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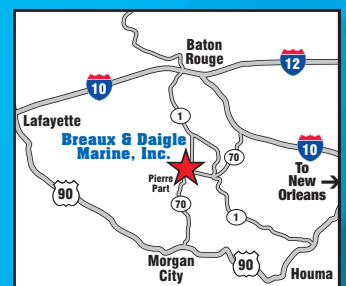
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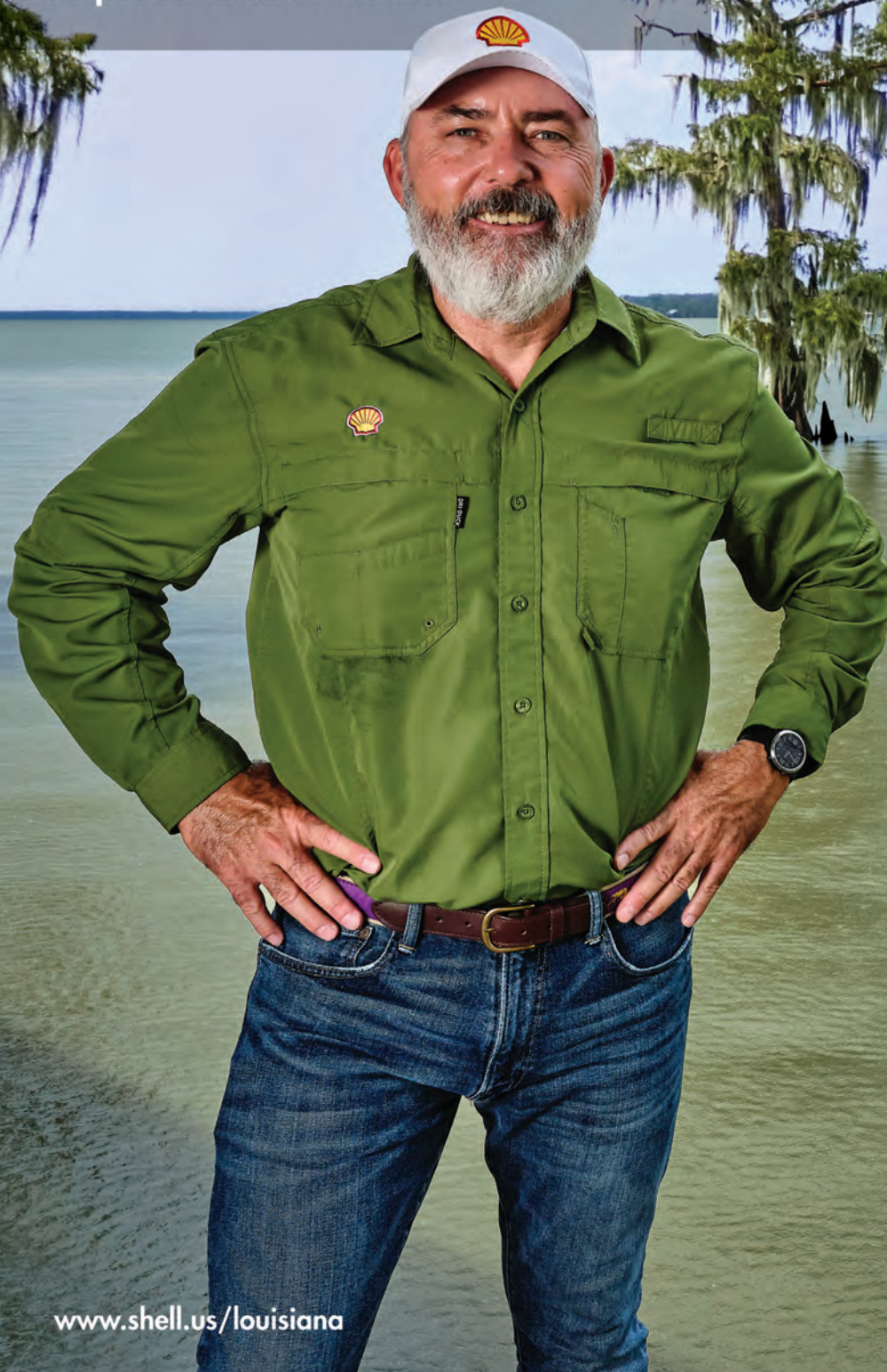
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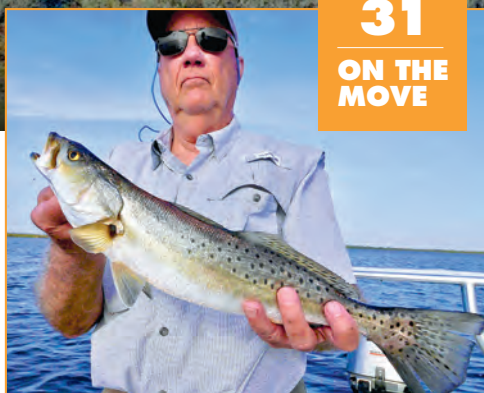
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Photo courtesy Sherrie Resweber

## Outdoor UPDATE

Paul Resweber (left) holds a 10.07-pound bass in his left hand after weighing in a limit on March 14, the second day of the Texas Oilman's Bass Invitational at Toledo Bend. Resweber, who lives in St. Martinville, and Mike O'Brien of New Iberia, finished third that day with 22.18 pounds and 25th overall with 33.24 pounds.

# BIG TOURNAMENT BASS WINS

By Don Shoopman

## ST. MARTINSVILLE ANGLER STRIKES IT RICH WITH 10.07-POUND TOLEDO BEND LUNKER

**W**hile Windy Robbins and James Pilcher were busy wrapping up first place in the Texas Oilman's Bass Invitational on March 14, Paul Resweber of St. Martinville was putting the biggest bass of the prestigious two-day tournament on Toledo Bend Reservoir in the boat.

Resweber tossed out a wacky worm on a 2/0 Gamakatsu hook tied to 10-pound line on a baitcasting reel and came back, after a considerable tussle, with a 10.07-pound bass worth \$1,200. It also anchored a second-day limit of five bass that he and partner Mike O'Brien weighed in at 22.18 pounds, good enough for third place that day in the 338-boat field and another \$720.

Plus, O'Brien had donated \$20 before the tournament to Army Bass Anglers, making him eligible for \$500, which he collected at the awards ceremony at Cypress Bend Resort.

Robbins and Pilcher won the TOBI with 43.9 pounds. Casey Martin and Joel Owen finished second with 39.78 pounds. Scott Mcfarlain and Todd Naquin were third with 39.39 pounds.

Resweber's bass weighed 10.12 pounds at Toledo Town & Tackle near Many, where it was registered in the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program.

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## THE CATCH

Resweber vividly remembered the sequence of events that led to his personal best bass after they pulled into a heavily pressured cove in Six Mile Creek.

"We were flipping in buckbrush," he said. "Mike happened to get a little tight to try to flip in a hole way in the back. I picked up my wacky worm and cast from the back of the boat toward the front of the boat to a little buckbrush sticking out."

Perhaps, he said, that big girl just moved up at that time, or maybe it was the light line tied to the hook, which was slipped under a ring for a wacky rig. Whatever the reason, the cast got the desired result.

"I felt the tap. I saw it splash when it came high. I said, 'Mike, it's a big, big one.' He looked back to see the rod bending. I thought it was a 7-pounder," Resweber said.

"He came back with the net. She finally came up out of the water to shake. I looked at it, amazed. I almost dropped my rod. It came up five, six times. She made one more run toward the buckbrush. Then she made one last run."

## LANDING THE LUNKER

"I heard him set the hook, heard the swish of the rod," O'Brien said. "We were catching 1½-, 2-pounders. He said, 'Blue, it's a big, big one!' I turned my head and saw her come out of the water. She went out to deep water first, then came back toward the boat. She decided to go underneath the boat and back to the bush. God was with us — I don't know how she stayed on that long."

A smallish landing net nearly was their downfall during the end game. Resweber chuckled and said, "Mike needs a bigger net. She didn't fit in the net, I'll put it that way."

## FISH OF A LIFETIME

After the "hawg" was in the boat, they fist-bumped. "I sat down for a while to retie," Resweber said. "I was shaking. I texted my wife Sherrie, Mel (O'Brien's wife), Braxton (his son) and a couple people that we had a 10-pounder."

"When you pull one of those big fish in the boat like that it's awesome. We're very grateful the way it turned out. You don't get to see that many big fish in a lifetime," said O'Brien, who has caught several 9-pound bass, all from Toledo Bend, but no double-digits.

Resweber and O'Brien had five bass in the boat when the big fish bit in late mid-morning. They caught a 3½-pounder after that to cull a 2¼-pounder, and that gave them their final weight.

Resweber and O'Brien had begun the second day of the two-day tournament in 218th place overall. They finished 25th overall with 33.24 pounds for another \$200 in the tournament, which is fished by anglers in the oil field and oilfield-related businesses across the region. ■

# LOUISIANA'S NO. 2 WAHOO BOATED OUT OF VENICE

By Dan Kibler

**T**he second-largest wahoo ever taken out of Louisiana waters was boated on March 20 by a Florida angler fishing on a Venice-based charterboat.

Brian Cueto of Vero Beach, Fla., was on the rod when a 129-pound wahoo hit a chunk of bait being drifted for yellowfin tuna by Capt. Gray Long of Go Long Charters.

"We were chunking for yellowfins near the Horseshoe, the East Lump," Long said. "It was our first drift of the day. I had marked a lot of fish and turned the boat sideways to drift when the fish hit."

"When he first hit, he screamed off so much line I thought it was a wahoo, but then it settled in and I thought he was a tuna — until he popped up in the prop wash, and we saw him, and we really went crazy."

"I try to underestimate for the customers. I said he was about 95 pounds. One of the guys we had on that day was a diver, and he said the fish was 115."



Long was fishing in about 230 feet of water, 28 miles offshore. He estimated that the bait was between 60 and 100 feet deep when the big wahoo hit.

"We had him on a Tiagra (reel) with 100-pound braid and an 80-pound fluorocarbon leader — what we usually fish for tuna," he said. "Wahoo will usually cut the fluorocarbon, but he had the hook in the corner of his mouth."

After about 30 minutes, Cueto wrestled the wahoo to the side of the boat.

"We tried to pull him up with one gaff, but my deckhand, Jacob Winfield, had to put a second gaff in him, and we pulled him up over the gunwales," he said.

The big wahoo was 76 inches long, fork length, and 35 inches in girth. At 129 pounds, it was 10 pounds lighter than the state-record fish, a 139.25-pound wahoo caught in April 1976 by Myron Fischer in West Delta Block 153. According to the Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association's record book, Cueto's fish will move into the No. 2 spot, ahead of a 124.5-pound fish caught in April 1974.

"There have been some wahoo all season around the Horseshoe," Long said. "We usually catch 'em trolling for king mackerel for bait. Another boat caught one the same day chunking, a 100-pounder. On any other day, that would have been the biggest." ■



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# TOLEDO BEND DELIVERS 11-POUND MONSTERS

TWO ANGLERS WEIGH IN HUGE FISH NINE DAYS APART DURING MARCH BIG-FISH FLURRY

By Chris Berzas

**H**aughton's Brad Watson and his father, Charley, waited at a Toledo Bend boat ramp on March 6 until all the boats in a tournament blasted off in every direction.

"We didn't get out on the lake until 9 a.m.," said Brad Watson, 43, who promptly motored into a congested area.

"We idled into the area and there were 10 boats around us," he said. "I told Dad that these guys were fishing the Holiday Inn, but I was going to take him to the Hilton."

Watson knew where he was going — a favorite place he wanted to share with his father. Three years ago, he had taken a 9-pounder there.

Arriving in the Palo Gaucho area, Charley Watson quickly caught the first bass of the day. At 9:30, Brad Watson cast a Texas-rigged, black-blue weightless Senko in 3 feet of water.

"At first, I felt a tap, then nothing," Watson said. "Then another tap, and nothing again. Then, it felt like a fish picked up the lure, and I saw the line was moving."

Watson set the hook and worked the bass over with heavy tackle in a fight he said didn't last long.

"She made just one hard run away, but I was able to get her to the net," he said. "Then, Dad netted her."

Once the huge bass was in the boat, the hook popped out of its jaw.

"The hook was about straightened out, so I was very fortunate I didn't lose her," he said.

Watson's bass was weighed on an onboard set of scales that pegged the

weight at 11.6 pounds.

"The scale was bouncing around and reading both 11.5 and 11.6 pounds, but it finally settled on 11.6," Watson said. "We went back to fishing after that."

For the day, the Watsons wound up catching about 20 bass. Watson got his fish officially weighed at Keith's Toledo Bend Tackle, where it registered 11.5 pounds. It was released and entered in the Toledo Bend Lunker Program.

## A LEAPING GIANT

Is there any way you could imagine seeing a bass measuring 26½ inches in length with a 19-inch girth jumping out of the water four times?

Difficult to conceive such a scenario, isn't it?

Well, Pitkin's Billy Maricle got to see exactly that on March 15, fighting a bass near the shoreline of Toledo Bend.

Maricle, 51, fished through trolling motor issues until 9 a.m., catching only one small bass, then decided to move south of an island in the Pirate's Cove area, trying to escape the wind after a

Haughton's Brad Watson displays his immense Toledo Bend 11.51-pounder taken in Palo Gaucho March 6 on a black-blue, Texas-rigged, weightless Senko in 3 feet of water.



Photo courtesy of the Toledo Bend Lake Association

## BRAD WATSON

**Date fish taken:** March 6, 2020

**Angler name:** Brad Watson

**Hometown:** Haughton, LA

**Location where fish was taken:** Palo Gaucho

**Depth taken:** 3 feet

**Lure:** Black/blue Senko, Texas-rigged, weightless

**Tackle:** 7-foot-3, medium-heavy Kistler rod; Abu Garcia Revo reel;

20-pound Seaguar fluorocarbon

**Certified weigh station:** Keith's Toledo Bend Tackle

**Certified weight:** 11.51 pounds

**Entry number of bass in the Toledo Bend Lunker Program:** 19

**Tagged and eligible for replica from Toledo Bend Lake Association:** Yes

front passed through.

Over the next two hours, Maricle caught 16 bass, eight of which were throw-backs, within a 100-yard area.

At 11 o'clock, however, he got a bite that didn't feel like anything special. Pitching a wacky rigged Senko in 4 feet of water, he felt a bite.

"I set the hook, and the fish made a run, and its whole body came out the water," he said. "She came around the boat, and I go to the back, and she jumped out the water three more times."

Maricle said he was easy on the fish, giving her little resistance because he was fishing 15-pound fluorocarbon.

"One time she got up close enough," he said. "I let go of the rod with one hand to grab my net, and she quickly turns and runs, taking 15 more feet of line before

Billy Maricle of Pitkin scored on this leaping giant, a Toledo Bend lunker bass weighing 11.85 pounds taken March 15 in the Pirate's Cove area. The bass hit his wacky rigged Senko in 4 feet of water.



Photo courtesy of the Toledo Bend Lake Association

## BILLY MARICLE

**Date fish taken:** March 15, 2020    3/0 Gamakatsu red hook  
**Angler name:** Billy Maricle    **Certified weigh station:** Toledo Town and Tackle  
**Hometown:** Pitkin, LA    **Certified weight:** 11.85 pounds  
**Location where fish was taken:** Pirate's Cove    **Entry number of bass in the Toledo Bend Lunker Program:** 28  
**Depth taken:** 4 feet    **Tagged and eligible for replica from Toledo Bend Lake Association:** Yes  
**Lure:** Wacky-rigged Senko  
**Tackle:** 6-foot-5 All Star rod; Lew's reel; 15-pound Seaguar fluorocarbon;

she stopped.

"I fought her again and got her back to the boat, and then she goes under."

At one point, Maricle admitted having the rod and reel underwater to be sure the fish wouldn't break off.

"I finally got her to the net," he said.

He weighed her first on his own scales, but admitted he didn't trust the weight because they hadn't been used in a while. He borrowed a set of scales from two anglers from Illinois who had witnessed the entire battle from nearby.

"On my scale, the fish weighed 12.01 pounds," he said. "On the one I borrowed from the two anglers, it weighed 11.96 pounds."

Maricle quit fishing and trailered the boat, driving to Toledo Town and Tackle for an official weight. On Toledo Town's certified scale, Maricle's fish weighed a hefty 11.85 pounds. The fish was measured, tagged and released back into Toledo Bend waters.

It is Lunker No. 28 for the 2019-2020 Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program year — the heaviest bass entered thus far this spring. ■

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# SPORTSMAN'S TOLEDO BEND GALLERY



Michael Kelly of Zachary displays his huge Toledo Bend 10.45-pounder taken near Alpine Landing on a YUM Dinger Bama Bug.

## MICHAEL KELLY

**Date fish taken:** March 6, 2020

**Angler name:** Michael Kelly

**Hometown:** Zachary, LA

**Location where fish was taken:** The Pond at Alpine Landing

**Depth taken:** 3 feet

**Lure:** YUM Dinger 5-inch, wacky-style Bama Bug

**Tackle:** 7-foot, heavy-action Carbonlite rod; Abu Garcia reel, 14-pound fluorocarbon

**Certified weigh station:** Toledo Town and Tackle

**Certified bass weight:** 10.45 pounds

**Entry number of bass in the Toledo Bend Lunker Program:** 20

**Tagged and eligible for replica from Toledo Bend Lake Association:** Yes



Ray Kovacs of St. Martinville worked a white Phenix bladed jig to take this huge bass, which weighed 10.50 pounds.

Photos courtesy of Toledo Bend Lake Association

## RAY KOVACS

**Date fish taken:** March 12, 2020

**Angler name:** Ray Kovacs

**Hometown:** St. Martinville, LA

**Location where fish taken:** Pirates Cove

**Depth taken:** 12 inches

**Lure:** White Phenix bladed jig

**Tackle:** Mojo medium-heavy, 7-foot rod; Lew's Reel;

**17-pound fluorocarbon**

**Certified weigh station:** Fin and Feather Resort

**Certified bass weight:** 10.50 pounds

**Entry number of bass in the Toledo Bend Lunker Program:** 24

**Tagged and eligible for replica from Toledo Bend Lake Association:** Yes



In Indian Creek, Kinder's William Tramel scored on this Toledo Bend 10.90-pounder, taken on a green-pumpkin, Texas-rigged Senko.

## WILLIAM TRAMEL

**Date fish taken:** March 8, 2020

**Angler name:** William Tramel. **Hometown:** Kinder, LA

**Location where fish taken:** Indian Creek area

**Depth taken:** 10 feet

**Lure:** Green-pumpkin Senko, Texas-rigged with 1/4-ounce tungsten weight

**Tackle:** 7-foot Falcon Lowrider rod; Shimano

Curado reel; 15-pound Seaguar InvizX fluorocarbon

**Certified Weigh station:** Fin and Feather Resort

**Certified bass weight:** 10.90 pounds

**Entry number of bass in the Toledo Bend Lunker Program:** 22

**Tagged and eligible for replica from Toledo Bend Lake Association:** Yes



Sulphur's Mike Richard caught this Toledo Bend 10.24-pounder in Housen Bay.

### MIKE RICHARD

**Date fish taken:** March 23, 2020  
**Anglers' name:** Mike Richard  
**Hometown:** Sulphur, LA  
**Location where fish taken:** Housen Bay  
**Depth taken:** Shallow  
**Lure:** V&M Chop Stick  
**Tackle:** 7-foot Lew's Mach 1 rod; Lew's Mach 1 reel; Seaguar fluorocarbon

**Certified weigh station:** Fin and Feather Resort  
**Certified bass weight:** 10.24 pounds  
**Entry number of bass in the Toledo Bend Lunker Program:** 35  
**Tagged and eligible for replica from Toledo Bend Lake Association:** Yes



Ryan Mathewson and his girlfriend display Mathewson's 10-pound Toledo Bend lunker taken in the Six Mile area on watermelon-red Zoom Brush Hog March 14.

Photos courtesy of Toledo Bend Lake Association

### RYAN MATHEWSON

**Date fish taken:** March 14, 2020  
**Angler name:** Ryan Mathewson  
**Hometown:** Port Neches, Texas  
**Location where fish taken:** Six Mile  
**Depth taken:** 5 to 8 feet  
**Lure:** Watermelon-red Zoom Brush Hog  
**Tackle:** 7-foot-6 Duckett rod; Shimano reel; fluorocarbon line

**Certified weigh station:** Fin and Feather Resort  
**Certified bass weight:** 10.00 pounds  
**Entry number of bass in the Toledo Bend Lunker Program:** 26  
**Tagged and eligible for replica from Toledo Bend Lake Association:** Yes



Tommy Washington caught this 10.35-pound bass on March 21. The big bass broke off the first time it was hooked, and the hook was still in its mouth 5 minutes later when it hit a Senko after Washington retied.

### TOMMY WASHINGTON

**Date fish taken:** March 21, 2020  
**Angler name:** Tommy Washington  
**Hometown:** Milam, Texas  
**Location where fish taken:** Palo Gaucho  
**Depth taken:** 2 to 4 feet  
**Lure:** Senko  
**Tackle:** Killer rod; Lew's reel; 20-pound Seaguar monofilament

**Certified weigh station:** Keith's Toledo Bend Tackle  
**Certified bass weight:** 10.35 pounds  
**Entry number of bass in the Toledo Bend Lunker Program:** 33  
**Tagged and eligible for replica from Toledo Bend Lake Association:** Yes

To read full stories about any of these Toledo Bend trophies, visit [louisianasportsman.com/bigbass](http://louisianasportsman.com/bigbass)

# SPORTSMAN'S TOLEDO BEND GALLERY



Mike Jasinski suffered a bout of "buck fever" immediately after catching this 10.65-pound Toledo Bend lunker on a Carolina-rigged watermelon Fluke on March 18 in Housen.

Photo courtesy Mike Jasinski

## MIKE JASINSKI

**Date fish taken:** March 18, 2020  
**Angler name:** Mike Jasinski  
**Hometown:** Gonzales, LA  
**Location where fish taken:** Housen  
**Depth taken:** 7 feet  
**Lure:** Carolina-rigged watermelon Fluke  
**Tackle:** Shimano rod; Lew's reel; braid with 4-foot fluorocarbon leader

**Certified weigh station:** Fin and Feather Resort  
**Certified bass weight:** 10.65 pounds  
**Entry number of bass in the Toledo Bend Lunker Program:** 30  
**Tagged and eligible for replica from Toledo Bend Lake Association:** Yes



Pineville's Sam Laprarie III scored on this 10.21-pounder on a Zoom Brush Hog fishing Palo Gaucho March 18.

Photo courtesy of Toledo Bend Lake Association

## SAM LAPRARIE III

**Date fish taken:** March 18, 2020  
**Angler name:** Sam Laprarie III  
**Hometown:** Pineville, LA  
**Location where fish taken:** Palo Gaucho  
**Depth taken:** 3 feet deep  
**Lure:** Zoom Brush Hog  
**Tackle:** 7-foot-1 Duckett rod; Lew's reel; 17-pound Seaguar fluorocarbon

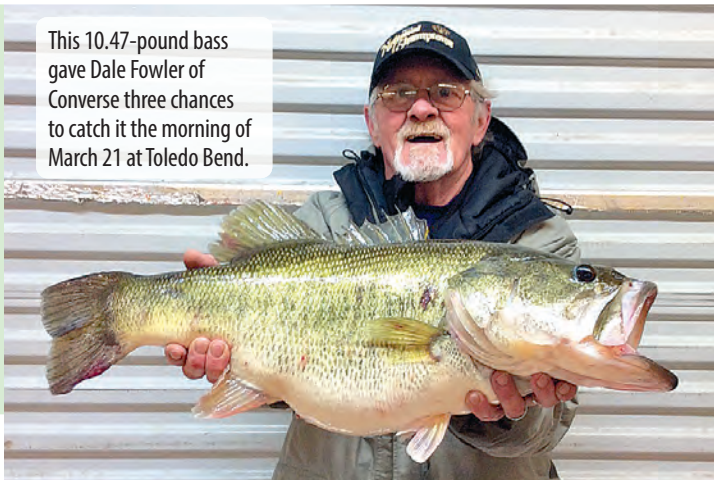
**Certified weigh station:** Buck-eye Landing  
**Certified bass weight:** 10.21 pounds  
**Entry number of bass in the Toledo Bend Lunker Program:** 31  
**Tagged and eligible for replica from Toledo Bend Lake Association:** Yes

## DALE FOWLER

**Date fish taken:** March 21, 2020  
**Angler name:** Dale Fowler  
**Hometown:** Converse, LA  
**Location where fish taken:** Slaughter Creek  
**Lure:** Watermelon red Strike King Shim-E-Stick  
**Tackle:** MHX rod, Lew's reel;

15-pound Big Game mono  
**Certified weigh station:** Toledo Tackle Town  
**Certified bass weight:** 10.47 pounds  
**Tagged and eligible for replica from Toledo Bend Lake Association:** Yes

Photo courtesy Dale Fowler



This 10.47-pound bass gave Dale Fowler of Converse three chances to catch it the morning of March 21 at Toledo Bend.

