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BURNING  
SUMMER BASS

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WRONG-WAY  
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SUMMER TIPS FOR  
BILOXI  
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The COVID-19 pandemic caused Taylor Ernest to postpone her early May wedding, so she went fishing out of Fourchon and caught this 4.6-pound speckled trout instead. Photo courtesy Taylor Ernest.

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# Outdoor UPDATE

Abbie Bayham and Braylon Hebert hold some April trout from Cocodrie.



## IS OVERFISHING OF MENHADEN A THREAT TO SPECKLED TROUT?

By Don Shoopman

**A** University of Miami scientist who is an avid angler has studied, documented and informed the public of a grave threat to the speckled trout fishery along Louisiana's coast: commercial fishing of menhaden.

Dr. Jerald Ault, professor and chair of the Department of Marine Ecosystems and Society at Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine & Atmospheric Science, held a webinar May 13 with participants from Louisiana and around the country, including charter captains from Venice and Buras. Menhaden, aka pogies, are being sucked out of the ecosystem at an alarming rate.

As a forage species and filter feeder, menhaden are essential to the ecology of the Gulf of Mexico, according to Ault. The

Gulf's myriad fish species, marine mammals and birds of prey eat menhaden, which constantly filter water through their gills, thus serving as a vital ecological cleaning system.

### THE BENEFITS

What's the value of filtering? Ault has said the menhaden population at historical levels could filter the Mississippi River's discharge 34 times over each year.

"An average 8-inch fish can filter 1.2 million gallons a year," he said.

Ault also brought his message in October 2017 to Marsh Madness in Venice, where sportfishing media and industry reps met at charter captain Mike Frenette's Redfish Lodge of Louisiana.

The message is, speckled trout and

Bradley Burdett with a nice stringer of speckled trout caught at Elmer's Island in Grand Isle on June 1.



redfish are almost automatically in an overfished condition with current menhaden exploitation. Preliminary data he showed that was generated by an ecosystem model under development by scientists at the University of Florida and NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center as part of a project funded by NOAA Restore Science Program shows that taking out so many menhaden results in a 50% reduction in the speckled trout biomass along Louisiana's coast, compared to no menhaden fishing.

And, Ault pointed out, the dire situation is made even more interesting because menhaden are a public resource, so from his point of view, there must be accountability, working toward ecosystem-based management for Gulf stocks, the same approach recreational fishing and environmental groups are championing for Atlantic stocks. A traditional, single-species management approach allows a much-higher level of menhaden to be netted each year, an option favored by one of the two main players in the menhaden commercial fishing industry.

## THE LOSS OF MENHADEN

Chris Macaluso of Baton Rouge is keenly aware of the issue, one confronting South Atlantic states as well as the Gulf. The son of Joe Macaluso, long-time outdoors editor of *The Advocate*, Baton Rouge's newspaper, he is the marine fisheries director for the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.

Macaluso, who has been with TRCP since 2012, primarily works on coastal restoration issues. The threat posed by commercial fishing for menhaden has his attention, thanks to Ault and Benson Chiles of Atlantic Islands, N.J. Chiles, who works closely with Ault, is coordinating a coalition of organizations on behalf of the TRCP.

The TRCP and its supporting partners played a pivotal role in getting landmark legislation transferring authority for managing menhaden from Virginia's state legislature, subject to well-funded lobbyists, to the Virginia Marine Resource Commission. The VMRC announced earlier this month it would set a lower quota for Omega Protein Inc.'s industrial harvest operation for 2020.

The legislation transferring management authority and the commission's swift action to limit Omega's 2020 harvest are hailed as historic wins for marine conservation, supporters say, and similar actions need to be the focus in Louisiana.

## BY-CATCH

Realistically, Macaluso said, anyone with any experience on the water realizes removing such a huge amount of menhaden out of an area — barrier islands and beaches along the Gulf of Mexico — doesn't bode well for predators that feed on them. That's reason enough to consider the speckled trout population in trouble and should be part of the discussion among state and federal officials, many say.

"You can't take that much food out of the water and have it not affect the animals that need that food," Macaluso said. "I'm talking about a lot of food for predators that is being taken out of the Mississippi and Louisiana coastlines."

"There are a lot of folks inside Louisiana and who come down here to fish who see this activity" and it doesn't take them long to understand there are very few regulations pushed by federal managers and state fisheries, he continued.

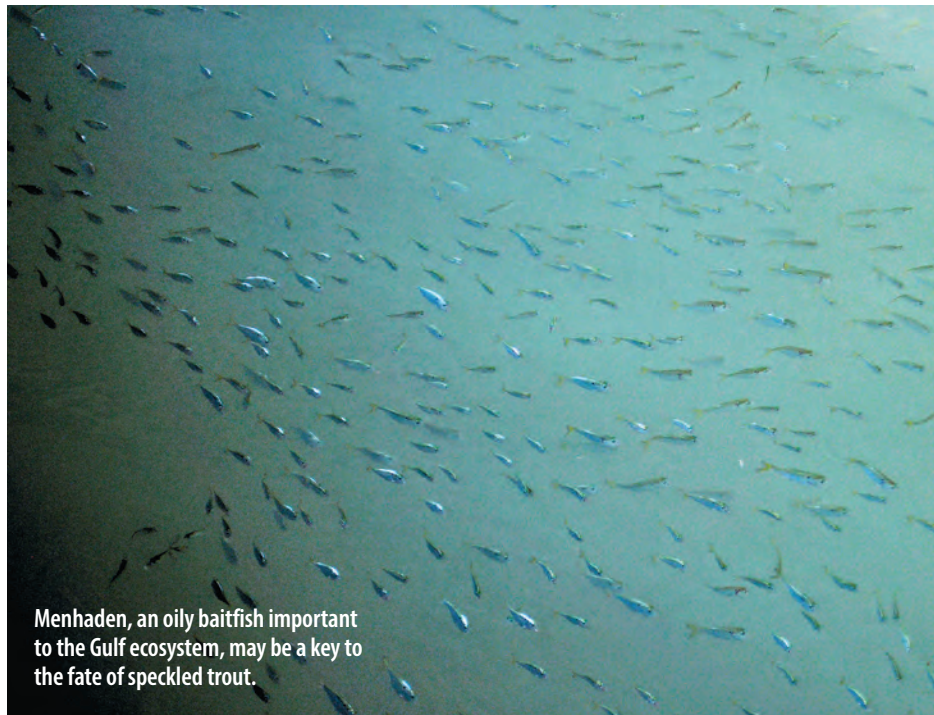
"I think it stands to reason if they're stringing purse seines in areas where speckled trout and redfish are, they're killing them. I know they're killing bull reds, no question. I know they're killing sharks, jack crevalle. These fish show up dead," he said, noting that floaters or beached carcasses are the tip of the iceberg because those are the fish that aren't sucked into the holds.

How prolific is the by-catch? A few years ago, Ault told *Sport Fishing* magazine that menhaden boats legally can retain a 5% by-catch — everything other than targeted menhaden — taken by their nets.

How much is that? Ault said 5% of 1.2 billion pounds — the amount of menhaden reported taken out of the Gulf in 2015 — is 60 million pounds per year, much of it gamefish such as speckled trout, redfish, tarpon, etc.

## CURRENT CONDITIONS

As Doug Olander pointed out in a story published March 2 in *Sport Fishing*, menhaden boats from Omega Protein Inc. and Daybrook Fisheries Inc. kill countless numbers of speckled trout, redfish, croakers and anything else entrapped in their huge seine nets.



Menhaden, an oily baitfish important to the Gulf ecosystem, may be a key to the fate of speckled trout.

Olander, who labeled menhaden boats as "200-foot, floating fish factories," pointed out the commercial menhaden fishery has no limits, unlike other major commercial fisheries. Also, it isn't accountable to anyone because any commercial fishery with three or fewer harvesters isn't required to reveal its harvest data, per the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

There is an economic angle to the issue, he said, noting an American Sportfishing Association study estimated the value of the Gulf of Mexico recreational fishing industry at approximately \$44 billion a year. Omega's menhaden industry is worth \$325 million per year. ■

# ORANGE GROVE CLOSED TO BOATS

ARE LOUISIANA FISHERMEN HEADED FOR ANOTHER FIGHT OVER WATER RIGHTS?

By Don Shoopman

**W**ill fishing for bass, bream and sac-a-lait — as generations of local residents and visitors have done for nearly seven decades — cease and desist in the marshy Orange Grove area of Terrebonne Parish?

Answers to that and other questions about gated canals blocking public access to Louisiana's natural resources are up in the air. There isn't a gate up there, yet, but there is a cable stretched across the waterway and a sign warning boaters — men and women who purchase resident and non-resident fishing licenses — to keep out of Orange Grove.



Photo courtesy David Robichaux

A cable stretched across the entrance to Orange Grove and this sign let the public know a landowner's intentions for the popular fishing destination.



Photo courtesy David Robichaux

## ANGLER ACCESS

One Gonzales resident who has fished the area for bass and redfish is concerned that it's another example of public access to fishable waters being blocked.

Lucas Ragusa is secretary for the Louisiana Sportsmen's Coalition (LaSC), a non-profit group dedicated to opening up gated canals under what he called an archaic, "Napoleonic Code."

"Our hope with Orange Grove," Ragusa said, "is that it is a catalyst to wake people up that this is happening and happening to a waterway that is frequented by a lot of inshore fishermen. It is having a direct impact on tourism in the state."

Ragusa, who fishes bass tournaments, emphasized that fishermen don't want ownership of the property behind the gates — at Orange Grove, the group that applied for a permit to put up the cable is Wylie Corp./Orange Grove Holding LLC/Robichaux, Alfred C. — they just want to fish without fear of having a weapon waved in their faces, being issued tickets or even losing their jobs.

"It's been an area I've fished for a long time. I've probably fished in there about 20 times," Ragusa said. "Bayou Black and I have a love-hate relationship. There's too much gray area for fishermen like me who don't want to be involved in a dispute that we fished legal or illegal waters.

"We don't want ownership. We just want to be able to use it."

Ragusa attended a Coastal Zone Management & Restoration Advisory meeting on June 2 in Houma, where the Orange

Grove cable was a major source for discussion. He said the controversy over the prohibition of entry into public waters is a reason that major bass tournament circuits have stayed away from Louisiana since 2016 — costing the state millions of dollars.

## IS A GATE COMING?

Matt Black of Houma, Terrebonne Parish Coastal Restoration Director and Coastal Zone Manager, said his office approved a local permit for the applicant, one of three required before a gate can be built. He said there's been plenty of feedback since the cable was stretched across the waterway and a white pole planted in the middle with a sign reading "Orange Grove is Closed to the Public."

Black said his office approved the permit application because after a public notice about the application was posted in March, there were no public comments, and because COVID-19 restrictions eliminated the chances for a public hearing.

Black emphasized the wetlands permit his office approved is one of three permits that must be obtained by an applicant for a gate to be built. The others are from the state's Office of Coastal Management and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Corps' permit may be the biggest challenge for the applicant. Black said a 15-day public comment period implemented by the Corps ran from June 1-15.

Black pointing out the Corps operates under laws that are much, much broader and encompassing than Terrebonne Parish's Office of Coastal Restoration & Preservation.

The Corps' options are to either approve or deny the permit, and, Black said, it weighs many factors before making a decision.

## THE FUTURE

Ragusa said LaSC is in the battle for the long haul, the opening salvo of which was House Bill 391 — which would have restored rights to access public waterways — defeated in the state legislature in April 2018.

An email from Black to LaSC said, "The long-term solution to this can only be found in Baton Rouge with the (Louisiana) Legislature. A law should be enacted which prohibits such gates, but carefully balances the needs of the property owners and the public, the fishing community."

LaSC supports three of six bills dealing with public access on the water introduced in this COVID-19-delayed Louisiana Legislature.

- HB 40, introduced by Rep. Sherman Mack, requires that agreements between an acquiring agency and a landowner for integrated coastal protection projects ensure public recreational access to waterways in the reclaimed lands.

- HB 627, introduced by Rep. Beryl Alexander, provides for an affirmative defense to the crime of trespass when certain property is not properly posted.

- HB 650, introduced by Rep. Beryl Alexander, provides relative to the regulation of gates across waterways in the coastal areas.

A cell phone message and a text message to Aaron Cantrelle, land manager listed on the permit application for the Wylie Corp./Orange Grove Holdings LLC/Robichaux, Albert C., seeking comment, were not immediately returned. ■

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# FAUSSE POINTE'S BIGGEST BASS OF 2020 IS LANDED

By Don Shoopman

**W**esley Verret Jr.'s Alabama bass-fishing tactics paid big dividends on a May 16 trip to Lake Fausse Pointe, the lake he grew up bass fishing, hunting and setting out hoop nets with his dad and grandfather.

Soon after hooking and boating a 4-pound bass, then a 5-pound bass while fishing with his father and father-in-law, Verrett, a native Louisianan living in Lillian, Ala., caught the lake's biggest bass this spring, a 9.21-pound goliath. His bass was the first weighing more than 9 pounds caught in 2020 and the eighth pushing the scales past 7 pounds, with six of those "hawgs" being at least 8 pounds.

It's one he would have wanted his dad, Wesley Verret Sr., of Jeanerette, to catch because the elder Verret has had a bass like that in his sights and dreams for so many years fishing the 17,000-acre system — Lake Dauterive-Fausse Pointe — in Iberia



Wesley Verrett Jr. caught this 9.21-pound largemouth bass from Lake Fausse Point on May 16.

and St. Martin parishes. That he caught it while fishing with his dad and Phillip Broussard of New Iberia made it so much more special, he said.

Verret, 39, was home visiting when the last-minute fishing trip was arranged.

"I just happened to be the guy on the end of the fishing pole," said Verret, who he understands the happy hullabaloo around the big bass but added, "It was me catching my father's fish, basically."

## VERRET'S TACTIC

Before his huge Fausse Pointe bass, Verret's biggest bass was in the 5-pound range. He had been fishing clear, clear Alabama waters since he moved to the coastal region three years ago with his wife, Kelly.

"The water's so clear here you have to fish slow, they spook so easy. Over here, you have to keep the bait in the same spot," Verret said.

That 9.21-pounder couldn't resist a black/green H2O Popping Frog that Verret tied on after catching the first two fish on a popper.

Verret didn't pop or walk the frog bait.

"I was basically making the frog vibrate," he said, explaining he gently twitched it to make it shudder, then let it float, then repeated the twitch.

"I mean, I barely moved it to make it vibrate. I actually saw the bass come out and look at it. I could just see the top of it because the water was a little stained," he said. "Then she took it. She swallowed it, took off and jumped three times and wrapped (the 60-pound braid) around cypress knees."

That was a problem for Verret. Fortunately, both hooks were buried in the mouth of the big fish.

Verret, fishing in the middle of the boat, urged his father to back the boat toward the cypress knees where the hooked bass was thrashing, drawn up tight to the cypress knees. All the while, Broussard was unwrapping braided line.

While he held the fishing rod up high, they got closer and closer. "I said, 'Dad, I want you to lip it.' I knew it meant a lot," he said.

Lip it his dad did. They all feasted their eyes on the prize.

## THE BIG REVEAL

"I think everybody was speechless for about 15 seconds," he said, before swinging into action.

"I immediately put it in the livewell," he said. "I didn't want to hurt it. I just wanted to mount it. I called a taxidermist to see what I needed to do to make a replica, because I knew I was releasing the fish."

The Verretts didn't have a scale, so they cranked the outboard and ran to the boat landing on the reservation of the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, where they had launched. On the way, they stopped at three houseboats to see if residents had a scale.

# 2020 FAUSSE POINTE HAWG HONOR ROLL

- Wesley Verret Jr., 9.21
- Dustin Dore, 8.99
- Travis Meche Sr., 8.82
- Jarrod Derouen, between 8 ½-9
- Andre Weber, 8.50
- Joseph Martin, 8.17
- Andre Weber, 7.25
- Bo Amy, 7.20

An angler at the boat landing had a scale and tape measure. The scale bounced around, and the bass slipped off three times before the weight was pegged at a light 9.2; Verret said it read 9.50 once.

"I said, 'Take a picture. Nine-two-one is good enough for me,'" he said.

The bass was 24 inches long with a girth of 18 inches. While the tail still was red, the bass apparently had spawned.

Concerned about the fish's health, Verret decided against going back to the lake and releasing it. It was released alive in a pond owned by one of his father's friends.

"I really wanted to put it back in the lake. I do wish she was back in the lake," he said, not wanting to risk killing it. ■



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# TWO MORE ADDITIONS TO THE 10-POUND TOLEDO BEND CLUB

By Chris Berzas

Ville Platte's Jake Ortego and a couple of his friends, Sam Tuminaro and Delaney Fontenot, were spending time at Ortego's Toledo Bend camp between May 11 and May 16.

"The doctor I work for was taking a vacation, so we were also able to get in several days of fishing at Toledo Bend," said Ortego, 35.

The anglers woke up to windy conditions Tuesday, May 12, but decided to forge ahead with plans to fish as much as possible.

Ortego launched at Old Yellow Landing early in the morning, and the trio settled down near the state park area, planning to move north to the Blue Lake area.

"We caught a few fish early," Ortego said. "It was windy, and we tried to stay on the main lake as much as possible."

"We ended up coming back toward the state park," he said. "We caught between 10 and 12 fish: a few keepers and one weighing about 3½ pounds."

The anglers fished main-lake points as much as possible, but eventually the wind was enough to force Ortego to seek protection.

"At 4 p.m., we ran to the back of San Miguel Cove, where my dad and I once prefished for a tournament," he said. "It was a fun trip, and our best five that day weighed close to 18 pounds."

Upon arrival in San Miguel, one bass was taken, and Fontenot dropped another one that was estimated as weighing 5 pounds.

## SOMETHING SPECIAL

Ortego was flipping cover with a Texas-rigged Missile D Stroyer when he set the hook after a good bite.

"The fish ran out of the bushes and jumped out the water," he said. "At one point, the fish moved under the boat and appeared on the other side, right by Delaney."

