock jetties and in shallow, marsh areas. It is best fished more slowly than an X-Rap, and the longer profile gives it big-meal appeal, like a medium-sized mullet.

- **RAPALA SHADOW RAP SHAD DEEP M09.** This jerkbait is 3½ inches long, with a 5- to 6-foot dive rating. This bait works on trout hanging in deeper water that will strike because of an aggressive bait presentation.

- **RAPALA SUBWALK M09.** This is a lipless jerkbait, often called a twitchbait. Its 3½-inch, full body gives it the profile of a meal-sized mullet. It's labeled as suspending with a running depth of 2 feet, but it sinks readily, so it can be fished deep if a slower action is used. The SubWalk has a fluid movement when twitched; it will glide aimlessly when line tension is released. Fish the bait with a couple of twitches, followed by about 5 seconds of slack line.

- **PAUL BROWN'S FAT BOY SUSPENDING.** The Fat Boy is a big-profile twitchbait, even though it's only 3½ inches long. It's called "suspending," but in brackish water, it's slow-sinking. Fat Boys have a semi-rigid rubber body that is soft to the touch. Some of these lures, including the Fat Boy, have a bendable tail feature, which allows the bait to be set to rise or dive when twitched. Bending the tail down causes a dive and up makes it rise. Another special feature is its wedge-shaped body that makes it wobble from side to side when falling. This feature puts extra action into the fall, which is great because the trout typically strike a falling or resting bait.

Fish the Fat Boy relatively slowly and allowing plenty of fall time. The sinking characteristic, combined with excellent twitch action, make this bait an excellent cold-water alternative to jiggling swimbaits.

- **PAUL BROWN'S SOFT-DINE SUSPENDING.** The Soft-Dine is a small-profile twitchbait that is 3 inches long. There is also a larger, XL version that behaves similarly. It's constructed like the Fat Boy, sinks readily and has the same wobble on the fall. It does not have the tail adjustment. Throw this bait up against rocks, like the MRGO rocks, and give the bait plenty of fall time. This bait is very productive when fished slowly, but it can also maintain good action when worked with hard jerks, making it a good choice for fast-paced fishing.

- **LIVE TARGET SARDINE TWITCHBAIT.** This is a floating twitchbait, that is 3½ inches long, with a big profile. It will submerge to a few inches when worked. It has a nice, darting action, but the floating body makes the action more subdued as compared to suspending baits. Fish this bait over submerged grass beds, where it's hard to keep a suspending jerkbait out of the grass. ■



Rapala X-Rap M08



Rapala Shadow Rap M11



Rapala Shadow Rap Shad Deep



Rapala SubWalk M09



Mirrolure Paul Brown's Fat Boy Suspending



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**SABINE, BIG LAKE EXPECTATIONS >**

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# GREAT EXPECTATIONS ON SABINE, BIG LAKE

Speckled trout should be working strong; big fish make great showing in spring

**D**rifting onto a flat at the north end of Sabine, I asked Ryan Pyburn, "Do you see anything?" "Nope," he said, "How about you?" Unfortunately, my response was the same.

The water clarity was decent but had zero signs of life. We quickly decided to motor further south in search of greener pastures. Pelicans were diving, and mullet were jumping as we trolled into our next spot, a great sign for any angler in search of a trout bite. When I turned to let him know that I was hooked up, I noticed he had a fish on as well.

Pyburn was fishing a MirrOdine XXL with a black back and orange belly, while I was chunking a swimbait. The fish were hanging near the bottom in 4 feet of water, with no interest in our topwaters.

Pyburn is addicted to the bluewater, where he spends a lot of time aboard his Contender, but he is also a darn good trout fisherman. We pick each other's brain on a regular basis and both agree that if you're going to catch your biggest-ever trout, it is likely to be during March or April. As water temperatures gradually warm, trout begin to feed more frequently and get ready to start spawning. Research may vary slightly but supports spawning in water temperatures as low as 71 degrees up to as high as 93, with the majority taking place in the low-80s. That resulting in trout being the heaviest they will be during the early spring.



Hungry trout have nearly knocked off all the paint from this Super Spook.

Photo by Capt. Adam Jaynes



Ryan Pyburn with a solid trout under windy conditions. Wade fishing allows us to fish quietly and slowly, resulting in increased opportunities to land high quality fish.

Photo courtesy Ryan Pyburn

## TROUT LOCATIONS, TACTICS

Fortunately for us, trout will be drawing much more attention to themselves, making them much easier to locate and catch. Slicks may as well be a white flag raised in surrender, as they are a tell-tale sign of feeding fish. If you aren't into the wading program, I'd highly recommend investing in a Power Pole if you don't already have one, as well as a good drift sock. A manual anchor will work fine, just try to avoid heaving it like a sack of feed. One thing for sure is that the wind is going to blow, being able to stop or at least slow down your drift is essential.

We should also start seeing some signs of bird activity over feeding trout, and redfish hustling shrimp to the surface. On Sabine, this will start on the south end, west of Blue Buck Point and traveling north from there along the levees. On Big Lake, we will see them starting in West Cove and just east of the washout up to Long Point. A good pair of binoculars will help save you some fuel if you're into the bird action.

Slow sinkers and suspending baits will still get the job done if you're after the trophy trout bite, but you'll find the likes of Pyburn choosing topwaters. In high wind conditions, I believe the noisier the better. A hi-frequency She Dog or a Heddon One Knocker should get the job done just fine. I highly recommend a monofilament leader in the 20- to 30-pound class if fishing braided line to allow for a little stretch for those quick runs to prevent pulling hooks. Make sure you've got a good knot tied, back off the drag a little and hang on. ■

— Capt. Adam Jaynes

*Capt. Adam Jaynes can be found at [justfishsabine.com](http://justfishsabine.com).*



**Capt. Adam Jaynes** grew up fishing both Sabine Lake and Lake Calcasieu and their surrounding bayous, marshes and rivers. He specializes in light tackle with artificial lures in the year-around pursuit of speckled trout and redfish.

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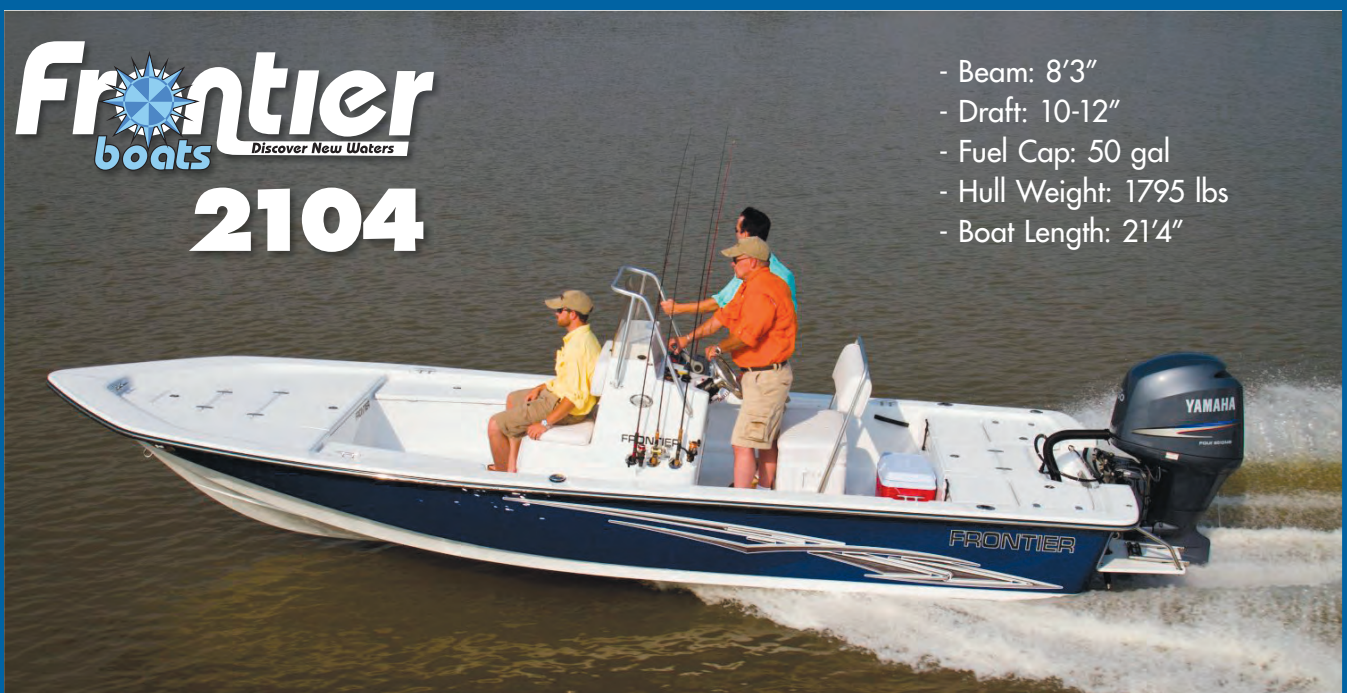
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# The little **TURKEY** CALL that could

**CEDAR HILL'S LITTLE SCRATCH BOX CAN HELP YOU TALK TURKEY WHEN YOU NEED TO.**

■ By Kinny Haddox

**T**urkey hunting is perhaps the most-challenging outdoor sport. You have to learn to “talk” like your target, then you have to convince a wary, sharp-eyed gobbler to strut into shotgun range. You can camouflage yourself, but you can’t hide in a big blind, and any movement will send the turkey racing away faster than a speeding bullet.