Tabatha Green of Leesville boated this 10.21-pound Toledo Bend trophy on March 28 on a Zoom Brush Hog in the Palo Gaucho area.



## TABATHA GREEN

**Date fish taken:** March 28, 2020  
**Angler name:** Tabatha Green  
**Hometown:** Leesville, LA  
**Location where fish taken:** Palo Gaucho  
**Depth taken:** 3 feet  
**Lure:** Green-pumpkin, blue-flake Texas-rigged Zoom Brush Hog  
**Tackle:** G Loomis rod; Shimano Curado reel; 17-pound Seaguar fluorocarbon

**Certified Weigh station:** Keith's Toledo Bend Tackle  
**Certified bass weight:** 10.21 pounds  
**Entry number of bass in the Toledo Bend Lunker Program:** 36  
**Tagged and eligible for replica from Toledo Bend Lake Association:** Yes

Clay Belanger of Orange, Texas, caught this 10.25-pound bass on March 15 on a Flapper Hog.



Photos courtesy of Toledo Bend Lake Association

## CLAY BELANGER

**Date fish taken:** March 15, 2020  
**Angler name:** Clay Belanger  
**Hometown:** Orange, Texas  
**Location where fish taken:** Six Mile  
**Depth taken:** 4½ to 5 feet  
**Lure:** Watermelon-red candy, Natural Forage Baits Flapper Hog  
**Tackle:** 7-foot-6 Denali rod; Quantum Smoke PT Series reel; 55-pound P-Line braid

**Certified Weigh station:** Fin and Feather resort  
**Certified bass weight:** 10.25 pounds.  
**Entry number of bass in the Toledo Bend Lunker Program:** 29  
**Tagged and eligible for replica from Toledo Bend Lake Association:** Yes

To read full stories about any of these Toledo Bend trophies, visit [louisianasportsman.com/bigbass](http://louisianasportsman.com/bigbass)

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# LATE MEANS GREAT FOR MISSISSIPPI FISHERMAN AT CANEY

## LATE START PUTS ANGLER IN NEIGHBORHOOD OF 12.47-POUND LUNKER

By Kinny Haddox

**E**ver been planning to go fishing, sleep a little bit late and ask yourself, “Should I stay or should I go”? If you ask Dalton Thompson, it’s a good idea to say yes, you should go.

“Tuesday morning, March 24, I was planning to get to Caney Lake at daylight, but I overslept a little bit,” he said. “I rolled over and started to go back to sleep but decided to get up and go anyway.

Now he’s glad he did. Thompson, 23, from Picayune, Miss., drove from Monroe to Caney and caught his dream largemouth, a 12.47-pound lunker. It was the first time he’d ever seen the Jack-son Parish lake.

It was actually easier to get out of bed than to catch the big fish, he said.

“I was (there) this week helping my mom, a traveling nurse, move in a place in Monroe, so I just pulled my boat along,” Thompson said. “I checked out some of the lakes in the area and tried Bayou D’Arbonne one day, but it was too high. I drove to Toledo Bend to try some sight-fishing, but it was high and too dingy. So I studied up a little bit and saw where some really big bass were being caught at Caney, so I had to give it a try.”

### SPAWNING BED

Thompson, who attends Pearl River Community College, had looked at some overhead views and picked out a section of riprap to try early, but he figured by the time he got there, it would be full of fishermen.

It wasn’t.

So he worked his way down the riprap and caught a few decent fish when he spotted a big spawning bed “the size of a kitchen table,” he said.

Thompson saw a male fish on the bed, but no female. He anchored his boat and watched, and in about 5 minutes, a big female swam into the bed.

“I got pretty excited, but I didn’t think the fish was over 7 or 8 pounds. I started throwing everything I had at her. No interest,”

Dalton Thompson with his 12.47-pound Caney lunker.



Photo courtesy Dalton Thompson

he said. “She swam on and off the bed several times. I started fishing for her at 8 a.m. and didn’t catch her until 10 a.m. I didn’t fish solid, and (I) gave her some time to settle down. I tried bait after bait, but she kept coming and going. Finally she locked down and stayed on the bed.

“I was about out of things to try, and the wind was picking up, so I tied on a small, white Rage Claw so I could see it and threw it right on her nose. She nailed it,” he said. “I caught her the first time she bit. Then, I knew she was bigger than 8 pounds. She headed for deep water, and I went to the back of the boat. I finally got her up to the boat and she ran under it. I sat at the console, and when she came back out, she started to jump right by the boat. Her mouth was open when she hit the top, and I just grabbed her. Man, then I thought it was a 15-pounder!”

### GETTING THE FISH WEIGHED

Thompson called a marina, but it was closed, and he started looking around the lake and found two anglers from Wisconsin who had a good, accurate scale. He weighed the bass, got 12.47 pounds, took some pictures and then released her back in her bed.

“We don’t have any fish like that where I live, that’s for sure,” he said. “It was a perfect area, and that grass in the lake is really making a difference from what I can tell. These are some big, healthy fish.”

He was going to fish some more, but he had to tell a few folks and send them photos. He didn’t have cell service, so he loaded up and headed for home, where he could share his story. Will he be back?

“Of course,” he said. “I can’t wait. When I graduate, I may even have to come look for a job over here.” ■

# READER REPORT



Corey Harwell caught this 10.2-pound lunker, which was 25 inches long and 19½ inches in girth, on March 21, fishing out of Tucker's Camp on Caddo Lake. "The fishing was excellent on a wacky rigged Senko. She was the last fish of the day at about 2 that afternoon. She put up an epic battle. As always, I released the big girl after weighing her and some photos."

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Andre Weber holds an 8½-pound bass he caught while fishing March 22 in Lake Fausse Pointe.

# NO BIG BASS PICS? NO SWEAT; CATCH ANOTHER

## FIRST BIG FAUSSE POINT BASS AVOIDS CAMERA; JEANERETTE HIGH-SCHOOLER REPLACES HIM WITH BIGGER ONE

By Don Shoopman

**A** high-school junior had mixed emotions after watching the 7¼-pound bass he had caught, weighed and video'd suddenly become rambunctious and swim away before he could get a decent keepsake photo.

Andre Weber of Jeanerette wasn't upset over the release, which he planned anyway after hooking it on a Cajun Boss spinnerbait on March 19 in Lake Fausse Pointe, which has given up at least half-a-dozen 7-pound plus bass since February.

The fish just shook out of his grasp and left him photoless, except for the brief video of him weighing it that, he said later, didn't do justice to its impressive size.

Weber, 17, thought that would be his last hurrah, his last chance, for a photo of a trophy-sized bass.

He was wrong.

"I'm the only one in the boat. I've got to get some kind of proof. I weighed it then got my phone and video'd (weighing it)," he said, explaining that he held the fish near the water over the side of the boat.

"That big thing started shaking its head and got away. I got to look at it for 45 seconds. I started thinking, 'That may be the biggest fish I catch in my life and I didn't get a picture of it.'"

He took care of that three days later.

"Then, I go and catch an 8½-pounder," said Weber, who was fishing with his brother and the grandfather who taught him to fish, Larry Ransonet of Jeanerette, the afternoon of March 22.

### TWICE IN A LIFETIME

That 8½-pound bass, which more than likely was heavier because his hand-held electronic scale weighs on the light side, put the world order back in place. His grandfather took plenty of photos.

Ransonet was extremely proud of his grandson after that catch. He knows Weber has watched countless bass fishing videos and fishes nearly every day.

"Unbelievable, especially because of what happened with the other one," he said. "Once-in-a-lifetime to catch a 7½. Then to catch one like that."

Because Weber was doing well with spinnerbaits when he caught the 7¼-pounder, he started out on his next trip throwing a spinnerbait but changed up and tied on a ¾-ounce black/blue Strike King Hack Attack Jig with a "moonlight" colored YUM Christie Craw.

His initial cast with the artificial lure combination started an exciting chain of events he'll never forget.

### A SWIMMING LOG

"On my first flip on a cypress tree, something hit it a couple times, like a little bass. Then it took off running. I set the hook and it felt like I was on a log. It felt like it, like a solid weight," he said. "I didn't think it was a bass at first the way it was pulling drag. I thought, 'No way it's a bass!' When he came up, my legs started shaking, I started shaking. I've never seen anything that big."

"It was nerve-wracking. I didn't think it was a big fish, so I didn't set the hook hard. When my Grandpa started netting it, the hook fell out," he said. "Normally, I set the hook with everything I have. I thought it was a bream at first. When I set the hook, it started going straight for the deep (water). They had a big mat of grass growing in deep water. He took off to go under it, and the line was getting caught on it."



Photo courtesy Andre Weber

"After that, it was pulling drag, and I have it set pretty hard. When it got near the boat, Grandpa missed it twice with the net. I was so scared. It barely fit in the net. If it didn't go in head-first, it wasn't going to fit."

"I was screaming, shaking. I couldn't believe it. Grandpa, he was shocked. He didn't know what to say," Weber said.

### CATCH AND RELEASE

Weber weighed the fish, had a few photos taken, then filled up the livewell and put the bass in there for a few minutes.

They measured the fish next — 24½ inches long, 18 inches in girth — then took even more photos.

There was never any doubt about releasing the bass.

"No sir," Weber said. "I don't keep any bass out there."

The bass was "perfectly fine," he said, when he positioned the boat and let it go over its bed to continue the spawning process.

"He was adamant about letting it go," Ransonet said. ■

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Robyn Bordelon catches a lot of catfish from her kayak, but this one proved to be special. The rare fish was caught in the Mississippi River in south Louisiana and after a quick photo, was revived and released.



Photo courtesy of Robyn Bordelon

# KAYAK ANGLER LANDS STRANGE CATFISH

By Chris Holmes

## 'COW-COLORED' BLUE CAT IS BORDELON'S NEW FAVORITE

**R**obyn Bordelon of Destrehan is no stranger to the pages of *Louisiana Sportsman*, having been previously featured for her uncanny ability to consistently catch big river catfish out of her kayak.

Bordelon recently caught what she considers her most memorable cat of all.

"I've been chasing blue cats in a kayak on the river for nine years, but that one will be remembered above all others," she said.

On the evening of March 16, Bordelon set out to check her anchored jug lines that had been set in the flooded Mississippi River bature for about 24 hours. The

jugs were baited with cut finger mullet.

### **COW CATFISH**

What she caught was a nice-sized blue that wasn't blue at all. It was a multi-colored cat, mostly white with distinct black markings and a pink and black tail. Sometimes called a "cow catfish" — as the white and black marks often resemble a Holstein cow, the fish is actually a leucistic or piebald. It has an abnormal condition and lacks pigmentation in a majority of its skin.

"I've seen pictures of blue catfish with this genetic anomaly before and of

course, you bookmark that in your head, but I never thought I would catch one," she said.

Hers was a beautiful specimen.

"That fish is at a disadvantage from birth, with a mostly white coloration that sticks out to predators," Bordelon said.

"When I pulled up the line and saw what it was — and how big it was — I almost lost my lunch."

Although she regularly turns her catfish catches into dinner, this one got a break.

"I quickly got it netted, took pics, revived it, and happily watched it swim away," she said. ■



## READER REPORT

My name is Jacob Howat. I am hooked on fishing. With my school, St. Charles Borromeo, closed and mandatory social distancing because of the coronavirus pandemic, it has allowed me to pursue some homeschool learning this spring. Ever since I was a little boy, I have wanted to be a marine biologist. I enjoy reading about marine biology, watching fishing shows and of course, going fishing, crawfishing, crabbing or just scooping in our canals and bayous to see what I can find.

After a few days of running catfish lines along the batture of the Mississippi River, with my dad, we came across a once-in-a-lifetime catch. The afternoon of April 2, as we were checking our second to last line, I pulled up a rare "white" blue catfish. According to my research, albino fish have red eyes, while leucistic catfish have a lack of natural color and have blue or black eyes. They are rare because it is more difficult for a white catfish to hide from predators when it is young and to hunt. My leucistic catfish weighed 5 pounds, 1 ounce and measured 22 inches long.

At first, I was shocked to see it was a white catfish and second, how the events unfolded. When I lifted the net and brought the fish into the canoe, I did not see a hook in its mouth, so my dad and I were amazed by the fact that we were so lucky to catch it since it came off of the hook so easily.

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Breaux Bridge's Sammy Guillory advises still hunters to move more slowly than they would during the fall in order to catch glimpses of spring squirrels eating buds in the trees while remaining still.



Photo by Chris Berzas

# SPRING SQUIRREL SEASON A GREAT REASON TO STAY IN THE WOODS

THERE'S NO REASON TO LEAVE THE WOODS AFTER TURKEY SEASON ENDS; JUST STAY AND HAVE FUN CHASING BUSHYTAILS IN MAY

By Chris Berzas

**T**he camouflaged hunter slowly made his way along the ridge bordering a small creek coursing through a hardwood bottom.

Reaching the northern end of the ridge, the hunter stopped in his tracks to see two gobblers slowly making their way into the bottom.

A slight movement to the east of the walking gobblers caught the hunter's attention. Slowly lifting the shotgun to his shoulder, he aimed, then fired.

Startled, the gobblers took wing, climbing to the top of the forest canopy.

The hunter casually walked over, picked up and examined the rust-colored fox squirrel, reached behind his back and put it in his game bag next to a squirrel killed earlier in the day.

That's just how hunting for spring squirrels in Louisiana can sometimes be.

## SEASON DATES

Louisiana's 23rd spring squirrel hunting season begins May 2 and runs through May 24 on private lands statewide. The daily bag limit is three squirrels, with a possession limit of nine.

On select state Wildlife Management Areas, the spring squirrel season is shorter: May 2-10.

Louisiana has no spring squirrel season on federal lands, including Kisatchie National Forest, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers properties and national wildlife refuges.

"Compared to the fall, only a small percentage of Louisiana squirrel hunters

take advantage of this spring season," said Cody Cedotal, a biologist who is small-game study leader with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Cedotal listed the most-popular WMAs where previous harvests should point to success: Big Lake WMA in Franklin, Madison and Tensas parishes; Dewey Wills WMA in Catahoula and LaSalle parishes; Richard K. Yancey WMA in Concordia Parish; Thistlethwaite WMA (still-hunting only) in St. Landry Parish; Sherburne WMA in Iberville, Pointe Coupee and St. Martin parishes; and Pearl River WMA in St. Tammany Parish.

## SLOW DOWN

Breaux Bridge's Sammy Guillory has hunted all but one of Louisiana's spring squirrel seasons since their inception in 1997.

"That exception was last spring, 2019, due to all the flooding on both the public and private lands I hunt," said Guillory, 58, whose work, associated with relief for flood victims, was affected.

He advises hunters that to be successful in the spring, they must slow down.

"I don't find they move all that much when compared to the fall," Guillory said. "You'll often find them eating buds on trees and not moving from that food source."

According to Cedotal, Louisiana's spring squirrels will feed on soft mast such as buds and berries.

The buds of sweet gum trees are a preferred source of forage and often, you'll

see squirrels (stretch) their bodies while reaching out for this popular food source. They will also feed on the seeds of dogwoods and certain maples.

"They will also be on the ground looking for their caches of acorns and other mast left over from the late fall," he said. "You have to be looking at trees for the slightest of movement compared to the heightened activity they show in the fall."

"Many times, you'll see them just sitting on a leafless tree, their tails hanging down, as they chew on the buds. And you'll have to work a bit harder to get even a three-squirrel limit in the spring," he said.

Guillory's favorite public lands for spring squirrels are Richard K. Yancey WMA and Dewey Wills WMA.

## CALLING THEM IN

Besides being a noted waterfowler from a family of legendary duck callers and call manufacturers, Kelly Haydel of Haydel's Game Calls enjoys calling squirrels on fall or spring hunts.

"The effects of using squirrel distress calls during the spring are better in that you have young adolescent squirrels out there being taken by raptors," he said.

"What you are trying to imitate or replicate are the sounds made when a (hawk or owl) grabs a young squirrel and brings it to the ground — causing a struggle while the hawk is beating its wings. That young squirrel will be screaming."

Haydel uses both the SW-92 Mr. Squirrel Whistle and the DS-85 Squirrel Call, a

# LOUISIANA WMAS OPEN FOR SPRING SQUIRREL HUNTING

**Attakapas WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Bayou Macon WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Bayou Pierre WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Big Colewa Bayou WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Big Lake WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Bodcau WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Bouef WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Buckhorn WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Clear Creek WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Dewey W. Wills WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Elm Hall WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Grassy Lake WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Hutchinson Creek WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**J. C. Sonny Gilbert WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Joyce WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Lake Boeuf WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Lake Ramsay Savannah WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Little River WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Loggy Bayou WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Manchac WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Marsh Bayou WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Maurepas Swamp WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Pearl River WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Pointe-Aux-Chenes WMA (parts open):** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Pomme de Terre WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Richard K. Yancey WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Russell Sage WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Sabine WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Sabine Island WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Sandy Hill WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Sherburne WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Spring Bayou WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Tangipahoa Parish School Board WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Thistlethwaite WMA:** May 2-10; Still hunting only;

**Tunica Hills WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**Walnut Hill WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;

**West Bay WMA:** May 2-10 with/without dogs;



Spring hunting for squirrels gives additional time to take youth into the woods for this popular game animal.

Photo by Chris Berzas

bellows-style call. They are available at [www.haydels.com](http://www.haydels.com).

When the woods settle after Haydel sits on the ground and remains quiet for a bit, he'll have by his side a leafy limb about 2 feet long.

"I will start a calling sequence by squealing on the Mr. Squirrel Whistle some five times, and at the same time slapping that limb on the ground," he said.

"I will perform that five-note sequence three times, with 10 seconds spaced between the sequences."

According to Haydel, if there are adult squirrels in the area, they should then reveal themselves and do a bit of chattering and barking in response to the commotion.

"If I haven't elicited a response, then I start barking with the DS-85 Squirrel Call," he said. "The reason I am pushing those barks out now is to imitate the sounds of the young squirrel's mother who would be quite angry at the raptor."

"This should get some squirrels coming in and leaving the hunter prepared for a shot at taking one." ■

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# LAKE MARTIN: BIG FISH BUT BIGGER PROBLEMS

Photos by  
Nick Vaccaro

By Nick Vaccaro

**L**ocated outside of Breaux Bridge, Lake Martin has been widely touted as a fishing mecca, yet plagued with border and access feuds that have recently escalated to new heights. Decisions made and actions taken have left this state body of water with restricted access and limited use.

The St. Martin-Lafayette Wildlife and Game Commission was created when Lake LaPointe was expanded into Lake Martin. A servitude was agreed upon in writing stipulating public access to all land situated between the water's edge and the levee, known as Rookery Road. Additionally, a boat launch was built with taxpayer money in the 1960s on private land within that servitude and leased by the Commission for 25 years, with a lease renewal option. Public use and private landowner co-existed peacefully.

In 1982, the Commission was abolished, and although the lake's responsibility shifted to the Louisiana Department of

Wildlife and Fisheries, the servitude was interpreted differently.

"The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has jurisdiction of Lake Martin's water only," said Cole Garrett, general counsel for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

As years passed, families that owned the boat launch allowed the public, as well as state officials, to use it at will. Local businesses, including swamp boat tours, were also free to use the launch but could not build a permanent structure, as the lake is zoned Woodlands-2 and not for commercial activity.

## **A TIME OF CHANGE**

Things began to change in 2011 when Bryan Champagne leased from a landowner a piece of waterfront property on Rookery Road. In two years, he obtained two building permits and constructed permanent structures known as Champagne's Cajun Swamp Tours and The

Wharf on Lake Martin. Interpretations of the Commission's servitude defined that land as wetlands and, therefore, permanent structures were prohibited.

The St. Martin Parish Council initiated court proceedings to remove Champagne's structures. Champagne won the case; the decision has been appealed.

"My business is my life, and I am leaving it up to my lawyer and the Parish Council," Champagne said. "I'd rather not discuss anything else on the matter."

## **BOATING CONCERNS**

According to Ryan Hebert, whose family has a stake in the land on which the boat launch is constructed, that due to the Parish not keeping up the facilities at the boat launch, it is in need of repair. His family, as well as others who share ownership, have liability concerns should a user become injured. As a result, the landowners notified the public earlier this year that the boat launch would close on March 1,



Property owners closed and blocked the public boat ramp at Lake Martin earlier this year because it is in need of repair.

2020. A barrier was staged to block access.

"If the parish would actually talk to the landowners that are shutting down the landing maybe something could get agreed upon," Hebert said in a post on the Friends of Lake Martin Facebook page.

Chester Cedars, St. Martin Parish president, said the parish is dedicated to preserving the integrity of Lake Martin. The city council wants Lake Martin to remain available to the public and provide the enjoyment for which it was established.

"I proposed a solution to the landowners to have the boat launch re-opened to the public. The parish cannot spend any public funds on private land until an agreement is signed," Cedars said. "Tell us what you want, and we'll do our best to get it done." ■

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# RED SNAPPER SEASON OPENING IS DELAYED

From News Reports

**J**ack Montoucet, secretary of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has signed a declaration of emergency to delay the opening of the recreational red snapper season.

The delay will allow the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission (LWFC) to gather public input and set the season at its May 7, 2020 meeting. The scheduled Commission meeting in April was cancelled due to the COVID-19 emergency.

By rule, the recreational red snapper season was scheduled to open the Saturday before Palm Sunday — April 4 this year — unless the Commission or Montoucet provided an alternative in advance. Due to the importance of this recreational fishery to anglers, Montoucet chose to delay the opening and allow for additional public input, rather than set a season opening without this issue being discussed in a public meeting. ■



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# YAMAHA

# CHANGING WEATHER PATTERNS AND WATER CONDITIONS PUT SPECKLED TROUT IN A RUSH TO CHANGE LOCATIONS IN LOUISIANA'S COASTAL MARSHES IN MAY. HERE'S WHY THEY MOVE AND HOW TO FOLLOW THEM.

■ By Jon Miller

It's May, and anglers on the Gulf Coast are lathering on the sunscreen and trying to repeat their April success with limits of speckled trout. But the conditions this month are different from the adjacent months in a few significant ways, including weather patterns, water temperature and water quality. To effectively find and catch speckled trout, it helps to understand how these unique characteristics impact them.

## TEMPERATURE CHANGES >

Dan Kibler

ON THE MOVE

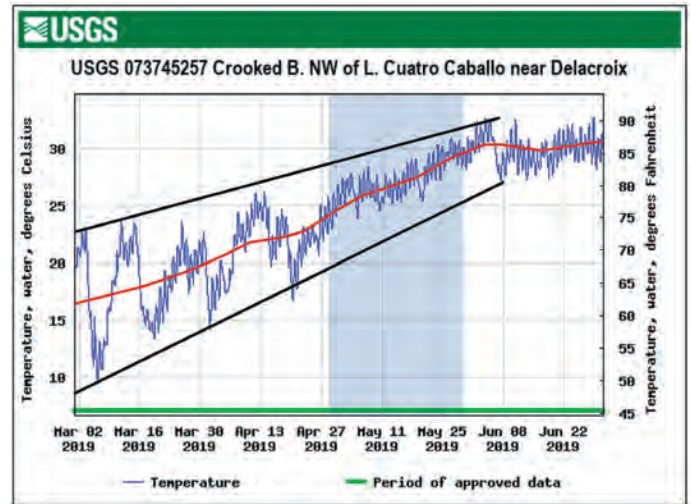
## TEMPERATURE CHANGES

The winter and early spring weather patterns of cold fronts have changed to frequent warm winds off the Gulf of Mexico. Water temperature reflects this change in weather patterns, and to show this, I pulled 2019 data from the USGS station at Crooked Bayou near Four Horse Lake, southeast of Delacroix. I chose this station because it is not directly affected by Mississippi River water. The chart clearly shows that the cold front-driven temperature swings in March and April have reverted to a tight range of less than 10 degrees in May. Also visible are moderate water temperatures that averaged 75 degrees in early May to 85 degrees by the end of the month.