After a couple of minutes, the big bass tired and Tuminaro lipped it and lifted it into the boat.



Ville Platte's Jake Ortego displays his Toledo Bend lunker bass weighing exactly 10 pounds taken in San Miguel Cove May 12, 2020. Ortego caught his fish on a Texas-rigged Missile D Stroyer.

Photo courtesy of the Toledo Bend Lake Association

Ortego knew the fish was close to 10 pounds; he and his father have taken fish weighing 9 pounds in the past.

Ortego's hand scale bounced between 9.9 to 10.1 pounds when the bass was initially weighed.

The certified scales at Toledo Town and Tackle pegged Ortego's bass exactly at 10.0 pounds. The fish was tagged and released alive back into Toledo Bend.

Ortego's bass is lunker No. 39 for the 2019-2020 Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program season.

## HOUSEN LUNKER

Henry West of Mermentau and his adult godson, Josh "Spanky" Viator, spent the better part of May 18, fishing Toledo Bend's bass-rich waters.

"It was more or less a fun-fishing trip, although there is a tournament there next month," said West, 62.

Launching from Cypress Bend, the anglers experienced light winds and blue-bird skies.

"We caught a couple of fish right out from Cypress Bend," West said.

Moving then into Lowe's Creek, they added a few bass to the livewell but missed a good one.

"I lost one there I would say would have gone 8 pounds," West said.

## THE RIGHT SPOT

West motored farther west to Housen where he knew an off-shore hump in 16 to 18 feet of water worth fishing.

There, West began a series of casts with a Carolina-rigged, Big Bite Rojas Fighting Frog.

On one of his series of casts, he had a noticeable hit.

"I set the hook, and I felt a solid fish on the other end," he said. According to West, the fish made quite a few thrusts while taking a lot of drag.

"She broke water four times, and it was pretty exciting," he said. "Josh eventually was able to scoop her into the net after a few more strong runs."

On West's digital scale, the fish's weight bounced between 10.5 and 11.5 pounds.

"I don't know if the bouncing around was due to the fish moving or Josh shaking while weighing the fish," West said.

Once the fish was in the livewell, they strapped everything down and made a run to Fin and Feather Resort to obtain a weight on a certified scale for entry of the fish in the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program.

West's Housen lunker officially weighed 10.80 pounds, making it lunker No. 38 for the 2019-2020 Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program season. ■



Photo courtesy of the Toledo Bend Lake Association

Henry West of Mermentau scored on this 10.80-pound Toledo Bend lunker fishing in Housen with a Carolina-rigged, Big Bite Rojas Fighting Frog. The fish was taken May 18, 2020, in 16 to 18 feet of water.

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# SURVEY: DUCK HUNTERS AREN'T HAPPY

## RESPONSES TO LDWF'S MAILING SUGGEST HUNTING HAS SUFFERED

By Kinny Haddox

**E**very five years, Larry Reynolds and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries conduct a detailed informational survey with the state's waterfowlers, partnering with the LSU School of Renewable Natural Resources.

This year, the LDWF got 8,218 "valid" responses. Of that group, 44.4% were very dissatisfied, and another 24.6% were dissatisfied. One of the main reasons was they strongly believe that the annual migration the past several years has greatly decreased.

"It shows what we already know for this year," Reynolds said. "It was just a crappy duck season."

"From looking at the preliminary results, it is obvious that a large number of duck hunters think the quality of duck hunting has declined substantially since we did the same survey in 2015. Only 8.5% of the respondents said they were very satisfied."

When hunters were asked to rank the contributing factors, the response was all over the board. Coastal wetland loss was the most important — a 3.94 average rank (from 1 most important to 10 least important) — and overharvest due to liberal hunting regulations was the least important (8.68), with warmer winters and increases in unharvested crops (4.03), and changes in rice agriculture and increased rice north of Louisiana (4.23) also seen as very important.

Despite what you hear about spinning-wing decoys, the increase in harvest of juveniles due to spinning-wing decoys was the second least-important with a score of 7.33. While spinning-wing decoys are an issue with hunters in some states, they are not with a majority in Louisiana.

Reynolds said the survey shows there is growing support for more restrictions to improve duck hunting on the state's Wildlife Management Areas. That includes more lottery hunts and limiting open days to four days a week, according to the survey. Overcrowding is an issue with many WMA hunters. Other interesting results show that a growing number of hunters — up from 2%

five years ago to 11% this year — are interested in more restrictive white-front goose limits.

The survey said that the average hunter spent 13 days hunting and killed 30 ducks and 4 geese. When hunters were asked what they would expect in a "good" season, they responded with an average of 14 days, 51 ducks and six geese.

The 12 parishes hunted most frequently were: Cameron (12.1%), Vermilion (9.6%), Plaquemines (6.7%), Terrebonne (5.3%), St. Bernard (4.1%), Jefferson Davis (3.7%), Avoyelles (3.2%), St. Landry (2.9%), Morehouse (2.5%), Calcasieu (2.4%), and Catahoula and Ouachita (2.2%).

In the 2019-2020 season: 44.9% hunted in the Coastal Zone, 36.2% in the East Zone, 9.6% in the West Zone, and 9.1% did not hunt in 2019-2020 — but had hunted at least one year in the past 5. Over the past five seasons, 59% of valid respondents hunted all five, 11% hunted four and 9% hunted three.

The survey results are very important, because the LDWF will be compiling all available data later this summer to recommend what types of zones and splits Louisiana will have for the next five seasons, beginning in 2021.

"We really do try to get as much input as we can from hunters, and this survey helps greatly," Reynolds said. "I wish we could get more data, but a lot of hunters won't respond or give us incomplete responses. But you can't play with people who don't want to play with you."

The next major step for the state's waterfowl group is to finish analyzing the data, get ready to present it to the full Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission this fall and submit zones/splits recommendations for the 2021 through 2026 seasons.

"That's where we are at this time with the 2020 Waterfowl Hunter Survey," Reynolds said. "There will be more study to come, and these numbers should not be considered final in any sense. It's really a first look." ■

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Joey Tripi's boat, sunk by heavy waves, was later recovered.

# FLOAT PLAN LANDS RESCUE IN BOB'S LAKE

## TWO SHRIMPERS SAVED THE MORNING AFTER SINKING

By Nick Vaccaro

**W**e have all been there. Everything is going right on the water. You start the motor, but it fails, and that sinking feeling overcomes your stomach.

For Thom Franklin and Joey Tripi, that feeling became a reality when their boat sank on Sunday, May 24.

The two launched Tripi's 21-foot skiff at about 5:30 p.m. in Hopedale and motored to Bob's Lake. They planned to shrimp into the night and return



Photo courtesy Joey Tripi

Helicopter view of the boaters



Photo courtesy Coast Guard

around midnight. They made their first drag around 7 p.m., in relatively calm water with no small-craft advisory.

Trouble presented itself later. The wind increased, and the waves grew and crashed over the boat's stern.

Tripi said that typically, when water enters the boat, it runs out through the scupper holes of the stern's well, but a tremendous amount of water entered the boat, and the bilge pump could not keep up with the incoming water.

"The motor was still running," Tripi said. "I never turn the motor off when I shrimp. I tried getting the boat on a plane to help the water run out, but it would bog down."

According to Franklin, in about 20 seconds, the boat filled with water and sank, with the motor wedging into the lake's bottom. The skiff's bow projected slightly above the surface, and they spent the night there.

"When we realized we were going to sink, I told Joey we needed to get life jackets on," Franklin said. They quickly donned life jackets and huddled in chest-deep water at the bow of the boat.

Both men are experienced sportsmen, and Tripi's boat was well stocked with survival gear, but when it sank, the lids on the storage compartments opened, and some

of those needed goods were lost.

"I had a flare gun, but we lost it," Tripi said. "I had a signal mirror, too."

Struggling to keep their composure, they looked over the situation and started gathering what they could. They managed to secure their ice chest and used it to trap anything salvageable. They had water, some small bottles of Coca Cola, one ham sandwich and some Fritos corn chips. Both had their cellular phones; they tried throughout the night to call for help but never were able to obtain service.

Far in the distance, Franklin and Tripi could see the lights of other boats. They utilized the boat's Q-Beam and flashed an SOS signal that went unanswered. They continued to struggle through the night and said the moon was not visible. The only illumination available was provided by stars and the occasional lit screen of a cell phone.

They focused on not drowning, with the inclination of reassessing their situation at daylight. They knew it was a matter of time before a search, but it would not launch until the next day.

"My wife was out of town in Texas," said Franklin. "She had no idea what was going on."

During the night, Tripi made the decision

Joey Tripi's float plan proved decisive in the search for he and Thom Franklin.

to remove his life jacket to dive underwater to search for more useful goods. Returning to the surface, he could not find it immediately. He spotted it off in the distance, but Franklin warned against going after it.

"I said, 'Joey, it's too far, and you'll never catch up to it,'" Franklin said.

Tripi began to tire later in the rough, rising waters. He decided to push away from his friend and try to take off his rubber boots and pants to minimize the weight he was carrying.

"I was getting tired, and I didn't want to panic and drown Thom," Tripi said.

Franklin was not going to let his friend die, and while Tripi removed articles of clothing, Franklin removed his boots and decided they could be fashioned into floats. He trapped air in the boots and gave them to Tripi to put under his arms.

The two men eyed land after sunrise and took note of the wind direction and accessed the tide. They decided to use the Igloo as a float and let the wind deliver them to land.

They drifted for more than two miles and landed on a grassy marsh island. They scoured the island and found two deflated balloons and a red crab basket. They attached it to a long stick to wave as a signal flag.

At about 8:30 a.m. on Memorial Day, Franklin's wife realized something was amiss. Her text messages to her husband had gone unanswered. Her two daughters sprang into action and arrived at his home to find he was not there.

When Franklin's whereabouts could not be confirmed through the Find My iPhone app, his daughters contacted the U.S. Coast Guard. Shortly thereafter, Franklin and Tripi were located.

"We brought the Q-Beam with us in the ice chest," said Franklin. "We took it apart and used the reflective part to try and signal for help, but it's curved, so it really didn't work all that well."

Tripi had drawn a crude map of where he and Franklin would be shrimping and left it with his wife. He and Franklin saw the Coast Guard helicopter searching for them in that general area and knew they just had to be patient. When the rescuers took a direct

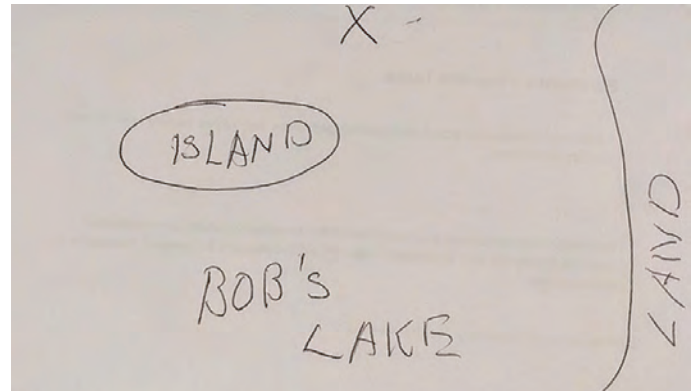


Photo courtesy Joey Tripi

course to the men, they waived their signal flag back and forth. "Thom was saluting and waving," Tripi said.

Tripi's float plan was recognized as the key to a quick rescue and not a long, gloomy recovery mission. ■

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# GRAND ISLE TARPON RODEO IS HERE

LEGENDARY TOURNEY SET FOR JULY 23-25

By Dora Lambert

**T**he Grand Isle International Tarpon Rodeo was first conceived in 1928, which makes it the longest-running fishing tournament in the United States. It is also one of the biggest annual events on the island. People come from all over the Southeast to participate and pack the small island to its limit.

Capt. Jeremy McHugh, winner of last year's tarpon division, is ready to do it again.

"It will be an early migration for tarpon from what I have seen so far," he said.

"Tarpon season typically lasts one to three months and is dependent on the migration, water clarity and water levels. It will be a little bit more difficult this year than last year to place. The tarpon will show up



The tarpon division is the namesake for Grand Isle's Tarpon Rodeo, but few silver kings are caught in local waters. Most come from far to the east, around the mouth of the Mississippi River.

a few weeks earlier, so the competition will be tougher."

Last year was McHugh's first year participating. Before that, it took him and his team three or four years to hone their skills targeting tarpon before business was opened. McHugh's Stillwater Fishing Charters is one of the few, if not the only guide/outfitter that targets tarpon out of Mississippi.

"The group of guys that taught me how to tarpon fish around Mississippi and Louisiana are members of the Grand Isle Tarpon Club," he said. "(In) 2019, we got the lucky hand. We got on the fish early on."

McHugh briefly explained how fishing the three-day tournament went. They were able to jump a decent tarpon the first day, but the second day, their video of the catch-and-release didn't qualify as a catch by tournament judges. This left them scrambling the last day to put a winner on the board. Thankfully, McHugh and his crew finally caught, tagged and released a quality tarpon the final morning.

Tarpon used to be caught around Grand Isle, but that isn't the case anymore. Anglers have to travel east, towards the mouth of the Mississippi River, to locate possible migratory pods. It's not always a guarantee

that a tarpon will be caught, but thankfully, other divisions were created, includes pelagic fish.

Owner of the *Whoo Dat* sportfishing boat, Keith Richardson sponsored the tournament for 10 years running and consistently fished it until five years ago. His last prize was a first-place trophy for miscellaneous catch for a 740-pound blue marlin.

"The tarpon side of the tournament is usually good," he said. "There are talented people from Louisiana that compete and win consistently when the tarpon are there. The speckled trout side also has a lot of stiff competition."

The increase in divisions has undoubtedly kept this tournament going all these years.

But, according to Richardson, participation has steadily declined, despite the increase in divisions.

"New people volunteering their time could change this," he said. "There are Grand Islanders that are energized to help with the Rodeo. It's a long standing tournament that many people are ready to get on board to revamp."

## NEED-TO-KNOW

This year's Rodeo is scheduled for July 23-25. Registration information can be found at [www.tarponrodeo.org](http://www.tarponrodeo.org). Categories that can be entered include slot redfish, Spanish mackerel, king mackerel, grouper, speckled trout, flounder and cobia. There's even a division for gafttop catfish. ■



GRAND ISLE, LOUISIANA

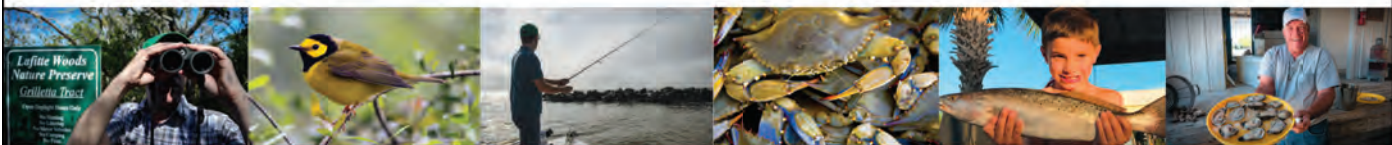


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# LOUISIANA ELK IS BIG SURPRISE PUNCH FOR PICKUP TRUCK

BOWFISHING UNLIMITED  
DECKHAND, 600-POUND  
ANIMAL HAVE ENCOUNTER

By Nick Vaccaro

A typical drive down a rural road in Louisiana might bring an encounter with a dog, deer or coyote, but in the early morning hours of May 27, Darryl Zar faced off with an elk that stepped out in front of his truck on Highway 23 near Myrtle Grove.

The sudden impact caused massive damage to his month-old 2020 GMC

pickup truck and ultimately left the elk fatally wounded.

Zar, employed as a deckhand with Bowfishing Unlimited, had been working all night. At about 4:45 a.m., an elk stepped in front of his pickup truck, which was traveling at 65 mph.



Darryl Zar's new pickup truck had a run-in with an elk on Highway 23 near Myrtle Grove in late May. The truck was damaged (below), but the elk really came out on the bad end.



"All I saw was a flash of brown," Zar said. "In that area, there is a big concrete wall, and he (was) between it and the highway."

Elk are not native to Louisiana, but before 2005, some were brought into the state privately and kept behind high fences, typically used to corral animals residing in game preserves. Hurricane Katrina made its way through the area and wreaked havoc; fencing was destroyed and animals were released to the wild, where they have roamed ever since.

"The story goes that there were over a dozen loose," said Capt. Jeremy Roussel, owner of Bowfishing Unlimited, who was following behind Zar in his own vehicle when the incident occurred.

After striking the estimated 600-pound animal, Zar gained his composure and concluded he was not injured.

"I felt the truck lifting," Zar said. "I realized the elk was still alive and felt the truck moving from him trying to get out from under it."

He said the elk died before a tow truck was able to remove the vehicle from atop the animal.

"It was like no other morning that I have ever experienced," Roussel said; he recalled the tow-truck driver being squeamish, so the men had to crawl under the truck and connect the tow-truck chains

themselves.

Local authorities were dispatched to the scene, and when contacted, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries determined the incident did not fall under its jurisdiction, Roussel said.

"We didn't want the elk to go to waste, and we asked if we could have it," said Roussel, who got a friend to show up with a skid steer, load the carcass into Roussel's truck, and he headed to his business, off-loaded the elk with a fork lift and butchered the animal to use the meat.

Zar said he had only made one payment on his new truck, but he was thankful he was not hurt. He said he has travelled that route hundreds of times and has never had an issue.

"I'll travel under the speed limit for sure," he said. ■



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New Iberia's Hunter Myers caught this blue bullfrog on a frogging trip in Iberia Parish.

# FEELING BLUE— NEW IBERIA MAN CATCHES BLUE BULLFROG

By Dan Kibler

**H**unter Myers didn't notice anything special about any of the 47 big bullfrogs he caught along with his father, Jay, and best friend, River Hebert, on a frogging trip to a small lake in Iberia Parish on May 31

But Myers, who is from New Iberia, knew the next morning, in daylight, that he had a rare find on his hands: a blue frog.

A mutation caused by the lack of one of its normal coloration pigments, the frog featured blue and black markings all over its body instead of the usual blue and green.