That means you need to master talking turkey with a really good call, and you have to use it with a minimum amount of movement. That’s the itch that led life-long turkey hunter Jerry Antley of Downsville to come up with his signature Cedar Hills Game Calls “Little Scratch Box.”



# It's the little call that could.

“It took some work, but it has the same sound as a bigger call,” Antley said of the 2-inch cedar box that you can easily hold and then slip into your shirt pocket when you are done. “We worked a long time to get the sound down as close to a real turkey as we could. We tested it and let the turkeys tell us when we got it right.”

The Little Scratch Box is great for close-in calling and can make a beautiful purring sound that drives big toms crazy. Handmade from 100% pure cedar, it requires a CH13 chalk stick. Antley, who has won numerous National Wild Turkey Federation calling contests and has been a leader at various organizational levels for NWTF, said to use your chalk generously and hold the striker stick between your thumb and middle finger. Gently drag the beveled edge of the striker at a 45-degree angle over the thin edge of the call. Most box calls are 6 to 8 inches long and have hinged lids that are moved to make the sound. The Little Scratch Box makes a big sound with very little movement.

Antley said that you can't just pick the call up and go to the woods without practice, and to have confidence, you have to learn by either listening to some sort of CD or video or go with someone who is an expert. Today, there are plenty of YouTube videos that can help you get started.

“Turkey hunting is special, because it is just hard to beat the one-on-one challenge of you

and the bird,” Antley said. “It's the fact that when you are calling that turkey, and he's calling you back, it's just amazing. You are carrying on a conversation from 300 to 400 yards away. He calls. You call. Sometimes, it's only a few minutes. Sometimes, it is hours. The main key is patience, confident patience. And to be successful, you've got to talk him up close — like 40 yards away — to get a shot. There's more that can go wrong than can go right.”

There is one other thing that is vital to successful turkey hunt-





**BELOW:** Talking turkey with an excited gobbler during the spring season is the perfect spot for the Little Scratch Box.

ing with the Little Scratch Box.

“Learn to make all the sounds that a turkey makes,” he said. “Study up on when to use which one. And you have to learn to locate turkeys and get where they are. I don’t care how good you are on the Little Scratch Box, you can’t call in turkeys where there aren’t any.”




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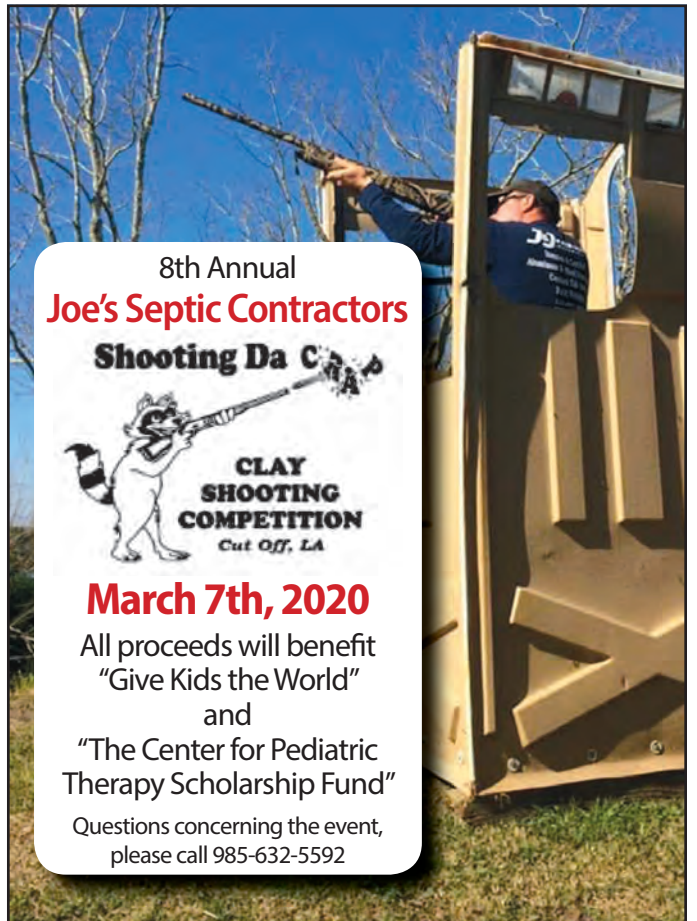
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**A**ntley said three key calls you need to learn are all hen calls: yelps, clucks and purrs. The yelp is the No. 1 mating call of the hen. The cluck and purr are soft “contentment” calls turkeys use to let other turkeys know everything is okay. There is another call — the gobble — but Antley rarely uses that, because he doesn’t want other hunters hearing it, then easing up through the woods and seeing something moving around up in the bushes, especially if that something moving is you.

“I seldom use the gobble unless it’s a last step, and I am trying to get a big gobbler in the final few yards by making him jealous and thinking another gobbler is moving in on his hens. Never use it repeatedly,” he said.

When using the Little Scratch Box, you don’t have to wait until the turkey gets within sight to know what you are calling. Antley said it comes with experience, but a big gobbler has a long, deep raspy gobble. A younger jake will make shorter, less gruff gobbles.

More than 100,000 Little Scratch Box calls have been sold.

Antley also produces the Cedar Hill Hen, Bayou Thunder and Super Double Glass call. ■



*Kinny Haddox has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 45 years. He publishes a daily website, [lakedarbornelife.com](http://lakedarbornelife.com) and is a member of the Louisiana Chapter of the Outdoor Legends Hall of Fame. He and his wife, DiAnne, live in West Monroe.*



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**GRUNTS & GOBBLES >**

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## GRUNTS & GOBBLES

David Moreland

Jakes rarely display the same caution that makes big gobblers so tough to kill, so should hunters avoid killing them? Not really, David Moreland says.



# JAKES: SHOOT OR NOT?

MANY TURKEY HUNTERS TURN UP THEIR NOSES AT YOUNG TOMS. ARE THEY RIGHT OR WRONG?

**H**unters debate a lot of things, one of the best-known concerns spike bucks: Once a spike always a spike. If you think a spike will never be a trophy buck, or if you're really hungry, you shoot. If you think, with proper age and nutrition, that a spike can become a trophy, probably not.

In the world of the Tenth Legion, turkey hunters, the question is whether or not you should shoot jakes. A true, blood member of this elite hunter cult would never shoot a jake — an immature male bird — but a novice would no doubt be thrilled to bag one.

Hunting regulations say it is legal to kill one gobbler per day — one gobbler, with no stipulations about age or beard length. A bearded hen is not a gobbler and not legal to shoot. Veteran turkey hunters are in it for the challenge of connecting with an adult tom and would never shoot a jake; well, maybe if it was the last day of the season, and they had

not filled a tag and the clock was ticking.

The jake harvest accounts for probably less than 30% of the total annual harvest, and Louisiana biologists generally do not feel this is a problem. Let the hunters decide what to harvest. With the harvest being low, there will be movement of young birds into the older age groups, so they do not feel the need to restrict the harvest of jakes as some states have, establishing a minimum beard length to eliminate their harvest.

## COMING TO CALLS

Veteran hunters commonly feel it is rather easy to kill a jake, since they will readily respond to calling and decoys, whereas an old wise tom that has experienced encounters with hunters in past seasons is a more worthy opponent. I readily confess that I have both passed up and shot jakes. To me, it is not that big of a deal, especially since I really enjoy eating southern fried wild turkey.

Over the years, I have had some interesting encounters with jakes. Once, I heard a tom gobbling in a creek drain, so I went in and set up and began calling. The gobbling tom came closer, and then three jakes appeared in gun range. Somewhat surprised, I watched them, and sure enough, all three gobbled at the same time. Every time they gobbled, it would be simultaneously. I left the drain and moved to a different area and started calling. A tom responded, and I set up by a trail on the edge of an opening. The gobbling tom came closer, and then I saw it; my tom was the same three jakes that would gobble in unison.



David 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](http://www.SportsmanGear.com) and at Amazon.com.

Of course, one reason to allow shooting jakes is to provide opportunity to youth hunters, especially ones who have never hunted. No need at all to deny the opportunity for a youth to kill a turkey and perhaps add a new hunter to the hunting community.

## GROWN UP

If a tom lives to be a year old, it has a very good chance of living for several more years, barring disease issues. This is one reason veteran hunters pass up jakes; they know that there is a high probability of the tom being around next year when it is a 2-year-old longbeard. No doubt, some of the elite of the elite may even pass up 2-year-old toms, but I have not reached that status.

A grown turkey is fully capable of eluding most predators. It is interesting to note that research done by former turkey biologist Jimmy Stafford documented a 50% loss of tagged toms on Bens Creek WMA due to hunting pressure. An adult tom can elude a bobcat, but the call of the seductive hen produced by a human hunter is hard to avoid.