The air temperature may start to feel a bit hot, but the water temperature range is downright balmy for speckled trout. In this tight temperature range, their metabolism is steady, and they can move through any water depth without their metabolism spiking high or low. I imagine that May is a time of true freedom for trout, when they can crash bait wherever it exists and swim into any inshore body of water they desire.

## WATER QUALITY CHANGES

May is a transition month for water quality. In years without extreme Mississippi River heights, the water quality will improve for speckled trout as turbidity decreases and salinity increases. The turbidity will decrease as strong north and west winds cease and the southeast wind brings in clean water from the Gulf. Salinity is, of course, very dependent on the amount of freshwater poured into the inshore waters by the rivers, and that can vary widely in March, April and May. However,



This chart shows big temperature changes through March and April caused by seasonal cold fronts, followed by consistent May weather. **BELOW:** Moderate water temperatures make May a nearly perfect month to catch trout in any coastal body of water.

as the influx slows and steady southeast winds increase, the salinity will begin to trend upward. In early May, high salinity is not a need for most speckled trout, because while their eggs are beginning to grow, they will not need the 15 ppt or higher salinity water to spawn until the end of May. Speckled trout are a euryhaline species, which means they are capable of regulating their electrolyte levels in water from nearly fresh to full sea water. However, it appears that as they age, they prefer higher salinity, so it's my assumption that higher salinity is a more-



comfortable condition for speckled trout. For all these water quality related reasons, May is surely one of the most comfortable months of the year for speckled trout.

## DIET

In the winter and early spring, a speckled trout's diet primarily consists of finfish such as croaker, mullet, killifish, sheepshead minnows and silverside minnows. However, brown shrimp have been growing in the marsh over the winter, and they begin to move out of their shallow environments into lakes in April. By May, these crustaceans have grown and are moving from the lakes into the sounds. When this happens, brown shrimp become the most plentiful food in the estuary for speckled trout. In addition to their numbers, biologists tell us that shrimp provide nutrients helpful for egg production in trout, and indeed, small to medium-sized trout seem to prefer a diet of shrimp during the prespawn period. Shrimp also create a moving food source on which the speckled trout can gorge themselves, while moving to the outside waters in preparation for the summer spawning season.

## WHERE TO FIND TROUT IN MAY

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced on April 2 that it would open the Bonnet Carré Spillway because of high levels in the Mississippi River. If the opening is not too great or too long — bringing turbid river water streaming into Lake Pontchartrain and beyond — speckled trout will be found in typical spring spots on the east side of the Mississippi River.

In general terms, speckled trout will be targeting migrating

brown shrimp in May. These masses of shrimp can be found from the large, inner lakes out into the sounds. Shrimp travel long distances during the spring by riding on tidal waters. They live on the bottom, but when a strong outgoing tide moves, they will suspend in the water column and be swept along with the tide. Therefore in May, speckled trout will typically be feeding on shrimp when there is moving water. A favorable feeding spot for trout is near a pinch point in tidal water flow. In these places, the moving shrimp will become concentrated and easier for trout to catch.

In May, large numbers of brown shrimp are in large lakes, feeding on plankton and detritus on the bottom. They are not helpless from attack by predators due to their iconic tail snap, so shoals of trout will drive them off the bottom to gain an advantage over them. This feeding technique exposes the presence of trout to anglers when snapping shrimp break the water surface, and flocks of seagulls dive on the shrimp. Anglers should be on the lookout for both these signs of shrimp to find concentrations of speckled trout in May. Unfortunately, in some areas, the shoals of trout found under diving seagulls will be juveniles, with only a few keepers. A good strategy for fishing under diving birds is to cast a few times under the birds with a swimbait either tight-lined or under a cork. If several juvenile trout are caught, there is a high possibility that very few keepers exist in the shoal, and it's better to move on. It's also possible that diving birds will reveal gafftopsail catfish feeding on the shrimp and not speckled trout, which may be a disappointment or windfall depending on your level of desperation.

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## LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN

The salinity in Lake Pontchartrain is too low for speckled trout to spawn, but they can be found there for as many as nine months out of the year. In decades past, the salinity in the lake was higher due to seawater intrusion into the lake via the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO). An earthen and rock barrier was built across the MRGO near Hopedale Marina in 2009, and in 2011, a flood protection wall was built across the MRGO near Chalmette. The combination of these structures has nearly cutoff seawater intrusion into the lake and returned salinity concentrations to those seen in 1960 before the MRGO was built.

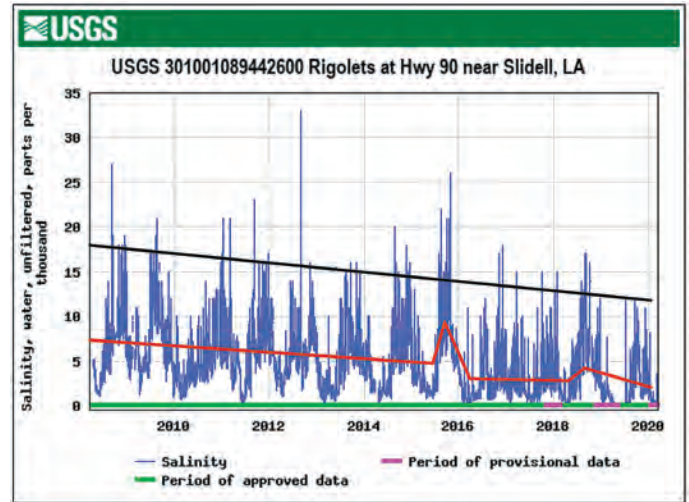
A chart shows the salinity decrease from 2008, before the MRGO barrier was constructed, to present day. The decrease is evident in the mean salinity and maximum salinity measured at the Hwy 90 USGS station.

In 2020, very few adult speckled trout will be found in the lake from mid-June until mid-September due to a salinity concentration below the speckled trout's estimated spawning requirement, which is a minimum of 15 ppt.

Fortunately for local anglers, many speckled trout will not spawn until June and will be found in abundance in Lake Pontchartrain, especially during early May. Telemetry studies conducted by LSU researchers in 2013 and 2014 found that speckled trout were prevalent in May on the eastern end of the lake. These areas include the northeast and southeast shoreline and around the three bridges on the east end of the lake.

## THE MRGO SOUTH

As mentioned above, a barrier — locally called the MRGO Dam — was constructed across the MRGO channel in 2009 to reduce marsh erosion and saltwater intrusion into the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. Downstream from the barrier to Breton Sound is the MRGO South. This barrier, near Hopedale Marina, is somewhat porous and allows tidal water to flow through in both directions. This tidal flow and the rock structure has



Salinity in Lake Ponchartrain has fallen gradually since two barriers were built across the MRGO in 2019 and 2011. **BELOW:** The Long Rocks on the west side of the MRGO channel will hold plenty of trout in May.

created an excellent habitat for speckled trout from late fall to early spring.

By May, many trout can be found in the MRGO South from approximately the midway point to the end of the rocks in Breton Sound, a 15-mile section. The lower section has 8 miles of rock jetty on the west side of the channel, called the Long Rocks, and 3 miles of rock jetty on the east side, called the Short Rocks. These rock jetties are among the most-productive trout fishing features on the east side of the Mississippi River in May. The bays and marsh edges to the east of the MRGO South jetties are also excellent May fishing locations. For instance, Eloi Bay has good fishing around its many oil and gas rigs and along Deadman Island.

## THE BARRIER ISLANDS ➤





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With specks headed to the saltier waters of the Gulf in May, barrier islands become extremely good trout spots.

## THE BARRIER ISLANDS

About 150 miles of the Louisiana coastline is spattered with barrier islands. Many islands on this stretch of coast have been severely eroded or lost completely to hurricanes and habitat destruction, but many still exist and provide excellent fishing habitat. The CPRA (Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority) 2017 Master Plan for the Louisiana coast has budgeted \$1.5 billion for barrier island and headland restoration. This work is defined as the creation and restoration of dune, beach and back barrier marsh with the goal of restoring or augmenting offshore barrier islands and headlands. A recent project completion under this program was Queen Bess Island on the edge of Barataria Bay.



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May is an excellent time to fish on the barrier islands, especially the remote islands, which require lengthy, open-water crossings. March and April are prone to strong fronts causing high north wind and rough seas, and June begins the summer period when violent afternoon thunderstorms can cause hazardous seas. In May, speckled trout begin to show up around the islands, and the less-turbulent weather makes for safer travel to the islands.

Many different habitats exist across this swath of islands, providing memorable fishing experiences, such as surf-fishing on Elmer's Island or wade-fishing the grass flats along the Chandeleur Islands chain. The most-accessible areas are Grand Isle and its nearby islands. Grand Isle is the only barrier island accessible by road; it has launching points from which surrounding islands can easily be reached by boat. Other launching points for boat access to barrier islands include Venice, Port Sulfur, Hopedale, Leeville and Cocodrie. The Chandeleur Islands are typically reached by seaplane from New Orleans or by boat from the Mississippi coast.

**MAY TACTICS FOR SPECKS >**

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## MAY TACTICS FOR SPECKS

My selection of baits for May is based on two primary factors: trout's metabolism and diet. Water temperature drives metabolism in fish, with higher temperatures increasing metabolism. Increasing metabolism causes an increase in respiration and energy consumption. This drives fish to consume more food, up to the point where the temperature becomes too high and a state of shock ensues, which leads to the death of the fish. In most circumstances, the fish retreat to cooler water and slow their metabolism instead of going into shock.

Fortunately, the water temperatures in May are perfect for moderate metabolism in speckled trout, and they will remain active and feed aggressively throughout the month. Therefore, I will be using baits that have a moderate to fast presentation and produce a good amount of noise. These include jerkbaits, fast-twitch baits, aggressively jigged swimbaits and popping corks.

The second factor is diet, and as stated above, the majority of speckled trout in Louisiana will feed primarily on brown shrimp. Second, they will feed on finfish species that are present, such as mullet, menhaden and bay anchovies. Therefore, shrimp imitation swimbaits or shrimp-colored swimbaits are a good choice for May, and of course, live shrimp will be very effective. ■

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

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HANGING AROUND  
GRAND ISLE IN MAY.

# GRAND ISLE, GRAND SPECKS

■ By Dora Lambert



CAPT. DARYL CARPENTER OF REEL SCREAMERS GUIDE SERVICE IN GRAND ISLE HAS BEEN FISHING THE WATERS AROUND THAT BARRIER ISLAND FOR YEARS, SO HE HAS AN IN-DEPTH UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE BITE AT ANY TIME OF THE YEAR.

## BUT HE'S REALLY DIALED IN ON THE SPECKLED TROUT IN MAY.

“Well, by May, and especially how warm the spring has been, the speckled trout bite is going to be awesome,” Carpenter said. “The bait is already here; the shrimp is here. The spawn should be underway. If you want the bigger girls, then they will be congregated at the beach.

“The cycle should be steady and predictable this year. Spawning trout will be going out to the beach and the high-salinity area. Once they finish, they will gang up on the oyster reefs before they are ready to spawn again. This will continue throughout the summer until it gets too hot, around late July, early August. When the water gets around 90 to 92, the water holds less oxygen. That’s when it’s crucial to center trips around the morning and afternoon.”

In May, bigger female speckled trout are going to be along the beach from Grand Isle to Fourchon because of the higher salinity of the water.

### WHERE WILL SPECKS BE IN MAY?

Speckled trout fishing is spot-fishing in May, mainly centered around the oyster reefs and along the stretch of beach from Grand Isle to Fourchon. However, many anglers with boats will anchor on a spot while targeting trout. Usually, locking in place won’t result in a substantial catch, because the schools of speckled trout move away from locations. This is why it is necessary to have different spots to fish.

Carpenter mentioned several times the importance of good electronics. Anglers should look for oyster reefs, current points, choke points with moving current and breaks in the sandbars.

Also, it’s important to keep your eyes open for activity, whether it is birds or bait activity.

“Shrimp don’t jump for exercise; if they are jumping, something is after them,” he said.

### GEAR FOR SPECKLED TROUT ➤



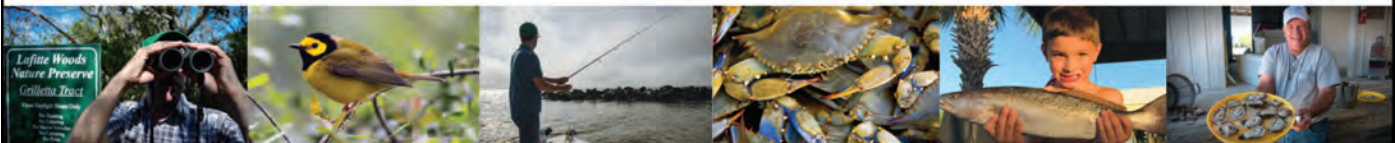


# GRAND ISLE

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Medium-light spinning tackle is the ticket for speckled trout around the Grand Isle area this month.

## GEAR FOR SPECKLED TROUT

A 7-foot, medium-light spinning rod, such as an Ugly Stik inshore select, and a 2500 series reel, such as the Penn Fierce, function fine for speckled trout. You will want to have 8- to 20-pound test line, mono or braid; stay away from stainless steel leaders. Store-bought, stainless-steel leaders for sale at area marinas and bait shops are for tackling bull reds.

Carpenter leans more towards live bait.

“The most important thing is to keep your bait alive and healthy,” he said. “Longer mono leaders are better.”

When he’s not fishing live bait, Carpenter’s favorite go-to lures are the Matrix Shad in shrimp creole color and H&H Sparkle Beetles in lime green.

“They worked in the 40s and 50s, and they still work now,” he said.

## KAYAK FISHING

“The fishing skillset it takes to be a good trout fisherman takes a lot of time behind the wheel, but you don’t necessarily need a boat to catch a trout,” says Danny Wray of Calmwater Charters, who has guided for the past 15 years and is best known as the founder of “Ride the Bull” — one of the biggest



Fishing live shrimp under a popping cork is a great technique for kayak anglers who want to target trout.

kayak tournaments out there.

“If Grand Isle is pretty new to you, then it might be best to hire a guide,” he said. “But if you want to try it out on your own, my best advice is to buy live shrimp for a popping-cork setup. You will need to watch for dolphins though; they see popping-cork fishermen as feeding opportunities.”

## SEASON OUTLOOK

Wray has many insightful viewpoints based on years of fishing Grand Isle. He said fishing pressure has steadily increased over the years. When he started out almost two decades ago, about 20 or 30 boats would be fishing from Grand Isle to Fourchon; now, the number is closer to 200 on any given day. The speckled trout stock has declined as a result.

“Success of the outing shouldn’t be based on catching a limit,” Wray said. “It is a renewable resource we need to protect. Mother Nature is doing a good job erasing what we have, so we should enjoy and preserve/conservate what we have. Keep what we need for dinner and give a pack to friends. We cannot be the “Ziploc State” going forward, if we want to preserve the speckled trout fisheries for the next generation to enjoy.” ■



*Dora Lambert is an avid multi-species angler, fish tagging conservationist and outdoors writer.*

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## MARSH MAN MASSON

Todd Masson



# MAY: A RESPITE FOR PARCHED SOULS

## TROUT FISHERMEN CHASE SPECKS LIKE NO OTHER TIME OF THE YEAR

**F**or Pontchartrain Basin anglers, the month of May is like a rich oasis, full of running water, palm trees and dates, where a weary traveler can refresh after crossing the desert of late winter.

The weather is warm but not hot, and the speckled trout that were tougher to find than fiscal restraint in Congress are all of a sudden concentrated and maniacally aggressive on the spawning grounds.

For Capt. Justin Bowles ([jbfishingcharters.com](http://jbfishingcharters.com)), that makes May one of his favorite months.

"It's definitely in the top three; that's for sure," he said.

In the big-picture sense, the fish are moving from Lake Pontchartrain and its surrounding marshes to the salty spawning grounds of Breton and Mississippi sounds.

Depending on the day, Bowles will either meet them halfway or make a big run to feed those that are already getting busy with creating next year's crop of

speckled trout.

The first place Bowles checks each day is Lake Borgne, particularly the few oil-field structures that dot the expansive waterbody.

"With clients, I like to fish them deep if I can," he said. "It's a lot easier with clients to fish them at the Lake Borgne rigs with live shrimp on drop-shots or Carolina rigs."

But Borgne is only productive when recent winds haven't beaten it to a pulp.

"If the water's not real clean at the Lake Borgne rigs, I generally just keep going," Bowles said. "I'll try to get on a protected shoreline in the Biloxi Marsh, where the water should be a lot cleaner."

### BAIT, CURRENT

Inside the salty marsh, Bowles looks for two things: bait and current lines.

"That time of year, I'm really looking for shrimp," he said. "As a general rule, if you find the shrimp, you've found the trout."

"Once I locate bait, I'm focusing most of my attention on tidelines around points. I really fish those out a good ways. Sometimes you find (the trout) right up on the point; other times, they could be a hundred yards off of it."

The fish inside the Biloxi Marsh in May are mostly good eaters that no one would consider putting on the wall.

"In the marsh, you're looking at 12- to 16-inchers, with a decent amount of



A former editor of *Louisiana Sportsman*, Todd Masson has published the *Marsh Man* Masson YouTube channel since 2017.



Hard-plastic twitch baits like MirrOdines produce some really big speckled trout for Capt. Justin Bowles this time of year.

throwbacks mixed in,” Bowles said.

If his clients want to roll the dice on bigger fish, and conditions allow it, Bowles will push past the marsh to the islands that pepper its eastern fringe.

“The farther you go out in May, the bigger the fish get,” he said. “If you go to the islands outside the Biloxi Marsh, like Martin or Comfort, you can get on some really nice fish, particularly first thing in the morning.”

## TWITCH BAITS TAKE OVER

Out there, Bowles likes to hurl Matrix Mulletts and MirrOdines.

“I don’t throw the lipped jerkbaits that time of year,” he said. “I don’t have an answer as to why; I just find the smaller, pogie-imitating twitchbaits are more productive.”

Rod and line selection are crucial for these baits, Bowles said. He most-often throws them on medium-light rods teamed with 30-pound braid. To the braid, he ties a 20-pound leader of fluorocarbon

for the MirrOdines or monofilament for the Matrix Mulletts.

Bowles’ favorite line-to-line knot is called a Shin’s. There are several instructional videos on YouTube showing how to tie it.

“I haven’t found anything smaller or easier to tie,” Bowles said.

Cadence can also be critical, particularly for the subsurface hard-plastic.

“Normally when I’m fishing that, I’m not going to be in more than 3½ feet of water,” Bowles said. “I cast it out, let it sink down and settle, pop it a couple times and let it sit for a few seconds.

“You don’t want it hitting the bottom every time you let it set, so you just kind of get a rhythm to where you’re not snagging it, picking up any grass or hooking on oyster shells.

“I’d say at least 75% of the hits come when the bait is sitting still.”

Using this technique at the outer islands, including the Chandeleurs, Bowles has caught fish up to 7 pounds. ■

LURE REVIEW >



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## LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

The Matrix XShad is Chad Champagne's latest offering.



# MATRIX XSHAD

Photos courtesy Chas Champagne

**T**hese are X-citing times at Dockside Bait & Tackle in Slidell, home of Matrix Shad, Vortex Shad, Matrix MEGA, Matrix Rip Shad, etc.

As X-cited as founder and owner Chas Champagne was about the recent release of the new Matrix XShad, consumers — the anglers who count on the artificial lures to put fish in the boat — are even more amped up.

“The public is anticipating this more than anything we’ve ever come out with. I can kind of judge how busy something is going to be,” Champagne said, noting the high volume of calls and inquiries from store owners is a tell-tale gauge.

The Matrix XShad, two years in the planning and making, was scheduled to be on the shelves last in April and scheduled to be available to subscribers of the Matrix Bait Box in March.

What’s the X-citement about, X-actly? Matrix XShads are intricately hand-painted, Champagne said proudly, and feature an added bonus.

## NOT NEW, UPGRADED

However, the veteran angler and artificial lure manufacturer emphasized, it isn’t a new line of soft plastics, per se.

“It is the exact mold of the ever-so popular Matrix Shad. The only difference is, we put a belly slit in this so it’ll give anglers the opportunity to rig it weedless or on an open-faced jighead,” he said.

“They’re hand-painted, each one. Instead of having purple/gold or black/chartreuse — colors in the fishing world the past 40 years — like a double-laminate, we’re going after a natural image, like we peeled the skin off a fish” and put it on each soft plastic, he said.

“It’s about as accurate as you can get when you paint and draw something.”

Redfish, flounder, other saltwater fish and even bass have been fooled by the Matrix XShad.

Champagne shipped frozen minnows overseas to the designers, who came up with the ultra-natural paint jobs for pogeys, mullets and glass minnows, right down to the gill plates painted red, the distinguishing dot on the pogeys and the silver line right down the belly of the glass minnows.

“That one’s really sharp,” he said.

The painstaking details are added to the soft-plastic body, already known for its flexibility and durability. The hand-painted finish was put to the test last April when Champagne and others tested the Matrix XShad, along with the Matrix MEGA and the Matrix Rip Shad, in Florida. Why Florida? If an artificial lure can entice speckled trout and other species to bite in the heavily pressured, clear waters of the Florida coast, it can trigger bites anywhere, Champagne has reasoned during his years as an artificial lure manufacturer.

The Matrix XShad has been in the works a long time.

“Man, I’ve been dealing with this



**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.

thing two years to get it right," he said.

Pulling it all together has been a feat. The packaging is made in one place, the packaging's special "clams" are made somewhere else and the soft-plastic lure itself is made somewhere else, then they're assembled in Slidell.

### DURABLE PAINT JOB

The Matrix XShad's paint job holds up "pretty well," he said, adding that it should last the lifetime of the bait, which is a shade longer than 3 inches. The body is the same as the Matrix Shad; it's common to catch at least seven or eight speckled trout on one of those.

"I'd say it will catch five or six fish before you might see scratches and scrapes. I was impressed," Champagne said.

There is a catch. Each bag of five baits is fairly pricey (\$6.99) for the saltwater fishing market — not so much so in the bass-fishing market — but Champagne wants to make anglers aware that it costs approximately five times as much for him to make one Matrix XShad as it does to make a Matrix Shad.

"I'm going to get the price down," Champagne vowed.