"When I grabbed him, he looked gray and black, but when we got him in the cage, my dad kept noticing that he looked different," Myers said. "That's when

we noticed he was blue.

"We didn't know exactly what he was, but my dad had seen an article about somebody catching a blue frog. I posted some pictures on my Facebook page, and when I woke up the next morning, I had all kinds of messages coming out of the wazoo. It was like I'd hit the lottery."



This unusually colored blue bullfrog wound up in Zouziana, the Zoo of Acadiana in Broussard.

## WHAT'S THE CAUSE?

What Myers had hit was an unusual frog, for sure. Several years ago, when a similar frog was caught in Jeff Davis Parish, Dr. Greg Lutz of LSU's Agriculture Center explained that a frog's green coloration is made up of two pigments: blue and yellow, in nearly equal amounts. A frog who didn't get the correct amount of yellow pigment would turn out blue, he said, and likewise, a frog that didn't get the correct amount of blue pigment would turn out yellow — noticeable but not nearly as striking in nature as a blue frog.

Myers said his was only the third blue frog he's ever heard of — the Jeff Davis Parish frog being one of the other two — and instead of keeping the frog or reducing it to frog legs for dinner, he gave the frog to Zouziana, the Zoo of Acadiana in Broussard. ■

## Correction

We misidentified the angler in a photo on page 32 of the June 2020 issue of *Louisiana Sportsman*. The photo is of Steve Stroder, not Jason Ellender as was written.

**READER REPORT**

I have fished here, in Bogue Chitto, all my life, and I had an awesome weekend on April 18-19. On the 18th, I landed a 68-pound flathead — we call them “tabbys” — and luck was on my side. I caught a 70-pounder on the 19th, as well as several more I didn't weigh.

I made a deal with myself and the Good Lord that if he'd allow me to put a good one in the boat, I'd turn it loose after I took pictures. I've lost several this spring at the boat and never thought it was going to happen, but it did, and I held up my end of the deal. I turned them both loose after family and friends came and saw them.

I've seen some nice fish come out of this ol' river, but I never dreamed I'd have two of the finest on the end of my lines. I was kind of proud and hope you enjoy the pictures as much as I enjoyed catching them.

Greg King  
Bush, La.



Larry Richard of Church Point caught this 40-pound, yellow/white cobia after tempting it for 30 minutes with a variety of baits.

## ANGLERS CATCH UNIQUE COBIA OUT OF FRESHWATER CITY By Brian Cope

BIG FISH WAS TRAVELING WITH TWO OTHER LING

**J**ack Romero, Mark Christenson and Larry Richard were fishing out of Freshwater City on April 9, and the three friends caught glimpse of a uniquely colored cobia, a yellow and white fish that wound up being 54 inches long and weighing 40 pounds.

They spotted the cobia as it swam around the boat with two others.

"You had to look at it a couple of times to see what it was," said Romero, who is from New Iberia. "But the other lemon fish with it looked normal. So that kind of helped us realize it was a cobia."

Once they noticed the uniqueness — and size — of the cobia, they targeted it, dangling bait in front of it for some time before it finally bit.

"It was weird seeing that thing swimming in the water beside the boat. Three of them were together, and we were trying to specifically catch this one. The other

two were regular colored, and this one was the biggest," Romero said.

All three anglers dropped baits in, trying to entice the fish to eat.

### RICHARD'S HOOKUP

"We probably watched it for 30 minutes. They were all just circling the boat," Romero said. "We'd pitch a bait in, and he would look at it, but never would hit it. We would throw some chum out and he would eat it right beside the boat. But he wouldn't eat anything with a hook in it."

Finally, Richard, from Church Point, made a cast that the fish could not resist.

"Larry dropped a hardtail baitfish to him. The cobia went straight to it and ate it," Romero said.

That's when the fish took off, making for about 15 minutes of nail-biting drama.

"He ran. Larry fought him for 10 or 15 minutes. We just kind of had our fingers crossed



the whole time. He got him beside the boat and we gaffed him and brought him aboard," he said.

Romero spoke with officials with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. They told him the fish was leucistic, which means it had a pigmentation defect.

"They said he was missing something in his genes, kind of like a piebald deer," he said.

Richard caught the cobia with a Penn 330GTI on a Penn Jigmaster rod. ■

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## READER REPORT

**D**riving from Slidell to Hopedale, the scenery change reveals the challenges we face in Louisiana. The hour-long drive early in the morning along the canals paints a picture of the tenacity of folks determined to thrive living close to the marsh. I know I'm entering a special place and can't wait to get on the water.

Each trip, I'm learning and know I have a lot more time to put in. Having made the trip short of a dozen times, I've made many mistakes learning all kinds of lessons along the way. Luckily, Hopedale has great marinas like Campos and Hopedale for hopeful anglers to get live shrimp, tackle, gas and other fishing necessities.

On Thursday, May 7, at about 6:30 a.m., me and my fishing buddy, Chase, launched from the two kayak slips out of Hopedale Marina. We were soon faced with a headwind pushing current against our start to get out to the MRGO rocks. Once anchored up, we quickly found smaller specks in the right-side corner of the rocks.

After picking through bunches of shrimp-eating specks between 6 and 10 inches long, I was resigned that there weren't any decent-sized trout biting that day, at least for me. We picked up a few decent sheepshead for eating and released a few small rat reds.

Around 10:30, after losing two popping corks and other tackle to the rocks. I reached into my bait bucket and picked out what must've been the smallest shrimp in there and made my next cast. The cork hit the water, and no sooner than it had landed 5 feet off the rocks, it was taken under by what I thought was the keeper-sized redfish we'd been looking for.

### A BIG SURPRISE

After a nice battle and a good amount of drag taken by the fish, I was absolutely shocked to see it was not a redfish, but the biggest speckled trout I'd ever seen.

With no net, I tried to remain as calm as possible and grab the fish by the gills to get it into the kayak. I couldn't believe what I was seeing; it wasn't a red, but a monster speck. No angling finesse or technique, just chaos at the surface, pure elation mixed at the same time with the dread of losing this monster.

Initially, after calming down and looking at my prize, I thought this was a solid 5- or 6-pound trout, having never personally caught a speckled trout weighing more than 3. But when we got back to Hopedale Marina, some fellow anglers with a scale showed me it was in fact 8½ pounds. It had a reddish scar on its right side and a little deformation from what I was told afterward at Hopedale Marina was a gill net.

### A LIFETIME MEMORY

I was excited, but I had no idea I'd just caught what others told me was a "fish of a lifetime." I couldn't have been more grateful for this rare and incredible experience: the other anglers that celebrated this catch with me and the great marinas like Campos and Hopedale that provided bait and supplies. The fish was 27 inches long, with a 15-inch girth. My plan is to get a mount honoring the fish and to cherish this memory for the rest of my life.

I also truly don't want this to polarize folks in the fishing community. My



inexperience and excitement all contributed to keeping this beautiful speckled trout. In the future, I can truly appreciate an exceptional encounter with a mature and outsized fish and hopefully make an experienced sportsman's decision whether to harvest.

Ian Kelly  
Slidell, La.

## GOT A REPORT?

Post it at: [louisianasportsman.com/field-reports/](http://louisianasportsman.com/field-reports/)

The Sportsman is looking for photos, videos and reports from anglers and hunters across the state.

We value your input and want to see what you're doing — and how you're doing it. Here's how to become part of our Sportsman community ... it's easy.

I heard about this hunt when I was turkey hunting last year in Des Moines, N. M., with Larry Zappanti of C Bar Z Outfitters. My guide was a young man named Kolten Cook. While hunting with him, we discussed, like all hunters do, what other animals and places we hunt. He told me about the elk, mule deer and lion hunting they do in New Mexico, Colorado and on another ranch in Wyoming where he guides.

We talked about the hunts that we do yearly. The topic of black bear came up. My wife and I have hunted in Cherryfield, Me., for black bear for the past three years for our anniversary. My friend and hunting buddy, Mike Rawson, has turned us on to hunting bears. Kolten told me that he guides color-phase black bear (a dream of mine since I started hunting) in Wyoming with Trophy Mountain Outfitters after the end of turkey season. I told him I was interested and to let me know how this year went and we would probably plan for a trip next spring, and of course, he did.

As outfitters do, he sent some great pictures of some great bears, and I was hooked (line and sinker). So as the year went on, Mike Rawson, my wife, Meagan, and I booked the hunt and started planning. However, when COVID-19 hit in February, all our spring trips came into question. An Aoudad hunt in Texas was the first to cancel, then a Texas turkey hunt. New Mexico with C Bar Z was up in the air for a while, then we got the all clear that we could still hunt, with restrictions. Along with that, we are self-employed, and our work had all but stopped. When we got to New Mexico, we discussed the bear hunt with Kolten. We had to tell him that the bear hunt wasn't looking good; we would probably have to cancel but would stay in touch. But two weeks before the hunt, with Mike constantly egging me on and me resisting, the Lord provided. He softened my wife's heart, because we are usually a trio, and she was not able to go, but she told me to go. We booked our tickets; sent Kolten a message and the plans were set.

## DAY 1

Mike and I landed in Jackson Hole. We checked in at the hotel and went to a local sporting goods store for a sweatshirt for me. We spent a small fortune between the two of us and forgot the sweatshirt, but we came out with a new Tenzing pack and had to find ammo. I get fussed at by Mike because that happens every trip. We met with Kolten to sign our paperwork for the outfitter and got lined out for the first hunt the next day.

## DAY 2

We met up with our two guides, Nate Suter and Kolten. We jumped in the trucks and took off. Kolten and I got to our trail head, unloaded the horses, and got ready to roll. I am a large guy, 6-foot-3 and 330 pounds, so they had to pair me with a large, tall horse, a half-draft named Grizz.

Wyoming is such a beautiful state, especially that area. We rode through the creek bottoms, through the Aspen and pines across the creeks to where we tied up the horses. Kolten pointed up and said, "Let's go."

Remember my frame and that I'm also from South Louisiana and I haven't even come close to acclimating to the altitude yet. I said "OK, how far?" He said, "Oh, just a couple hundred yards." I said, "OK." We elk hunt in the Buena Vista, Colo., area and hike there a lot, so I thought "No problem."



Well it was a problem, because Kolten is part billy goat and takes no breaks. We did hike about 400 yards with a gain of 600 feet. I was soaking wet with sweat. It was raining. I was sitting on the ground just thankful to have not gone any higher.

We sat for eight hours and never saw a bear. I saw about 40 elk, about the same number of mule deer and one cow moose. It was a good hunt.

We got down and back within phone service range, and I got a text that Mike had killed a sow right at 7 p.m. The thing you must know about Mike is he isn't picky at all. He shoots the first legal animal every hunt. He asked Nate how large the bear was, and before he answered, Mike shot and just about blew the binos out of Nate's hand. Nate looked at him and said, "I don't think you cared about the size." Which Mike replied, "Nope."

## DAY 3

The next day, we checked the bear in with Kyle Lash, a great warden with a good sense of humor.

Back at the ranch Kolten, Nate and I loaded up and took off to the same spot I had gone the day before. It was already raining and nasty at the trail head. We tied up and headed back up; I still just about fell out when I got to the top. By that point, it was snowing. We sat for a few hours, the snow stopped, and we sat and waited. Nothing. I put my gun back down and wrapped the scope back in my jacket to keep it clear.

Suddenly, a bear ran up the hill in front of me. Kolten yelled and the bear, a yearling, stopped 8 feet away from me. I saw it coming up; but I couldn't get my gun up before he could have had me. I



always wonder how a hunter with a gun gets caught by a bear. Now I know. The bear never really knew we were there, turned and headed uphill, walking off. All while Nate was sleeping.

An hour or so later I was watching deer and elk feed and move around across the canyon when I spot a large blonde bear with a chocolate head and legs. I told Kolten to come look. I ranged him at 760 yards. I told Kolten I could shoot that, no problem. We got set up, Kolten on the Vortex spotter, Nate on my Leica binos and me on the Remington. The bear was moving around, feeding and taunting the deer. We changed distances on the Nightforce scope several times.

I finally got him locked down at 765. I shot, and the shot went high, about 2 inches over his shoulders. We tried to reset, but the bear was on the move, and we were unsuccessful. He was gone. I couldn't figure what I had done wrong. Then I saw I had dialed the scope for 775 yards. We packed up, mounted up and rode the horses up the slide to verify a clean miss. We get there and the bear had come back, but it happened too fast to dismount and get a shot. He ran up the ridge and went out of sight. After checking the area for hair and blood we rode back.

## DAY 4

After licking my wounds and dropping a gloating Mike off at the airport, I went to the range just south of town to double check my rifle. Started at 440 then 600 then 750. The gun was on, which really didn't make me feel a whole lot better, but it did feel good to shoot.

I reported back to the ranch and away we went back to the same spot. There was a big black and a cool cinnamon bear on the bait we were seeing on the trail cameras; we felt we could get one. However, after sitting until dark again with no luck. However, I did make it up a lot easier than the other two days. That's something.

I asked Kolten if my wife had a deal with him to make me lose weight while I was there.

## DAY 5

Kolten got up early and went to check baits and cameras like he did every day. He went to the farthest bait they had, which had been set only a few days, just to see if the bears had found it. Three bears had. A very large blonde, another large black and a massive chocolate; only the black was on camera in the daylight. Kolten came down and texted me to meet him at the ranch. We needed to leave right away as it a long ride to get there in time.

We met at the ranch and caught Grizz, who by this time was sick of packing me. We got to the trailhead and headed out. Two hours later, after some of the steepest riding I have ever done and taking in some of the most beautiful scenery God has ever created, we hopped off and walked downhill to the spot we were going to hunt. Sitting down, we set up and took a break to reflect on the past few days and what I had just ridden up through. We sat a few hours and didn't see anything but one cow elk.

The wind was swirling, mainly going straight to the bait. The sun was going down, and I was starting to get disheartened. Kolten was bracing for the ribbing I was going to give him on the two-hour ride down. I said a little prayer for the next few minutes, asking God for anything legal to walk out. I promise, I wasn't

picky anymore. I will be thankful for anything. About 20 minutes later, we heard the sound of a stick breaking. Kolten told me to get ready.

I had high hopes but had my doubts he was going to show in the next few minutes of daylight. Looking and not moving an inch, we saw an area darken. Kolten said he was coming out, to get ready. I watched him through my scope; he was looking and sniffing in our direction, and I thought he was fixing to bolt. He took two steps, and I pulled the trigger. He flipped, slid down the hill and died. "Thank you, Lord," I said. Kolten screamed that was a monster.

I had no idea. I shot him for a 250-pound, solid-black bear, and he ended up being a 7-foot, 450-pounds-plus chocolate with a brown muzzle and a white patch on his chest. What a moment to remember in my hunting life. I finally got my color-phased black bear, and it was a monster.

We are both so pumped up we take some pictures. Then the work began with the Outdoor Edge. We finished processing and skinning the bear at 11 p.m. We gathered the horses, loaded the bear, and headed down the mountain reflecting and taking in the clear starry night. I got to bed about 1:30, however it was closer to four before falling asleep.

## DAY 6

We got up, got some breakfast, and headed off to find the warden to check in the bear. We met up with wardens James Hobbs and Kyle Lash. We dropped the tailgate for Hobbs, and he said, "Wow, that's a big bear!" Lash stopped shoeing horses and came over. "Wow, that's a big bear!" he said.

After checking him in and doing the paperwork, we started talking, and both wardens said that is the biggest bear that either of them had ever checked in. I was really getting excited. Dustin Child, the owner of Trophy Mountain Outfitters, came and got pictures, and we went to the taxidermist to get him prepped to mail home.

We get there, and he had the same reaction: "That's a big bear!" I asked if he could remove the skull while we are there so we could get the measurements to see if he is a record-book bear. He went right to work. After cleaning him up, he got out his measuring tools, and the skull measured 21 inches. Our jaws dropped. The Boone & Crockett Club's record awards start at 20 inches, and the all-time record book starts at 21 inches. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would harvest a record bear. Thank you, Lord. I promised I wasn't going to be picky.

Ben Fabre  
Slaughter, La.

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# ALWAYS ON THE MOVE

**THE BARRIER ISLANDS THAT SEPARATE LOUISIANA'S COASTLINE FROM THE GULF OF MEXICO OFFER SOME GREAT FISHING OPPORTUNITIES, BUT THEY AREN'T SITTING STILL. HERE'S WHY....**

■ By Jon Miller



# I LOVE EVERYTHING ABOUT LOUISIANA'S BARRIER ISLANDS: THE ADVENTURE OF GETTING THERE, THEIR UNDEVELOPED STATE, THE ABUNDANCE OF BIRD LIFE AND WATERS FILLED WITH A VARIETY OF FISH.

My most-dramatic marine experiences have happened on these islands and strangely, often involved ladyfish and sharks. Occasionally, I have arrived at a barrier island to discover a scene of utter chaos as thousands, maybe tens of thousands, of big ladyfish erupt from the water in undulating waves of fish bodies, while sharks thrash at them.

There is an irresistible temptation to cast a line into these masses of "poor man's tarpon" and hang on as a 24-inch ladyfish peels drag and performs acrobatic aerial moves until a shark swallows it. This is followed by more peeling drag and the parting of fishing line. I still carry a grudge against the ladyfish that grabbed my dangling lure and stole \$250 worth of gear while my back was turned on Isle au Pitre.

Of course, it is for speckled trout that I travel to the barrier islands, beginning in April and ending in October. My safety protocols prohibit traveling to the distant islands on many summer days due to high winds and frequent thunderstorms, so I cannot fish those islands as often as I would like, but when I can, the fishing experience is rewarding.

That doesn't mean the trout catching is always spectacular, because just like elsewhere inshore, environmental factors control where trout will be found and when they will feed. I believe my chance for catching the biggest of Louisiana's trout is greatly increased when I fish the barrier islands. As a general rule for the species, the largest trout are caught in the water with this highest salinity, no matter the season. Certainly, exceptions exist — especially in Louisiana with our vast salinity gradient — but I am looking for salinity greater than 15 parts per thousand to improve my odds. The barrier islands are positioned perfectly to provide structure and cover in high-salinity water.