The most important management work a hunter can do is to report the gobblers they harvest. In many areas of Louisiana, there has been a decline in turkey numbers, which obviously has resulted in a decline in the turkey harvest. The more information that biologists have regarding turkey populations, the better management effort can be applied. Let me encourage you to report your harvest, whether it be a Jake or an adult gobbler. ■



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# GREEN-OUT SAVES THE DAY

**WHEN SPRING BRINGS OUT NEW GROWTH ON NATURAL PLANTS, YOUR LOCAL DEER HERD WILL PROSPER, BUT IT TAKES MORE TO IMPROVE THEIR YEAR-ROUND HEALTH.**

By Dave Moreland

**It's**

been a mild and wet winter, and signs of spring are popping out on the landscape.

During the fall and winter, many of the browse species that deer have been eating lose their leaves and enter a period of dormancy. If the winter is a cold one, with regular freezes, the forage that deer normally eat become scarce, and if the habitat is poor, it can be a tough time for deer.

Fortunately, we have several browse species on the Louisiana landscape that can quickly recover from a freeze, and when it warms up, begin to produce new growth. Honeysuckle, Smilax, privet, yellow jessamine and blackberry are some of the better browse species that can survive freezes and remain on the landscape during the colder months. Climbing fern and Horse Sugar shrub are two other plants that maintain leaves during

the winter and can be heavily browsed by deer. If the habitat is holding high numbers of deer, over-browsing can be readily seen. The green leaves of the Smilax vines will be eaten, and only the spiny green stems will remain.

Because of the changes in browse conditions during the fall and winter, it is only natural for deer to shift their food demand to fruit and acorns. Their body and antler growth have ended; does are finishing up rearing fawns, and nutritional demands seek out the sugars and carbohydrates in the acorns to develop body fat. Fat reserves will be available for the animal should winter conditions remain through February and into March. Does have been bred, and the bucks begin losing antlers; soon, the cycle starts again with spring green-out.

**HARD MAST IS A KEY >**

## HARD MAST IS A KEY

An early green-out will definitely help those herds that are over-populated or habitats that are not well-managed. Despite what you might hear or read, the hard-mast crop — acorns and pecans — is important to Louisiana's deer. A good mast crop will maintain a deer herd in good condition during the stress of winter, and the deer will be in better condition going into green-out. A poor mast crop results in reduced food availability on the landscape, especially in areas where browse is limited.

This past fall's mast crop was decent — on some areas better than other areas — but it was not as good as it was in 2018. Cow oaks were limited on the Pearl River WMA, which, from what I see, is a key for hunter success. By December, around the trees that had produced acorns, the nuts were gone, and deer and hogs were scrounging for whatever water and obtusa oak acorns they could find. I looked at the stomach of one young deer in late December and it had 1½ acorns in it. I did note that the deer in the northwest piney woods were eating as many acorns as corn, which is unusual from what I have seen in past years. Corn generally dominates the intake of deer in these parishes where the habitat is pine-dominated, but this year, it appears that a good crop of water oak and willow oak acorns was present. On our small property in East Feliciana Parish, there are still water oak acorns on the ground, which might attract a few pigs later on and also help the deer going into green-out.

## GREEN-OUT FIXES THINGS

When green-out occurs, the landscape becomes flush, and deer generally don't have to travel much to find food. I have always noticed a drop in the browsing on food plots.

With the high-quality forage available everywhere, deer don't have to trek to the green patches to fill up. This can actually help the green patches, giving them time to recover somewhat if the browsing has been heavy, particularly on the clovers.

If the land manager has done a good job with plantings, and there is plenty of clover forage, deer get an added boost from the quality native plants and the quality clover. Protein demands have increased with body growth, new antler growth and pregnancy maintenance, and the new growth of browse plants on the landscape is a boon for the deer. Areas that had acorns available for deer, combined with quality browse, should see quality deer during the fall of 2020.

One of the key ingredients for deer management is to have quality, diverse habitat. Browse conditions should be such that quality forage can be found during the early spring and during the hot, late summer. A sound timber management program is



a must to accomplish this. Forest management that creates a dominant pine forest will not be the habitat that deer need to achieve maximum growth and development. Low body weights and sub-par antler growth is typical on this type of habitat.

**MANAGE TREES FOR MAST >**



These Smilax (greenbriar) stems have no leaves; deer have eaten them, an indication of heavy browsing pressure. **BACKGROUND:** Clover in the deer food plots will only had to the quality native nutrition during green-out.

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**GREEN-OUT  
SAVES THE DAY**

**MANAGE TREES  
FOR MAST**

Forest management that maintains a good hardwood component with both soft mast and hard mast is a must. On dominant pine forest sites, forage plantings and winter feeding is needed to maintain the herd. Unfortunately, many clubs and landowners simply do not have the means to do intense plantings. Our small property is surrounded by acres and acres of pine forests, and my objective is to produce a hardwood oasis in the piney woods. I have sawtooth oaks that within 5 years should start producing acorns in the early fall. The mature water and willow oaks that were present have not been cut and are currently providing mast. There were no white oaks on the landscape, so I have focused on planting white oaks and cow oaks, especially the latter, which produces a really large acorn that deer relish. Last year, I planted a 100-yard strip of cow oaks in a dove field, and this year I used the extra trees that sprouted to plant another 100-



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yard strip. While I might not live to benefit from these plantings, my son and grandsons will.

I have also planted obutsa oaks, pear trees, mayhaw trees, persimmons and plums. I would like to plant some blackgum trees. I have planted arrowwood shrubs that deer browse, and I try to maintain the habitat to produce elderberry shrubs. The privet shrubs, which are everywhere, has been removed from the edges of fields; it seems when this is done, the elderberry comes back. Habitat work is a year-round process, and now is the time to do the tree planting. Develop a good management plan and work it. When green-out happens, this is the time to do browse survey work and see what browse plants you have and what the deer are eating. LDWF has private lands biologists who can help with this. Do not hesitate to call them. ■



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



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**APEX PREDATOR >**

## APEX PREDATOR

Joshua Chauvin

The author closed out a long, frustrating deer season by taking this buck in a spot where another buck had gotten away.



# SOMETIMES IT TAKES ALL SEASON

MONTHS OF FRUSTRATION TURN TO EXCITEMENT AS DEER SEASON WANES

**S**ome deer seasons, everything seems to go right, but others are a test of persistence. Luckily, archery hunters are blessed with a very long season, giving ample time to score on a deer.

This season started out amazingly, when I downed a record-book elk, using my vintage recurve bow, on the 13th day on my annual Colorado public-land trip. I hit the Louisiana woods feeling on top of the world but was quickly reminded that whitetails are much harder targets to hit with these slow-flying arrows.

## TOUGH HUNTS

October and November were filled with many close calls chasing does. On one hunt, my arrow drilled the one, tiny sapling in front of a doe after a near-perfect stalk. Another stalk on a windy morning resulted in a big doe inside of 20 yards ducking my arrow. On one hunt, I forgot my shooting glove and drew short, send-

ing the arrow under the doe. And those were just a few of the does that got away.

I saw several bucks from my stand early in the season. I switched to my heavy-powered Black Widow recurve for some hunts. After many weeks of hard hunting, I was able to down a buck when one finally walked close enough.

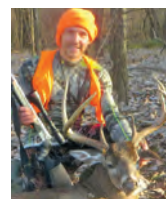
The next deer encounter was the most frustrating; I lost a buck while bowhunting. The video clearly showed the unalerted buck, 20 yards away, lunging forward around 18 inches in the split second the arrow was in flight. I gave the deer nearly 24 hours before tracking, but I still bumped him in a high, briar-filled cutover 70 yards from the spot of the shot. I never saw him again in multiple days of searching.

## ARROW SPEEDS

I've had several deer duck my 330-foot-per-second compound bow arrows in the past, but my traditional arrows flying less

than 160 feet per second gives the deer more than twice the time to dodge. One article I read that crunched deer reaction-time numbers using bowhunting videos, to avoid a deer vertically ducking a 230-fps arrow, you'd have to aim 6 inches low at 20 yards and 17 inches low at 30 yards. Sadly, these are estimates using an arrow flying nearly 50-percent faster than the ones I shoot.

What's worse is, one cannot accurately predict the horizontal direction the deer may react; sometimes it's forward, sometimes it's reverse. Then comes the unpredictable shifting and rotating of the deer's torso. No matter how accurate one is in practice sessions, these jumpy



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

deer can leave the most accurate shots landing far from the mark.

## ARROW NOISE

Having a quiet rig will help dampen the thud from the arrow's release, but the noise of the flying arrow is still something deer often react to within milliseconds. A hunter cannot hear how loud an approaching arrow really is. Sound testing videos taken of arrows flying from the target's point of view demonstrate this whirling noise that the deer hears throughout the arrow's flight.

Sometimes a deer doesn't begin to react until hearing an approaching arrow in the final several yards. This still gives deer enough time to potentially move its vitals from the point of impact. Watching archery hunts in slow motion will really demonstrate the amazing reaction ability of a whitetail.

Heavier arrows fly slower and drop more quickly, but they are much quieter in flight. Larger feathers help stabilize arrows, but they decrease speed and increase noise. In archery, everything is a trade-off.