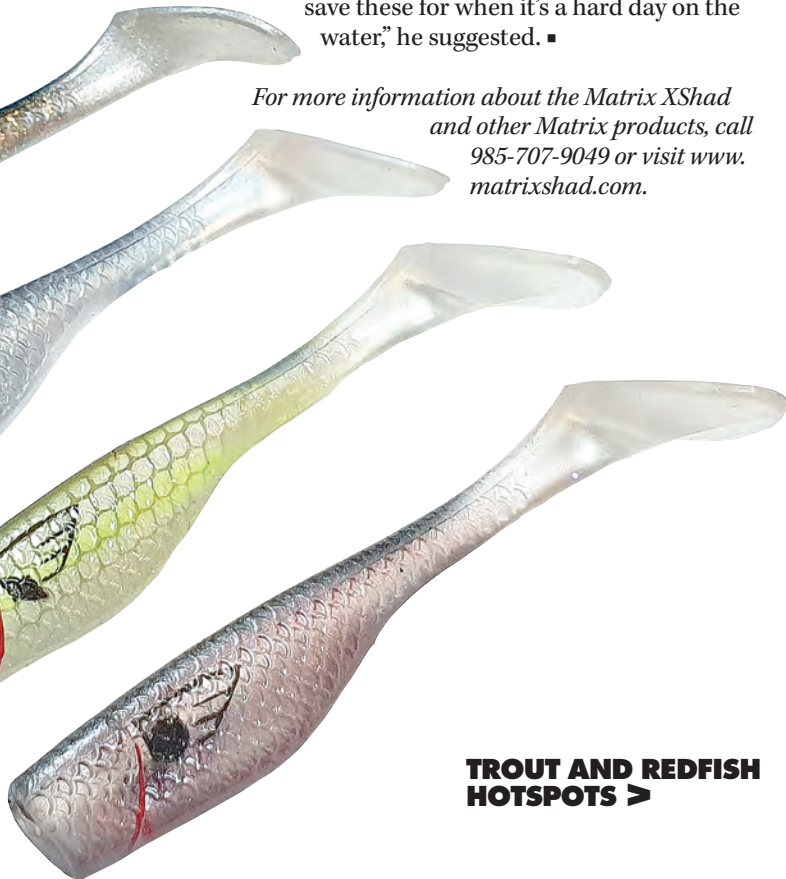
This new bait lure is at the upper end of the soft-plastic echelon, he emphasized, noting the Matrix Shads are "well-priced" and have proven effective in inshore waters from Texas to Florida and beyond.

"Both will catch you fish, but one of them is a little bit fancier," he said. "If one of the anglers wants to have the newest thing, one with bells and whistles, this is it."

Tie the newest product on and use it to target big speckled trout, which are a little more wily, and/or during trying fishing conditions, he said.

"I wouldn't use these lures like under birds. I'd save these for when it's a hard day on the water," he suggested. ■

*For more information about the Matrix XShad and other Matrix products, call 985-707-9049 or visit [www.matrixshad.com](http://www.matrixshad.com).*



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**SPORTSMAN**

# BAY ELOI ROCKS, RIGS FOR BIG TROUT, REDS

## Guide hopes water quality is up to snuff

**C**apt. Marc Fradella is hoping the short-time opening of the Spillway doesn't ruin what was shaping up to be a spectacular May run of speckled trout in the Hopedale area.

"It's been really looking good; the specks have been showing up in good sizes and numbers in many of the early summer hotspots, and while the action has been sporadic, it sure points to a great season," he said. "Just last week, I caught a 6-pound trout, took some pictures and released it; biggest trout I've caught in a few years. So, like I said, there's cause to be hopeful."

At the same time, Fradella (985-290-2908) said there's also some cause for concern.

"It always concerns me when they open the Spillway, not just because of the freshwater diluting the salinity of the water, but also because of all the toxic pollutants it introduces into our waters," he said. "Last year, we saw so many sick reds and drum and sick dolphin after they opened the Spillway, it was depressing. I'd hate to see a repeat."

"Generally in May, I'm fishing Bay Eloi's rigs and wellheads, the east side of Breton Sound's islands and rigs, and the MRGO Rocks — usually in that order. I do occasionally head straight to the rocks when there's a good consistent bite going on. Anchor up and fish live shrimp 2½ to 3 feet under a cork, and don't cast too close to the rocks or you'll leave your tackle there."

"I like to fish the wellheads and rigs scattered all over Bay Eloi as well as those in Morgan Harbor. Hook on with a rig hook and fish all around the boat with live shrimp or live croakers. I usually free-line the croakers using just a split-shot weight, and the shrimp I fish the same way or under a cork."

Fradella said you can expect to find some big fish — nice-sized trout, big reds, big drum and occasionally Spanish mackerel around any of those wellheads and rigs.



Capt. Marc Fradella with a speckled trout caught on live shrimp under a cork on the fringe of Bay Eloi.

"At the deeper rigs and wellheads, I'll still try free-lining baits with just a split-shot for weight, but I also like to fish live shrimp or croakers on bottom rigs, either sliding sinkers or drop-shot rigs," he said. "I've also done real good on the Vudu plastic shrimp in the clear or natural colors, and I've used them on bottom rigs and under a cork with great results."

Fradella said whether you fish the big lakes on the fringes, the MRGO Rocks or the open waters of Bay Eloi and the Sound, the key will be to avoid the muddy river bilge and look for good salty water.

He said if redfish alone are on your menu, try the Biloxi Marsh lakes and ponds, at points, cuts and coves, with live or market shrimp under a cork. ■

— Rusty Tardo

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# FISH THE SLICKS FOR BIGGER TROUT AT BIG LAKE, SABINE

**F**ishing, the original social distancing activity, has been deemed “essential” by Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas. If you’re an angler, there was undoubtedly never any question about that. The easiest program to fish this May and working into June — other than school fish — is fishing slicks, but many anglers will drive right past and many times over slicking fish. With the large numbers of baitfish on which trout and redfish alike are gorging this time of year, slicks are very common and a very productive means of locating fish. The naturally occurring oil in the baitfish that are being eaten produces the slick. If you are unsure what a slick looks like, toss a couple of potato chips in the water and observe the slick that immediately develops. If you go the potato chip route, you’ll probably make some new best friends pretty quickly as boats pull up on the birds that will also

show up nearly as quick as the slick. It is important to note that speckled trout and redfish are not the only fish that produce slicks. Black drum, gar and gafftop may also be found feeding under them. If you hook a gafftop, it is time to start looking for the next slick to fish. Also, be wary to not waste time fishing crab-trap slicks; their location and odor should warn you. A productive slick should have a fresh, sweet odor that is comparable to fresh-cut grass or watermelon. I am a topwater fishing lunatic, so naturally I will be casting either a Super Spook or a She Dog at slicks. If they’re unwilling to eat on top, I will switch to either a jerkbait or a MirrOdine XL. Pink/gold or pink/silver are hard combinations to beat; clown is also another personal favorite. MirrOlure’s 808 and 21 are also colors that are very productive in the MirrOdine XL. If they aren’t going for hard plastics, I will switch to soft plastics; a Sea Shad in chicken-on-a-chain color rigged on either ¼- or ½-ounce jighead is always a good choice.

Remember, slicks will drift with the wind and current. It is vital to position upwind and upcurrent and cast to where the slick first developed, not where it drifted. Make long casts and fish slowly until you are able to locate the fish. Sometimes, just one or two will be there, and other times, you will find a school under a slick that produces fish for several hours. To increase your chances, fish as quietly as possible; simply shutting a hatch or cooler lid too loud can completely ruin a good bite.

Slicks can literally form anywhere. We fish them in open water, along shorelines and on flats. Areas to key in on are flats off of ship channels and the ICW such as Turner’s on Big Lake or Sydney Island on Sabine. We also commonly fish slicks along rock walls such as the jetties or the north and south revetment walls. Running the Louisiana shoreline south of Johnson’s Bayou to Blue Buck is another prime location. ■

— Capt. Adam Jaynes



Chuck Ramirez with an oversized redfish from just off the ICW. Smelling slicks is key to locating them when it is flat calm.



**Capt. Adam Jaynes** grew up fishing Sabine Lake and Lake Calcasieu and surrounding waters. He specializes in light tackle with artificial lures in the year-around pursuit of speckled trout and redfish. He can be contacted at [justfishsabine.com](http://justfishsabine.com)



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# DELACROIX'S SQUEEZE

## River water coming from all sides should push the fish into the reachable middle

**C**apt. Chad Dufrene said that between the squeeze of an encroaching, muddy river and the hovering threat of coronavirus, anglers who venture out should be able to find some fish in the mid-zone middle of the Delacroix area.

"Truth is, there are still some trout hanging out in the inside waters, in areas like Lake Fausan, Lake Campo, Four Horse Lake and over around Petain and Tanasia Lagoon, but how much longer they'll hang out is anybody's guess — and they haven't really stacked up in any of those areas in any substantial numbers," said Dufrene (985-637-6357).

"I know you can work those areas with live shrimp under a cork and some shrimp-colored plastics and still catch some fish. But their migration instinct is irresistible, and for the most part, those trout are heading out to the bigger bays and looking for higher salinities to spawn this month."

Dufrene said the key in May will be to find good water in the middle zones as the muddy river water encroaches from all sides.

"Once again, the Spillway waters want to put the squeeze on us from the east side, and Mardi Gras Cut continues to pour in from the west side, so that only leaves the middle area for the trout to seek saltier water," he said. "I'm talking about Lake Calabasse, Lake Fortuna, Lake Machais and the Lake of Two Trees.

"Of course, the bigger concern is the trout get squeezed out altogether by the freshwater and leave the whole area. They must have that saltier water to spawn, and they'll go wherever they have to find it."

But since the Spillway opening this year is supposed to be only for a few weeks, he's hoping that worst-case scenario won't happen.

"I'm cautiously optimistic," he said. "The lakes I just mentioned are usually very productive in May, and the fish we've seen so far have been nice-sized. I know we can go there right now and



Rimmer Jennings of Cleveland, Miss., caught this beautiful bronze redbreast on market shrimp under a cork by the Twin Pipelines while fishing with Capt. Chad Dufrene.

work live shrimp under a cork or shrimp colored soft plastics under a cork in those waters and catch some fish. I like to fish around the broken marsh islands, or off points, always looking for clean water, moving current and bait in the water. Find that and you'll find fish."

Dufrene said all the interior lakes are holding reds, but many are so grassed up they're unfishable. He said the best bet is the larger outside lakes like Grand Point Bay, Bay Lafourche and American Bay.

"Look for areas with big coves and points that aren't grassed up and soak a dead shrimp under a cork," he said. "The reds will find you."

— Rusty Tardo

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# Quite a sight

THERE'S A TALENT TO THE POPULAR TECHNIQUE OF SIGHT-FISHING FOR REDS IN THE MARSH. THIS VETERAN GUIDE SHARES HIS EXPERTISE. ■ By Sammy Romano

# Redfish are one of the most abundant and sought-after saltwater fish in Louisiana.

Unlike speckled trout, whose populations are struggling, redfish continue to thrive in the marshes, causing many anglers to shift their focus. Although redfish will readily take bait or lures fished in deeper water, this doesn't compare to the excitement of watching them inhale a lure in a clear, shallow pond.

The thrill of spotting a cruising redfish, casting directly to it, and then watching it strike has caused sight-fishing for redfish to explode in popularity. As such, an ever-increasing number of anglers are looking to increase their knowledge of this specialized fishing technique.

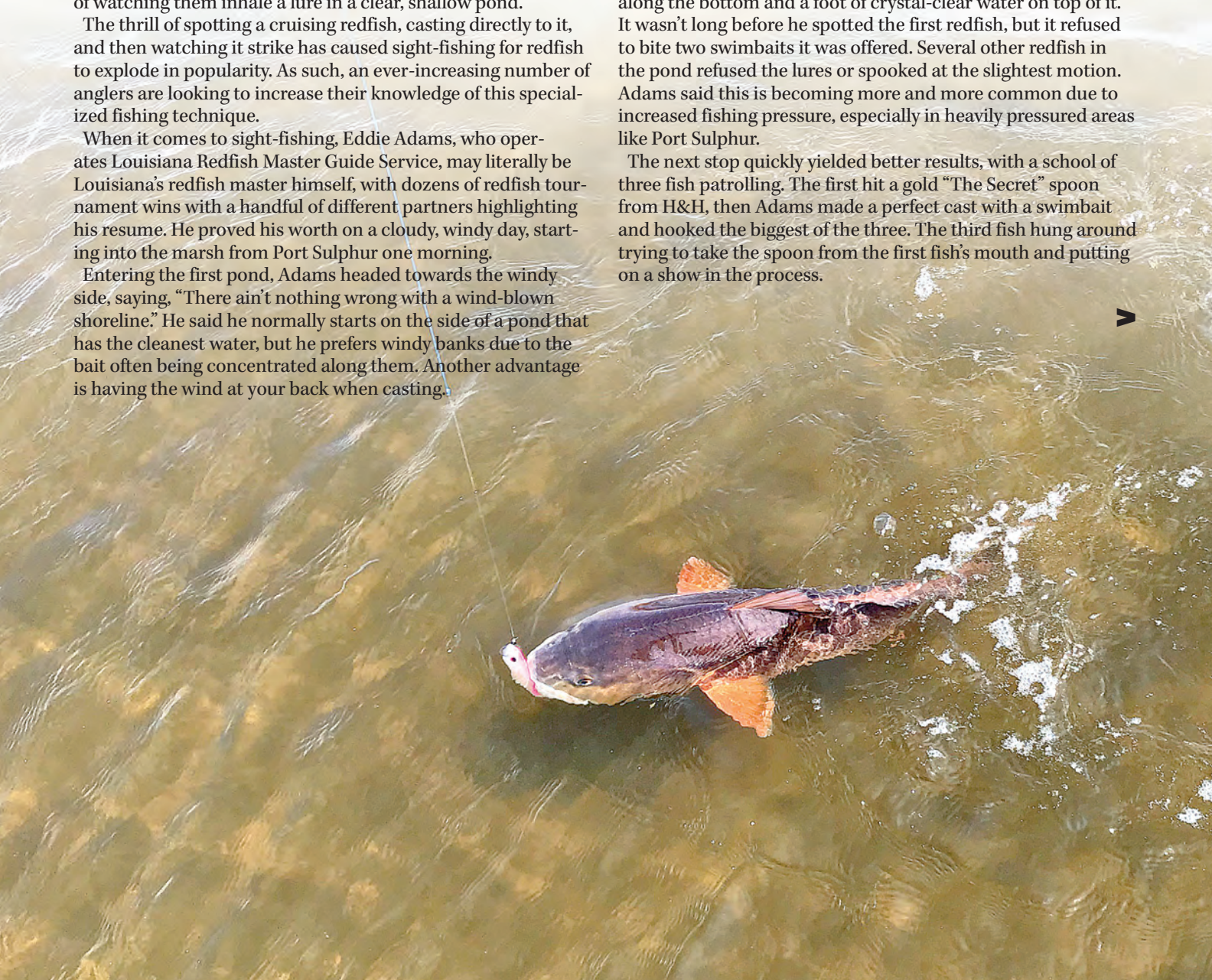
When it comes to sight-fishing, Eddie Adams, who operates Louisiana Redfish Master Guide Service, may literally be Louisiana's redfish master himself, with dozens of redfish tournament wins with a handful of different partners highlighting his resume. He proved his worth on a cloudy, windy day, starting into the marsh from Port Sulphur one morning.

Entering the first pond, Adams headed towards the windy side, saying, "There ain't nothing wrong with a wind-blown shoreline." He said he normally starts on the side of a pond that has the cleanest water, but he prefers windy banks due to the bait often being concentrated along them. Another advantage is having the wind at your back when casting.

**BELOW:** Clear water is a key to sight-fishing for reds; it allows you to see your target and place an accurate cast.

This pond was ideal, with what Adams calls "oyster grass" along the bottom and a foot of crystal-clear water on top of it. It wasn't long before he spotted the first redfish, but it refused to bite two swimbaits it was offered. Several other redfish in the pond refused the lures or spooked at the slightest motion. Adams said this is becoming more and more common due to increased fishing pressure, especially in heavily pressured areas like Port Sulphur.

The next stop quickly yielded better results, with a school of three fish patrolling. The first hit a gold "The Secret" spoon from H&H, then Adams made a perfect cast with a swimbait and hooked the biggest of the three. The third fish hung around trying to take the spoon from the first fish's mouth and putting on a show in the process.



(From top) Swimbaits, spinnerbaits, top-water plugs and spoons are all great lures for sight-casting to redfish.



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## Quite a sight

**A**ccording to Adams, clean water and the presence of bait are keys to success when sight-fishing for redfish. When at all possible, keep searching until you find clean water before spending time fishing, since it will both help you to see the fish as well as help the fish see your lure. Aquatic grasses are often keys to success because they filter the water for better clarity, as well as providing shelter for baitfish and crabs on which the redfish feed. Not all grasses are created equal, however, with coontail and widgeon grass being two of Adams' favorites.

He was quick to point out that crab traps are a good sign, because redfish feed heavily on crabs, and the presence of traps usually indicates an abundance of crabs.

"Crabbers make their living in the marsh; they know what's going on out here," he said.

Redfish have an extra attraction to washed-out islands and humps — high spots of submerged mud — in ponds and will gravitate to these when available. Adams and partner Ray Chagnard once won a tournament by marking humps in a pond with white PVC pipe.

"There were so many redfish in that pond that it was hard to avoid spooking them all, so we were able to ease up on those high spots because we knew exactly where they were due to the PVC markers," said Adams, who also looks for wading birds like herons and egrets to reveal the presence of redfish. "If you see a shorebird, especially an egret, standing along a shoreline, that's almost a guaranteed redfish. That bird is there because



A marsh pond with a grass bottom and a foot of water above the grass sets up a perfect sight-fishing situation.

he is hunting the same bait as a redfish, and the bait is along that bank."

Adams uses both baitcasting and spinning tackle. He mates a 7-foot-1, medium/extra fast G-Loomis NRX 852CJWR casting rod with a Shimano Metanium reel with a very fast, 8:1 gear ratio, spooled with 40- to 50-pound Power Pro Super8Slick braid.

"This lets you retrieve your lure quickly if you make a bad cast, and then re-cast before the boat spooks the fish or the fish moves away," he said.

Adams' spinning setup includes a 7-foot, medium-action rod with a Shimano Stradic 4000 reel spooled with 20-pound braid.

Eyewear is obviously a huge key to sight-fishing success, and Adams likes polarized glasses with amber lenses. He prefers mirrored lenses on sunny days, and non-mirrored lenses on cloudy days.

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## Quite a sight

Sunglasses with polarized lenses are a key to sight-fishing for redfish, according to guide Eddie Adams.

**H**is favorite lures include a gold Rapala Skitterwalk, H&H's "The Secret" weedless spoon in gold, Power Bait Ripple Shad (pink, orange, or holographic gold/black back), Matrix Shad or 4-inch Gulp Ripple Mullet (morning glory/chartreuse tail or glow/chartreuse tail) — any of these swimbaits rigged with a jig spinner.

Adams isn't sold on tower boats and raised casting platforms. He said that height offers definite advantages, but there is a point of diminishing returns.

"Anything you can do to gain some height will help, even if it's just standing on a cooler on the front deck of your boat," he said. "The additional height helps you to see into the water better, but there is such thing as too high."

Once you get higher than 6 feet above the deck of your boat, the height affects your lure presentation, making it difficult to properly work the lure.

If an area has thick aquatic grass, elevation is key because it allows the angler to see fish farther away and make longer casts before they sink into and under the grass. Adams said how you work the lure depends on the day and the fish's disposition. Experience will help you to judge the fish's reaction and adjust accordingly.

"On days where fish are just lying there, hugging the bottom, it is often tough fishing, but if they are lit up and floating high, swimming around on their own or rolling side to side feeding these are all good signs," he said. "Some days, the fish want the



lure swimming; others you have to throw past them and drop it right in front of them. Sometimes you have to just kill it." ■

*Capt. Eddie Adams fishes the marshes of Port Sulphur, Point-a-la-Hache, Delacroix, Empire and Venice, La. He can be reached at 504-975-7902 or via e-mail at [captaineddie@louisianafishmaster.com](mailto:captaineddie@louisianafishmaster.com).*



**Sammy Romano** is a lifelong outdoorsman who has worked in the outdoors industry for more than 28 years. He currently manages Chag's Sporting Goods in Metairie, La., and can be contacted at [samboka31@aol.com](mailto:samboka31@aol.com).

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# Redfish SCRAPBOOK



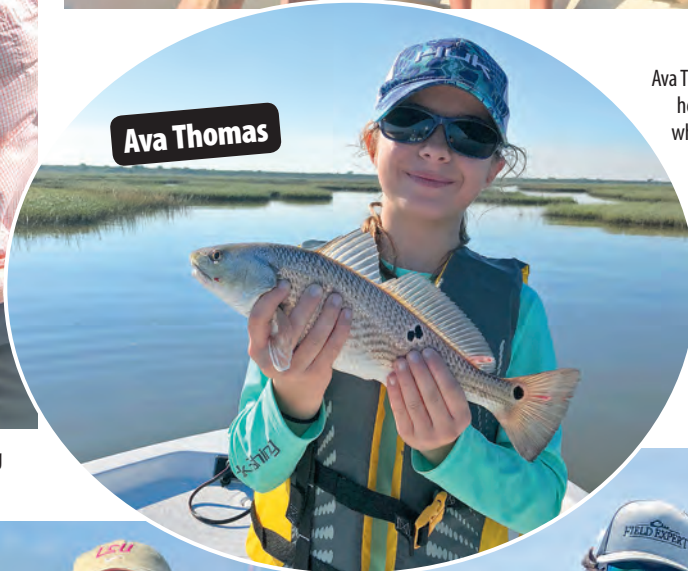
**Addyson and Kelly Guillot**

Addyson and Kelly Guillot pose with Addyson's first redfish. It was caught using dead shrimp in Leeville.



**Johnny Lynn & Justin**

Johnny Lynn Miller's first redfish was caught out of Venice while fishing with her dad, Justin.



**Ava Thomas**

Ava Thomas landed her first redfish, which just made the cut.



**Beaux Roddy**

Beaux Roddy, 4, holds a redfish that he caught in Delacroix on June 15, 2019.



**Nicole Navarre**

Nicole Navarre slammed the redfish and speckled trout in Delacroix on a brand new Castaway Lady Angler rod and Penn Battle II 2500 combo that she received for her 21st birthday.



**Kyle Oden**

Kyle Oden with a redfish caught June 2 in Point-Aux-Chenes.

# GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

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Digital images must be at least 200KB and in jpeg format.



**Hagen McAllister**

Hagen McAllister with a redfish from Leeville.



**Josh Jolicoeur**

Josh Jolicoeur caught two redfish with a plastic worm bank fishing in Mandeville.



**Jase Curry**

Jase Curry, 5, with proud dad Andrew, after Jase caught his first redfish on a dead shrimp while fishing Bayou Dularge on Aug. 10.



**Joe Guillory**

Joe Guillory holds up a nice spotted Delacroix redfish caught back in December 2018.



**Aaron Gerberg**

Aaron Gerberg with a Lake Salvador redfish.



**Melanie Vicknair Moran**

Melanie Vicknair Moran was fishing Hopedale when she caught this big redfish.

Mangrove snappers are a tasty alternative to inshore fish, especially out of Cocoderie.

# MANGROVE SNAPPER ARE COCODRIE DRAW

Plenty of deepwater structures hold fish

**A**s inshore fisheries become more and more pressured, anglers are buying offshore boats to target the surplus of species found in the deeper waters of the Sportsman's Paradise. Among the cobia, red snapper, amberjack, grouper, and occasional tuna bagged, mangrove snapper have etched their rightful place as a preferred offshore quarry.

Mangrove snapper are quickly becoming a favorite to catch, cook and eat for Louisianians. The creel limit is five times that of red snapper, which makes them a tantalizing option for anglers who want to fill their freezers.

Mangrove snapper can be found anywhere from Venice to Grand Isle to Cocodrie, with Cocodrie perhaps the best-known



mangrove snapper destination — and it's easy to see why. South of the town are a series of barrier islands, and only a short boat ride away are a multitude of offshore structures, first-class habitat for these fish.

Mangrove snapper associate directly with structure. Offshore rigs, artificial reefs, bridges, oyster reefs, jetties and even piers are places you can catch them. In Cocodrie, they are often caught around oil and gas rigs that spatter the offshore landscape.

Electronics are essential for having a successful trip. Not all of the oil and gas rigs will hold substantial amounts of baitfish.

Anglers new to targeting mangrove snapper often make the mistake of using the same rig they use for red snapper. Multi-hook setups and 80-pound fluorocarbon leaders



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usually will not work for these finicky fish. One may be cajoled into biting, but the bites will be few and far between.

Mangrove snapper are renowned for being very intelligent and having excellent eyesight. They will not bite any bait from a rig that has beads or a visible weight. The best setup is a 2- to 4-foot fluorocarbon leader that isn't too heavy and about a 3/0 circle hook. Water clarity should influence the size leader you use. The clearer the water, the smaller the line; the murkier the water, the line size will not matter.

Reel size will be dependent on how deep you will be fishing, but a 4000 to 6000 series reel should be adequate. The best rod to use is a 7-foot, fast action. Unlike red snapper, mangrove snapper are known to be relatively light biters.