With the exception of Grand Isle, all the barrier islands I have visited communicate a sense of fleeting existence. For instance, Free Mason Island, while being a productive fishing spot,

Speckled trout are a big draw for anglers heading to Louisiana's barrier islands when conditions allow.



also looks like a giant sand pile delivered to a job site that later went defunct. Recently, that impression of fleeting existence was further strengthened when I learned that a married couple lived on the island from 1957 to 1986. It's intriguing to think about how they so far from civilization and also sad to realize how much of Free Mason Island must now be missing.

## BARRIER ISLAND FORMATION

A bit of time spent researching the formation of Louisiana's barrier islands will fill you with awe and paint a mental picture of the cyclical nature of barrier island formation and destruction. The islands have all been formed by the Mississippi River, even the distant Chandeleur Islands, which should trigger a sense of fluidity in our minds.

The Mississippi River has taken various paths to the Gulf of Mexico over the eons, and in fact, it has created seven delta complexes over the past 6,000 years. The river pushes sediment to its delta, where the sediment is deposited. Lighter sediments such as silt and clay create a fan of marshland, but the heavier sand particles take the shortest path to the Gulf of Mexico and fall out at the very end of the river. Here, a dense landmass called a headland is built. To grasp this concept, I think of the solidness of Grand Isle and the Elmer's Island area, which was part of the Caminada Headland.

*With the exception of Grand Isle, all the barrier islands I have visited communicate a sense of fleeting existence.*

Eventually, the buildup of sediment in the delta creates excessive resistance to the river's flow, which signals the end of a particular lobe of a delta complex, because this resistance causes the river to jump its course somewhere upstream and carve a new and shorter path to the sea. Scientific studies reveal that this major change of course happens roughly every thousand years.

After the river changes course, the abandoned delta will begin a long period of decline defined by land loss. The old delta is starved of new sediment, and the sediment that remains is primarily silt and clay, with a small portion of sand at the barrier islands. All these sediments are loose and easily transported elsewhere by Gulf waters. Erosion and subsidence of the headland will cause it to detach from the marsh, at which point it takes on the identity of barrier islands. Over time, the islands are carried to lower areas and become shoals of sand, so the structure of the delta naturally flattens in a few thousand years, but just like the phoenix, a new delta could be built here precisely because the old delta flattened and thus created a new lower section of coastline, which would draw the river back.

## THE PRESENT RIVER DELTA ➤



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## THE PRESENT RIVER DELTA

This period of deltaic decline is the prominent event that people living today are experiencing. In the ages before our industrial period, the loss of habitat created by the declining delta was offset by the Mississippi River creating a new delta just a hundred miles away. In this new delta, the communities of biota and animals could flourish and avoid devastation to their populations. But our modern river course is forced to stay within levees, and instead of building a new, major delta, it is forced to empty itself further and further across the inland shelf until now it spits its sediment into the depths of the Gulf, where a delta can never be built.

Some scientists, and possibly the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, believe that the river would have shifted its course to the Atchafalaya River basin in the 1970s or 1980s if not for the Old River Control Complex. Even now, 30% of the river flow is diverted to create the Atchafalaya River, and a small delta is forming in what was the ancient Salé-Cypremort delta complex, which dates back 5,000 years. A new headland will eventually appear on this new delta, but long after I depart this life.

Land is being built in a small area around the current mouth of the Mississippi River, called the Birdfoot Delta. Some of the land growth is coming via sediment dredged from the river

for navigation purposes. The Birdfoot Delta looks unnatural because it's not connected to the coastline, except for thin slivers of land on either side of the levees, and it looks backwards compared to deltas that are formed naturally. It is clearly creating something unprecedented in the history of the Mississippi River. The mid-Barataria and mid-Breton sediment diversions proposed in the CPRA Master Plan are designed to expand the marsh on either side of the levee, which would make the Birdfoot Delta appear more natural. However, it's not clear that a headland will ever be built, and therefore, Louisiana will never see another barrier island formed by the river.

## BARRIER ISLAND RESTORATION

I can't help but cringe a bit at the subject of barrier island restoration. It's not that I am opposed to the restoration work; it's just that ancient wisdom reminds us to build our house upon a rock and not upon the sand, because when the water comes, the sand washes away and the house falls. The Hawaiian Islands are pieces of rock, and our islands are piles of sand.

Most Louisiana barrier islands are surprisingly fluid structures; they move. They consist of sand, and water is the master of sand, so longshore currents move them, particle by particle. The UNO Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Science says Timbalier Island has moved 5 miles westward in 100 years.

Dredging and reclamation projects have attempted to reverse the effects of trying to control the Mississippi River's power.



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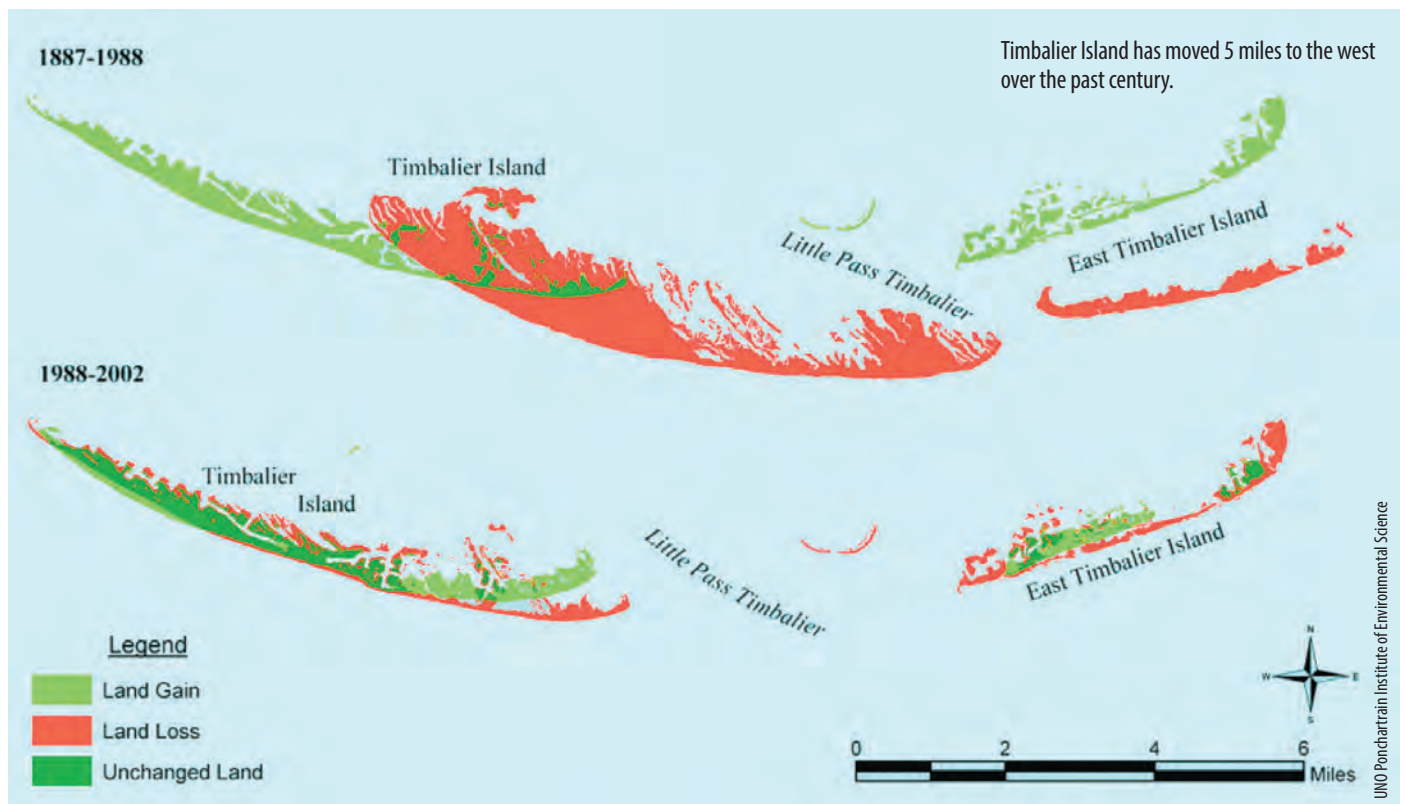
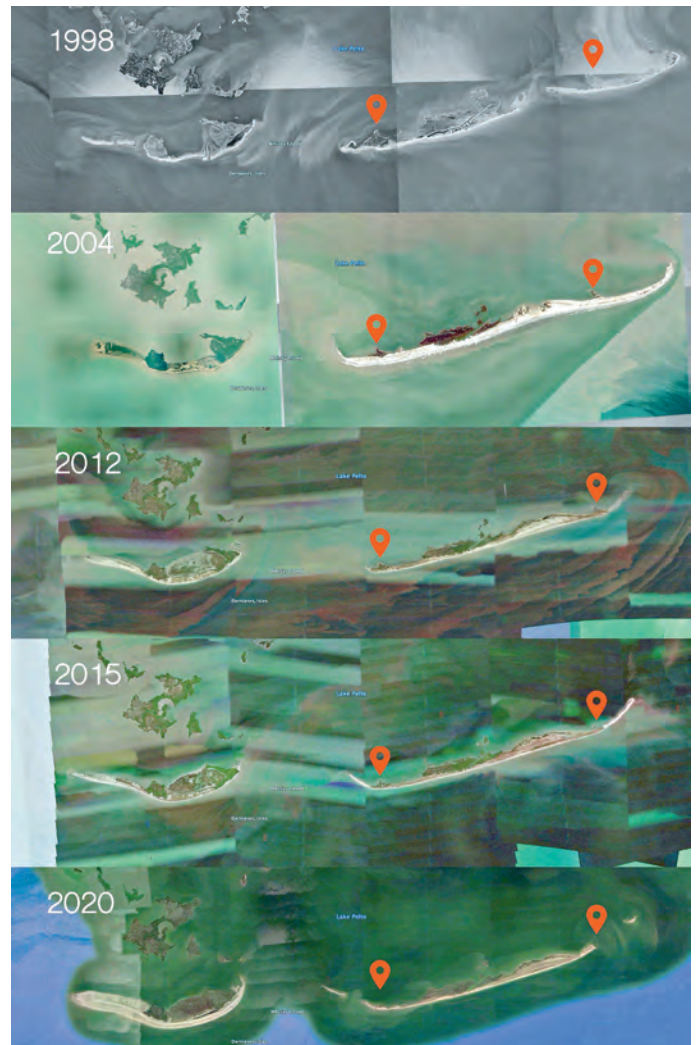
These photos show the restoration of Whiskey and Trinity islands and the land loss after restoration

**I**n layman's terms, island restoration, according to the CPRA Master Plan, is pumping sand onto the shoreface and dune, adding lighter sediment to the backside for the development of marsh and planting vegetation on the dune areas. But just as the naturally formed islands are broken up by waves and moved by currents, so too will the restored islands.

The general scarcity of sand-sized sediment on the shelf means that few heavy particles will naturally find their way to the island to replenish it, so it's up to humans to transport sand from seabed deposits and replenish the island's sand. It seems that the long-term existence of many of the barrier islands will be dependent on frequent restoration projects; the 1999 Trinity Island project had a projected lifetime of 20 years.

The Mississippi River has emptied into seven delta complexes over the past 6,000 years, and each delta left barrier islands behind. Many are now underwater shoals of sand deposits. Our best-known island, Grand Isle, is from the same time period as the Timbalier Islands and the Dernieres Islands, of which Whiskey Island and Trinity Island remain. These islands were formed from the Lafourche Delta between 1,000 and 3,000 years ago. Grand Isle attributes its status as the only inhabited and vacation island in Louisiana to its greater geologic stability.

My favorite barrier islands, the Chandeleurs, are older than Grand Isle and its contemporaries by as much as 1,000 years. The Chandeleurs were formed during the St. Bernard delta period 2,800 to 4,000 years ago. While most of the major islands west of the Mississippi River have received restoration treatment, the elderly and ecologically rich Chandeleurs have not been given any restoration. The main island was breaking up



Pumping sand onto the face of the main island in the Chandeleur chain after the BP spill has solidified the island's makeup.

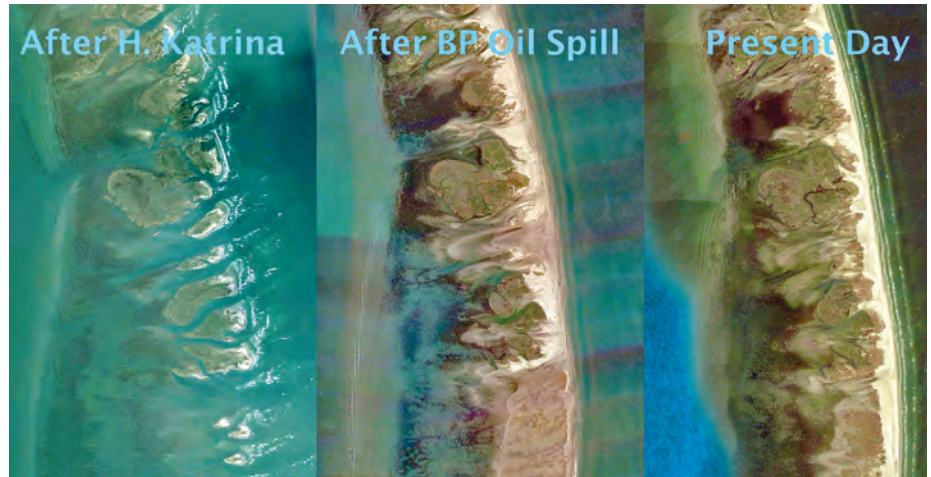
badly until the 2010 BP oil spill, when crews quickly pumped sand from a nearby underwater deposit onto the shore face in an emergency effort to stop the oil from completely covering the island. Consequently, the main Chandeleur Island is looking solid; vegetation is flourishing, and the skies are full of birds. I can only imagine how beautiful the islands would become with an engineered restoration project.

## WHY SAVE BARRIER ISLANDS?

So why should we try to save these islands, which are in constant decline? The sand that we pump onto the islands only lasts a millisecond by geological time, and we will need to repeat this task over and over.

We are forced to do this because we occupy the soft and vulnerable land deposited in 6,000 years of abandoned river deltas. The heavy sand structures of the barrier islands break the wave energy from the Gulf and reduce the erosion of the land on which we built.

In the previous 5,900 years, the creatures of the Mississippi River deltas lived fluid lives adapted to a coastline in motion, but we are proficient at rigid structures, and so we did something unprecedented in history: confined the nation's largest river. That let us build more rigid structures in the delta, which we now have to protect against the mightier forces of the Gulf, forever, no matter the cost. We must restore the islands, as many times as necessary, or create something functionally equivalent.





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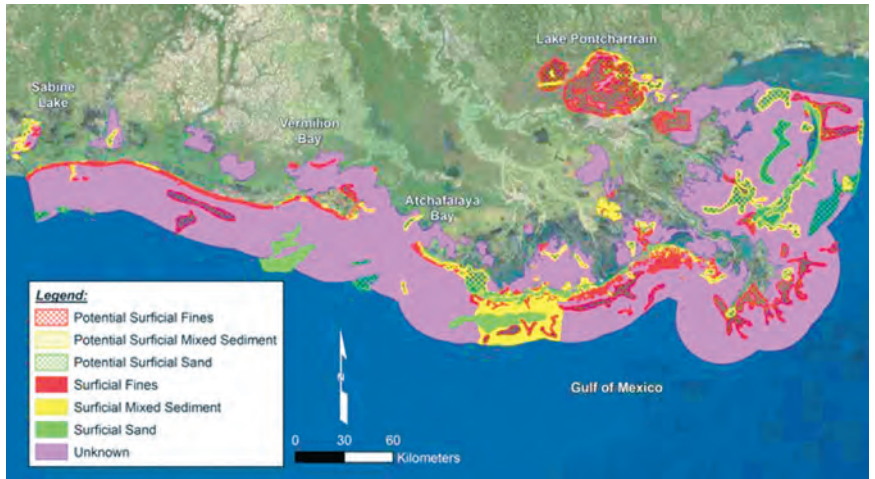
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This map emphasizes the abundance of usable sediment near the barrier islands.

Even though the sand islands are not rigid in a structural sense and will always need restoration work, I would rather have them than rock jetties and seawalls. A restored barrier island is far more ecologically rich and better for our fisheries than seawalls and jetties. Plus, over time, the rigid structures will also break up, sink and fall over because of the soft sediment. If you have ever hit submerged rocks, pipes, pilings or any of the other trash in our estuary, you will agree with me that, in comparison, hitting a sand bar is better.

Fortunately, pumping sand is cheaper than you might think. In the 2017 CPRA Coastal Master Plan, \$1.5 billion is allocated for barrier island restoration. That may seem like a lot of money, but barrier island restoration is just 3% of the total budget. Marsh creation through sediment dredging and placement is \$17.8 billion, or 36% of the budget. Individual island restoration projects vary in cost, such as the \$10.8 million spent on the first Trinity Island restoration in 1999, to \$103 million spent on the recent 2018 Whiskey Island restoration project.

Island restoration is dependent on access to particular types of sediment, including sand and mixed sediment. The Louisiana Sand Resource Database (LASARD) records locations of usable sediment. Also, about 50% of the dredged sedi-



Syed M. Khalil

ment from the lower Mississippi River can be used for island restoration, and the CPRA and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers are considering how this continuing sediment resource can be used most effectively.

The commitment by Louisiana and the CPRA to continue barrier island restoration projects is excellent news for the protection of the coast and for inshore anglers. Hopefully, future generations will also have the chance to be inspired by the spectacular barrier islands of Louisiana. ■



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

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**S**torms to the north broke loose about 1:45 p.m. in the small-boat harbor in Pass Christian, 15 minutes before Capt. Ronnie Daniels had scheduled the beginning of a trip across to the Biloxi Marsh.