## WOES CONTINUE

In December, I had more bad luck. Several times, I had nice, racked bucks on camera just after or before shooting hours or in daylight before arriving or leaving the location. Other times, while hunting one tree, I had other deer show up had deer show up on camera at my other, nearby spot. These cameras are great tools to use on WMAs, but they can really tease a hunter.

On one hunt, I was about to shoot a buck, and just before he got to the perfect spot, two other bucks ran in from another direction. I twisted around in hopes of shooting the bigger one. He was standing at 15 yards, looking at the first buck, presenting a quality shot. I was caught in between them and unable to draw. Soon, the closer buck glanced up and busted me. All three skipped out of range and fed together for a while.

This wasn't shaping up to be one of my hotter seasons, when I saw plenty of deer and let smaller ones walk. I was going to have to work harder than ever to fill another tag. My hunting buddy had missed several deer, including three trophy bucks, and he had wounded a nice buck with his traditional bow, so at least I had a friend with whom to commiserate. When you're using a recurve bow,

the deer will win most of the time, and that's part of the ultimate challenge one must accept.

## TRIPLE DUEL

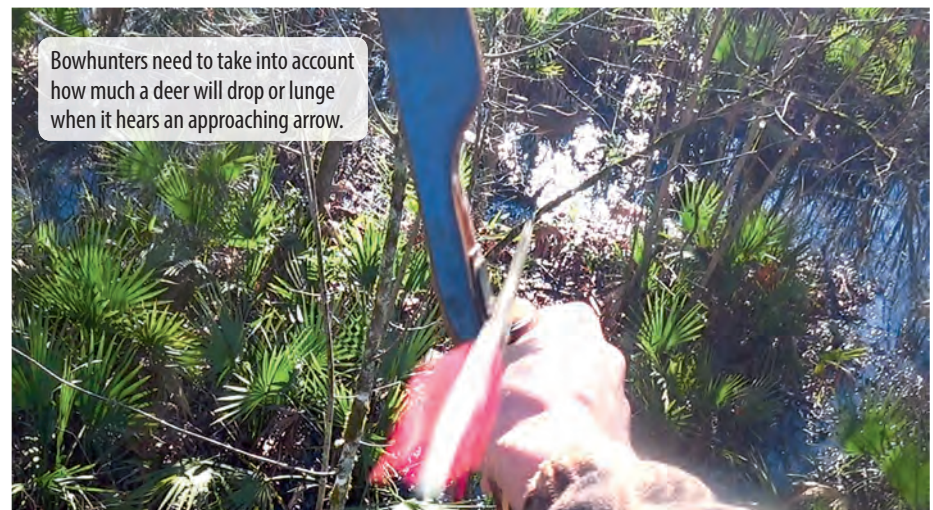
Then came my late-season face-offs with an elusive 6-point buck. He ducked and twisted away from my arrow not once, not twice, but three times. The first time, I waited too long to draw, worrying about getting busted when he was in the open and broadside at 15 yards. Instead, I drew undetected, but the 23-yard quartering away shot where I forgot to aim low enough gave the buck more time to drop and twist so much that the arrow hit his antlers.

The next time, one evening after having my range finder break in the morning. I thought I knew most of my gaps at this spot, but apparently I didn't know the one gap the rattled-in buck passed

utterly defeated every Sunday was taking its toll. On the last weekend, I thought it was finally going to come together. I was set up at my bad-memory spot; a location I shot an 8-point with my recurve the previous season, one that had ducked hard, resulting in a non-lethal hit above the spine.

The area was still hot this season as a racked buck approached late in the morning along my doe-in-heat scent drag line. However, I couldn't shoot with a recurve from where he was standing, with the tree and my stand being in the way of the bow's limbs. I was using my short, 52-inch Kodiak Magnum bow, but even that isn't like a compound that can be drawn easily in advance and shot from most angles from a climber.

Finally, the buck came around to my side and into a shootable gap in the thick brush 15 yards away. My bow was



through, and I misjudged it by 5 yards. Not aiming low enough, the arrow passed just over his back as he dipped down.

The third time, I watched this buck feed for several minutes around a nuttall oak 22 yards away. I passed all the shots, hoping he would come to a closer nuttall, but he finally began to head in another direction. I had a good look, aimed low, but I lost focus of a branch in the shot path and hit it instead of the deer.

My cousin told me he had one buck dodge his recurve arrows three times this season as well. We agreed: at least they'll be bigger next year.

## THE FINAL WEEKEND

Driving to north Louisiana every weekend to hunt a different public land with newfound excitement, but coming home

pointed at him, but I couldn't draw with the deer looking around for a hot doe and up into the treetops for the human he also smelled. The deer eventually turned his head, but as soon as I started to draw, he picked me up in his peripheral vision and bolted. That evening, at another spot, I saw does out of range.

## FINISHING FOCUSED

A friend shared a great quote from a legendary hunter that kept me focused. "You can't get a deer by giving up or being worried about the past failures. It isn't about all the unsuccessful days and hours spent hunted; it's all about being there and ready in the next minute of the next hunt."

continued >

# APEX PREDATOR

continued

I woke up the next morning at 4 a.m., went for a 10-mile run and decided to hike back to the previous morning's tree one last time. Once again, late into the morning, after all the duck and squirrel blasting stopped, a buck approached from upwind. He walked right into the same gap where the previous day's buck had stood. When my Steel Force 2-bladed broadhead struck just above his heart, my bad-memory spot turned into a great-memory spot.

I was barely able to see the 4 pointer sprint about 70 yards and crash. The



Hit in the vitals with an arrow from the author's recurve, this buck made it 70 yards before collapsing.

water and leaves quit shaking quickly, but I continued to shake for quite some time. I hiked out of the woods and went to review my head-camera footage. Exact shot placement is something that's hard to tell during the rush of the moment, and checking video gives extra time that an animal may need to expire.

The video showed the 650-grain arrow appearing to fly way too low for a lethal hit, just under the buck. However, that's where I aimed, and in the final few yards of the 15-yard shot, the deer dipped down more than one-half foot for a flawless center-height pass-through behind the shoulder. I went right back in find my 2½-year-old deer, which was easily located, but the 2-mile drag was far from easy.

After having more missed deer opportunities in this one testing season than I had in the past decade, I persevered to harvest my first whitetail using my 72-pound, vintage 1960s bow I call "The Wolverine." Sure, bucks are scored by inches, but this measurement is just a fun number to quibble with. What really matters to me is the unique, unquantifiable meaning that lies within each set of horns. ■



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Ray Ramagos caught this 9½-pound bass in a private pond in Kentwood fishing a spinnerbait on Nov. 24, 2019.

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**Ray Ramagos**



**Brody John Rivet**

Brody John Rivet was on a guided trip with Capt. Rob Dupont of Impulse Charters, fishing out of Dularge, when he caught this bull red.



**Miles Bowman**

Miles Bowman got his first kill on family property in Livingston, bordering Ascension Parish, during a morning hunt on Dec. 23, 2018.



**Larry Bringol**

Larry Bringol of Alexandria caught this 13.51-pound lunker in Guerrero, Mexico, with a Rat-L-Trap.



**Josh Trahan II**

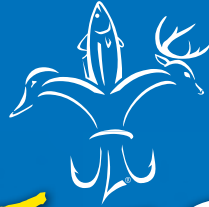
When this 6-point buck showed up on camera in late September on a friend's family land in the Houma area, Josh "TJ" Trahan II decided he wanted to have this deer be his first since he is 6 years old and the deer was a 6-point. He even practiced with a crossbow so he could hunt for bow season. On Nov. 10, he finally got his deer.



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# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



**Jered Fontenot**

Jered Fontenot battled this 50-pound amberjack 120 miles out of Port Fourchon with Down The Bayou Charters.



**William Stephens**

William Stephens with a fish caught in Covington on November 25, 2019.



**Earl Norwood**

This timber rattler, with 10 rattlers and a button, was sunning itself at the foot of Earl Norwood's deer stand on Nov. 12, one of the coldest days to date last year in Union Parish.



**Jillian Riera**

Eight-year-old Jillian Riera with her first buck, a 6-point, taken in Iberville Parish.



**Madison Pitre**

Nine-year-old Madison Pitre poses with a big Claiborne Parish doe.



**Hayden Strother**

Hayden Strother with a fish from Bundick Lake in Beauregard Parish.



**Eric Daigle**

Eric Daigle caught this red in Bayou Barre.



**Evan Huling**

Evan Huling was 12 when he killed this bear in Hell's Canyon, Idaho.