Anglers will want to position their boat up current, so that their bait can drift through the mangrove snapper habitat naturally. Live shrimp and baitfish are great bait. If you plan to chum a platform for mangroves, dead cut bait will work as well.

Time and time again, one of the biggest mistakes made while fishing for mangrove snapper is when anglers go to "set the hook." Never jerk your rod up at the first tap. Wait until the rod tip bends steadily down and then start reeling. ■

— Dora Lambert



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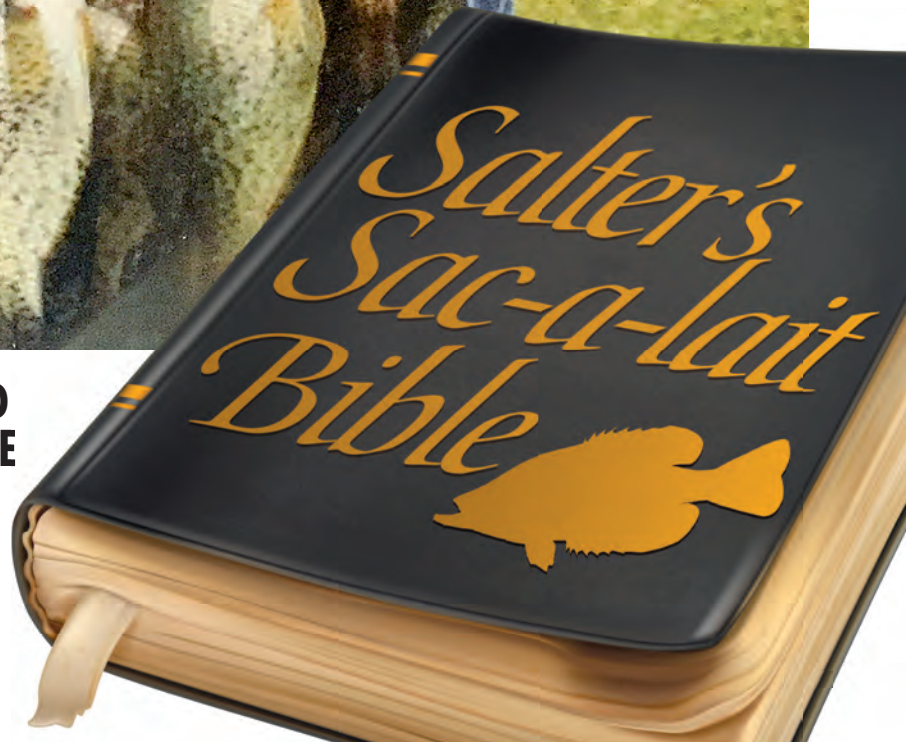


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**JIGGIN' POLE'S INVENTOR HAD PLENTY TO SAY ABOUT CRAPPIE FISHING, AND HIS SON IS KEEPING THE RELIGION ALIVE.**

■ By Kinny Haddox



# Trying to summarize all the sac-a-lait fishing knowledge

Blaine Salter spends countless days teaching anglers to fish for sac-a-lait and promoting his company's jigging poles.

that J.B. "Blaine" Salter Jr. accumulated over the years from his father, the late J.B. Salter, and from time on the lake is like trying to summarize the entire Encyclopedia Britannica — Remember those? — in two paragraphs or less.

Salter is driving forward the legacy of his father, who passed away four years ago, and their company, Salter's Jiggin' Pole, the same way they built the business and some of the best panfishing poles around in a modest shop in Erwinville. Salter's two main products continue to be the Classic Fiberglass Jiggin' Pole and the Elite Series Jiggin' Pole.

The poles are still built so when they are held, the guides are on the side of the pole to keep it from contacting the line to maximize the feel for bites. They are also built with counterweight on the end of the rod to keep them perfectly balanced and easy to hold during a long day's fishing.

"It's an all-out war out there now," said Salter, 44. "Years ago, there weren't that many sac-a-lait — or crappie — fishermen. Now everybody's out there sac-a-lait fishing. It's tremendous. The sport has grown 26% each year the past four years, and it isn't through yet. I combine what I have learned crappie fishing with teaching others how to be successful. That's what I do. In fact, between running the business and teaching every chance I get, I do less fishing than ever."

Even if he never wets another hook, which isn't about to happen, Salter spends all the time he can teaching sac-a-lait fishing at tackle shows, store seminars and even as a guest instructor at Crappie University. All the while, he ensures Salter Jiggin' Pole produces the same, dependable fishing poles that his father began more than 40 years ago when he invented the Salter's Jiggin' Pole in 1981.

What's the most important factor that influence sac-a-lait and bream and your ability to catch them? Salter has a handwritten answer to that question on a worn, old piece of ruled tablet paper.

"Out of a thousand handwritten letters Dad wrote, there were 12 things he felt influenced fishing patterns, Salter said. "Whether you are a beginner or an advanced fishermen, pay attention to these, and you'll catch more fish."



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**I**t would take a book to share all that information, but Salter breaks down the most important three items on that list in more detail. They apply no matter where you fish.

“Know your area’s food source,” he said. “If there is no food, there are no sac-a-lait there. Most of our home area is as follows: minnows or shad are No. 1, followed by grass shrimp for grassy lakes, and tadpoles or crawfish. Your bait should mimic these at all cost. Use the chart to determine colors. They react to contrast; Bobby Garland tadpole style baits are great. Cajun Lures’ Slim Jimmy has great tail action for jigging vertically and grey ghost hair jigs like Crappie G mimic a shiner’s flash.”

Next in importance are water clarity and oxygen levels, Salter said. Do not fish black, clear water. This indicates lack of oxygen. You want water with that beautiful green tint that is rich in oxygen, perfect for jigging so you can get up close.

“Shade patterns is high on the list,” he says. “If you catch a feeding pattern twice a day, then great. You can catch them easily. The skill comes at other times. Shade is your best friend. They hide in the shade and are invisible and ambush their pray. Suspend your bait under a cork or work your jig in a swimming pattern. That’s crucial. This really shouldn’t even be called jigging because it’s really swimming. Swim that bait in a 6-inch pattern with a little wiggle at the stop. And I mean stop. Still. Give that fish a chance to get it, and he will.”

Another tip Salter picked up as absolute truth from his father was to fish between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. The elder Salter fished four to five hours at least three times a week the 10 years before he passed on. He swore by the 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. time frame. He also created a color chart that is included with Salter products and that Salter hands out at his teaching appearances.

“That chart has withstood the test of time and if you follow it, you’ll catch fish,” he said. ■



*Kinny Haddox has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 45 years. He publishes a daily website, [lakedarbonslife.com](http://lakedarbonslife.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.*



Blaine Salter (right) and a friend show the results of following a good sac-a-lait fishing plan. **BELOW:** J.B. Salter’s color chart helps anglers choose their panfishing weapons.

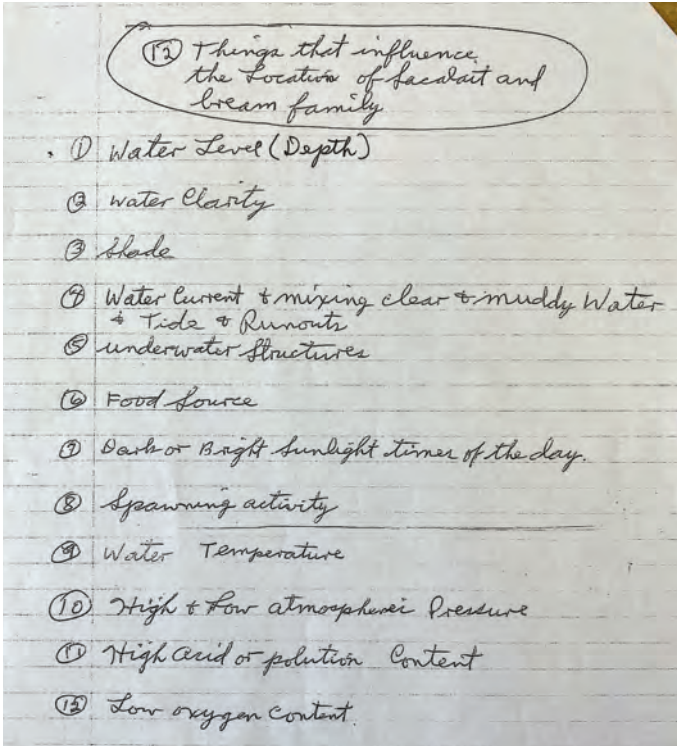
<p><b>General Rule:</b> Black/Chartreuse Sparkle is best for black clear water. Light colors are best for clear water. In milky, muddy, or deep clear water, because of decreased visibility, darker colors are necessary for fish to see the jig.</p>			
<p><b>COLORS FOR DIFFERENT KINDS OF WATER</b></p>			
<p><b>BLACK CLEAR WATER</b></p>	<p><b>CLEAR WATER</b></p>	<p><b>MILKY WATER</b></p>	<p><b>MUDDY WATER</b></p>
<p><b>BLACK/CHARTREUSE SPARKLE</b> <b>BLACK</b></p>	<p><b>LIGHT PINK/WHITE</b> <b>RED/CHARTREUSE SPARKLE</b> <b>YELLOW/CHARTREUSE</b> <b>BROWN/ORANGE</b> (Crawfish Color) <b>CHARTREUSE</b> <b>HOT PINK/WHITE</b> <b>CLEAR SPARKLE</b></p>	<p><b>LIGHT PINK/WHITE</b> <b>RED/CHARTREUSE SPARKLE</b> <b>BLACK/CHARTREUSE SPARKLE</b> <b>BLUE/WHITE</b> <b>BROWN/ORANGE</b> (Crawfish Color) <b>HOT PINK/WHITE</b> <b>GREEN/WHITE</b> <b>BURNT ORANGE/WHITE</b> <b>ORANGE/WHITE</b> <b>BLACK/YELLOW</b> <b>RED/CLEAR SPARKLE</b></p>	<p><b>BLACK/CHARTREUSE SPARKLE</b> <b>BLUE/WHITE</b> <b>BLACK/WHITE</b> <b>BLACK</b> <b>BLACK/BLUE SPARKLE</b> <b>BLUE</b> <b>PURPLE/RED</b> (Crawfish Color) <b>BLACK/YELLOW</b> <b>BLACK/FIRETAIL</b> <b>PURPLE/CLEAR SPARKLE</b></p>
<p>COPYRIGHT J. B. SALTER 1987 Rev. 3/15/87</p>			

# J.B. Salter's **DEADLY DOZEN**

What influences the sac-a-lait and bream bite?

These are the 12 things that influence the location of sac-a-lait and bream, as copied exactly off a hand-written list from J.B. Salter. He swore by these as the most important factors in catching panfish and he used them religiously in his own fishing and teaching others.

1. Water level (depth)
2. Water clarity
3. Shade
4. Water current and mixing clear and muddy water and tide and runouts
5. Underwater structure
6. Food source
7. Dark or bright sunlight times of the day
8. Spawning activity
9. Water temperature
10. High and low atmospheric pressure
11. High acid or pollution content
12. Low oxygen content ■



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# HOT TIP:

## Don't ever fish naked

Blaine Salter is adamant about doing things right when sac-a-lait fishing. One thing he swears by is to never fish naked — bare. No, he's not talking about the fishermen. He's talking about the hook on your lure. Never leave it bare.

"You can't catch fish if you are hung up and if you are throwing the bait where you need to catch fish most of the time,

A Salter's Weed Guard (right) can make any panfish lure weedless by covering the point while still allowing it to penetrate a fish's mouth.



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you will get hung up unless you use a weed guard," he says. "It's the most vital part of every bait we use. Period. No, make that exclamation point."

He designed the Salter's Weed Guard, made of clear, soft-plastic polymer. It will make every jig in your box weedless, Blaine said. It's made and distributed by Zachary Dubois of Cajun Lures in Kaplan.

"When hooked up right, it will allow you to put that jig right through tree roots, Christmas trees, grass beds ... anything," Blaine said. "It has a small hole in one end that you take your hook and go through that hole. Pull it up to the back of the jig head. If you are adding a plastic trailer, put it on and get it straight, then stick the other end of our weed guard right into the point of the hook. It also works on hair jigs. It's weedless, but the bite and hookset will pull the point right through the plastic and stick the fish."

There's an instruction video on YouTube that features Blaine showing you exactly how to use one.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=RkyUcfSqVbE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=RkyUcfSqVbE)

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"Land is an enormous part of our lives," said Farris. "The love for land is in our blood. As youngsters, we grew up hunting, fishing and being outdoors every chance we got. As adults, we're still those same kids at heart. Our passion for land was passed on to us by our fathers and grandfathers, and now it's our turn to pass this same passion on to our children as we raise them on the land."

A Whitetail Properties Land Specialist isn't your average real estate agent, they're someone you can count on to have the deepest knowledge of the land market in your area, someone who is connected with a vast database of buyers and sellers and someone who has the most experience understanding the value of every aspect of land.

"It nothing short of thrills us as Mississippi Land Specialists to be the ultimate resource for clients during the buying and selling process," said Gibbes. "We take great pride in guiding our clients during those vital decisions because we've been there. We continue to live it. Yes, these decisions are likely the most critical one's buyers and sellers

make in their lifetime, but they don't have to be overly difficult or stressful. We take our responsibility very seriously to make it as enjoyable and stress-free as possible. Plus, as much as we enjoy land, the ultimate reward is helping clients realize their dream of land ownership as they make memories for a lifetime."

Through the years, Brad and Chipper have collaboratively meshed their knowledge of land in order to guide and assist clients at the highest level, regardless of what type of property you may be looking to buy or sell.

"As a team, we have extensive experience in hunting, timber, and farmland," said Farris. "Because we are both stewards of our own land and lifelong outdoorsmen, we understand the many dynamics of land management, such as habitat enhancement, timber management, and conservation opportunities, to name a few. We focus on understanding the client's goals in relation to the value of every acre for all the diverse land types in the south."

"When you call us, you get not one, but two of the hardest working, most devoted, and highly experienced land professionals in the south," said Gibbes. "The knowledge, experience, and services provided to our clients by our team is unbeatable. Trust is earned and proven only by transactions, what our past clients have to say, and years and knowledge in the land business. It's not just what we do, it's who we are and our proven results should offer peace of mind and assurance that our clients make the right choice by contacting us to help achieve their goals."



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Kade Thomas, 12, guided his father to the right spot to catch this D'Arbonne slab.



# D'ARBONNE CRAPPIE STILL BITING BUT HAVE MOVED SOME

Post-spawn fish can be located, caught

**G**et a room full of fishermen together, and one thing is for sure. If there are 14 fishermen, you'll get 15 different opinions on baits, techniques and how to catch them. That's especially true with crappie fishermen this time of year.

In fact, it's often hard to get a big group of crappie fishermen together after the spawn, because a lot of them move on to something else. But some things just stay the same; at Lake D'Arbonne, the "second bite" is on.

But while the fish are still biting, the technique and the places you'll likely catch them will change, said Josh Thomas of Monroe, who likes to fish for bass — when the crappie aren't biting.

"They just taste so dang good," said Monroe, a 38-year-old job manager for Vista Construction. "But that's not all it is. The good thing about crappie fishing is that once you figure out what they are doing, you'll catch a whole lot more fish in one area than you will bass. That's a big reason, too.

Thomas uses electronics to locate fish by looking for baitfish. When he finds them, he knows crappie are not going to be far



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Hollis Arneemann caught this crappie using a 1/6-ounce H&H Beetle Spin (black/yellow/red), on a Shimano Stradic reel on 7-foot Daiwa rod.



away. This time of the year, the side-scan gives him a better view of fish and bait. Crappie tend to hold a little bit shallower than some people would think as they get over the spawning ritual. They may be in 13 to 14 feet of water, but they actually suspend in 4 to 5 feet of water a lot of the time. As the weather warms, they'll actually come up higher, near stumps and around schools of baitfish, mainly because that is where the best oxygen is.

Thomas readily admits he has a secret weapon that helps him find fish as often as his electronics.

"My 12-year-old son Kade can just kind of figure them out," he said. "We'll be fishing and maybe only catching one or two, and he'll tell me that we need to go try over there and do this or that. I've learned to listen and typically when we do what he says, they are on."

Fish on D'Arbonne this time of year usually hang around the edges of flats along the side of secondary creeks and runouts. They like to get around stumps and stickups which are normally not visible to the naked eye because they have broken off just below the water line. But if you locate stump fields with schools of bait, crappie will be there somewhere.

"I love fishing out from the Bear Creek area and around from Terrell Island this time of year," Thomas said. "I also go up the creeks to areas like the islands up Corney Creek and the Mixing Hole."

Shiners work well in May, tight-lined either on a single pole or a spider rig. Because of the stumps, you have to pay close attention to all your lines to keep from hanging up if you spider rig. Thomas also likes Bobby Garland soft-plastic trailers in blue thunder and popsicle colors, and while it may sound strange to some people, his favorite jighead is a 1/6-ounce in orange.

D'Arbonne has numerous public landings, including one on each side on the big lake at the Spillway and others at Jake's, Stowe Creek, Ramp Road and Hwy 2 bridge (Bernice Bridge). There's a tackle store right beside the middle section of lake in Farmerville, K&M Coffee, Corks & Camo, that has everything you'll need for your trip and can give you the latest reports if you are just getting to the lake. ■

— Kinny Haddox

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WET WEATHER HELPING  
POPULAR BUSSEY BRAKE  
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AFTER 7-YEAR RENOVATION.

■ By Kinny Haddox

# RAIN



# DANCE?

Bussey Brake Reservoir



# HEAVY SPRING RAINS

in northeast Louisiana were not welcomed by everybody, especially turkey hunters and farmers. But fishermen hoping to see the “new” Bussey Brake Reservoir begin filling with water didn’t mind.

There is no natural water flow into the lake, so it must be filled by rainwater and through pumping from Bayou Bartholomew.

Bussey Brake is a 2,200 acre, man-made water-supply reservoir in Morehouse Parish that was given to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries by International Paper in 2012. It’s 60 years old, but recent renovations, including draining the lake and restocking, is making the lake like new. The lake was 90% drained in 2013, and work on improvements and eliminating an overabundance of trash fish began. The LDWF used rotenone to kill the remaining rough fish and began restocking shortly thereafter the deep areas of the lake and sloughs that still held some water.

Physical improvements have been completed, and the LDWF and anglers are waiting for enough water to make it safe.

“We will open the reservoir as soon as we deem it safe for boat traffic and for the good of the reservoir,” said Ryan Daniels, who is

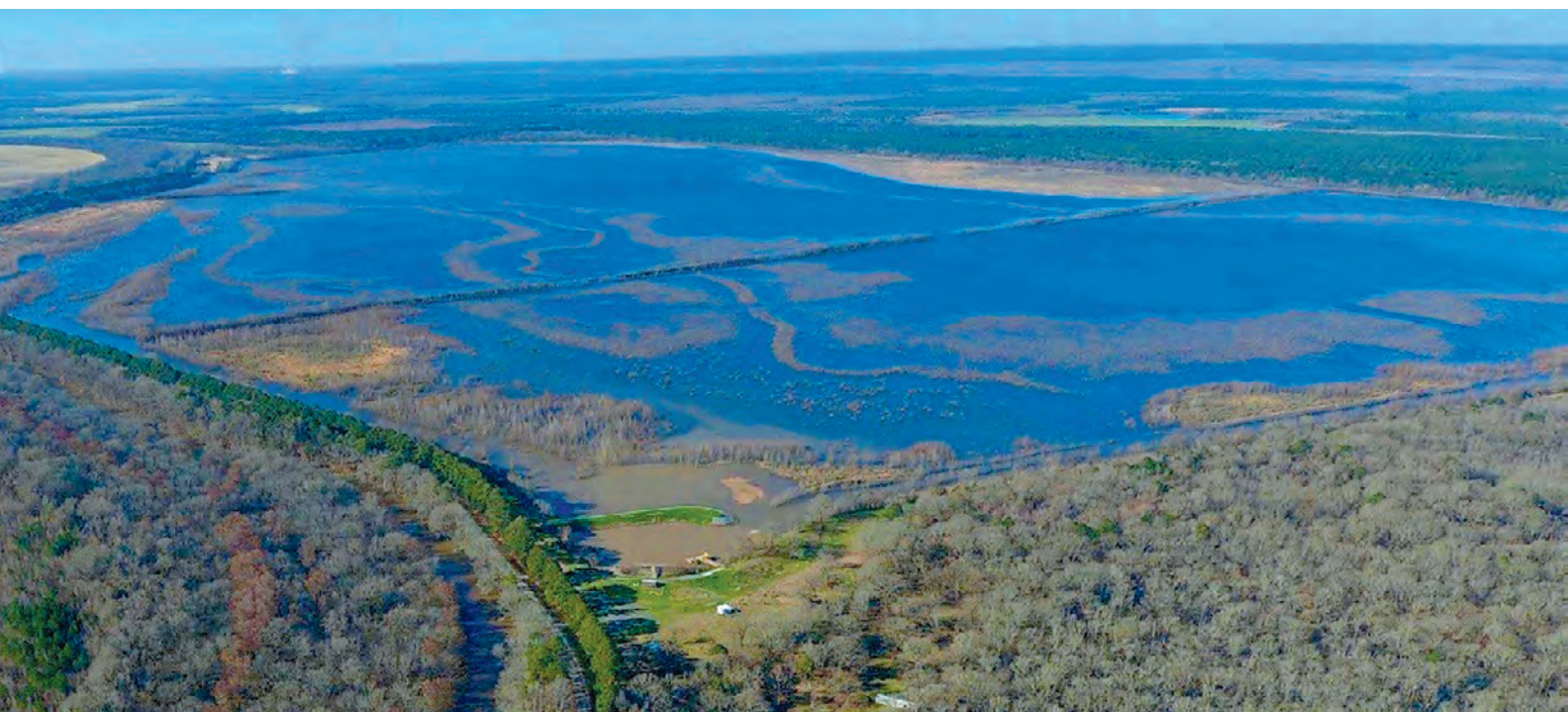
BELOW: Bussey Brake’s 2,000 acres are filling up with water naturally from rains. LDWF will open it when it’s safe for boats.

overseeing the project for the LDWF. “We can’t give an exact date, because there are so many variables, but the good thing is, when it does open, there will be catchable fish. We’ve been restocking as much as we can, as we go, over the past several years.”

Fish have been stocked since early 2017, including 300 adult Florida-strain largemouth bass. Multiple stockings of both Florida and northern bass fingerlings, redear sunfish, bluegill, black and white crappie and threadfin shad have been done. Stocking will be continued as long as necessary.

There is a new pier next to the boat ramp to allow anglers to tie up their boats while loading and unloading. A new, handicap-accessible fishing pier in the same area has been built. An earthen wave break constructed out from the ramp will protect the launching area from big waves — a problem in years past.

Much of the lake has new growth, including grasses, cypress trees and other bushes that will provide excellent cover to protect the fisheries food chain. One of the problems with the “old” Bussey, besides trash fish, was that most of the lake’s fish-friendly structure had rotted, silted in or otherwise disappeared over time.



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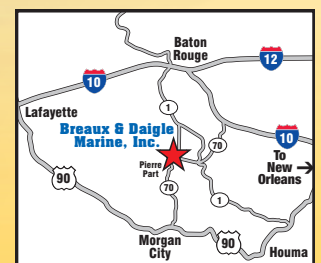


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**RAIN DANCE?**

The mooring dock, which is next to the fishing pier, is designed to assist boaters with launching.



**B**oat lanes have been constructed on both the east and west sides of the lake, with spoil banks created in some areas to improve aesthetics, help mark the lanes and provide additional fish habitat. There is no large standing timber in the lake.

The new electric pump that is being used to fill the reservoir was installed in late 2019.

It's important to note how the project is being paid for. International Paper donated the property, valued at more than \$4 million dollars, eight years ago. The majority of funding has come from the federal Sport Fish Restoration program, which is funded by special excise taxes and license fees paid for sportsmen.