The next hour or so was spent with Daniels and the father-and-son fishing team of Dana and David Sanders, visiting with a fourth angler while the rains passed.

When he finally left port, Daniels pointed his bay boat's bow south and ran the 11½ miles to the first spit of land.

When he pulled off plane, he was just off Isle au Pitre, the northeastern tip of the Biloxi Marsh, and the surface of the beautifully clear water was alive with rain minnows flipping and fish blowing.

While Daniels and Dana Sanders fiddled around getting gear ready, David Sanders was on the bow, sending a Matrix Shad into the fray. On that first cast, he set the hook and dragged the first trout of the trip into the boat.

As he unhooked the schoolie and tossed it overboard, the older and slower anglers got into gear and put lures in the water.

**REACHING THE NORTHEASTERN STRETCHES OF THE BILOXI MARSH REQUIRES LONG HAULS FROM LOUISIANA PORTS, BUT IT'S LESS THAN 12 MILES FROM PASS CHRISTIAN. HERE'S HOW TO CATCH LIMITS WITHOUT BURNING A LOT OF FUEL.**

**SUMMER TIPS FOR**

# **BILOXI MARSH**

Dan Kibler

# CLOUDS OF BAIT WERE CREATING NERVOUS RIPPLES AS PREDATOR FISH SWEEPED THROUGH THEIR SCHOOLS.

That's why Daniels, owner of Fisher-Man Guide Service, loves to fish the area: the waters are teeming with life.

The tide wasn't much, but you wouldn't know it by the conditions he found: a text-book tide line had formed and was flowing around the eastern tip of Isle au Pitre, with storm minnows being swept along the clear side of the current break.

Daniels (228-323-1115) said that sets up the perfect situation for anglers.

"(Trout) are going to be along this tide line, on one side or the other," he said. "They can sit in that muddy water and run out into the clear water to ambush bait. At some point, they will be feeding here."

David Sanders seemed intent on proving that trout were there and that he was the best angler on the boat.

He did so by reeling in nice trout while Daniels and the fourth angler played with ladyfish, while Dana Sanders hung around on the back of the boat making some casts, pretty much enjoying the scene of his son showing off.

To his credit, David Sanders didn't rub it in. Too much.

But with all of that, by the time they were chased back across the Mississippi Sound by another storm, thoughts about how getting back to this area to fish were already abounding.

Daniels said he sees a Louisiana boat here and there, but for the most part, this section of the Biloxi Marsh is only fished by Mississippi anglers. Isle au Pitre acts as a magnet, attracting a lot of attention.

"It's the jumping-off point," Daniels said. "So not only do you get a lot of pressure, you get a lot of beginners."

That can lead to frustration, as boats crowd around the relatively small island. The virtue of patience can truly be tested, especially on the weekends.

So when there are a number of boats surrounding the island — or if he's working the area and crowds build — Daniels simply moves farther into the Biloxi Marsh to find waters free of the pressure and frustrations.

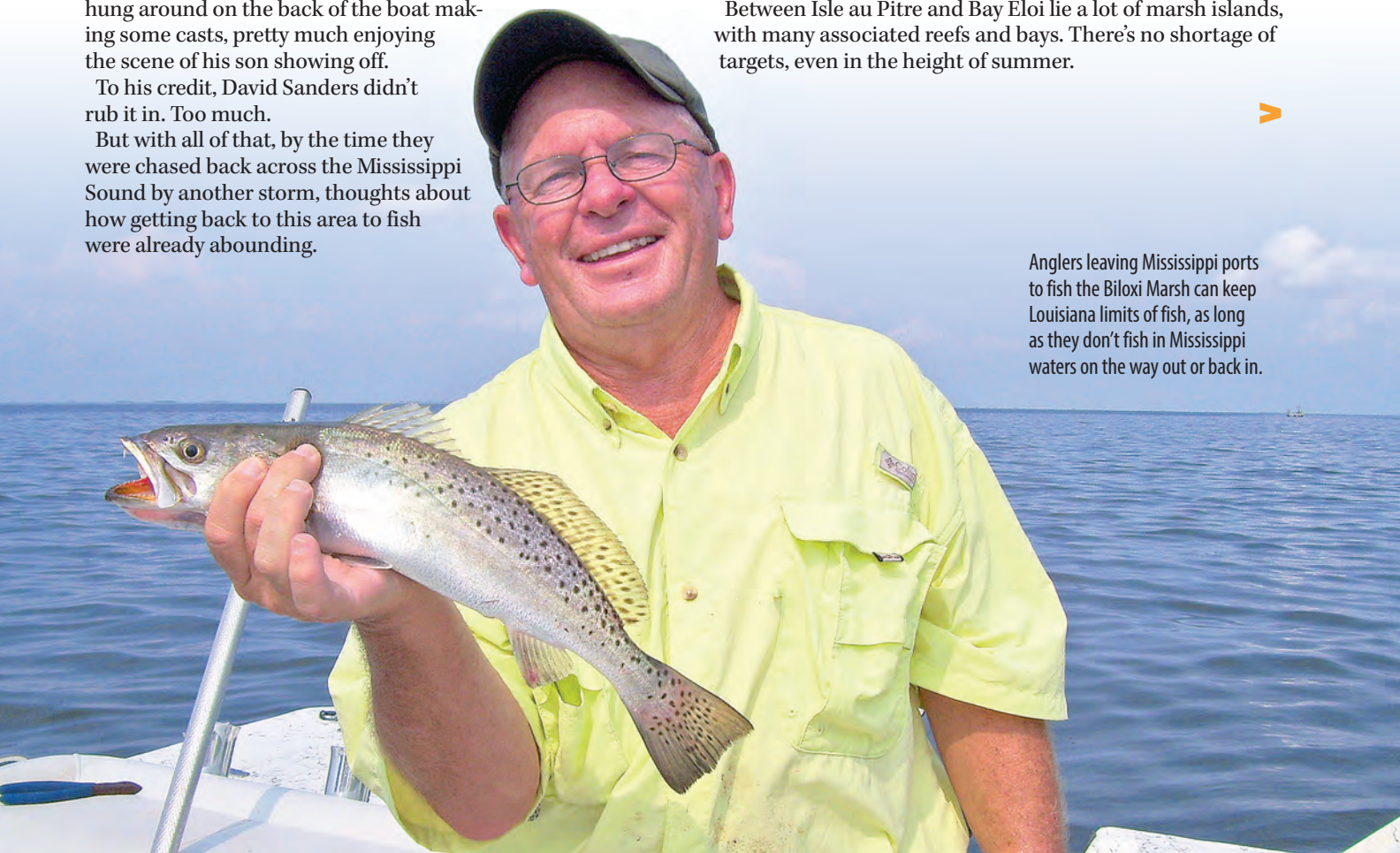
Normally, Daniels sticks to areas from Door Point north, but runs to other areas is not unreasonable.

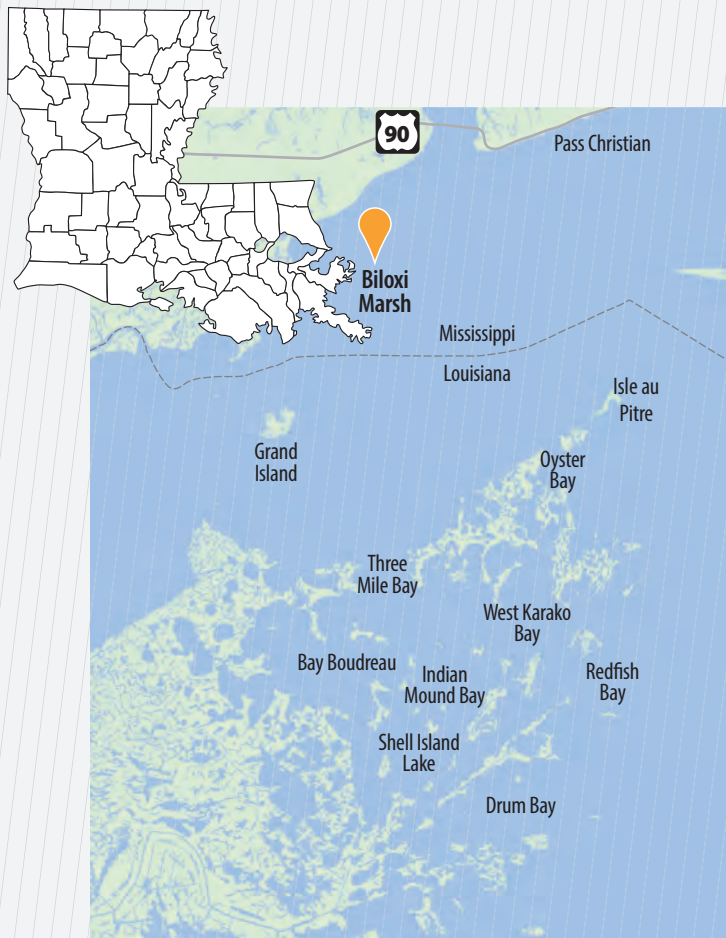
"It's 35 miles to Bay Eloi," Daniels said.

Between Isle au Pitre and Bay Eloi lie a lot of marsh islands, with many associated reefs and bays. There's no shortage of targets, even in the height of summer.



Anglers leaving Mississippi ports to fish the Biloxi Marsh can keep Louisiana limits of fish, as long as they don't fish in Mississippi waters on the way out or back in.





## LOUISIANA FISHING LIMITS OK WHEN LAUNCHING FROM MISSISSIPPI

The entire Biloxi Marsh is located in Louisiana, but what if you decide to launch in Mississippi? Do you have to abide by the 15-fish daily creel because you'll cross Mississippi waters on the way in?

Nope. Louisiana regulations prevail, according to Mississippi's fishing regulations.

"Recreational fishermen not fishing in Mississippi waters may transport and land fish that meet the minimum size and creel limits of the waters in which they were legally caught," the regulations read.

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Live shrimp become extremely productive baits in the Biloxi Marsh when bigger baits turn off speckled trout during summer.

**W**hen he's working Isle au Pitre and islands on the eastern edge of the marsh, Daniels said it's important to use the tidal flow to determine where to set up.

"On an incoming tide, we'll fish the north side (of an island), because the fish are waiting for shrimp to be swept around the islands," he said. "On an outgoing tide, there will be a big, looping tide line around the points, and the fish will be on that side of the island. They're just sitting there waiting on all those shrimp to come across that point."

As summer really takes hold, catching trout in the shallow flats off these islands becomes an early morning and late-afternoon game.

"When that water temperature gets up, they're conserving their energy and hunker down," Daniels said. "You get an early morning bite and a late-evening bite, but during the middle of the day, they're not feeding. They're there; they just aren't feeding."

After picking off fish early along the islands, Daniels will head to deeper water if he needs to round out limits. He focuses his efforts on two kinds of structures: oyster reefs and shallow-water rigs.

There are three keys that have to be considered when looking for just the right place to begin"

- Clean water;
- Tidal movement;
- Bait.

"Any time you can find clear water pushed up against muddy water that's a good ambush point," Daniels said. "We know there are shrimp and rain minnows here because we see them flipping, and we have tidal movement. There's going to be some good fish feeding here at some point today."

He normally puts up his artificials when he's searching mid-day bites.

"We typically go to live bait in the middle of the day in that deeper water — and by deeper, I'm talking about 8, 10, 12 feet," Daniels said.

While croakers are part of his arsenal earlier in the summer, he said shrimp become more important when the broiler of



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summer heat really kicks in. "We're not using croakers as much any more," Daniels said. "They get too big, and the trout just seem of turn off of them."

While Carolina rigs are the norm for croakers, when he turns to shrimp Daniels other means of delivery.

"If I'm throwing shrimp, a lot of times it's drop-shotting," he said. ■

**PICKING APART A FLAT** ➤

# HOW TO LEARN NEW FISHING AREAS

An intimate knowledge of a specific area can produce quick limits of fish, Capt. Ronnie Daniels said. He simply knows where he should go given the specific conditions on a given day.

Building such a library of information took time, and that's something Daniels said many anglers seem unwilling to invest. "A lot of guys try to learn too much too fast," he said.

That leads to a lot of running around — especially in places like the Biloxi Marsh, where there are many options — with the result that little information is gleaned about any particular spot.

"They spend so much time running around trying to learn everything that they never learn there's a shell reef that comes off that point and the tide sweeps around it on an outgoing tide," Daniels said.

What anglers should do instead is to focus, the captain said.

"Pick out a small area, say two square miles, and learn it," Daniels said. "Learn the drop-offs. Learn the reefs. Learn the tides."

That way, you'll know where fish concentrate and how to pick them off when you arrive.

Once you know that smaller area very well, then you can widen your search and add to your library of knowledge, Daniels said. ■

You can rely on a known, productive fishing area, but expanding your horizons may be a real plus for your fishing. This nice bull red was caught by Daniel Zinc while fishing in the Biloxi Marsh.



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# PICKING APART A FLAT

Capt. Ronnie Daniels said effectively working a flat extending off a spit of marsh is about knowing how trout relate to the underwater structure.

"I find that a lot of times they'll be on the up current side," Daniels said. "They can just group up in the eddy and eat, and not have to work so hard."

Understanding how trout use a flat and its associated drop-offs is the key to quickly putting a box of fish together.



He said often these flats will have a ledge on one side and taper off on the other side, and it's that drop-off that sets up a the eddies that allow fish to conserve their energy.

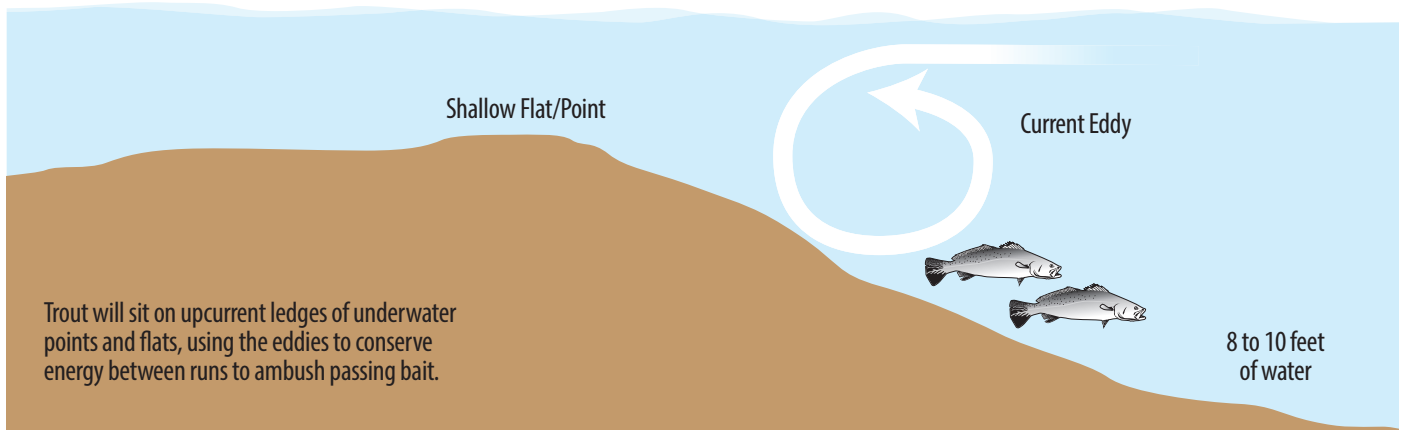
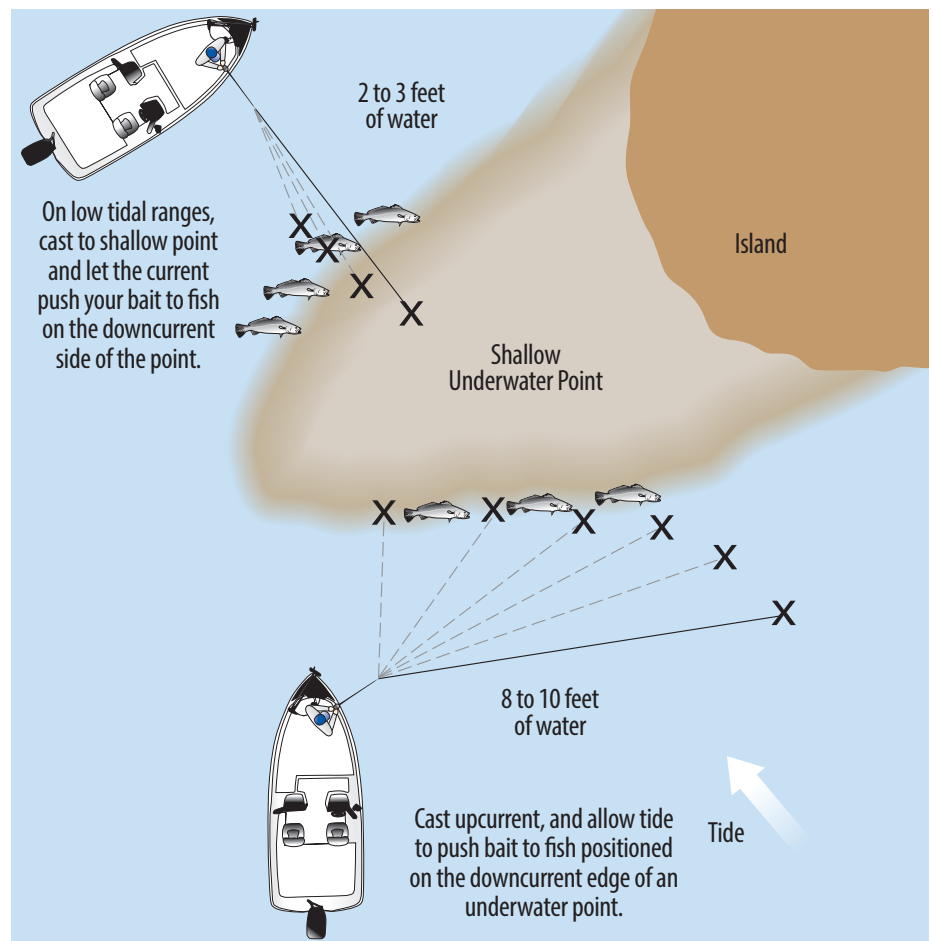
That's not to say some fish won't be on the down current side of a flat — but they will only be there when the current

is fairly slow because there is no eddy.