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# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



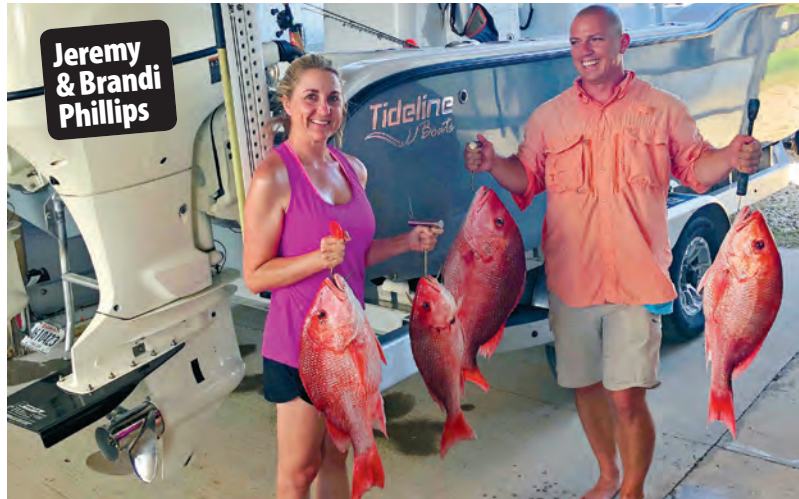
**Chris Bizette**

Chris Bizette killed a piebald 3-point that weighed 120 pounds in St. Helena Parish on Dec. 15, 2019.

Rhlynn Stelly with her 140-pound doe killed in St. Martin Parish while hunting with her dad, Spenser Stelly.



**Rhlynn Stelly**



**Jeremy & Brandi Phillips**

Jeremy and Brandi Phillips went on a June 29, 2019, trip out of Dulac for these snapper.

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Capt. Eddie Berthelot, Jr.

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# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



**Olivia Martin**

Olivia Martin fought this big jack crevalle for over an hour off the Louisiana/Mississippi barrier islands. She beat her dad's fish; that's for sure.



**Parker Elias**

Parker Elias hooked his first ling at the East Cameron Block 188. It weighed 51 pounds and was caught on a Spro jig.

Cooper Reese, 13, of Madisonville, killed his first duck while hunting with his stepdad and their dog, Bella, in Greenwood, Miss.



**Cooper Reese**

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# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



**Mason & Hayden**

These two bulls were caught on dead mullet by Mason Bousegard and Hayden Callais in Fourchon Pass.



**Avery Marcotte**

Avery Marcotte, 11, killed her first deer, a nice doe, while hunting with her dad, Russell, on Nov. 16 in Avoyelles Parish.



**Josh Louviere**

Josh Louviere with the buck he took on Dec. 21 in Bienville Parish.



**David Cresson Jr.**

David Cresson Jr. caught this 19-inch trout at Elmer's Island in August 2018 on live shrimp under a popping cork.



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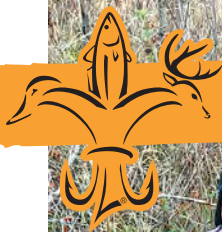
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## Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



**Carter Fagan**

Carter Fagan, 7, shot his first buck the morning of Nov. 30 while hunting with his grandfather on private property in St. Landry Parish.



**Sascha Schnur**

Sascha Schnur hooked this big bull red on Nov. 25 in the northeastern Biloxi Marsh while tight-lining VuDu shrimp. He caught two like this and both were released.



**Tiffany Whiteman**

Tiffany Whiteman shot her first buck, this 8-pointer, in Jackson Parish.



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- **Commercial Property For Sale, Mansura, LA, Avoyelles Parish**  
DRASTICALLY REDUCED!! AVOYELLES PARISH COMMERCIAL PROPERTY FOR SALE!! Price: \$612,150. Looking to locate in the fastest growing area in the parish. Look no further. Located within the corporation limits of Mansura and only .60 of a mile from the city of Marksville, sits this commercial property. Tract size is 17.49 acres. Kent Juneau, (318) 729-4920
- **17.76 Acres with home in Mansura, LA, Avoyelles Parish**  
NEW!! Acreage and Home For Sale in Avoyelles Parish  
Price: \$215,000. Located at 212 Airport Rd, this property has a Mansura address but is right next to the Marksville city limits. It consists of 17.76 acres of land with possible development potential and a 3BR 1BA, 1692 sqft home and several older outbuildings. Troy Thompson, (318) 447-7676.
- **Camp and 2 +/- Acres For Sale on Red River, Avoyelles Parish**  
NEW!! Camp and Acreage in Marksville, LA. Price: \$279,000. Stunning camp and 2 +/- Acres that won't last long in Marksville, LA. Jay Garvin, (318) 381-7880.
- **Commercial Office/Medical Building for Sale or Lease in Marksville, LA, Avoyelles Parish**  
MOTIVATED!!! COMMERCIAL PROPERTY FOR SALE IN AVOYELLES PARISH  
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- **Hunting Land For Sale in Concordia Parish**  
LAND FOR SALE NEAR MONTEREY, LA!! Price: \$1,316,250. Located a few miles southeast of Monterey, between Eva and New Era, this 585 acre WRP tract offers both deer and duck hunting which is sometimes hard to find in the same property. Carl Foreman, (318) 481-0092 or Troy Thompson, (318) 447-7676.
- **Concordia Parish Duck & Deer Hunting Land For Sale**  
MOTIVATED!!! MONTEREY DELTA HUNTING LAND FOR SALE!!  
Price: \$922,500. Located in the Monterey Delta near Acme, LA is a 307.5 +/- acre tract of managed timber with the perfect location for big deer and duck hunting. This tract has it all! It's timber has been managed by a forester. Chris Lemoine, (318) 359-2394.
- **211.1 +/- Acres of Hunting Land in Caldwell Parish, LA**  
Caldwell Parish Hunting Land Bordering Boeuf WMA For Sale! Price: \$580,525. Located in southeast Caldwell Parish, on the Ouachita River, this 211.1 +/- acre tract is bordered by the river. This property may just have it all: water frontage, income producing farmland, and woods! Troy Thompson, (318) 447-7676.
- **Deer and Duck Hunting Land For Sale Tallulah, Louisiana, Madison Parish**  
MADISON PARISH, LA HUNTING LAND FOR SALE!! Price: \$3,000,000. 734 +/- acres in Madison Parish near Tallulah, LA. It is all set up with 3 acre food plots, box stands, feeders, roads, irrigation wells, underground piping to each duck hole, pit blinds, and a very nice lodge. Chris Lemoine, (318) 359-2394.
- **389 +/- Acres in Boyce, LA, Rapides Parish**  
NEW!! Beautiful Acreage in Rapides Parish! Price: \$1,089,200. 389 +/- Acres of pasture, levee, and fishing along the Red River in Rapides Parish, with great access and views to the Red River and oxbow lakes. Barbara Bonnette, (318) 308-6614.
- **2246.9 Acres For Sale in Grant Parish**  
NEW!! RARE HUNTING PROPERTY FOR SALE NEAR BOYCE, LA  
Price: \$3,370,350. Situated near Boyce, LA in Grant Parish and north of the Red River is a 2246.9 Acre tract of rare hunting ground just available for sale and new on the market! Chris Lemoine, (318) 359-2394.
- **1761.6 Acres For Sale in Natchitoches Parish**  
NEW!! PRIME HUNTING LAND NEAR CHOPIN, LA  
Price: \$4,000,000  
Chris Lemoine, (318) 359-2394.
- **209.77 Acres in St. Landry Parish**  
Price: \$524,429. NEW!! Acreage in Big Cane, LA! Offering deer, duck, and small game hunting. 164.19 acres of this tract are enrolled in a Wetland Mitigation Covenant similar to WRP while the remaining 45 +/- acres are unencumbered. Carl Foreman, (318) 481-0092 or Troy Thompson, (318) 447-7676.
- **CAMP FOR SALE on Bayou Rouge in St. Landry Parish**  
NEW!! Camp in Palmetto, LA. Price: \$115,000.00. Camp was built in 2009, has 2 B/R, 1BA and features double insulated walls, on slab, central air and heat, and fully furnished! Beth Brown (337) 207-6871.
- **304 +/- Acres in Lebeau, LA, St. Landry Parish**  
New!! Acreage and camp in St. Landry. Price: \$1,200,800. Located in the northern half of St. Landry Parish, next to the Lebeau Community, this 304 +/- acre tract has been aggressively managed for the last 5 years and is now producing some high quality bucks in both antler and body size. Carl Foreman, (318) 481-0092 or Troy Thompson, (318) 447-7676.
- **Mississippi Hunting Land For Sale**  
REDUCED!!! PRICED TO SELL!!! Price: \$2,696,110. 1,017.4 +/- acres of prime big Black River Bottomland with just enough hill high area to keep you high and dry in any river flood situation. Call Chris Lemoine, (318) 359-2394.