Bussey has also been deemed a Wildlife Management Area, operated by the LDWF's Fisheries Division. Daniels said LDWF is planning to develop and enact special creel limits — and possibly size limits — for the lake, especially while it is new, to maintain

a high-quality fishery. WMA-specific regulations will also be in play, so anglers fishing it when it opens will need to pay attention.

Leaders from the Bastrop community are hoping that the reopening of the lake will be a boost to the area's economy, similar to what it was back in the 1960s. A report on an opening day on the lake in 1960 showed 446 fishermen were checked with 4,400 fish brought to the main dock. Results for the first

year the lake was open showed that 60,000 fishermen visited the lake, spent 220,000 man hours and caught more than 200,000 pounds of fish. Resident fishing licenses in the parish increased from 1,700 in 1959 to 2,700 the year the lake opened.

It was also reported by one sporting goods store that "24,000 shiners, 38,000 crickets, 500 boxes of red worms and more than 3,000 artificial lures" were sold during the first week of Bussey's opening. No outboard motors were allowed with the lake first opened, only boats propelled by electric trolling motors.

When the lake is reopened, there will be no duck hunting for the time being. It will be open for fishing 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with no restrictions on boat or motor sizes. No ATVs or jet skis will be allowed, and no camping allowed will be allowed. ■

**Kinny Haddox** has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 45 years. He publishes a daily website, [lakedarbonnelife.com](http://lakedarbonnelife.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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# 4 BASS PROS, 4 FAVORITE BAIT'S

By Don Shoopman

Like it or not, the bass spawn is history, or close to it. It's time to move on to May and narrow down the choices of artificial lures that best put bass in the boat. Because Louisiana is blessed with some of the most successful, accomplished bass anglers in the country, it's a no-brainer to turn to them for advice on what to throw and when to throw it. Four Louisiana bass pros and their top artificial lures should help the cause. Hunter Freeman of Monroe, Brent Bonadona of Port Allen and Greg Hackney of Gonzales favor going up top with topwaters, while Glen Freeman of Zwolle stays below the surface and probes the bottom with his favorite plastic worm. Those artificials will be locked in their respective hands when they're on the water for fun or competition this month.

## WHEN WALKING IN MAY, FREEMAN CHOOSES A SALMO RATTLIN' STICK

**H**unter Freeman, a bass pro from Monroe, has the perfect answer to ringing up big bass in May. He goes walking.

His bait of choice in this post-spawn month is a Salmo Rattlin' Stick. "It's just a big, walking bait," Freeman said. "You can throw any topwater. I just prefer a big, walking bait like that. You can catch a bunch of fish on it and you can catch big ones."

Freeman, a 23-year-old former Louisiana-Monroe college angler who fishes the FLW Pro Tour, said this topwater is easy to walk-the-dog because of its balance, shape and design. It's perfect for Toledo Bend, Lake Sam Rayburn and the clear waters of Caney Lake, which he considers his home lake and where he spends as much time guiding as possible. It can come back on either a tight slither or a wide-swinging walk-the-dog presentation.

"Oh, yeah, it's very easy to walk," he said, "and it's got a weight transfer system in it you can cast it a mile."

Freeman knows the action attracts bass early in the morning, prime time for the May shad spawn, and throughout the day when bass can't ignore the commotion it makes on the water.

The Salmo Rattlin' Stick, which has a unique deep-sounding



Photo courtesy Hunter Freeman

“If it's calm, I usually do four big walks and let it pause.”

rattle, is 4¾ inches long and weighs three-quarters of an ounce. That rattling sound is like the call of the sirens to bass. It's most effective over grass beds around points, if there's any underwater vegetation where you fish. After the spawn, bass push out and sit on anything they can hold on, according to Freeman.

"I usually like to stay 6 feet and shallower in early May. In late May, I start backing up some," Freeman said. "If it's calm, I usually do four big walks and let it pause. If the wind is blowing I try to walk it as aggressively and consistent as possible."

Freeman said the bait creates a significant disturbance on the water, one bass seek out like heat-seeking missiles.

Setting the hook depends on "how they are eating it," he said. There are times they swirl and roll over on top of it. There are days they slurp it from under. And there are days they smash it. The key is to wait until you feel the weight of the bass before slamming home the two sets of Mustad Triple Grip hooks.

Freeman fishes the Salmo Rattlin' Stick on 40- or 45-pound braided line, mostly Power Pro.

With 40- or 45-pound test, he said, "You can work the bait a whole lot better (than with 60-pound test)."

He works it on a 6-foot-10, Falcon Expert "Bayou" Rod, which has "pretty stiff action."

"I throw that because I'm not the tallest guy in the world," he said.

He favors a reel with a 7.1:1 gear ratio because "that way you can slow it (the retrieve) down but get a quick pickup." ■



Photo courtesy Salmo Rattlin' Stick

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## MISTER TWISTER'S NIGHTCRAWLER IS OLD-FASHIONED FAVE FOR FREEMAN

**W**hen Louisiana's respected bass fishing legends talk about catching fish, anglers usually benefit. They can heed the words of Glen Freeman of Zwolle, a 70-year-old outdoorsman who specializes in putting bass in the boat on lakes like Toledo Bend. The accomplished bass pro's years of experience make him a treasure trove of bass-catching knowledge.

Freeman, a veteran guide, has been fishing FLW-related bass tournaments since 2005. His penchant for Texas-rigged plastic worms is well known.

"Nowadays, everyone is throwing crankbaits and Carolina rigs, and I feel like the fish hardly see Texas rigs anymore," Freeman told the *Shreveport Times*.

That mindset will stay with him in May 2020.

"You know what? We're getting back to the post-spawn, (time for a) Texas-rigged worm," he said. "We're in post-spawn in May, when I look for deeper fish, post-spawn fish. A lot of people like crankbaits in May; I like soft plastics, actually, a straight-tail. I've always done well with a straight-tail."



Photo courtesy Glen Freeman



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Photo courtesy Darryl Laurent / Mister Twister

““ *Nowadays, everyone is throwing crankbaits and Carolina rigs, and I feel like the fish hardly see Texas rigs anymore.* ””

“I use the basic 6-inch worms. Mister Twister has one that I use. It’s called ... a (Tri-Alive) Nightcrawler, a 6½. That’s the one I use. They’ve got a good product. That’s all there is to it. Bass have always eaten their product and still do.”

For sure, he said, there’s information overdrive on the number of artificial lures that might produce bass from late April through early June. He continues to keep his approach to putting quantity and quality bass in the boat simple over the past several decades.

“It’s not that big a deal,” he said.

In other words, KISS — Keep It Simple, Stupid.

Freeman likes to impale the Tri-Alive Nightcrawler on a 2/0 or 3/0 Gamakatsu hook tied to 15- to 20-pound Seaguar fluorocarbon on a Lew’s Pro-Ti reel. He uses a 7-foot-2, medium-heavy Custom Speed Stick Lite. He likes 20-pound line in heavy cover, while 15- or 17-pound line does the job elsewhere.

The proven knot he connects the line to the hook with is an “old knot called a Toledo Bend knot. I’ve been using it so long.”

Freeman said he either hops or crawls the plastic worm, letting the fish tell him how they want it on any given day. ■



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## WHAT'S THE BUZZ ABOUT IN MAY? FOR BONADONA, IT'S A DELTA LURES BUZZBAIT

**T**here was no hesitation in bass pro Brent Bonadona's voice when he talked about his favorite artificial lure for May. "I like a buzzbait, really. I cover a lot of water with it. I try to get a reaction bite and move," said Bonadona, a 45-year-old FLW Toyota Series angler from Port Allen.

Bonadona prefers a 3/8- or 1/2-ounce buzzbait from Delta Lures. His top three choices are a copper blade with a chartreuse/white skirt, a bigger black blade with a black skirt or a 1/2-ounce model and silver blade with either a white skirt or a white Zoom Horny Toad. The latter combination allows him to make longer casts, which he likes to do with a fast retrieve.

He said, "I'm not a slow-roller guy. I cover water. It's a search bait. I'm really moving it."

It's effective anywhere in Louisiana, he said from experience, adding, "It's a great coverage bait. I typically try to find water with a little visibility, 4 inches, at least."

Bonadona targets the edge of grass lines and hyacinth mats, plus certain areas in natural bayous, particularly in the Atchafalaya Basin. The curves and bends offer optimum conditions for buzzbait fishing in May, either on the current side or on the slack side; check out both sides, he said.

"Normally, this time of year, I catch on the current side, especially in May," he said.

Cypress trees and the shade they provide, even on the sunniest of days, offer good ambush points to pick off bass, too, he said.

A soft presentation, as opposed to a "huge splash," is the key to triggering bites with the sputtering topwater, he said.

Delta Lures' buzzbaits are "great" to go out of the pack, he said. However, he applies certain modifications to the blade to get a louder chirp.

Bonadona pointed out the buzzbait has its own custom wire and a trailer keeper to secure a soft plastic in place, plus it features a durable head that is hand-painted. The Delta Lures buzzbait also boasts a Mustand Ultra Point hook, he said, and the buzz blades, even the black blade, are anodized to emit a unique sound that aggravates bass into hitting the source of the noise. ■



Photo courtesy Brent Bonadona



Photo courtesy Fred King / Delta Lures LLC

**“I’m not a slow-roller guy. I cover water. It’s a search bait. I’m really moving it.”**

## HACKNEY MAKES A SPLASH IN MAY WITH FAVORITE TOPWATER

**A**fter bass have seen a steady flow of soft plastics danced, hopped, crawled, swam, pitched, flipped and punched in front of them for two months, do you think they want to see a soft plastic in May?

According to Greg Hackney of Gonzales, the answer is a resounding “No!” He’ll offer something else that gets the bass stirred up between spring and summer. The key word is “up” because his favorite artificial lure this time of year is the Strike King KVD Splash, a topwater bait with a balance of spitting, chugging and walking that versatility is hard to beat.

“The cool thing about it, it catches giants, if you go to a place with giants. It’s real good after the spawn. It’s that time of year when they’re looking up. It’s a topwater month. I can catch them all day, early, late, in the shade,” Hackney said.

The KVD Splash is effective for a couple of reasons, he said:

- Shad are spawning.
- May is an active month of the year for bass because they are feeding up after the spawn. They are getting more aggressive with each warm day.

What’s more, he said, “It’s a cool bite. You get to see it.”

Hackney said the topwater will be effective anywhere he fishes now, particularly across Louisiana. In May, he prefers the full-sized model, the ½-ounce, 2⅞-inch KVD Splash, which is armed with two treble hooks — a feather enhancing the back set — 3D eyes and a details paint job. Because the bait doesn’t have an O-ring, Hackney uses a loop knot in order to walk the dog when necessary.

“You can walk it around. Fish it fast. Fish it slow. You just have to figure the cadence,” he said.

The key is using 25-pound test Gamma monofilament.

“It’s really soft. Their 25 is bigger than other’s 20, but it floats,” he said.

Hackney, host of Sportsman TV, said a handful of colors can do the job: bone, chrome or some flavor of chartreuse, adding that the color scheme hinges on the watercolor.



Photo courtesy Greg Hackney

He fishes the bait on a 6-foot-8, Hack Attack Topwater/Jerkbait Rod and a Lew’s Custom Pro reel with an 8.3:1 gear ratio.

“This is the deal. With that bait most of the time you’re fishing it 5 feet and then you’re reeling it in. You’re target fishing ... short, pinpoint casts.

“I like a fast reel on anything you’re not pulling the bait with; it helps to have that fast reel.” ■

“You can walk it around. Fish it fast. Fish it slow. You just have to figure the cadence.”



Photo courtesy strikeking.com

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# HUNTING 'HAWGS' AT LACASSINE POOL

Tie on a frog and hold on; you can't beat it.

**G**ive Jonathan Quinn a homemade, aluminum marsh boat that shines in the skinniest water, a 25 HP GatorTail, a heavy-duty trolling motor, 50-pound braid, a 7-foot, heavy action baitcasting rod and a Spro plastic frog, and he'll catch trophy-sized bass at Lacassinne Pool.

And May is one of the best months, if not **THE** best month, for him to do just that. His insight and experience can help other bass anglers hook up with 7- to 11-pound bass that lurk in the 16,000-acre marsh.

Quinn, who lives in Sweet Lake, a small community in Cameron Parish, has been hunting big bass at Lacassinne Pool most of his life, particularly over the past 11 years. A 27-year-old instrument technician at Westlake Chemical, Quinn has had some success on the Lacassinne National Wildlife Refuge.

How successful? Quinn has caught and released more than 30 bass weighing 7 pounds and better since 2016. His biggest was a 10.4-pound marsh giant, with multiple 7s, 8s and 9s boated.

One day last year, Quinn and his mother's biggest five bass weighed 42 pounds.

The biggest bass ever put in his marsh boat, built by Eric Richard of Creole, is 11½ pounds. This year, in the first eight days the pool was opened, Quinn fished only twice but caught three 7-pounders.

According to Quinn, May is a prime time to wrestle with big bass in Lacassinne Pool. Here's why:

- Many bass are done with the spawn, which apparently came early this year, before the fishing pressure hit, and they are putting on their feedbags big time.
- The water is full of bass fry, and the females are trying to protect them.
- Frogs, an amphibious delicacy for bass, have had their offspring, and there are plenty of them.

"In May, they'll be mad, and they'll be trying to keep everything away from their babies," Quinn said. "You want to throw anything that'll piss those fish off. May is baby frog time. It's the nature of what they're eating."

That's why Quinn ties a Spro frog to the business end of his braid. When it's overcast, he uses a dark-colored frog, maybe black, and a white or bright-colored frog when it's clear and sunny.

That's all he fishes with these days, a plastic frog. He's addicted. Now, if he swings and doesn't connect, he'll come back fast with a Zoom Super Fluke.

"Frogs are thick out there," he said.

Using an inexpensive plastic frog won't cut the mustard.

"You definitely don't want to use something cheap, because you don't want to break or bend hooks," he said.

Jonathan Quinn with a trophy-sized bass caught on a plastic frog in Lacassinne Pool. The Sweet Lake bass angler releases all bass that he catches and urges other bass anglers to do the same.



Photo courtesy Jonathan Quinn

Why 50-pound braid and a heavy action stick? Both are necessary because of the thick vegetation.

"You're about to pull (the bass) through a cement wall," he said.

Mostly, Quinn targets big bass in the thickest grass and dollar lily pads growing on the pool, which should have plenty of vegetation by May. He'll launch his boat at the old ramp, where he doesn't have to travel far to get in prime big bass country, the North Pond. Some other likely hotspots are The Duck Penn and Twin Cypress area, he said.

From May to August, fish a solid, thick patch of dollar lilies. It's important to fish those areas that aren't full of vegetation under the dollar lilies, at least a foot of clearance. You can tell with the trolling motor, he said.

Bass prefer that habitat because the water's cooler under the canopy of dollar lily pads, but it's unfishable if there's vegetation top to bottom.

When the day is bright and sunny, head to the thickest stuff. When it's overcast, stay on the edge of that stuff on the flats and throw plastic frogs and buzz baits, he said. ■

— Don Shoopman

## SHIMANO METANIUM REELS

Shimano has redesigned its low-profile Metanium baitcasting reel series and hit the market with six new reels, right- and left-hand models in three different retrieve speeds: 150 and 151 with 6.2:1, 150HG and 151HG with 7.1:1 and 150XG and 151XG with 8.1:1.

The Metanium reels feature Shimano's CoreSolid Body frame of lightweight magnesium, a brass drive gear and narrow MGL III spool for added casting distance.

All six Metanium reels have 10 S-ARB (shielded anti-rust) ball bearings in

strategic locations, and a one-way roller bearing for no-handle back play.

Additional features include Shimano's MicroModule Gears and SVS Infinity brake system.

The line capacity ranges from 110 yards of 12-pound mono or fluorocarbon to 135 yards of 35-pound braid.

**MSRP: \$419.99**

**For more info, visit: [www.fish.shimano.com](http://www.fish.shimano.com).**



## PLANO'S EDGE MASTER TERMINAL BOX

The era of portable, plastic tackle boxes that could be added or removed from tackle bags has revolutionized the way fishermen store their crankbaits and worms and jigs.

But until Plano introduced its Edge Master Terminal Box, none of those plastic tackle boxes was made specifically for terminal tackle: for hooks and weights, snaps and swivels.

The Edge Master Terminal Box has 16 removable interior boxes,

four of which are further divided and three of which are made from high-density rubber for bullet-style weights.

The individual boxes have molded-in, finger slots for easy removal, and they come with the rust-preventing technology and watertight seals the Edge line introduced last year, plus watertight sealing.

This box comes in the 3700 size, which fits into current tackle storage systems.

**MSRP: \$49.99**

**For more info, visit: [www.planomolding.com](http://www.planomolding.com).**



## GAMAKATSU FINESSE JIGHEADS

With finesse fishing becoming a significant part of a bass angler's arsenal, light jigheads and weights and small worms are taking up a bigger percentage of tackle boxes everywhere.

Techniques like the Ned Rig and Neko Rig have sent anglers scrambling for their spinning tackle and light line, and now, Gamakatsu has jigheads on the market they'd love to see those anglers tying on.

Gamakatsu recently debuted three new jigheads: Finesse, Finesse Offset and Bottom Knocker Offset, in packs of four.

The Finesse jighead has a spring keeper to hold the bait securely against the flat side of the head. It features a No. 1 hook and is available in 1/16-, 3/32- and 1/8-ounce sizes.

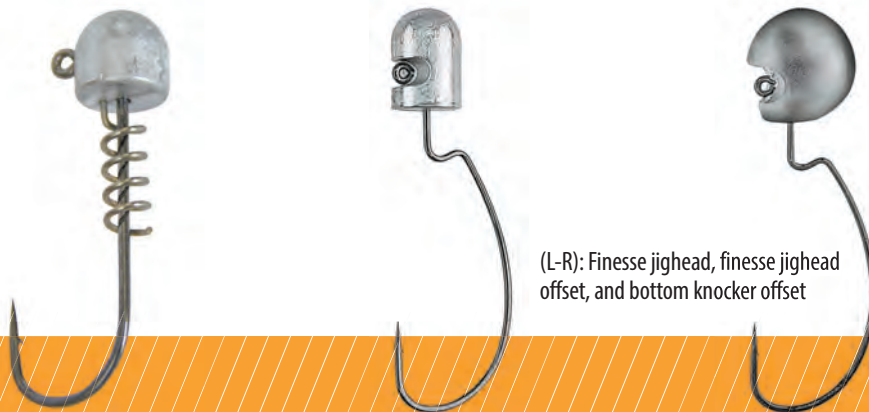
The Finesse Offset jighead has an offset eye countersunk into the jighead and a Z-shaped bend that helps with Texas-rigging soft plastics. It features a 1/0 hook and is available in 1/16-, 3/32-, 3/16- and 1/8-ounce sizes.

The Bottom Knocker Offset is a

deep-water version of a finesse jighead with a hybrid football/round style head and recessed eye. It comes in 3/8-, 1/2-, 5/8- and 3/4- ounce sizes with a 1/0 hook.

**MSRP: \$5.98 to \$6.66.**

**For more info, visit: [www.Gamakatsu.com](http://www.Gamakatsu.com).**



(L-R): Finesse jighead, finesse jighead offset, and bottom knocker offset

# TRY A TOP TOAD AT TOLEDO BEND

## A plastic frog bite should be great in May

**S**pring has evolved into a crazy, mixed-up mess at Toledo Bend, starting with unseasonably cold water that stayed for nearly a month and rapidly rising water in the latter part of the spring

Then, there was the sad development of the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent stay-at-home orders in Louisiana and across the United States. The disease prompted orders for social distancing, but many have found solace and some good times bass-fishing on the lake.

I am hopeful the severe threat to our health is on the downslope by late April.

Weather-wise, spring went south in a hurry with heavy rains greeting the arrival of April. Toledo Bend was at full pool the last day of March at 172.27. The highest this lake has ever been is 174. With the rainfall that's predicted, we could easily see 173 or 174.

But all the mess didn't prevent the big bass from hitting the scales. From mid-March until the end of the month, eight bass weighing 10 pounds or better, including an 11.84-pounder, have been caught and entered in the Toledo Bend Lunger Bass Program. That's outstanding and something to brag about.

Water will inch higher and higher into and past the bushes. More and more bass will hightail it into the newly created shallow water, which can be frustrating. Still, the depth to target bass in May will be 5 feet or less, and you can probe the miles of underwater vegetation. That's right. If somebody tells you there's no underwater vegetation, they're wrong. There is a lot of shoreline grass that grew while the lake was low that's flooded now, and

Tiger Manuel of Sulphur, a member of the Sulphur High fishing team, and his 7.3-pound bass caught at Toledo Bend on March 18.



the fish are in it. More important, the drains are full of lush, green milfoil, and that's encouraging, although it isn't widespread.

I'll fish that stuff so much in May with either a Ribbit or a Top Toad, mostly the latter. Why a Top Toad? I prefer hollow-bodied plastic frogs because I can stop one at a target, particularly when there's a ton of cover along the shoreline you're fishing, and you can pause it in a clear pocket.

Bass were trying to get on a plastic frog bite in early April. Imagine what it's going to be like in a month. With the lake up and warmer, and bream moving in to spawn, they'll still be shallow.

I think the cold water that stuck around so long pushed back spring bassing as we know it for at least three weeks, which means most bass haven't hit the beach, as we say, to spawn.

Other topwaters can be just as effective, or even more effective, as Ribbits, Top Toads and buzzbaits. Try Chug Bugs, Zara Spooks and Yellow Magics, too. Color preferences are easy this time of year. I'll use anything bone, green (chartreuse), white and black.

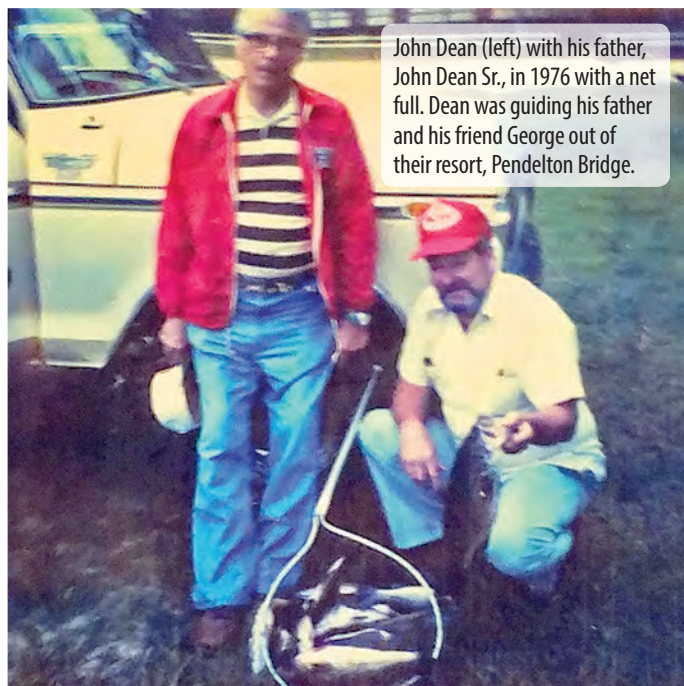
Don't forget buzzbaits. I like ½-ounce models with a silver blade. White or chartreuse skirts work well, but to me, the killer on this lake is Stanley's golden bream. That's my first choice with moving baits of any kind, like spinnerbaits and bladed jigs.

Soft plastics in watermelon/red and green pumpkin/red will account for bass this month. Senkos, Flukes, wacky worms and Neko-rigged Senkos are solid this time of year.

The only other thing I'll have on a rod on the deck of my boat is a Carolina-rigged soft plastic. I like a ¾- or 1-ounce weight with a 2½- to 3-foot leader. In shallower water, 2½ to 3½ feet, a ½-ounce will be fine because there are plenty of bass in that range.

White perch (crappie) fishing has been great early in spring, and it should stay good until sometime in May, when they'll start exiting the shallows and moving toward the brush-tops in 22- to 25-foot depths, where they can be caught in bunches. ■

— John Dean



John Dean (left) with his father, John Dean Sr., in 1976 with a net full. Dean was guiding his father and his friend George out of their resort, Pendelton Bridge.



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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David and Gabe Walsworth chasing Caney Lake bass in the SS Minnow.