"If it's a high tidal range, they can't stay in that current," Daniels said. "But when it's a low tidal range, they can sit there and swim in that current and pick that bait off as it's swept over the flat."

In either situation, the guide uses the current to position his bait properly. That means he will cast up current and let the tide drag his lure to the fish. ■

## MARSH MAN MASSON >



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## MARSH MAN MASSON

Todd Masson

Big speckled trout have made a pretty good appearance in the waters around Venice the past three years. Will it continue and/or get better?

# ARE TROPHY TROUT MAKING BIG RETURN TO VENICE WATERS?

**C**apt. Brandon Carter watched several 8-pound speckled trout cross his gunwales this spring, supported by a rubber-coated landing net. Does that mean Venice is reclaiming its mantle as one of the premier trophy trout destinations along the Gulf Coast?

Time will tell, but Carter thinks it might. “Up until 7 or 8 years ago, this was normal,” he said. “In the last 7 or 8 years, we’ve had a lot of high rivers, and the numbers of bigger fish have been more scarce.”

Carter, who has been guiding at the extreme southern tip of Plaquemines Parish for more than two decades, began seeing evidence things were picking up 3 years ago.

“Our fishing was kind of tapering down until 2017, and then it kind of exploded,” he said. “That was the best year in at least the previous 10. We had guides who were targeting redfish in redfish spots, and they’d leave a couple hours later with their limits of speckled trout. On the radio everyday, we’d talk about how it

was like the old days.

“Then, in ’18 and ’19 we had even more days like that. The last couple of years, we’ve seen glimpses of the old days. I had a few days last year that would rival any bite I’ve ever seen in Venice in my entire life. I had one day in particular where we were catching no 5-pounders, but no 2-pounders. Every fish was between 3 and 4 pounds.

“It was like they were jumping out of the water to catch the bait, and when you reeled a fish in, there would 10 or 12 fish swimming in with that fish trying to get the bait from it.”

## NUMBERS ARE BACK

Not every day this year has been *THAT* productive, but Carter said the fishing has been good even on days when it really shouldn’t have been.

“I don’t think it’s been as consistent this year as it was 20 years ago, but we’ve caught a lot of fish this year despite the wind being absolutely horrific,” he said. “The conditions have been terrible, but

we’re still catching fish. That tells me the numbers are pretty strong.”

The 8-pounders Carter and his clients have caught this year haven’t come on any special baits designed specifically for trophy trout. Every single one has been caught on either a live shrimp or midnight mullet-colored Matrix Shad, he said.

But they have come from areas that historically produce trophy trout.

“Certain spots are going to hold bigger fish in general,” Carter said. “All the big fish I’ve caught this year have come from spots where I expected them to be. We haven’t just lucked up and caught any in a place where I thought, ‘Man, what is a big fish doing here?’ They’ve all been in places that they should have been.”



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

Trophy-sized speckled trout have been more plentiful around Venice this year, according to veteran guide Capt. Brandon Carter.

## A STRONG JULY?

Will that strong action for big fish continue into this month? Quite possibly. Carter said most anglers don't think of July as a prime trophy trout month, but he's seen STAR winners hit the scales down in Venice in July. The fishing, in general, benefits from a falling Mississippi River.

That doesn't mean the fish move inside yet, however. Quite the opposite, Carter said.

In May and June, he was still catching trout in interior bays, but that'll change in July.

"They'll still hold small trout, but they won't hold any quality fish," he said. "(In July) I'm fishing the extreme outer edges of the delta, I'm fishing the rigs, and I'm fishing the islands."

Which of those features he hits on any given day depends on recent action, he said.

"Usually we're on a 3- to 4-day pattern," Carter said. "For three or four days, everyone will be fishing the islands, the fish are stacked up like cordwood, and then things thin out a little bit. Somebody will go poking around at the rigs and find them, and for the next three, four, five days they're at the rigs, and then you have to find them again."

Located at the end of Highway 23, the waters around Venice are accessible from two full-service marinas: Venice Marina and Cypress Cove Marina. ■



**SPECKLED TRUTH >**

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## SPECKLED TRUTH

Chris Bush

Different jighead styles work better with different styles of soft-plastic baits in different fishing situations.



Christopher Bush

# JIGHEAD 101: HOW TO PICK THE BEST

SITUATIONS DICTATE WHICH STYLE OF LEADHEAD, SOFT-PLASTIC BAITS MATCH UP BEST

**O**ne of the most-versatile and effective ways to catch speckled trout is with a soft plastic and jighead pairing.

Seamlessly transcending the range of experience levels, they allow anglers to target fish both shallow and deep.

With all kinds of different jigheads saturating the market, it's worth spending some discussing their capabilities. Keep in mind, there are no absolutes in fishing. Exploring different brands and styles is what makes targeting big trout so much fun.

## ROUND, ASPIRIN

Admittedly, these are probably the most-popular styles, and for good reason. Most lure manufacturers produce a 3½-inch soft-plastic swimbait that pairs perfectly with these styles of jigheads.

I mostly use either of these when fishing deeper water — 5 feet or more — or areas with heavier tide or wind, and I

always pair them with some “boot” tail style softplastic. Since all of the weight is on the front of the soft plastic, it allows the bait to go up and down in the water column. Also, the weight of the jighead displaces a fair amount of water, allowing the boot tail to kick while ascending/descending.

**Jigheads preferred:** Deathgrip, Golden Eye, H&H, 10 Mile

**Soft plastics preferred:** Matrix Shad, Egret Wedgetails, DOA Cal Shad, MirrOlure Marsh Minnow Jr.

## MUSHROOM STYLE

The NED Rig is a complete fish-catching deal, and the unique, stand-up feature these jigheads gives small, finesse baits drives fish of all sizes crazy. Designed to rest nose-down on the bottom, your soft plastic stands straight up. This technique is exceptionally effective in clear sky, clear water, calm situations when fish are particularly finicky.

**Jigheads preferred:** Owner Blockhead (⅜-ounce) and ZMan NedLockZ (½-ounce). Go up and down in weight as needed based on depth, tide and wind.

**Soft plastics preferred:** ZMan Finesse TRD, ZMan Trick ShotZ, ZMan HogZ and Cajun Lures T-NED

## ARROW STYLE

Designed as a modified, stand-up jighead, arrow-style heads are typically more slender than most. As a result, these compliment jerk shad-style baits perfectly since they enable a more erratic action. I typically like to throw an ⅜-ounce or lighter head over shallow grass, and they work extremely well in cloudy,



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

clear water situations in 4 feet of water or less. I normally prefer the 1/0 or 2/0 size hook, and since these are paired with 5-inch or larger plastics, castability normally isn't an issue.

By going as light as possible with your jighead, you're allowing the weight of the soft plastic to keep pace with the descent of the jighead. In other words, your offering will descend in a more horizontal fashion instead of straight up and down.

**Jigheads preferred:** Texas Custom Lures' Jay Watkins Series Jigheads, Saltwater Assassin Pro Elite, Mirrolure Push On & Pro Series, Norton Lures GFX

**Soft plastics preferred:** Down South Lures (Southern Shad and Super Model), MirrOlure Provoker, KWiggler BTS, Gambler 6-inch FlapN Shad, Norton Sand Eel, Big Bite Baits Jerk Minnow, Mann's 6-inch Hard Nose Jerkshad

## DOMESTYLE

Dome-style jigheads are incredibly versatile and work in any situation, and they pair well with most soft-plastic brands and sizes. However, I specifically

use them on smaller, darter-style baits. The shape of the head, combined with the shape of the soft plastic allows your offering to descend through the water column very quickly. This means you can reduce the weight of your offering as much as possible given the wind and tide and allow the slower descent to the bottom. Also, the contour of the jighead paired with the bait allows it to move in an erratic action, typically drawing strikes from bigger fish.

**Jighead preferred:** Yellowmouth Baits (1/8- or 1/16-ounce)

**Soft plastics preferred:** Capt Lanes Ghostminnow, Pure Flats Lil' Slick, MirrOlure Lil' John, Cajun Lures T-John, Norton Lures Sand Eel Jr, Deadly Dudley Jr.

As you can see, there are many jigheads on the market, and they range in size, style and shape. My goal for you to start thinking about the different things you can do by just changing your jighead. ■



Christopher Bush

The author unhooks a big speckled trout caught on a jighead and soft-plastic bait.

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**Fishing at night opens up a world of possibilities for fishermen targeting speckled trout, if you know how to take advantage of after-dark conditions.**

Photo courtesy Chas Champagne

# EXPAND YOUR NIGHT-FISHING OPTIONS

By Capt. Steve Himel

**N**ight-fishing options are greatly expanded for those who have boats and are willing to deal with the dangers of navigating after dark.

Chas Champagne, the owner of Matrix Shad, grew up on the water in Eden Isles. As a youngster, his parents would not allow him to venture outside of the canal system of Eden Isles in his small boat, but he fished day and night, and soon became an expert in the area.

"When I was young, the fishing was so good I could go out at night around the lights in the canals and easily catch 15 trout and five bass pretty much anytime I wanted," he said. "The fishing is still very good in the canal system, especially in fall when the white shrimp come in."

But there are a lot of great options during the dog days of the year.

"During the summer, the best night-fishing is around all the lighted piers on Carr Drive, Old Rat's Nest Road (now Lakeview Drive), Treasure Isle, Rigolets Estates and Highway 90," Champagne said. "If there are any trout in the area, you will definitely find them under the lights at night."

Champagne said one of the major advantages of using a boat to fish at night is that you can select the best area to fish based on wind direction, tides and water clarity. He said you can move around in that general area, from pier to pier, until you locate a good bite. By the end of the night, you will have a nice box of fish.

Champagne mentioned that anglers fishing lighted piers should be courteous

to pier owners and choose other piers when the owners are fishing. Waters are open to anyone to fish, but the lights and piers are private property, so be respectful.

## LET'S GET SMALL

Champagne said there is a simple rule about baits, tackle and techniques for fishing at night.

"For night-fishing under lights, you really want to downsize your baits," he said.

"Most of the time the trout will be on top of the water, so you want to use a 1/8- or 1/16-ounce jighead and small, soft-plastic baits. I simply bite about an inch off the front of a Matrix Shad and thread it on the jighead."

Champagne also divulged one of his closely guarded secrets.

"If you see glass minnows under the lights and want a rig that imitates them almost exactly, use a split-tail Bass Assassin or a Zoom Fluke and attach it to a hitch-hiker rig, which is a trailer rig that has a cork screw that you screw into the head of the lure," he said. "You then attach it to a small kahle hook. This rig allows the lure to swim freely, and this presentation is deadly — it is real finesse fishing."

Champagne also said VuDu and DOA shrimp work well under lights when shrimp are in the area.

Champagne recommended light spinning outfits with 6- to 10-pound line to help cast the light baits farther.

He said the best presentation is normally a steady retrieve with a twitch or a stop-and-go retrieve. He mentioned that he has not found cork fishing to be very productive under lights.

Champagne also recommended changing to a 1/4- or 3/8-ounce jighead to work the bottom if you are not seeing activity on the surface.

According to Champagne, the best conditions for night-fishing are calm waters and a falling tide.

"I am not sure why," he said, "but night-fishing under lights is always better when it is calm." ■

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# JULY'S SMORGASBORD

Menus in Leesville includes specks, whites, reds

**B**obby Gros at Bobby Lynn's Marina in Leesville said that if tropical storms don't interfere, July should be a speckled trout slam-dunk, with big white trout and redbfish thrown into the mix, making for a summer smorgasbord.

"I look for some outstanding action along the beaches around the full moon and the new moon in July," said Gros (985-396-2678). "All the beaches will be on fire, and the best action starts early in the morning. I fish between the first and second troughs between the sandbars off the beaches, because the trout will feed up close to the beach before the sun gets up and the heater turns on to blast cycle. I like to fish live shrimp or live croakers on a sliding-sinker rig, or you can fish under a cork early in the first and second trough because it's not too deep.

"Once the sun gets up, you have to back up to the second and third troughs off the beaches where the water is a little deeper and cooler, and for sure, you want to put down the cork rig and fish that sliding-sinker rig. And if you are fishing with live croakers, which are an excellent bait in July, remember not to set the hook at the first bump when the trout hit your bait. Those big trout will hit that croaker hard to stun it, but they won't immediately swallow it. So be patient, give it a few seconds after the stun bump, and he'll be back to inhale that stunned croaker. The key is don't



Capt. Bobby Gros said Leesville anglers will have plenty of action on the beaches for specks and white trout.

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Chris Mcwhorter was fishing out of Leeville when he hooked into this massive bull red when he hooked into this massive bull red on light tackle. He was fishing for speckled trout with shrimp under a popping cork.



set the hook until you feel the trout swimming away with it. Then you set it and reel that big trout in. It's a blast fishing the beaches in July and catching those big trout."

Gros said while great action is on the beaches around the full and new moons, the in-between action is in the back bays behind East Timbalier and West Timbalier, Lake Racourci, Hackberry, Barataria Bay, Bassa Bassa, Lake Barre — all the big bays.

"Fish the platforms, the islands and the oyster reefs for specks and some nice-sized white trout. The Fourchon rock jetties will hold big sheeps-head and big reds, and the old Fourchon barges will produce as well," he said. "I still prefer live shrimp under a cork, but those fish will also put a hurt on your soft plastic baits in July."

Gros likes the clear/chartreuse H&H cocohoes, pearl/chartreuse or anything shrimp-colored. He said High Water Lures' southern shrimp color has been productive, but no matter what plastic bait you toss, it should have a chartreuse tail. ■

— Rusty Tardo

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## HEAD SOUTH IN THE HEAT OF SUMMER

Sabine ship channel will hold plenty of fish

It is always a thrill to see the excitement and joy of new anglers catching fish, especially kids. That has been even more gratifying for me here lately, due to the fact that my wife and I are expecting our first child in a matter of weeks. I have been able to fish with my nephew, Fisher, more frequently lately, and he is living up to his name. For a 7-year-old, he is one heck of a little fisherman. His ability to cast and reel in fish is impressive.

I was fortunate recently to take Kelly Ford, his son Landon, and his father Lee, fishing. Landon, 6, was on a boat for the first time and was a pure natural. His interest and excitement about fishing is second to none. Kelly and I went to school together growing up, so it was great to get to catch up with him and his father.

We started the morning with a pretty long boat ride, but I wanted to put them on some good speckled trout I had found the previous evening. Water conditions were drastically different, but the fish were still there. We fished a strong incoming tide all day, and in combination with a howling south wind, the water

was more sandy and less green than the day before.

With the trout having transitioned into a more predictable and consistent summer pattern, we were targeting them on drop-offs in 6 to 8 feet of water in the Sabine ship channel. Banks with more structure, such as oyster shell and riprap, are the most productive. The structure, providing current breaks, gives predators such as trout, redfish and flounder easier opportunities to ambush their prey. In turn, successful anglers target these areas.

I find topwater lures such as a Heddon Super Spook in clown color or a white Rapala Skitter Walk to be the most-productive in the early morning hours and late in the evening. After the top-water bite subsides, I recommend switching to soft plastics that mimic shrimp or menhaden.

There is no telling how many trout and redfish fall for a Vudu shrimp rigged under a cork. Swimming a 4-inch Sea Shad

The author's nephew, Fisher Jaynes, had a fantastic evening catching his limit of nice speckled trout in the Sabine ship channel.



**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](mailto:justfishsabine.com)

Kelly Ford and his son, Landon, released this great catch of a redfish after cheesing for a quick picture.



in the opening night color on either a 1/8- or 1/4-ounce jighead is another favorite during summer. I prefer to fish the Sea Shad with a steady retrieve, at times making short, subtle pauses. Multiple factors determine the speed of the retrieve, including water depth, wind and current velocity and the aggressiveness of the fish we are targeting.

Kelly, Landon and Lee all got to battle their fair share of trout, with a couple of oversized, bonus reds. Landon's enthusiasm and curiosity was the icing on the cake.

Barring any major storms and torrential downpours this pattern should only get better and last well through the summer. It would be remiss of me if I did not encourage you to fish the jetties when the weather allows. Both the Cameron and Sabine jetties can be absolutely loaded with fish and give new and young anglers the opportunity to catch different species of fish.

If you get the chance to take a kid fishing make sure and capitalize on it. They are the future of the sport and the memories made will last a lifetime! ■

— Capt. Adam Jaynes

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# DELACROIX SPECKS

hold some promise for July after a lost 2019 season of trout fishing

**D**own in Delacroix, Capt. Ron Broadus, aka Captain Ahab, recently came back to the dock with limits of speckled trout, near limits of redfish, several nice flounder and some very happy customers. "It was a fantastic day on the water, the kind we'd like to see much more of," he said.

To be sure, the past year has been a tough one for Delacroix anglers, especially those who like to chase specks. The river got high and stayed high, sending a steady deluge of nasty water through the Mardi Gras Cut that kept the whole area inundated. The double opening of the Spillway didn't help matters any, either. Fresh water so diluted the salinity that the trout pretty much vanished. Thankfully, the redfish never skipped a beat, but freckled fish became so scarce some wondered if they'd ever return.

"And then, we get a banner day like this when the trout show up, and it seems like things are getting back to normal," Broadus said. "The only problem is, this action has been sporadic. Great action today can be



Capt. Ron Broadus said reds won't be affected by freshwater intrusion around Delacroix.



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followed by a tough day tomorrow. It makes predicting what to expect very difficult.”

But here’s what Broadus (504-914-6063) said he hopes will happen in July.

“I hope the river will fall enough that we’ll see some saltier water,” he said. “I hope the east winds will push some good Gulf water up into the big bays, and loads of shrimp along with it, because where the shrimp are, the trout are, too. If we can get that combination of a low river and some good east winds, then the trout will show up in good numbers in Black Bay around the islands and structures, and the big fringe bays will teem with shrimp and the fish that eat them. Oak River Bay, Bay Lafourche, Lake Campo and Bay Gardene will all be hotspots at the various reefs, structures and marsh islands that dot them.