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SALTWATER

STATE REGULATIONS (0-10.357 miles<sup>Δ</sup>)

FISH Species	Minimum Length	Bag Limit (per person)
Greater Amberjack <sup>~</sup>	34" FL	1/day*
Lesser Amberjack, Banded Rudderfish*	14-22" FL	5/day (aggregate)
Yellowfin Tuna	27" CFL	3/day
Bluefin Tuna	73" CFL	1 per vessel per year*
Bigeye Tuna	27" CFL	None
Blue Marlin	99" LJFL	None
White Marlin	66" LJFL	None
Sailfish	63" LJFL	None
Swordfish*	29" CL or 33 lbs. DW	5 per vessel per trip
Cobia (ling or lemon fish)	33" FL	2/day
Drum, Black	16" TL	5/day#
Drum, Red (redfish)	16" TL	5/day#
Flounder, Southern	None	10/day
Grouper <sup>*</sup> Gag <sup>Δ</sup> & Black <sup>Δ</sup>	24" TL	4/day (aggregate)*
Scamp <sup>Δ</sup>	16" TL	
Nassau & Goliath	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
Yellowfin <sup>Δ</sup>	20" TL	
Red <sup>Δ</sup>	20" TL	2 of 4 grouper total
Atlantic Sharpnose & Bonnethead shark <sup>@</sup>	None	1/day
Other sharks (except prohibited species) <sup>@</sup>	54" FL	1/day/vessel/aggregate
King Mackerel*	24" FL	3/day
Spanish Mackerel*	12" FL	15/day
Striped mullet	None	100 pounds/day
Black seabass	None	None
Hogfish	14" FL	5/day
Sea trout, Spotted (Speckled Trout)	12" TL*	25/day*
Red Snapper*	16" TL	2/day*
Other Snapper		5 mutton in 10 snapper aggregate
Mutton Snapper	18" TL	
Cubera, Yellowtail, Gray (mangrove)	12" TL	10 in aggregate*
Queen, Blackfin, Silk, Wenchman	None	
Vermilion Snapper	10" TL	
Schoolmaster, Dog, Mahogany	None	None
Gray Triggerfish*	15" FL	1/day in aggregate
Lane Snapper	8" TL	
Almaco Jack, Goldface Tilefish, & Bluefin Tilefish	None	20/person/day in aggregate*
Blackline Tilefish, Anchor Tilefish	None	
Tripletail	18" TL	5/day

CFL = curved fork length    LJFL = lower jaw fork length    CL = carcass length  
 DW = dressed weight    LJTF = lower jaw to tail fork    FL = fork length

FRESHWATER

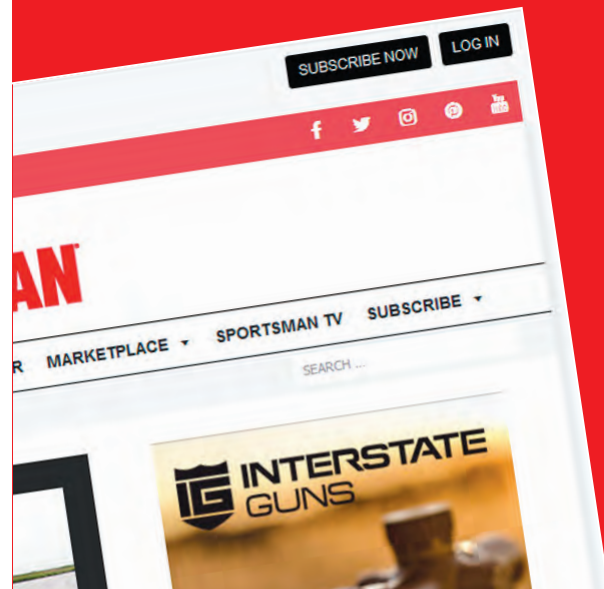
FISH Species	Minimum Size Limit	Bag Limit (per person)
Crappie	None	50/day*
Buffalo Fish	16" TL	25/day
Freshwater Drum (Gaspargou)	12" TL	25/day
Channel Catfish	11" TL*	***
Blue Catfish	12" TL*	***
Bowfin	16" TL	None
Flathead Catfish	14" TL*	***
Crawfish	None	150 lbs./day
Paddlefish	30" max LJFL	2*
Shad	None	50 lbs./day
Black Bass (largemouth & spotted)	None*	10/day*
Striped Bass or Hybrid Striped Bass	**	5/day*
Sturgeon	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
White Bass	None	50/day*
Yellow Bass	None	50/day*

\* see exceptions in pamphlet.    \*\* no more than two may exceed 30 inches.  
 \*\*\* catfish limit is 100 in aggregate; however, 25 fish in aggregate may be undersized.  
 # only one fish may exceed 27 inches.    @Shark season is closed between April 1 and June 30.  
<sup>Δ</sup> Closed season for gag grouper Jan. 1 - May 31. Closed season for black, red, yellowfin, yellowmouth & scamp grouper from Feb. 1 - March 31. ~ Greater amberjack season is open May 1-31 and Aug. 1 - Oct. 31. " Closed season on gray triggerfish Jan. 1 - Feb. 29 and June 1 - July 31.

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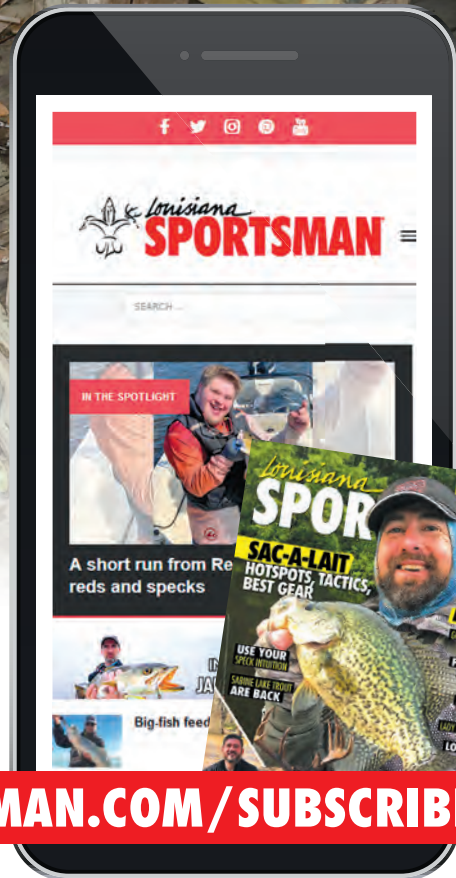
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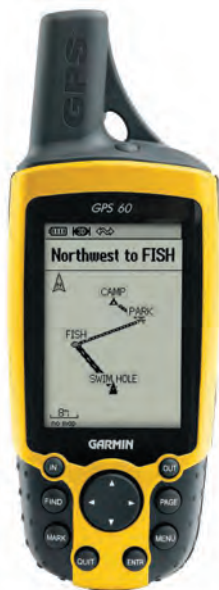
**Jordan Fontenot**

Jordan Fontenot harvested his first buck, this 8-point, on Dec. 1, 2019, with his .30-30 at about 20 yards on a hunting lease right outside of Pine Prairie in Area 2.



**Jake and John**

Jake Morello and his uncle, John Friscia, with reds they caught in Deer Bayou on dark green Matrix Shad.



# Capt. Paul's FISHING EDGE

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Capt. Paul Titus is Louisiana Sportsman's GPS expert. Need to ask him a question? Go to [www.louisianasportsman.com](http://www.louisianasportsman.com)

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- Leeville West - Terrebonne & Timbalier Bays
- Barataria Bay
- Lake Borgne
- Hopedale to the Mississippi Sound
- Hopedale MRGO to Bayou Terre aux Boeufs
- Delacroix to Point a la Rache
- Bayou Bienvenue
- Port Sulphur
- Lakes Ponchartrain & Maurepas
- Calcasieu Lake
- Myrtle Grove-Lake Hermitage
- Empire to Buras
- Pearl River WMA
- Lafitte
- The Rigollets
- Vermillion Bay
- Bayou Sauvage NWR
- Big Brans NWR
- MRGO WPS & Dam Routes



**Colette Lebourgeois**

Colette Lebourgeois caught this snapper on a July 7 trip on the calm waters before the storm out of Grand Chenier.



**Brannan Webb**

Brannan Webb of Baton Rouge helped fill alligator tags with Nola Hunt & Fish in Orleans Parish on the last Friday of the season. This one was 7½ feet long.



**Jake Viator**

Jake Viator caught this sheepshead off a boat dock in Grand Isle on Feb. 2. His dream is to one day have his own fishing show.

# SUZUKI

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**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 2020 PrimeTimes Wall Calendar.** \$13.95 (plus \$4 s&h). Know the best days, best times, and their relative strengths for all of 2020 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 2020, the year's best periods, a look ahead at 2021, and more. Comes with FREE 2020 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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- #1: **Wall Calendar, Astro Tables and "How to Know..." book...** \$19.95 (plus \$5 s&h).
- #2: **Same as #1, plus Software...** \$47.95 (plus \$6 s&h).
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For credit/debit card orders, call 515-964-5516, or go online to [primetimes2.com](http://primetimes2.com) and click **Catalog**.