# JUST GO FISHING

## Jonesboro pastor said bass fishing is not all 'go big or go home' at Caney Lake

Caney Lake is monster bass country, but it's also a great place to "just" go fishing this month. It isn't all "go big or go home."

Just ask David Walsworth. He isn't the best-known fisherman on the lake, but when he's fishing, people can't miss him.

"Look, this is just fishing," said Walsworth, pastor at Jonesboro First Assembly of God. "I haven't been doing this a long time, but I try to learn something every time I go. My son, Gabe, watches YouTube videos on bass fishing all the time. My brother, Mike, has taught us a lot and I talk to others. I watch other fishermen. It pays off. I'd suggest getting all the information you can for any fisherman, veteran or beginner."

Walsworth may be the most readily noticed angler on Caney Lake. He fishes from a Pelican 10E Bass Raider, a two-man pontoon boat powered by a 2.5 HP outboard. When he and his son fish, they carry four rods, six small plastic tackle boxes, a \$90 depth finder that gives depth and water temperature and a battery for the trolling motor. He call it the "SS Minnow" because it's the smallest rig on the lake.

"The uniqueness of what we are doing helps make it fun,"

Walsworth said. "I can't afford one of those \$50,000 bass boats, but I can't worry about what other people think. We just want to fish, and doing it like this has made us better bass fishermen."

"People sometimes forget that this lake is full of 1-, 2-, 3- and 4-pounders as well," he said. "We have a unique approach to fishing here, and I wouldn't trade it for anything."

Having a small boat and not being able to run up and down the lake has made Walsworth focus on something many anglers forget.



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"We have to be careful where we go, because we can't just head out across the lake burning a tank of gas," he said. "There is one cove that we love to fish, and I have spent so much time there, I know pretty much every place a fish might be. I fish the cove just like it was a little lake unto itself."

Some of the things Walsworth has learned can help you be a better fisherman.

"First thing I'd say is to slow down," he said. "Fish it out good where you are. I have to do that by necessity, but it pays off. In almost every area, there are docks, grassbeds, humps. If fish aren't in one place, they'll be in another."

"Second, fish baits you have confidence in. I don't know why fish like it so well, but my best bait on Caney right now is the Sweet Beaver. I like green pumpkin or watermelon red. I also fish a shaky head with a Zoom finesse worm. They eat it up. We also fish Zoom worms in the same colors with good success."

Walsworth said that if you can, try to go when the fishing pressure on the lake isn't so high. As a pastor, he's fortunate to be able to fish on Mondays and Tuesdays, and while he said the best times to fish are early and late, he doesn't pass up the mid-day bite if he gets a chance.

The Walsworths don't catch just small bass. David Walsworth has caught one better than 8 pounds, and his son has landed several better than 5. Recently, Gabe Walsworth hooked a fish that jumped out of the water and was clearly bigger than 10 pounds, according to anglers who witnessed it. But it was "the one that got away."

Walsworth enjoys catching some smaller fish because he likes to take a mess home to fry for supper. He believes in keeping enough fish to eat if you like, but releasing the big ones. That's an easy thing to do on Caney.

One other thing that people need to remember. Fish don't bite all the time, so you have to be patient, he said. When fish are beginning to bite, you'll know it — besides catching fish.

"When the bite is on, you'll see movement in the water," he said. "Minnows jumping, swirls in the grass beds, even birds flying and going after fish. Pay attention." ■

— Kinny Haddox

**COLUMNS >**



Gabe Walsworth with a chunky, 2-pound Caney largemouth.

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## SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope

This largemouth bass weighed just shy of 8 pounds and bit an artificial soft plastic lizard on the outer edge of standing vegetation.



Photos by Brian Cope

# SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: LARGEMOUTH BASS

PERHAPS THE NATION'S NO. 1 GAMEFISH, THEY'RE AVAILABLE ALMOST EVERYWHERE

**L**argemouth bass, *Micropterus salmoides*, are one of the most-important gamefish in the United States. Aside from numerous professional fishing tournament trails, as well as smaller semi-pro and amateur trails, countless Americans spend a great deal of time and money trying to catch these fish.

One reason they are so sought-after is their existence in such a wide variety of water types. Bass live in slow-moving streams, calm pools of large rivers, natural lakes and man-made lakes and ponds. They can tolerate brackish water, various levels of water quality and a wide range of water temperatures.

Largemouth bass, one of several black bass that live throughout the South, are members of the sunfish family. Unlike most sunfish, black bass have elongated bodies. They can be distinguished from their cousins, smallmouth bass and spotted bass, by their longer jaws, which

extends past the rear corner of the eye when the fish's mouth is closed.

These fish have one long dorsal fin which is so deeply notched that it looks like two different sections. Largemouth bass usually appear dark green to olive on the upper part of their body, while the lower part and belly are usually white or a very light green. In some bodies of water, however, these fish can look very dark green, almost solid black.

Largemouth bass have a lateral line that runs almost the entire length of its body. They almost always have a visible series of dark blotches on each side. These blotches merge with the lateral line. That lateral line provides a great deal of information to these fish as it picks up vibrations and movement.

## GEOGRAPHIC KIN

Two different strains of largemouth bass live throughout the South. The northern strain, despite its geographi-

cally deceptive name, is native to the southern states across the country. The Florida strain, native only to Florida, has been introduced throughout the South. The Florida strain grows bigger and more quickly, but they are less aggressive than the northern strain.

## BASS BUFFET LINES

Largemouth bass eat just about anything. As fry, they eat zooplankton and insects. Pretty soon, they begin eating bigger insects, then fish larvae. Once big enough, they begin eating other fish. As adults, other fish make up the majority of their diet. But largemouth will also eat worms, insects, birds, mice, and snakes.



**Brian Cope** of Edisto Island, S.C., is a retired Air Force combat communications technician. He has a B.A. in English Literature from the University of South Carolina and has been writing about the outdoors since 2006. He's spent half his life hunting and fishing. The rest, he said, has been wasted.

In brackish water, they often eat shrimp and small crabs. They are very opportunistic feeders. This is one reason for the huge amount of lure types available for catching largemouth bass.

These fish begin spawning when water temperatures range between 65° and 75° F. Throughout the South, this can occur as early as February, but typical spawning months are March through June.

Males construct saucer-shaped nests in water ranging from 2 to 10 feet deep.

Females deposit between 5,000 to 150,000 eggs over the nest, then, the males fertilize the eggs.

Eggs hatch in three or four days. Adult male bass guard the fry for several weeks. When independent enough, the young bass disperse.

## TARGET STRUCTURE

Largemouth bass prefer to stick close to structure or cover of some type. Sunken trees, docks, concrete walls, deep holes, and any type of sunken debris are prime spots for bass to hang out. In farm ponds with no structure, they usually seek out the deepest holes or stay close to the banks. They are skilled predators and are often the dominant gamefish in whatever body of water they live.

Nicknames for largemouth bass include green trout, bucketmouth, lunker, hog, and cypress trout.

The Louisiana state record largemouth bass came from Caney Lake in February 1994. Greg Wiggins caught the fish, which weighed 15.97 pounds.

Anthony Denny of Washington, Miss., caught the Mississippi state-record largemouth, an 18.15-pound fish. Denny's prize catch occurred in Natchez State Park Lake in December 1992.

The world record largemouth bass is a tie, according to the International Game Fish Association (IGFA). George Perry's 22.4-pound bass from Montgomery Lake, Ga., stood as the record for decades after being caught in 1932. In 2009, Manabu Kurita caught a 22.5-pound bass in Lake Biwa, Japan. According to the IGFA, a fish must weigh at least two ounces

more than the previous world record to become the new record. Otherwise, it is considered a tie. Therefore, the IGFA lists Kurita and Perry as tied for the world-record largemouth bass. ■



Largemouth bass are one of the most highly-sought after gamefish in the United States.

# TOPWATER TERRORS



**BRONZEYE FROG**

**SIZE:** 60mm - 1/2oz, 65mm - 5/8oz  
**ACTION:** WALKING  
**HOOKS:** GAMAKATSU EWG DOUBLE



**BRONZEYE POPPER**

**SIZE:** 50mm - 1/4oz, 60mm - 1/2oz  
**ACTION:** POPPING & SOUND  
**HOOKS:** GAMAKATSU EWG DOUBLE



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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).

# MUDBUGS, KAYAKS AND KIDS

PADDLE YOUR WAY TO A VERY TASTY CRAWFISH BOIL

**T**hese are crazy, sad times for sure. First and foremost, everyone should be adhering to the recommended safety guidelines, and hopefully, we will all come out of this coronavirus mess and bounce back stronger than ever.

Fortunately, Louisiana citizens are not being overly restricted or even prevented when it comes to hunting and fishing activities. It is good to be outside, both mentally and physically. Kayaks are perfectly suited for these restricted times. Most are single-seat models, and even if a small group ventures out together, it is easy to maintain social-distancing recommendations.

Fishing is the most-popular use of kayaks in Louisiana, and it's great to enjoy the outdoors with family and friends. Children particularly like the sense of responsibility and accomplishment of handling a kayak on their own — if they are old enough to safely handle one. While fishing is a great activity, sometimes a lack of experience or simply a bad fishing day can become boring and lose their attention. However, other activities like crabbing or crawfishing from a kayak can be relatively inexpensive and productive.

I recently accompanied James Kellum and his 10-year-old son, Kaleb, on a crawfishing adventure in their kayaks. While Kaleb has ridden shotgun on his father's kayak for several fishing adventures, this was only his second trip as captain of his own kayak.

We are in the peak of crawfishing season across Louisiana, and while the vast majority of public consumption comes from commercially purchased mudbugs, many kids my age grew up chasing them in ponds, swamps and neighborhood ditches everywhere. Whether scooping with a net, pulling in with a string line or using pyramid nets, it was an easy and exciting — albeit muddy — adventure.

Those techniques still work, but the use of traps can increase the catch and substantially decrease the work. The most-common and least-expensive is the coated-wire pillow trap. These are easy to bait and set and can be flattened for storage and transport. They are lightweight and can be stacked for easy carry on the kayak.



**V**



James Kellum assists his son Kaleb empty the final trap of their kayak crawfishing adventure. With the overnight set of a few traps and use of a few nets, they made a nice haul for a family crawfish boil.

## PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

continued

Kayak crawfishing is a great activity for kids. Kaleb Kellum pulls his first crawfish trap and was rewarded with a pile of the tasty critters.



Crawfish are known to bite better at night, so putting traps out late in the evening and returning for pickup the next morning is a good strategy.

Crawfish are not that picky and can be lured with a variety of baits. However, fresh baitfish such as shad or pogie are generally the best. Beef melts, available at many local meat markets, work well, but they are better suited for use with nets since they tend to wash out when soaked for long periods in a trap.

Pillow traps are set with a string and small cork to mark their location. They can be set in any water depth, but they should be fully submerged, and their use in depths up to about 6 feet seems to be best. This method is truly a set-it-and-forget-it activity, with no need to check the traps once deployed.

Some folks like to combine the use of traps and nets for a crawfishing outing. While the traps are passively doing their thing, running a line of nets is a fun activity that helps pass the waiting time. If the area you are fishing has a relatively flat bottom and shallow water, the use of simple pyramid nets can easily be accomplished from the kayak or you can simply get out and walk. A long pole is used to set and retrieve the nets. They are typically set with the peak of the wire frame sticking above the water with a bright ribbon tied on to mark their location. After being set, the nets are run after a 15- to 20-minute soak time. You have to be quick on the pick-up since the nets have

A large advertisement for a pontoon boat. The boat is light green and white, with a canopy and a Yamaha outboard motor. Two people are on board, one in a white shirt and red shorts, the other in a white shirt and blue shorts. The background shows a lake with palm trees.

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no sides and crawfish can go over the edges if not quickly dumped in the basket.

Nets can also be used in water too deep for pyramid nets. Deepwater crawfish nets are similar to traditional crab nets but have a smaller mesh size to keep the mudbugs from slipping through. Also set with a cork and string, it is easy to quietly kayak right next to the cork and pull the line in for retrieval.

There's always suspense when pulling up a net or trap. Will it be a dud or filled with tasty critters? For our trip, his father allowed Kaleb to pull up all the traps and nets while he stayed nearby to assist with dumping the bounty into the basket. Each trap and net was eagerly pulled, with many laughs and squeals along the way. The good thing about traps is that there is no danger of any crawfish escaping if the child pulls slowly or the trap drops from their hands. It is just a simple matter of pulling it back in.

It took only about 90 minutes to pick up and empty the 10 traps that had been set the night before. It was a fun and simple task, hampered only somewhat by strong winds that gave Kaleb a bit of trouble maneuvering the kayak. All traps had crawfish, while some had a bit more than others. A couple of deep-water nets were set on the way out and picked up three times during the span of picking up the traps. An estimated 25 pounds of decent crawfish were caught and made for a delicious family boil. ■

## LOUISIANA RECREATIONAL CRAWFISH REGULATIONS

No fishing or gear license is required to use crawfish nets, dip nets, hand lines or bait seines. However, a basic Recreational Fishing license or Wild Louisiana Stamp is required for their use on Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries WMAs or refuges. Crawfish traps may be prohibited on certain WMAs and refuges. Check regulations for details.

Crawfish traps must be marked with a waterproof tag, with the name and recreational gear license number of the fisherman

legibly printed on the tag. No more than 35 traps per person can be used recreationally.

There is no minimum size for crawfish; the daily bag and possession limit is 150 pounds per person in state waters. A resident trap license is \$15.00 for up to 35 traps, and a basic Recreational Fishing License is \$9.50.

For full regulations go to: [www.lwf.louisiana.gov](http://www.lwf.louisiana.gov)

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• 555 Acres ..... \$3,513/Ac.	<b>JONES</b>	• 255 Acres ..... \$3,243/Ac.	• Home & 485 Acres ..... \$1,499,999
• 270 Acres ..... \$3,514/Ac.	• 20 Acres ..... \$2,100/Ac.	• Home & 283 Acres ..... \$895,000	• 662 Acres ..... \$3,761/Ac.
<b>ATTALA</b>	<b>KEMPER</b>	• 20 Acres ..... \$4,179/Ac.	• Home & 680 Acres ..... \$2,950,000
• 148 Acres ..... \$1,182/Ac.	• 37 Acres ..... \$1,643/Ac.	• 30.75 Acres ..... \$3,500/Ac.	• 716 Acres ..... \$3,840/Ac.
• 96.5 Ac. & Cabin ..... \$250,000	• 220 Acres ..... \$1,422/Ac.	<b>PERRY</b>	• 961 Acres & Home ..... \$5,500,000
<b>COPIAH</b>	• 247 Acres ..... \$1,750/Ac.	• 160 Acres ..... \$2,500/Ac.	• 1278 Acres & Lodge ..... \$9,500,000
• 50 Acres ..... \$2,750/Ac.	<b>LAMAR</b>	<b>PIKE</b>	<b>LOUISIANA</b>
• 339 Acres ..... \$2,389/Ac.	• Home & 66 Acres ..... \$955,000	• 20 Acres ..... \$4,500/Ac.	<b>BIENVILLE</b>
• Cabin & 63.5 Acres ..... \$289,000	• 23.4 Acres ..... \$8,952/Ac.	• 24.11 Acres ..... \$4,769/Ac.	• 127 Acres ..... \$2,975/Ac.
• 162 Acres ..... \$2,500/Ac.	• 20 Acres ..... \$8,950/Ac.	• 28.52 Acres ..... \$3,488/Ac.	<b>BOSSIER</b>
• 185 Acres ..... \$2,378/Ac.	• 33 Acres ..... \$2,750/Ac.	• 32.23 Acres ..... \$2,249/Ac.	• Home & 51 Acres ..... \$597,000
• 98 Acres ..... \$2,397/Ac.	• 21.10 Acres ..... \$8,952/Ac.	• 36.7 Acres ..... \$2,500/Ac.	• 120 Acres ..... \$2,991/Ac.
<b>COVINGTON</b>	• 58 Acres ..... \$2,408/Ac.	• 40 Acres ..... \$2,650/Ac.	<b>DE SOTO</b>
• 182 Acres ..... \$3,850/Ac.	• 64.19 Acres ..... \$5,436/Ac.	• 40 Acres ..... \$2,200/Ac.	• 255.5 Acres ..... \$3,295/Ac.
<b>FOREST</b>	• 1118 Acres ..... \$2,399/Ac.	• Home & 58.4 Acres ..... \$420,000	<b>EAST BATON ROUGE</b>
• 64 Acres ..... \$5,436/Ac.	<b>LAUDERDALE</b>	• 196 Acres ..... \$3,250/Ac.	• 238.97 Acres ..... \$9,143/Ac.
• 95 Acres ..... \$5,000/Ac.	• 30.5 Acres ..... \$1,500/Ac.	• 200 Acres ..... \$2,600/Ac.	<b>LAFAYETTE</b>
<b>FRANKLIN</b>	<b>LAWRENCE</b>	• 423 Acres ..... \$3,000/Ac.	• 100 Acres ..... \$1,950/Ac.
• 40 Acres ..... \$3,300/Ac.	• 36 Acres ..... \$3,500/Ac.	• 48.26 Acres ..... \$1,864/Ac.	<b>TANGIPAHOA</b>
• 44 Acres ..... \$3,409/Ac.	• 765 Acres ..... \$2,875/Ac.	• 41.17 Acres ..... \$3,922/Ac.	• 157 Acres ..... \$4,006/Ac.
• 105 Acres ..... \$3,000/Ac.	<b>LINCOLN</b>	<b>PRENTISS</b>	<b>WASHINGTON</b>
• 145 Acres ..... \$2,744/Ac.	• 20 Acres ..... \$7,021/Ac.	• 31 Acres ..... \$1,850/Ac.	• 27.14 Acres ..... \$3,481/Ac.
• 170 Acres ..... \$3,235/Ac.	• 23.46 Acres ..... \$2,898/Ac.	• 44 Acres ..... \$2,000/Ac.	• 77 Acres ..... \$3,505/Ac.
• 230 Acres ..... \$3,004/Ac.	• 32.2 Acres ..... \$3,354/Ac.	• 75 Acres ..... \$1,250/Ac.	• 650 Acres ..... \$8,921/Ac.
• 250 Acres ..... \$2,796/Ac.	• 68 Acres ..... \$2,800/Ac.	• 75 Acres ..... \$1,750/Ac.	<b>WEST FELICIANA</b>
• 420 Acres ..... \$2,850/Ac.	• 80 Acres ..... \$2,800/Ac.	<b>TALLAHATCHIE</b>	• Lodge & 113 Acres ..... \$1,250,000
<b>GRENADA</b>	• 100 Acres ..... \$2,500/Ac.	• 176 Acres ..... \$2,130/Ac.	
• 127.5 Acres ..... \$1,550/Ac.	• 148 Acres ..... \$2,800/Ac.		



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## TIME TO CRUNCH DEER NUMBERS

HARVEST FIGURES, GROWTH RATES, ANTLER SIZE SHOULD BE EXAMINED TO SEE IF MANAGEMENT IS WORKING

**T**he 2019-20 deer season ended two months ago, and it's time for biologists to look at harvest data and evaluate the condition of the deer herd being managed. However, because of Covid-19 pandemic, this work may have been put on hold.

As a club or landowner, you probably should be examining your data now that spring green-out is well under way. Last year, a wet spring made for ideal growing conditions for browse, and this should have had a positive impact on the condition of the deer and should be reflected in the data. The mast crop was fair, and this, too, should have benefited the deer and should be reflected in the data.

This year, we experienced a very mild January that initiated our early green-out. Browse conditions are excellent, and it's time to be out looking at the browse. From what I have seen on our property here in East Feliciana Parish, deer are eating the choice browse species. This early spring growth is quality nutrition for bucks and does and should complement body and antler growth and pregnancy.

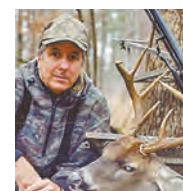
### HOW OLD, HOW BIG?

Age and growth studies are a must for any game-management work. In the fall, biologists collect dove wings from hunters to determine the number of juvenile and adult birds that were harvested. This will provide information about reproduction and nesting success. Biologists will check hunters during squirrel season to identify the percentage of males and females in the harvest, along with the number of spring-born and summer-born squirrels.

Deer biologists will examine jawbones to determine the age of harvested deer, to go along with body weight, antler growth and reproduction. Growth trends can then be established, and over time, they will reveal whether the management program is working or needs tweaking. Deer herds are impacted by the harvest effort and by the habitat and management work being applied to the habitat. If the work is doing what it should, growth and development should be good.

A word of caution regarding the data. Harvest effort can somewhat bias the data. Many clubs and landowners choose to harvest only top-end bucks. These bucks may represent only 10% of the buck population and may not give a clear picture of the actual growth trends. Likewise, many programs do not harvest 6-month-old deer, and some restrict the doe harvest, thus the data set is not really complete. I have always thought it best to harvest deer from all age classes, which should provide a good data set and allow biologist to get a clear picture of what is going on in the herd. This type of harvest occurs every season on public lands, and the data sets from WMAs are a good reference source.

continues on page102



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.



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# GRUNTS & GOBBLES

continued

I have been working with a DMAP club in Area 6 for about 10 years, and the harvest data is used to make annual recommendations regarding the management program. The habitat is bottomland hardwood with available agricultural crops, corn, soybeans and winter wheat. This is the type of habitat that produces the big bucks that hunters desire. The buck harvest on this property is somewhat selective, so the doe harvest provides the best information about growth and development. Because of the excellent forest habitat and agriculture, one would expect growth trends to be good.

## CHARTING DOES

The 1992-93 data indicates does were somewhat heavier; in fact 1½-year-old does averaged 10 pounds more than those from recent seasons. The heavier a deer is when it is young, the better growth and development it will have as it grows older. Yearling (1½) bucks that average 125 pounds will be larger in the older age-classes than yearlings that average 110 pounds and may have larger antlers also. Reproduction will also be higher; heavier does are the best producers and mothers.

For this type of habitat, with all the available agriculture, I really believe the does on this tract should weigh more. A factor that may be having an impact is that on the large tract that joins this one, very few does are harvested. Consequently, does that are harvested are quickly replaced with the neighbors'

does, so growth

trends are not quite what I would like to have.

As previously mentioned, biologists will do the same type of examination with antler data, lactation rates and other collected data. With these stay-at-home orders, now is a good time to look at your data and do some ciphering.

If body weights and antler growth are poor, it may be due to habitat issues. If browse availability is low, it may be time to do some timber work. If possible, plantings may help to some degree, as would supplemental feeding, but that gets expensive. If the browse survey reveals high browsing pressure on the desirable browse species — which results in the lesser quality browse species being eaten — it may be time to stock up on bullets for next year and reduce the number of mouths on the landscape. Be safe, keep your distance while extending brotherly love and have a great summer. ■

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## DOE HARVEST DATA

### Average Live Weight (2019-20)

6 months	1½ years	2½ years	3½ years	4½ years
63 pounds	102 pounds	113 pounds	122 pounds	124 pounds

This compares favorably with the statewide DMAP harvest data from past years.

### Average Live Weight (1992-93)

6 months	1½ years	2½ years
NA	112 pounds	127 pounds

### Average Live Weight (1997-2006)

6 months	1½ years	2½ years	3½ years
65 pounds	102 pounds	113 pounds	120 pounds



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## APEX PREDATOR

Joshua Chauvin

The author connects various brands of climber pieces together with his bungee cords.



# BALL BUNGEE TRICKS

One of the items I use most in the field happens to be one of the cheapest and simplest devices out there: the ball bungee. These stretchy, little cords have countless applications, and I own dozens of them in various sizes. They simply fold over, making a circle to attach things without the need for metal hooks or tying knots.

No one I knew had even heard of, much less used these awesome devices when I first learned about them after buying an X-stand tree climber that came with two small ball bungees. After years of constantly struggling to put tree stand pieces together tightly to avoid making noise, these bungees got the job done within seconds, with 100% silence. There was no need for noisy, heavier ratchet straps or larger typical rubber bungees with metal hooks that clang against the metal stands.