“Typically, now is when we would head outside to Stone Island and all the surrounding islands and structures, over to Battledore Reef, Iron Banks, the Wreck and even on out to the rigs in Breton Sound and Breton Island. But this time last year, we were forced to focus on redfish, solely because of the sheer volume of freshwater inundating our prime trout habitat. This year should definitely be a better one for trout, and we’ll still have a great year for chasing reds.

“If reds are your target, stay inside and fish the close-by lagoons and lakes. Lake Lery, Spanish Lake, Lost Lake, Sun Lagoon, Grand Lake and all the inside waters have been productive. The lakes have a lot of grass, and the reds are on the edges of it and around points and in coves that aren’t all grassed up. Market shrimp under a cork is the go-to bait, but

Charles Williams with a nice trout caught in Delacroix.



spinnerbaits, spoons and soft plastics will entice them as well. For trout, live shrimp under a cork is the key, but soft plastics will provoke them to bite also.”

Broadus’s favorite plastic colors are lemonhead, chartreuse, and natural shrimp colors. ■

— Rusty Tardo

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Bradley Matte of Morgan City hefts a bull red he caught in the Morgan City area.



## FOUR LEAGUE BAY offers great summer sight-fishing for reds

**F**or fishermen who enjoy the thrill of the hookset and the zing of fishing line attached to a heavy, runaway redfish, there's a great place for them to satisfy the buzz.

No one knows that more than Bradley Matte, a 30-year-old Morgan City outdoorsman who has been doing that since he was a boy fishing with his father. And there's no time like July to hook redfish after redfish along the lower end of Four League Bay, including the Oyster Bayou area.

Matte is excited when he talks about the midsummer opportunity that awaits anglers southeast of the mouth of the Atchafalaya River. He puts redfish in the boat searching with his favorite spinnerbait or a soft-plastic bait under a popping cork.

Targeting redfish along leeward shoreline of the immense bay is the best bet, he said, noting that if the wind's blowing out of the east, he gets on the east side, generally from Big Carencro Bayou to Blue Hammock Bayou, and if the wind's out of the west, he fishes the west side in the around Mosquito Bayou.

"At that time, when the (Atchafalaya) river starts falling, I find fish ganging up on the banks of the bay from about enough water to just cover their back to 3 feet, depending on the day and tides and water level," he said, adding he favors the skinny water and targets those reds with a spinnerbait.

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Bradley Matte catches redfish like this around Four League Bay, which is southeast of the mouth of the Atchafalaya River.



"I'm a shallow-water fisherman," he said. "I like to sight-fish for them. I call it pushing wakes, sometimes going down the banks, sometimes around cuts and points, any little difference along the way. Sometimes when I think I'm in an area where there are multiple fish, I Power Pole or anchor. I'll fish a little slower with a popping cork."

Matte, who competes on the Elite Redfish Series and the IFA Redfish Tour as well as local tournaments, has a tower on the bow of his boat so he can sight-fish. His go-to lure is a spinnerbait he rigs with an H&H blade and a 1/8- or 1/4-ounce Deathgrip jighead. He adds a 3- or 4-inch Slayer paddletail as a trailer, most of the time with contrasting colors: dark on top and light on the belly. His favorite is Houdini.

"I fish with a spinnerbait mostly," he said, who also uses a shrimp-colored Gulp about 18 inches or less under the popping cork when he finds an area that might have plenty of reds.

"I really prefer fluorocarbon for the spinnerbait for a couple of reasons," he said, noting that fluorocarbon sinks, and he wants to keep the spinnerbait "on the bottom where the redfish's eyes are."

He fishes with a fast-action, medium-heavy 7-foot-3 Dobyns rod with a Lew's baitcasting reel.

Matte said an outgoing tide definitely is the best, but, in the same breath, said, "Fishing can be really good on an incoming tide.

"On an outgoing tide, I spend a lot of time on ditches and drains that flow into the bay," he said. "On an incoming tide, they tend to move around a little more. I troll a little faster and cover more water. It still can be good fishing."

Many of the redfish he catches in the area average 24 inches, sometimes with a fair share of rat reds. He can see bigger redfish, including bull reds, in the shallows, which makes it so much more enjoyable to set the hook and listen to the line zing. ■

— Don Shoopman



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LOUISIANA ANGLERS ON  
PLENTY OF FISH.**

■ By Don Shoopman

## FOR THREE MEMBERS OF THE POE FAMILY, all highly regarded charter captains, it's been business as usual the past several months as they scout around to find speckled trout and redfish, help clients catch those and other fish and enhance their reputation built since the mid-1980s.

Jeff Poe, his wife, Mary, and their son, Nick, are enjoying every minute, as always. Their passion for saltwater fishing remains unbridled, and it's good to great right now.

But on May 11, the Poes — who for 35 years owned and operated Big Lake Guide Service from their home in Sweet Lake near Calcasieu Lake — had to go to town to get their respective driver's licenses as residents of Alabama.

Say what? Alabama?

The Poes — including Nick, his wife, Kimmie, and their son, Cooper, moved from southwestern Louisiana to Dauphine Island, Ala., a month after the calendar turned over to 2020. Nick Poe opened Reel Gypsy Fishing, and his parents are helping as fishing guides, Jeff Poe said.



Jeff Poe, 61, sold Big Lake Guide Service to Grosse Savanne Lodge in Lake Charles.

An Alabama native, he said the couple vacationed last summer at Dauphin Island. They “pretty much” made the decision to move, his wife said.

“We love this place,” Mary Poe said.

How poignant are the consequences of leaving a demanding, successful business behind?

“Yesterday was probably the first Mother’s Day spent with her in 35 years; I was always fishing,” Jeff Poe said.

Mary Poe was part of Big Lake Guide Service out of Sweet Lake for 35 years before moving to Alabama in January. RIGHT: Jeff Poe totes a big stringer of specks in an old flier for his well-known guide business.



Let that sink in. Plus the fact that Mary Poe isn't cooking multiple-course meals almost daily like she did for guests at their old lodge along the shoreline of Big Lake.

"There are restaurants here," she said, happily, ready for them to reopen after coronavirus pandemic restrictions. "I spent half my life cooking down there, and cleaning," she said.

The Poes married in 1984, four years after Jeff moved to Louisiana to work one season as a duck hunting guide — but wound up relocating. The Poes opened Big Lake Guide Service in 1985.

Someone recently told the Poes how much they meant to the Sportsman's Paradise.

"Louisiana meant a lot to us, too," Jeff Poe said. "I mean, we're going to miss it, without a doubt. We're happy to be here but sad to leave at the same time. It's a bittersweet thing. You hate uprooting yourself and your family.

"We're sure some old customers will come over here and fish with us. We've made friends, not just clients, people in the neighborhood."

*Louisiana Sportsman* was integral to their success, they said.

"It was easy to work with somebody you like, put it that way," Jeff Poe said. "(They) were always very helpful.

"It was a great place for us to advertise Big Lake because the *Louisiana Sportsman*, everybody reads the *Louisiana Sportsman* magazine," Mary Poe said. "It's the No. 1 magazine out there. It helped us greatly through our 35-year journey."

Because of their fishing expertise, the Poes were expert sources for many stories over the past 3½ decades. They helped anglers catch fish even if those anglers didn't get in a boat with them.

That was important to Jeff Poe, who said, "Well, we always tried to make it accurate with technique and boat handling. The magazine over the years, it's been your source for outdoors news."

Fittingly, Jeff and Mary Poe were on the magazine's cover four times. Naturally, they had hands full of speckled trout.

Mary Poe is a Lake Charles native who fished Calcasieu Lake from the day she could hold a fishing pole to the day she moved this past January. Nevertheless, she was all in for the big move.



Jeff Poe (right) and his son, Nick, admire a flounder that Jeff caught.

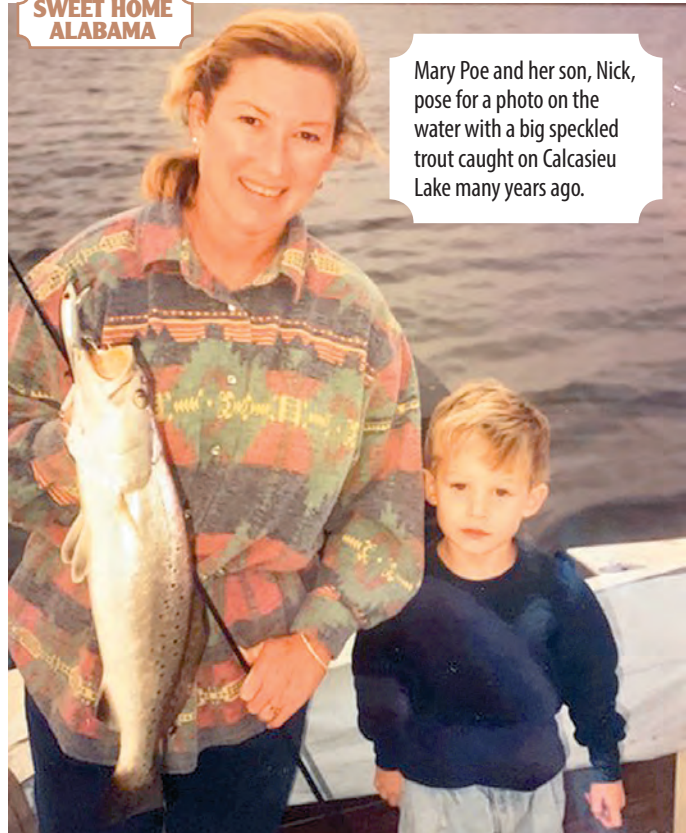
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## SWEET HOME ALABAMA



Mary Poe and her son, Nick, pose for a photo on the water with a big speckled trout caught on Calcasieu Lake many years ago.

“I’m always up for a challenge. Sometimes you’ve just got to move on. Jeff agrees,” she said. “Well, I mean, we were ready for a change. I’m sort of ready to semi-retire.”

There’s a little more to it, also involving change, behind their decision. Jeff Poe was feeling uneasy about a few issues in southwest Louisiana.

“With all the changes coming to Lake Charles. I’m not sure where all that’s going,” he said, referring to industrialization along the Calcasieu Ship Channel. “I felt there’s a few things going on in Lake Charles and Cameron, all the LNGs (liquefied natural gas) coming, and I was concerned about it.

“I felt this area has a lot more emphasis on tourism, more emphasis on the environment, and I’m not an environmentalist. They still have some development, but we still will be able to enjoy our lifestyle.”

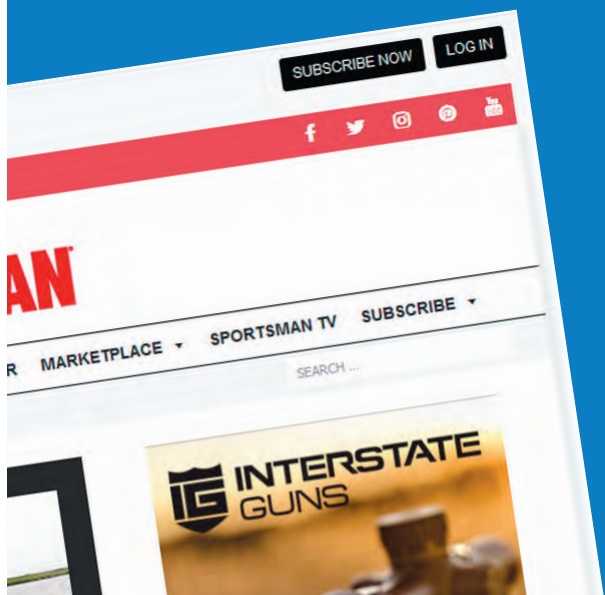
That explains the background music for an almost 10-minute video put together by Nick Poe for their Facebook page. Blues guitarist and Baton Rouge native Tab Benoit’s “A Whole Lotta Soul” lyrics include the lines:

*“What’s the matter with the place we live in?  
Did Mother Nature get it wrong?  
A rusted delta in the name of changing  
And dig it ‘til it’s dead and gone  
Oh, what you gonna tell the children?  
What you gonna tell the trees?  
What you gonna tell the spirit?  
When the heart of the bayou bleed?”*

The video can be seen at [www.facebook.com/biglakegs/videos/233309694337160](http://www.facebook.com/biglakegs/videos/233309694337160). ■



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.



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**MOST BASS FISHERMEN HEAD TOWARD DEEP WATER WHEN SUMMER GETS A HOLD ON LAKES AND RIVERS, BUT PLENTY OF BASS HEAD BACK TO THE SHALLOWS, AND WITH GOOD REASON. HERE'S HOW NOT TO OVERLOOK THE HOT-WEATHER BANK RUNNERS.**

■ By Kinny Haddox

**WRONG  
WAY**

# BASS

**B**ass anglers spend countless hours trying to learn about bass, pattern what the fish are doing and where they will go. They make their game plans based on basics and then try and work on the details.

One basic idea is that fish live in deep water in the winter, go shallower in the spring, then head back for deeper water as the summer waters warm up.

But bass don't always do what they're supposed to. As summer arrives and the water warms, a large number of bass go in the wrong direction. They head for cover, for cool spots and for places in shallow water with high levels of dissolved oxygen — and that goes against the teachings of Bass 101.

In fact, as more and more fishermen become expert using their advanced electronics and spend more and more time fishing deep, those bass may get more pressure than ones that stay shallow.

**IS SHALLOW THE  
NEW DEEP? >**

## IS SHALLOW THE NEW DEEP?

“A lot of us have been talking about that recently,” said bass fisherman Curtis Simpson of West Monroe. “One reason people backed off the shallow fish is because of all the pressure. But now, pressure on deep spots with all these fancy electronics is higher than bank fish. Shallow may be the new deep when it comes to summer fishing.”

Bass like shallow water for a number of reasons. When grass, shade or wave action is present in shallow water, the level of dissolved oxygen is higher, Simpson said. And a lot of baitfish hang out there, too, especially bream. If there’s more food around grass beds, lily pads and the shade under boat docks, that’s where bass will be.

“Sometimes, I hear that bass become really lethargic in the summer,” he said. “That may be true in extreme cases of poor water quality, but in a good lake or river like we have here in Louisiana, bass actually eat more in the summer than any other time. Their metabolism is higher, they eat more and they digest it faster. Where you might have to hit them on the head with a bait some times of the year, bass are going to be more aggressive and opportunistic. If something comes by close, they are going to run it down and eat it.”

With that in mind, Simpson said it’s also a good time to fish

almost any kind of bait. They won’t hit everything every day, but if you fish a few different lures, they’re going to latch on to one of them. And when you find what they want, it’s on.

Simpson does have some favorites he thinks work best in summer.

## FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE BAIT

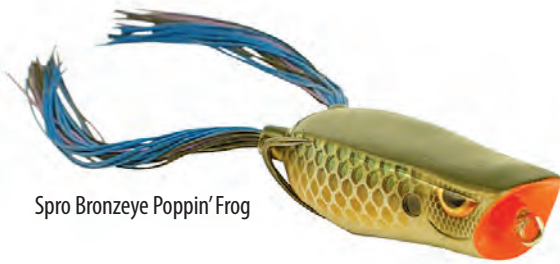
If grass is nearby, he’ll tie on a Spro Bronzeye Frog or similar lure and look for any baitfish or fish movement in the vegetation. Sometimes, fish will be back in there, and sometimes, they’ll be on the edges or pockets. He calls the frog a “four-wheel drive” bait because it will go anywhere. Brown and darker colors work best for him.

“Grass means bass,” he said. “When you see grass, you’ll find bass. I don’t care if it’s lily pads, pepper grass, coontail, hydrilla or reeds, the fish are going to find something they like there. Sometimes, they are up in the thick of it. I always use braid with a heavy rod when I’m getting way up in the grass.”

Next on his list of favorites is a swim jig. He loves the 6th Sense Divine swim jig in shad color; in dingy water, he’ll go to black and blue. It works through vegetation and is good around wood, boat docks and cypress trees. Simpson said cypress trees hold fish year-round, especially when conditions are right. In many Louisiana lakes, cypress trees are the main cover; those



Cypress trees are a very prominent form of shallow-water cover in bodies of water around Louisiana.



Spro Bronzeye Poppin' Frog



Bandit 100 Series Crankbait

6th Sense Divine Swim Jig



Zoom Z-Craw

Different shallow-water cover targets are better fished with different baits: frogs, crankbaits, jigs, craws.

on some sort of depth break are usually the best, where water is a bit deeper than the shallowest trees.

Behind Door No. 3, Simpson picks the Bandit 100 series crankbait. He goes with shad colors and likes to fish them anywhere he can get the bait without getting hung. That includes grass beds when the grass isn't growing all the way to the surface.

Choice No. 4 is a go-to bait for almost any condition: a Texas-rigged, green pumpkin Zoom Z-Craw in junior or regular size. When fish are a little tighter to cover, that works well. And Simpson said, "green pumpkin gets the bite anywhere."

Other baits that work well in Louisiana waters this time of year include black and blue buzzbaits, shad-colored or silver topwater lures, especially those with small hair trailers, hard-plastic buzz frogs, stick-baits and just about any type of plastic lure rigged weedless or Texas-style.

**CURRENT AND WAVES** >



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## CURRENT AND WAVES

Louisiana anglers are familiar with fishing current; any river or creek that has current will draw bass to break points, even in a foot or two of water. The summer finds our lakes full of boaters as well, and the waves they generate can push bass shallow to feed as the food chain along the shoreline is stirred up by wave action.

Caused by boats or wind, waves also cool the water and keep oxygen levels high. Early and late are best for the most fish in shallow water. It's also a great time to fish at night. The best spots at night are grass beds and boat docks with lights. The lights congregate baitfish and the bass follow.