2020 MAR	BEST DAYS			
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL. VALUE
Sun 1	██	██	██	46
Mon 2	██	██	██	58
Tue 3	██	██	██	50
Wed 4	██	██	██	47
Thu 5	██	██	██	47
Fri 6	██	██	██	57
Sat 7	██	██	██	66

Sun 8	██	██	██	78
Mon 9	██	██	██	81
Tue 10	██	██	██	69
Wed 11	██	██	██	55
Thu 12	██	██	██	41
Fri 13	██	██	██	32
Sat 14	██	██	██	29

Sun 15	██	██	██	31
Mon 16	██	██	██	40
Tue 17	██	██	██	28
Wed 18	██	██	██	23
Thu 19	██	██	██	23
Fri 20	██	██	██	23
Sat 21	██	██	██	34

Sun 22	██	██	██	45
Mon 23	██	██	██	57
Tue 24	██	██	██	65
Wed 25	██	██	██	57
Thu 26	██	██	██	51
Fri 27	██	██	██	44
Sat 28	██	██	██	42

Sun 29	██	██	██	45
Mon 30	██	██	██	48
Tue 31	██	██	██	55

25 50 75  
AVERAGE

For more, visit [primetimes2.com](http://primetimes2.com)

LUNAR PERIODS				
TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED				
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
10:32 am	3:58 pm - 7:10 pm ☀	12:42 am	3:43 am - 6:43 am	☾
11:10 am	4:42 pm - 8:04 pm ☀	12:42 am	4:23 am - 7:35 am	☾ HALF
11:53 am	5:31 pm - 9:01 pm	1:41 am	5:07 am - 8:29 am ☀	☾
12:45 pm	6:25 pm - 9:57 pm	2:41 am	5:56 am - 9:26 am	☾ HIGH
1:44 pm	7:24 pm - 10:54 pm	3:38 am	6:50 am - 10:22 am	☾
2:49 pm	8:27 pm - 11:49 pm	4:32 am	7:49 am - 11:19 am	☾
4:00 pm	9:32 pm - 1:42 am	5:21 am	8:52 am - 12:14 pm	☾
6:13 pm	11:38 pm - Midnight	7:05 am	10:57 am - 2:07 pm	☾ Begin DST
7:26 pm	Midnight-2:30 am	7:46 am	12:03 pm - 2:55 pm ☀	☾ FULL
8:39 pm	12:43 am - 3:15 am	8:23 am	1:08 pm - 3:40 pm	☾ Perigee
9:51 pm	1:49 am - 3:57 am	8:59 am	2:14 pm - 4:22 pm	☾
11:01 pm	2:53 am - 4:41 am	9:35 am	3:18 pm - 5:06 pm	☾
	3:56 am - 5:24 am	10:12 am	4:21 pm - 5:49 pm	☾
12:11 am	4:56 am - 6:12 am	10:52 am	5:21 pm - 6:37 pm	☾
1:18 am	5:58 am - 7:00 am	11:37 am	6:23 pm - 7:25 pm ☀	☾
2:21 am	6:56 am - 7:52 am ☀	12:25 pm	7:21 pm - 8:17 pm	☾ HALF
3:19 am	7:53 am - 8:45 am ☀	1:18 pm	8:18 pm - 9:10 pm	☾ LOW
4:11 am	8:44 am - 9:40 am	2:14 pm	9:09 pm - 10:05 pm	☾
4:57 am	9:31 am - 10:33 am	3:11 pm	9:56 pm - 10:58 pm	☾ Spring
5:37 am	10:14 am - 11:26 am	4:08 pm	10:39 pm - 11:51 pm	☾
6:11 am	10:55 am - 12:17 pm	5:05 pm	11:20 pm - 12:42 am	☾
6:42 am	11:30 am - 1:08 pm ☀	6:01 pm	11:55 pm - Midnight	☾
7:11 am	12:05 pm - 1:57 pm ☀	6:57 pm	Midnight - 1:33 am	☾ NEW & APOGEE
7:38 am	12:37 pm - 2:45 pm ☀	7:51 pm	12:30 am - 2:22 am	☾
8:05 am	1:09 pm - 3:35 pm	8:46 pm	1:02 am - 3:10 am	☾
8:32 am	1:42 pm - 4:24 pm	9:41 pm	1:34 am - 4:00 am	☾
9:01 am	2:18 pm - 5:14 pm	10:38 pm	2:07 am - 4:49 am	☾
9:32 am	2:55 pm - 6:05 pm	11:35 pm	2:43 am - 5:39 am	☾
10:08 am	3:37 pm - 6:59 pm		3:20 am - 6:30 am	☾
10:48 am	4:23 pm - 7:53 pm	12:34 am	4:02 am - 7:24 am	☾
11:35 am	5:15 pm - 8:47 pm ☀	1:32 am	4:48 am - 8:18 am ☀	☾ HIGH

ANY LUNAR PERIOD IS ENHANCED WHEN IT OVERLAPS A KEY SOLAR PERIOD. THE BEST OF THESE OVERLAPS ARE DESIGNATED BY THE SUN SYMBOLS: ☀ = DAWN ☀ = HIGH NOON ☀ = DUSK  
WHILE THE LESSER MOONRISE AND -SET OVERLAPS (ABOUT 30 MIN. BEFORE AND AFTER THE LISTED TIME) ARE DESIGNATED BY BOLD BLACK TYPE.

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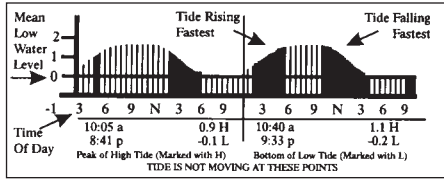
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How to use the **SPORTSMAN** Tide Guide



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	2 FQ	3	4	5	6	7
12:28 am -0.1L 1:50 pm 0.7H	1:37 am -0.2L 2:43 pm 0.8H	2:37 am -0.3L 3:46 pm 0.9H	3:34 am -0.4L 4:57 pm 0.9H	4:29 am -0.4L 6:09 pm 1.0H	5:22 am -0.4L 7:21 pm 1.0H	6:13 am -0.4L 8:32 pm 1.0H
8	9 FM	10	11	12	13	14
8:02 am -0.3L 10:45 pm 0.9H	8:47 am -0.1L	12:08 am 0.7H 9:25 am 0.1L	1:58 am 0.6H 9:22 am 0.3L 12:25 pm 0.4H 8:11 pm 0.1L	12:13 pm 0.6H 10:24 pm 0.0L	12:51 pm 0.8H	12:12 am -0.2L 1:42 pm 0.9H
15	16 LQ	17	18	19	20	21
1:41 am -0.3L 2:41 pm 1.0H	2:57 am -0.3L 3:47 pm 1.0H	4:05 am -0.3L 5:02 pm 1.0H	5:06 am -0.3L 6:23 pm 1.0H	6:00 am -0.2L 7:41 pm 0.9H	6:45 am -0.1L 8:50 pm 0.9H	7:22 am 0.0L 9:52 pm 0.8H
22	23	24 NM	25	26	27	28
7:48 am 0.1L 10:53 pm 0.7H	7:58 am 0.3L	12:01 am 0.6H 7:36 am 0.4L 6:00 pm 0.3L	1:39 am 0.5H 6:14 am 0.5L 11:23 am 0.6H 7:35 pm 0.3L	11:25 am 0.7H 8:51 pm 0.2L	11:46 am 0.8H 10:01 pm 0.1L	12:17 pm 0.9H 11:11 pm 0.0L
29	30	31	Order the Tide Guides for over 40 locations throughout Louisiana. Call 1-800-538-4355 or go on line www.lasmag.com			
12:57 pm 1.0H	12:24 am 0.0L 1:46 pm 1.0H	1:36 am -0.1L 2:45 pm 1.1H				

**Calcasieu Pass Lighthouse Wharf**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2 FQ	3	4	5	6	7
1:20 am 0.0L 9:06 am 1.1H 12:36 pm 1.0L 5:23 pm 1.1H	2:16 am -0.1L 11:04 am 1.2H 2:11 pm 1.2L	3:10 am -0.3L 12:20 pm 1.3H	4:04 am -0.4L 1:01 pm 1.4H 6:04 pm 1.3L 8:15 pm 1.3L	5:02 am -0.5L 1:36 pm 1.5H 6:13 pm 1.3L 9:31 pm 1.4H	5:58 am -0.6L 2:09 pm 1.5H 6:43 pm 1.2L 10:46 pm 1.5H	6:50 am -0.7L 2:39 pm 1.5H 7:20 pm 1.0L 11:57 pm 1.6H
8	9 FM	10	11	12	13	14
8:40 am -0.6L 4:05 pm 1.5H 9:01 pm 0.8L	2:00 am 1.7H 9:30 am -0.5L 4:27 pm 1.5H 9:46 pm 0.6L	3:04 am 1.7H 10:20 am -0.3L 4:47 pm 1.5H 10:34 pm 0.3L	4:17 am 1.7H 11:10 am 0.1L 5:08 pm 1.4H 11:22 pm 0.0L	5:38 am 1.6H 11:59 am 0.4L 5:32 pm 1.4H	12:13 am -0.2L 7:09 am 1.5H 12:53 pm 0.8L 5:59 pm 1.4H	1:09 am -0.3L 9:12 am 1.5H 2:14 pm 1.1L 6:30 pm 1.4H
15	16 LQ	17	18	19	20	21
2:12 am -0.3L 10:56 am 1.6H 4:08 pm 1.3L 7:11 pm 1.4H	3:20 am -0.3L 12:38 pm 1.6H 5:43 pm 1.3L 8:13 pm 1.4H	4:24 am -0.3L 1:45 pm 1.7H 6:51 pm 1.3L 9:27 pm 1.4H	5:29 am -0.2L 2:32 pm 1.7H 7:34 pm 1.2L 10:38 pm 1.4H	6:31 am -0.2L 3:12 pm 1.6H 8:07 pm 1.2L 11:53 pm 1.4H	7:25 am -0.1L 3:44 pm 1.5H 8:35 pm 1.1L	1:00 am 1.4H 8:12 am 0.0L 4:06 pm 1.5H 9:00 pm 1.0L
22	23	24 NM	25	26	27	28
1:50 am 1.5H 8:52 am 0.1L 4:16 pm 1.4H 9:23 pm 0.8L	2:34 am 1.5H 9:29 am 0.3L 4:12 pm 1.4H 9:47 pm 0.7L	3:20 am 1.5H 10:03 am 0.5L 4:04 pm 1.4H 10:14 pm 0.5L	4:10 am 1.5H 10:34 am 0.6L 4:10 pm 1.4H 10:44 pm 0.4L	5:03 am 1.5H 11:02 am 0.8L 4:21 pm 1.4H 11:18 pm 0.3L	5:55 am 1.5H 11:30 am 1.0L 4:31 pm 1.4H 11:54 pm 0.2L	6:51 am 1.5H 12:00 pm 1.2L 4:32 pm 1.4H
29	30	31	Order the Tide Guides for over 40 locations throughout Louisiana. Call 1-800-538-4355 or go on line www.lasmag.com			
12:36 am 0.1L 8:07 am 1.6H 12:34 pm 1.3L 4:13 pm 1.5H	1:25 am 0.1L 9:41 am 1.6H 1:26 pm 1.5L 4:00 pm 1.5L	2:24 am 0.1L 11:10 am 1.7H				