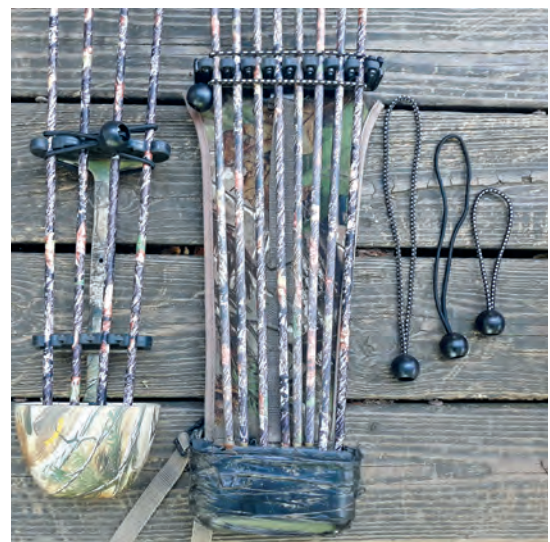
Since I use several different types of climbers, I mix and match many of the different brands together, securing them with only two or three ball bungees. I typ-

ically use the 4- and 6-inch bungees for tree climbers; I'll use longer versions for holding sets of climbing sticks together.

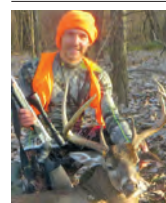
## ARROW HOLDERS

The best application I've discovered for ball bungees is as arrow holders. Over the years, I have lost many arrows while hunting the thickest areas on public lands. I remember losing half a quiver of arrows that were strapped to my backpack on a single hunt. A lot more than three dozen of my arrows are out there somewhere in the woods. Sadly, each arrow tipped with an expensive broad-head and turkey feathers typically costs upwards of \$25 to \$30.

Since attaching a single ball bungee over the rubber slot where the arrows tuck in, I have not lost an arrow. After long, tough hikes, I often find my arrows dislodged from the quiver's rubber grooves — which tend to loosen over time — but that expensive arrow that would have fallen out is held against the quiver by the ball bungee.



The author wraps bungee cords around his quiver to avoid losing arrows.



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.

## ATTACHMENTS

On the few deer hunts each season when I don't use my traditional bows, I enjoy using my vintage, single-shot Contender primitive pistol. I used to keep my holster attached to my belt. Once, however, after standing to aim at a deer behind me, I didn't connect the holster strap before sitting down. When I went to sit down after not being able to get a good shot, the pistol fell to the ground. Not knowing if my micro red dot got bumped off from such a long fall, I had to climb down and end the hunt.

Now, I keep the holster attached to the side bar of my climber with a 4-inch ball bungee. This makes for a quick and quiet pistol pull from the holster that stays fully upright when a deer approaches. Sometimes, I also connect my hunting bag to the climber with a ball bungee.

## MOVING GAME

Some of the longer ball bungees, 9- and 12-inch models, work well for carting out animals. This year, I carted out two deer and used the longer ball bungees around the deer's neck and smaller ones on the legs to keep the animals fastened to a cart for each of the 2-mile hauls. The deer never came off, even when going over numerous logs and branches.

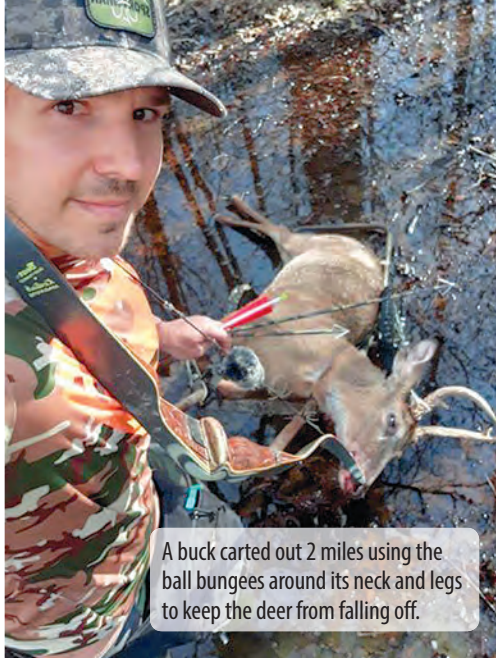
When packing out pig, deer or elk quarters on my frame backpack, the larger bungees work like a charm. However, my bull elk horns and the cape I hauled out needed some rope to help with the large profile of the head. Ball bungees connected the horns to the frame, which worked well for that grueling, 123-pound load.

Ball bungees come in handy when I go backpack hunting as tie-ups for my tent pieces, tarps, sleeping bags, air pads, etc. At night, I hang my tent lamp in the top center with one.

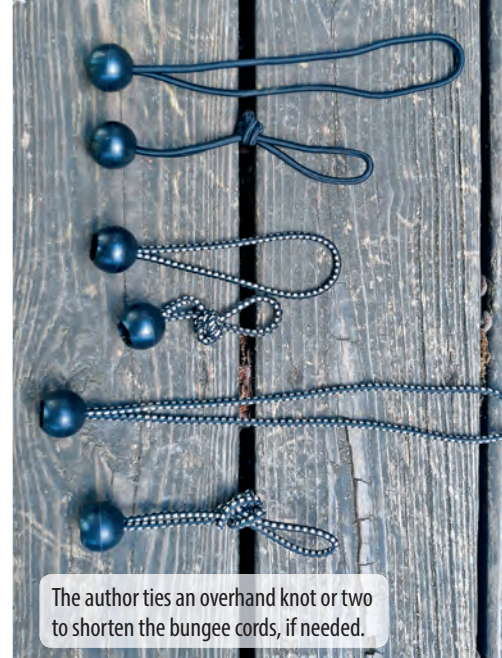
## FISHING APPS?

For fishing, I use ball bungees for strapping rods, nets and paddles down. Sometimes, I hook up an ice chest or shrimp basket to a rail, which keeps it from sliding in the waves. Usually, the smaller, 4-inch models work best.

Larger-sized ball bungees can be made into smaller ones in a jiffy by tying one or



A buck carted out 2 miles using the ball bungees around its neck and legs to keep the deer from falling off.



The author ties an overhand knot or two to shorten the bungee cords, if needed.

two overhand knots in the center to shorten them. I've had no issues with any of them breaking during several years of use.

I purchase them on Amazon at really low prices. The best deal is to buy a set of ball bungees that includes sizes from 4 to 12 inches. I suggest buying the ones marketed as heavy duty; they have a thicker cord for a stronger elastic ability.

I highly recommend keeping a few ball bungees in your hunting bag or boat. It's amazing how sometimes the simplest things can make such big differences during hunting and fishing adventures. ■

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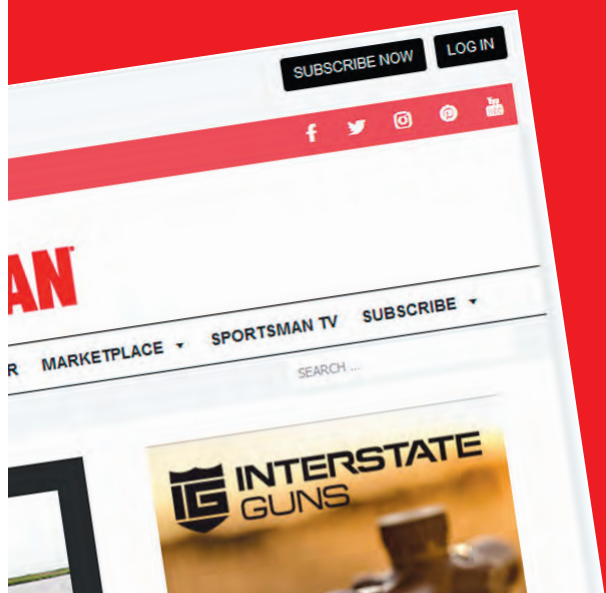
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## FISHING REGULATIONS

# 2020

These regulations are unofficial. For official regulations, always check the Department of Wildlife & Fisheries pamphlet and/or the federal pamphlet. [www.wlf.louisiana.gov](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov)



### SALTWATER

#### STATE REGULATIONS (0-10.357 miles<sup>Δ</sup>)

FISH Species	Minimum Length	Bag Limit (per person)
Greater Amberjack*~	34" FL	1/day*
Lesser Amberjack, Banded Rudderfish*	14-22" FL	5/day (aggregate)
Yellowfin Tuna	27" CFL	3/day
Bluefin Tuna	73" CFL	1 per vessel per year*
Bigeye Tuna	27" CFL	None
Blue Marlin	99" LJFL	None
White Marlin	66" LJFL	None
Sailfish	63" LJFL	None
Swordfish*	29" CL or 33 lbs. DW	5 per vessel per trip
Cobia (ling or lemon fish)	33" FL	2/day
Drum, Black	16" TL	5/day#
Drum, Red (redfish)	16" TL	5/day#
Flounder, Southern	None	10/day
Groupers* 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	
Atlantic Sharpnose & Bonnethead shark@	None	1/day
Other sharks (except prohibited species)@	54" FL	1/day/vessel/aggregate
King Mackerel*	24" FL	3/day
Spanish Mackerel*	12" FL	15/day
Striped mullet	None	100 pounds/day
Black seabass	None	None
Hogfish	14" FL	5/day
Seatrout, Spotted (Speckled Trout)	12" TL*	25/day*
Red Snapper*	16" TL	2/day*
Other Snapper		5 mutton in 10 snapper aggregate
Mutton Snapper	18" TL	
Cubera, Yellowtail, Gray (mangrove)	12" TL	10 in aggregate*
Queen, Blackfin, Silk, Wenchman	None	
Vermilion Snapper	10" TL	
Schoolmaster, Dog, Mahogany	None	None
Gray Triggerfish*	15" FL	1/day in aggregate
Lane Snapper	8" TL	
Almaco Jack, Goldface Tilefish, & Blueline Tilefish	None	20/person/day in aggregate*
Blackline Tilefish, Anchor Tilefish	None	
Tripletail	18" TL	5/day

CFL = curved fork length    LJFL = lower jaw fork length    CL = carcass length  
DW = dressed weight    LJTF = lower jaw to tail fork    FL = fork length

### FRESHWATER

FISH Species	Minimum Size Limit	Bag Limit (per person)
Crappie	None	50/day*
Buffalo Fish	16" TL	25/day
Freshwater Drum (Gaspergou)	12" TL	25/day
Channel Catfish	11" TL*	***
Blue Catfish	12" TL*	***
Bowfin	16" TL	None
Flathead Catfish	14" TL*	***
Crawfish	None	150 lbs./day
Paddlefish	30" max LJFL	2*
Shad	None	50 lbs./day
Black Bass (largemouth & spotted)	None*	10/day*
Striped Bass or Hybrid Striped Bass	**	5/day*
Sturgeon	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
White Bass	None	50/day*
Yellow Bass	None	50/day*

\* see exceptions in pamphlet.

\*\* no more than two may exceed 30 inches.

\*\*\* catfish limit is 100 in aggregate; however, 25 fish in aggregate may be undersized.

# only one fish may exceed 27 inches. @ Shark season is closed between April 1 and June 30.

<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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## LAND FOR SALE

- 106 acres of hunting land for sale in Eola, LA, Avoyelles Parish**  
106 ACRES OF LAND FOR SALE IN AVOYELLES PARISH  
Price: \$530,000. Only 45 minutes north of Lafayette, just off of I-49, near the community of Eola, sits 106 +/- acres of some of the finest hunting that Avoyelles Parish has to offer. Kent Juneau, (318) 729-4920
- 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  
Price: \$475,000.00  
Kent Juneau (318) 729-4920
- 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.
- 208.77 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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**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, and 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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BEST DAYS					
2020	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	VALUE
MAY					
Fri 1	██	██	██	██	58
Sat 2	██	██	██	██	51

Sun 3	██	██	██	██	49
Mon 4	██	██	██	██	57
Tue 5	██	██	██	██	67
Wed 6	██	██	██	██	74
Thu 7	██	██	██	██	75
Fri 8	██	██	██	██	62
Sat 9	██	██	██	██	50

Sun 10	██	██	██	██	37
Mon 11	██	██	██	██	31
Tue 12	██	██	██	██	31
Wed 13	██	██	██	██	36
Thu 14	██	██	██	██	46
Fri 15	██	██	██	██	37
Sat 16	██	██	██	██	35

Sun 17	██	██	██	██	36
Mon 18	██	██	██	██	38
Tue 19	██	██	██	██	50
Wed 20	██	██	██	██	62
Thu 21	██	██	██	██	76
Fri 22	██	██	██	██	84
Sat 23	██	██	██	██	77

Sun 24	██	██	██	██	70
Mon 25	██	██	██	██	61
Tue 26	██	██	██	██	57
Wed 27	██	██	██	██	57
Thu 28	██	██	██	██	61
Fri 29	██	██	██	██	69
Sat 30	██	██	██	██	57
Sun 31	██	██	██	██	50

25 50 75  
AVERAGE

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LUNAR PERIODS				
TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED				
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
1:30 pm	7:01 pm - 10:11 pm	2:53 am	6:26 am - 9:48 am	☾
2:39 pm	8:03 pm - 10:55 pm	3:34 am	7:26 am - 10:36 am	☾

3:48 pm	9:06 pm - 11:38 pm	4:11 am	8:28 am - 11:20 am	☾
4:59 pm	10:08 pm - 12:20 am	4:46 am	9:31 am - 12:03 pm	☾
6:10 pm	11:13 pm - Midnight	5:20 am	10:33 am - 12:45 pm	☾ Perigee
7:23 pm	Midnight - 1:01 am	5:56 am	11:38 am - 1:26 pm	☾
8:35 pm	12:18 am - 1:46 am	6:34 am	12:43 pm - 2:11 pm	☾ FULL
9:47 pm	1:23 am - 2:35 am	7:16 am	1:48 pm - 3:00 pm	☾
10:54 pm	2:26 am - 3:28 am	8:03 am	2:51 pm - 3:53 pm	☾

11:56 pm	3:30 am - 4:22 am	8:55 am	3:55 pm - 4:47 pm	☾
	4:28 am - 5:20 am	9:52 am	4:53 pm - 5:45 pm	☾ LOW
12:49 am	5:21 am - 6:17 am	10:51 am	5:46 pm - 6:42 pm	☾
1:35 am	6:10 am - 7:12 am	11:51 am	6:35 pm - 7:37 pm	☾
2:14 am	6:54 am - 8:06 am	12:51 pm	7:19 pm - 8:31 pm	☾ HALF
2:48 am	7:32 am - 8:58 am	1:48 pm	7:57 pm - 9:23 pm	☾
3:18 am	8:07 am - 9:49 am	2:44 pm	8:32 pm - 10:14 pm	☾

3:46 am	8:40 am - 10:38 am	3:39 pm	9:05 pm - 11:03 pm	☾
4:12 am	9:12 am - 11:28 am	4:34 pm	9:37 pm - 11:53 pm	☾ Apogee
4:39 am	9:44 am - 12:16 pm	5:29 pm	10:09 pm - 12:41 am	☾
5:06 am	10:19 am - 1:05 pm	6:25 pm	10:44 pm - 1:30 am	☾
5:36 am	10:55 am - 1:57 pm	7:23 pm	11:20 pm - 2:22 am	☾
6:09 am	11:34 am - 2:50 pm	8:22 pm	11:59 pm - Midnight	☾ NEW
6:46 am	12:18 pm - 3:44 pm	9:21 pm	Midnight - 3:15 am	☾

7:29 am	1:07 pm - 4:39 pm	10:20 pm	12:43 am - 4:09 am	☾
8:19 am	1:59 pm - 5:35 pm	11:16 pm	1:32 am - 5:04 am	☾ HIGH
9:15 am	2:56 pm - 6:28 pm		2:24 am - 6:00 am	☾
10:16 am	3:55 pm - 7:21 pm	12:07 am	3:21 am - 6:53 am	☾
11:21 am	4:55 pm - 8:07 pm	12:53 am	4:20 am - 7:46 am	☾
12:28 pm	5:54 pm - 8:54 pm	1:34 am	5:20 am - 8:32 am	☾ HALF
1:35 pm	6:55 pm - 9:35 pm	2:11 am	6:19 am - 9:19 am	☾
2:43 pm	7:56 pm - 10:14 pm	2:46 am	7:20 am - 10:00 am	☾

ANY LUNAR PERIOD IS ENHANCED WHEN IT OVERLAPS A KEY SOLAR PERIOD. THE BEST OF THESE OVERLAPS ARE DESIGNATED BY THE SUN SYMBOLS:  
☀ = DAWN ☀ = HIGH NOON ☀ = DUSK  
WHILE THE LESSER MOONRISE AND -SET OVERLAPS (ABOUT 30 MIN. BEFORE AND AFTER THE LISTED TIME) ARE DESIGNATED BY BOLD BLACK TYPE.

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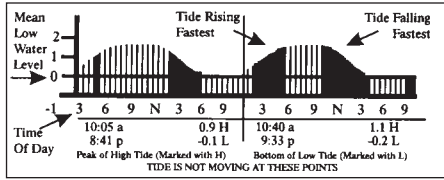
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## How to use the SPORTSMAN Tide Guide



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.

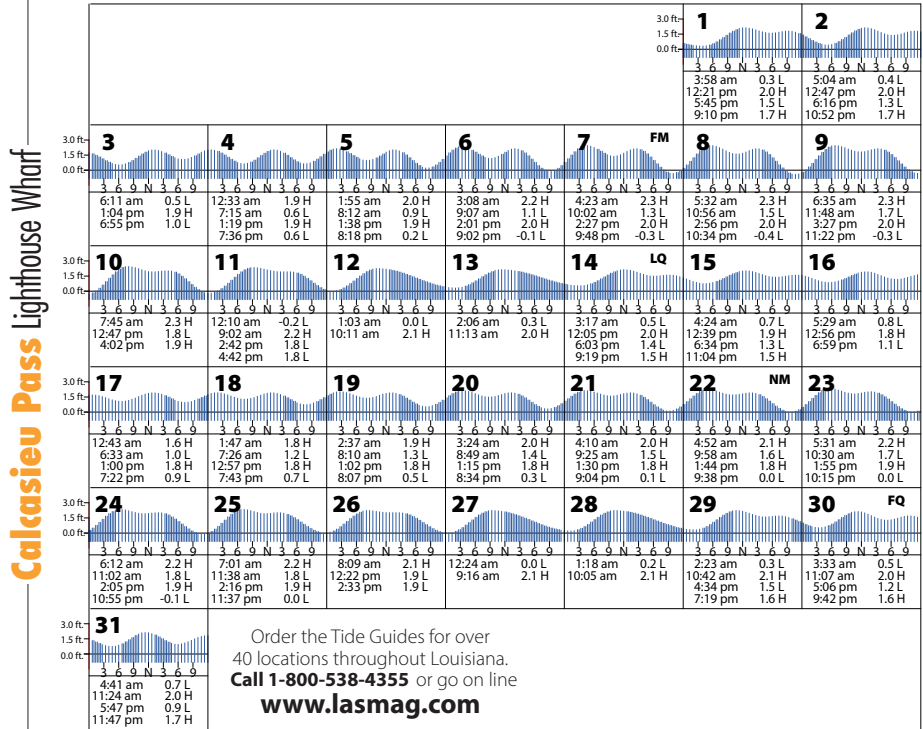
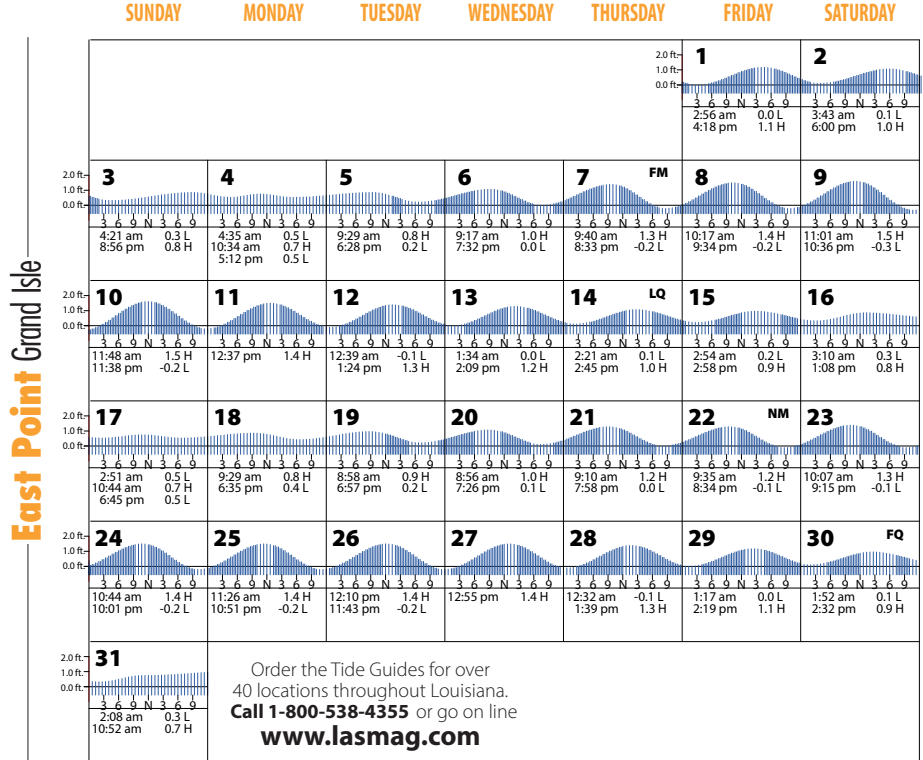
### Tide Corrections

**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





# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



**Tyler & Tanner Landry**

Tyler and Tanner Landry pulled in this big blue cat checking their jug lines the morning of Nov. 28, 2019.



**Annabelle Louise Howard**

Annabelle Louise Howard, 4, with a bass caught in Lafitte on Feb. 28, 2020.



**Ryleigh Dedon**

Ryleigh Dedon, 11, took this ring neck drake on her first youth duck hunt on Feb. 1, 2020 at the Krotz Springs crawfish ponds.



**Willow Sigrist**

Willow Sigrist holds up a lunker bass caught in Lake Boeuf.



**Easton Fanguy**

Easton Fanguy, 8, of Houma with a bass caught on a custom swimbait in the Mandalay National Wildlife Refuge area.

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**Breigh Begnaud**

Breigh Begnaud, 12, killed her first deer, a 7-point, this past season in Evergreen.

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# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK

Damon Paul Scanlan proudly displays his black squirrel taken at his family's camp.



**Damon Paul Scanlan**



**Angie Alford**

Angie Alford went on a hunt with her sister and killed her first deer in Concordia Parish.



**Melody and Julia**

Melody Morris and her mom, Julia, had a great night on her Uncle Bennie's wharf catching sac-a-lait. It was 8-year-old Melody's first time.



**Ryan Roberthon**

Brothers Ryan (left) and Kevin Roberthon each caught a bull red in Cypermort Point on cut mullet. Ryan's was 42 inches and Kevin's was 37.



**Kevin Roberthon**

Jack Kleinke had a successful hunt on Osceola Plantation in Tensas Parish on Nov. 29, 2019.



**Jack Kleinke**



**Lane Dreher**

Lane Dreher, 7, of Pride killed his first buck on Dec. 11, 2019. It weighed 230 pounds and had an 18½-inch spread.

Emmaline DesRoches, 1½ years old, showing off her Uncle Lester's ducks from his morning hunt in Three Bayou Bay in Lafitte.



**Emmaline DesRoches**



**Katy White**

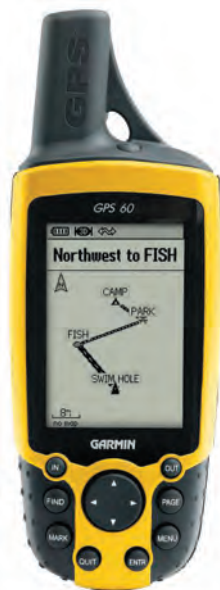
Katy White holds up a redfish she caught while fishing in Venice on Thanksgiving Day with her mom, dad and sister, Nell.

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- Delacroix to Point a la Hache
- Bayou Bienvenue
- Port Sulphur
- Lakes Ponchartrain & Maurepas
- Calcasieu Lake
- Myrtle Grove-Lake Hermitage
- Empire to Buras
- Pearl River WMA
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