## SPRO RK CRAWLER SERIES

With spring bass fishing right around the corner, SPRO has added four colors to its line of RK Crawler crankbaits, all of them carrying different shades of red — just as anglers get ready to try and fool bass with crawfish-colored lures.

The RK Crawler 55, the RK Crawler MD 55 and the RK Crawler 50 will add electric red craw, melon craw, burnt orange craw and red river craw to its product line

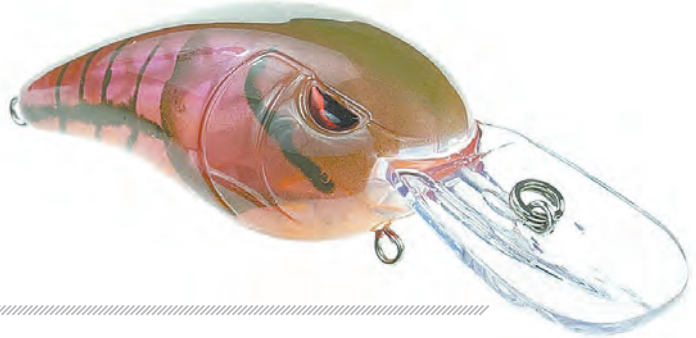
The RK Crawler 55 is the deep-diver, a 3-inch, ½-ounce bait that runs from 9 to 14 feet deep. The RK Crawler MD 55 is the same size but runs 4 to 8 feet deep. The RK Crawler 50 is a slightly smaller version, 2¾ inches and ⅝-ounce bait that runs 4 to 8 feet deep with a tighter wobble.

The coffin-bill style helps bait in the RK Crawler line to deflect off submerged, wooden cover like stumps and limbs,

as well as rocks, without hanging up, attracting the attention of bass that are often keying on crawdads.

**MSRP: \$11.11.**

**For more info, visit: [spro.com](http://spro.com).**



## LEARN TO MAKE YOUR OWN BOUDIN

Learn the craft of boudin at home. Taught by Daniel Robert, the Curator of Meat Science Programs at the Southern Food & Beverage Museum, and Paul's Meat Market out of Ville Platte, this class will show every step involved in producing traditional pork boudin and crawfish boudin from start to finish.

Classes will begin on March 15 at 1 p.m. in the Rouses Culinary Innovation Center by Jenn-Air.

Cost: \$65 per person (\$60 for

SOFAB members and \$25 for culinary students with school ID). Class size is limited, so buy your tickets early!

Admission to the Southern Food & Beverage Museum included in the ticket price. This is a hands-on class. Please dress accordingly as you will be handling meat and working with grills and smokers.

**For more info, call 504-569-0405 or email [Dan@Southernfood.org](mailto:Dan@Southernfood.org).**

## CZ 1012 SHOTGUN

If you're tired of having to spend too much time after hunts cleaning your shotgun, making sure it's spotless so the gas-operated recoil system works, then the CZ 1012 is for you.

A moderately priced semi-automatic, the CZ 1012 comes in five models, all in 12-gauge with a 28-inch barrel, with the company's new gas-less spring bolt operating system, which uses recoil from the shot to rotate and unlock the twin-lug bolt head from the barrel extension to withdraw the spent shell. Maintenance requirements are minimal compared to gas-operated guns.

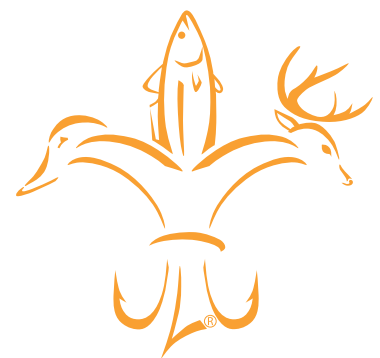
Unlike many semi-automatic guns, the inertia-operated recoil system in the CZ 1012 will shoot anything

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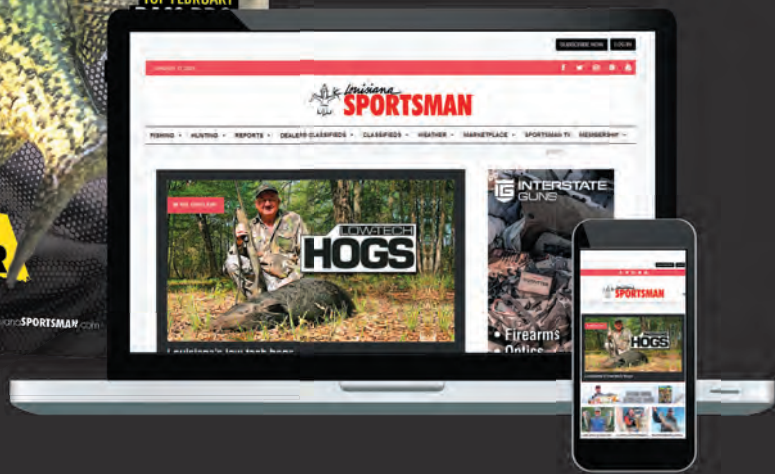
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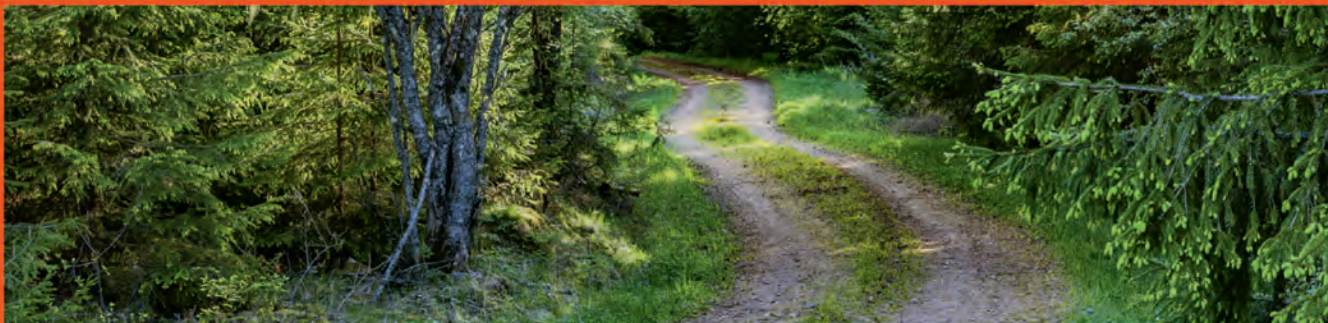
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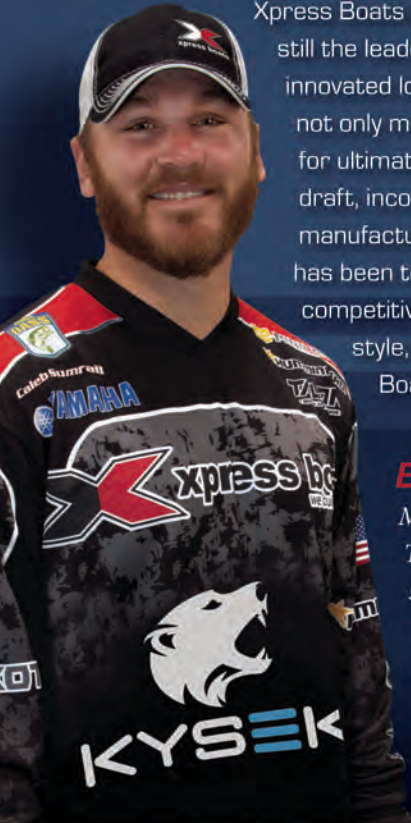
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