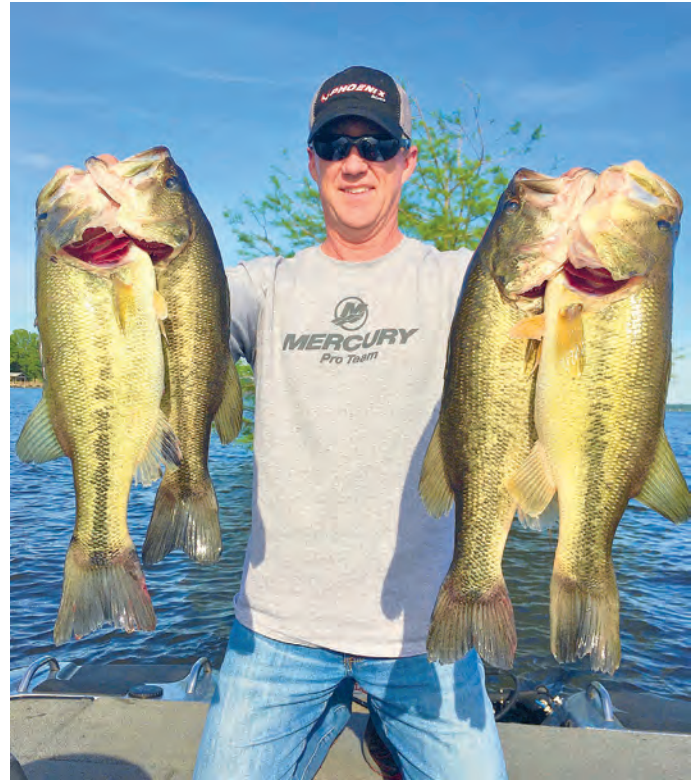
Simpson has one final tip.

"Remember that, for the most part, water is clearer in the hotter months, so I always try to lower the profile of the baits I'm fishing," he said. "Smaller baits will get more bites. You can stick with big lures for a bigger bite, but if you are just wanting to catch fish, I'd suggest going with a smaller lure." ■

### PADDLES 'N PUDDLES >



**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.



Where do you look for shallow summer bass? Try weed or cane banks, especially those with deeper water nearby. **TOP:** Angler Curtis Simpson caught these four big fish out of one shallow grass bed.



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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).

# GETTIN' FROGGY

KAYAKS ARE MADE FOR FISHING VEGETATION



It is hard to beat fishing a frog in areas where the grass seems impenetrable. Easy to cast and work, frogs are retrieved across the top of the grass, in open pockets in between and along the edges. Bass are suckers for a good frog presentation, but others species such as reds and trout can also be caught in some areas.



**A**s summer arrives, many freshwaters and brackish waters in Louisiana see a drastic increase in the amount of submerged aquatic vegetation — i.e. grass. No matter what kind, this collective expanse of greenery makes for great, albeit somewhat challenging fishing.

Kayaks are uniquely situated to fish large expanses of grass where powerboats just cannot go. From above, the grass may appear impenetrable, but the fish underneath prove otherwise.

Short of technical poling skiffs, boats with outboard motors and even powerful trolling motors simply cannot efficiently and, more important, quietly traverse the large areas of grass where fish lurk. However, kayaks can easily be paddled or poled across the grass without causing much of a disturbance. If the grass is thick, most pedal-drive kayaks simply need to raise or remove the drive unit so they can be paddled without any resistance or grass fouling.

In freshwater, bass are the primary target. For brackish areas, redfish and bass often frequent the same grass-laden areas and sometimes even speckled trout. All three will viciously strike a good

topwater offering, and when the grass is thick, it is hard to beat throwing a weedless frog lure or similar weedless baitfish imitation.

Frog baits come in a variety sizes and shapes. Some are true-to-life replicas with detailed hollow-body shapes and legs, while others are generally frog-shaped with silicone skirts similar to those on a spinnerbait to imitate the frog's rear legs. The hooks point up and are close to the body to avoid fouling. For heavy grass, the more streamlined baits with silicone legs foul less often.

Setting the hook on a frog bite can be frustrating. Many anglers shy away from using frogs because they miss too many fish. However, with a little change in technique, getting a fish hooked and staying hooked can be greatly increased. Frog bites are explosive, and the natural reaction is to rear back and instantly set the hook. However, this often pulls the lure out of the fish's mouth without getting connected. It is best not to set the hook instantly when the fish hits the frog. You need to give it a chance to get the frog well down into its mouth. The fish sucks in a lot of water on the strike, and if you set too soon, you more often than not pull the frog out of its mouth before it has a good hold on it.



## PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

continued

This 17-inch red ended up with a mouthful of Live Target hollow body sunfish. Constructed similar to a frog, the bait mimics a dying or struggling fish and can be fished in the thickest of vegetation.

A second tip is, if you do overreact, and all you get is a frog flying back at the kayak, don't give up. Quickly reel in and cast back to the exact spot, as chances are the strike may have been just a tail slap or the fish did not feel the hook. Try again, and the next strike may be the one that counts.

If you are fishing frogs in heavy cover, be it lily pads or matted grass, use any line as long as it is braid, which has no stretch and helps to drive the hooks home. Also, braid actually slices through the vegetation if the fish wraps you up in a big clump of grass or around a lily pad stem. Avoid using any leader. With the heavy cover, there are no worries of the fish being line shy.

Think like a frog, act like a frog. There are many ways to successfully fish a frog lure, but the best is to make it act froggy. Jump it, sit it still for a while, pull it up onto a stump, lily pad or on top of the grass. Hop it off, twitch it, walk it, but don't forget to pause it, as that is often when the strikes come. Cast with a high arc so it makes a plop when it hits the water. Shake and move the grass with it. If the lure gets into a patch of open water, make it appear more nervous and eager to get out of the wide open.



Other lures with similar construction to frogs are designed to mimic a variety of baitfish. They also have hollow bodies and protected weedless hooks. Rather than swim like a fish, they lay sideways and provide a profile as if they are struggling or dying. They are great for slowly twitching and working in place, particularly at the edge of a grass line or a small clearing in a thick area. Handling the strike is the same as with a frog.

Use the kayak to stealthily move across large expanses of grass, and cast in every direction. Keep an eye out for slight movements in the grass: jumping bait or even a curious bird lurking overhead. Thoroughly fish an area before moving on.

Sometimes a hooked fish gets so tangled in the grass that you cannot reel it in. When this happens, keep a tight line as you move the kayak to the fish. The grass keeps the fish calm, and you can often get close enough to scoop up grass and land the fish.

Trying to fish heavy grass with many conventional lures is almost impossible and certainly frustrating; this is true even with many so-called weedless lures. When the grass is expansive and so matted that there is no way to easily get a lure through it, the best way is to fish on top of it. Rest assured, fish are lurking below, taking advantage of the shade and cover as they traverse unseen channels and clearings. Next time you find yourself in an area that looks impenetrable, don't get frustrated — get froggy. ■

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# BURNING SUMMER BASS

■ By David A. Brown

**A FAST RETRIEVE, USING A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LURES, MAY DRAW A STRIKE FROM A FISH THAT WOULD NORMALLY JUST SIT QUIETLY, ENJOYING A SUMMER NAP. HERE'S HOW TO WAKE THEM UP.**



# YOU KNOW THE DEAL:

YOU'RE CHILLAXING BY THE POOL, AND SOME GOOBER CANNONBALLS THE CROWD — NOT ONCE, BUT TWICE.

HE'S CLIMBING OUT TO RELOAD AND, EVEN THOUGH YOU REALLY DON'T FEEL LIKE MOVING, YOU JUST HAVE TO LAY DOWN THE LAW.

ONE MORE TIME, BUDDY, AND IT'S ME AND YOU.

# IT'S THE SAME DEAL WITH SUMMERTIME BASS FISHING.

We tend to picture largemouth bass as snoozing away much of their summer days, but properly motivated, these fish can exhibit considerable aggression.

Regardless of what the calendar says, if you flip a bass's switch by appealing to its appetite or anger, it'll do what bass do: put the chomp on the offending party.

Savvy anglers can leverage this truth with aggressive lure presentations. Yep, we're talking about burning baits for summer bass — not always the first choice, but certainly a play to integrate into your game plan.

Just ask bass pro Mark Menendez, and he'll tell you: the faster the better.

"Metabolisms are high, and the fish are hungry," he said. "Ultra-high water temperatures will bring their metabolisms down into a safety mode, but in normal, high water tempera-

tures, like 80 to 82 degrees, you can still get them to react."

Menendez explained that bass might be perfectly capable of moving quickly in the summer heat — they just don't want to.

Changing their minds, poking that largemouth's ego, stimulating a violent response, is the logic behind summer burning.

"We have to make the fish react so they don't have a chance to think about it," Menendez said. "If they get a good look at the

bait, they may let it go by. But if we give them a brief look and then a burst of speed, generally that will trigger the bite."



Lane Martin of Paulina and his son, Jace, hold up a nice stringer of bass out of Bayou Black.

## SOFT SWIMBAIT

Calling this the ultimate in simplicity, Menendez uses a 4-inch Strike King Swimming Shiner on a 3/16- to 1/4-ounce Strike King Tour Grade shaky head.

The smaller jighead, he said, provides the proper physical dynamics for the technique he's using.

"I can wind that head at a pretty good clip, and it won't break the surface," Menendez said. "But if I need more speed, I'll put that bait on a 1/2-ounce jighead, and then I have the ballast to bring that thing back at Mach 1."

Menendez fishes the little swimbait on a 7-foot Lew's spinning outfit spooled with 10-pound fluorocarbon. His main targets for this presentation are marsh drains.

The idea is to mimic baitfish flowing out of the inner reaches at a speed that forces bass into a now-or-never response.

"Where the water pulls out of the marsh, there's always a lot of current right there," Menendez said. "You have an ambush point where there's an active fish, but yet, in warmer water, they may not want to eat.

"Something that comes by them with speed will trigger the bite."

Menendez will also take this swimbait up to the backs of creeks with flowing water on big lakes like Toledo Bend. This can offer often-overlooked opportunities in the seasonal transition.

"August is always a time in the South where the first group of fish tend to come off the main-lake structure," Menendez said. "You'll have a few cool nights in August, which drop down to 70 degrees instead of 80 degrees.

**““ If they get a good look at the bait, they may let it go by. But if we give them a brief look and then a burst of speed, generally that will trigger the bite.””**

"That cools the water temperature enough to signal the shad to move shallow. A percentage of the shad will ... and go to the backs of those creeks, and some of those resident bass that are on the main-lake structure will follow those shad into the backs of the creeks."

Menendez looks for naturally flowing creeks and bayous off major creek arms like Toledo Bend's Six Mile, Patroon and Housen.

Targeting any visible cover with a speedy swimbait can yield big results.

"It's generally game-on for a few fish that you may not have thought you would have caught in the heat of summer," Menendez said.

Another application for this deal: burning that swimbait around wing dams on the Red River to tempt largemouth and spotted bass.

**TOPWATERS >**



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## **TOPWATERS**

Recalling a day when he could see a group of quality bass but could not coax anything more than a follow with his Strike King Sexy Dog topwater walker, Menendez said an epiphany came when a big smallmouth blasted the bait while he was actually ripping back in frustration.

“Now, I literally throw the Sexy Dog and wind it back in,” he said. “I don’t use any rod-tip action, and I don’t walk the bait side-to-side in the traditional walk-the-dog action: I throw it and wind it at a pretty good clip.

“What that looks like is a baitfish that’s absolutely trying to get out of the address.”

Menendez described two options for this presentation:

- Retrieve with the rod tip lower to create a V-wake like a fleeing baitfish;
- Hold the rod tip higher to actually skip the lure like baitfish leaping away from predators.

## **SPINNERBAITS**

Probably the bait most-commonly associated with an extremely fast retrieve is a spinnerbait, which leverages flash and vibration to trigger aggressive responses.

Preferring the ½-ounce Strike King Burner for its wedge-shaped head, Menendez typically drops down to Nos. 3 or 4 willow-leaf blades to minimize the “lift” and keep his bait lower



in the water column.

Targeting naturally flowing creeks, Menendez looks for structure like the outer ends of laydowns where baitfish often hold. Casting into the cover, he’ll let the bait sink below the cover and then burn it through the bait.

“I’m winding it along, and then I’ll give it a burst of speed and rip it as hard as I can,” Menendez said. “It’s normally a pretty violent strike.

“I’m not ripping my rod tip: I’m winding with the rod tip pointed at the bait, like you would a normal retrieve. I’m just bringing it back with an extra burst of speed when I get to that strike zone.”

## **OTHER BLISTERING RETRIEVES ➤**



Brice Jones of West Monroe landed this 7-pound largemouth bass on June 3, 2018, while fishing on D’Arbonne Lake in Farmerville. **ABOVE:** A steady retrieve of a walk-the-dog topwater will often draw a strike from a summer bass.

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**BURNING SUMMER BASS**



Winding a small crankbait through standing timber is a good summer tactic for getting a reaction strike from a bass.

**OTHER BLISTERING RETRIEVES**

Pro angler Greg Hackney of Gonzales puts the heat on his crankbaits during the summer with what he calls a “wide-open” retrieve.

When bass relate to docks, mid-day finds them far back in the shadows. However, when early morning and late afternoon finds them positioning on the edges to feed, these fish can be highly susceptible to a peppy-paced swim jig.

When pro J.T. Kenney, who has retired from tournament fishing and is a TV analyst on Major League Fishing’s TV events, fishes tidal waters, he knows lower water levels offer a strategic window to burn a spinner-bait or a swim jig because submergent grass beds will be closer to the surface.

Pro Kevin VanDam, a four-time Bassmaster Classic winner, loves burning a Strike King Caffeine Shad across current points during the summer. He’ll also burn his signature Strike King KVD 1.5 squarebill

through standing timber.

“When you’re cranking deep trees, you have to go slow until it clears, and then speed up,” VanDam said.

Clearly, summer fishing is a lot more than sitting and soaking. In fact, the fish are just as vulnerable to sudden stimulus as we are.

Sometimes, you just have to step on the gas and make them mad or make them hungry.

Either way, a bite’s a bite. ■



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

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**BEST  
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**W**hen the heat is on and the bass spawn is a fond memory, it's time to grab an artificial lure that unlocks the jaws of bass that are cooling their fins in deep water, or in the current around points and structure, or under mats, lily pads and other cover.

Four Louisiana bass pros know what their favorite artificial lure will be as summer shifts into high gear. They depend on their bait of choice to put bass in the boat when it counts or when they are enjoying a relaxing trip on the water.

Jake Ormond of Sterlington, Quentin Cappo of Prairieville, Darold Gleason of Many and Greg Hackney of Gonzales have a powerful weapon in hand when they tie on their favorite lures this month: confidence. Ormond prefers a ribbontail

## 4 BASS PROS, 4 FAVORITE BAITS

By Don Shoopman

worm, Cappo a swim jig, Gleason a football jig and, like Ormond, Hackney relies on a plastic worm.

They have their reasons and don't mind sharing them.

### MEGATAIL HELPS ORMOND MAKE SOME MEGA CATCHES IN JULY

**J**ake Ormond of Sterlington, a rookie this year on the FLW Pro Tour, readily shares a story that helps explain his reliance on a large, ribbontail worm in the summer, night and day, particularly in July.

Ormond and his father, Jimmy Ormond, targeted bass three straight nights late in the summer of 2010 at Lake Fork in Texas. The first two nights, using strictly plastic worms, the Ormonds caught between 20 and 30 bass up to 5 pounds.

After finishing the second night of fishing, the Ormonds got into a breakfast conversation with a fishing guide; they asked about other places to try. The guide told them about a long point in deep water that held bass he had been unable to catch.

The Ormonds arrived at that spot about an hour before the next sunset. They saw "great big fish on the graph" in 16- to 20-foot depths. Jimmy Ormond boated a 6-pounder on his first cast and followed up with another 6, then two 5s back-to-back.

"I haven't had a bite yet," Jake Ormond said. "We were both using worms.... He's kicking my butt so bad."

Then, he missed a fish and threw back to the same spot. About 15 minutes before dark, a 10-pound, 2-ounce bass bit and didn't

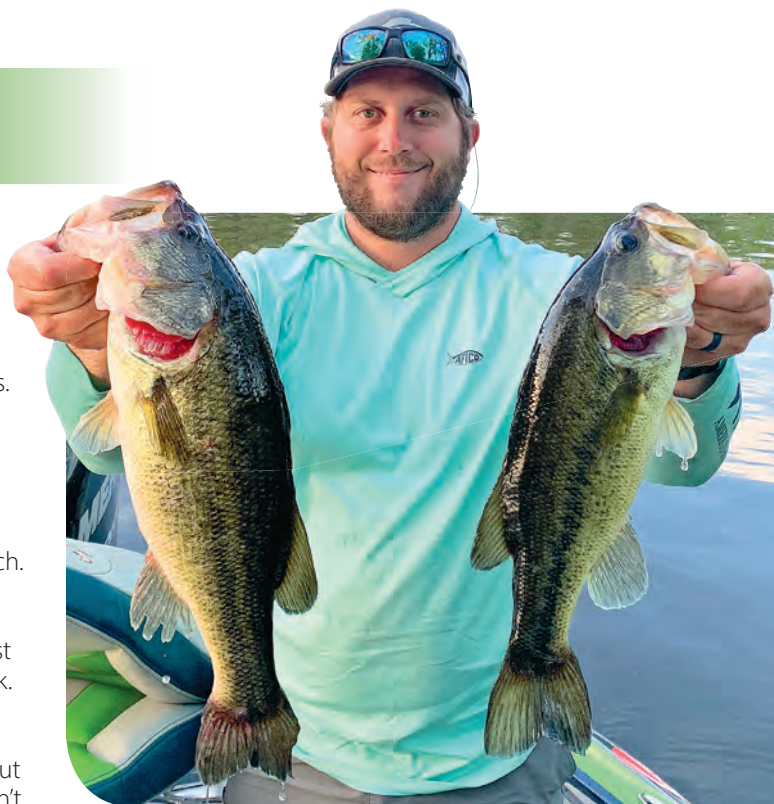


Photo courtesy Jake Ormond

**Grande Fishing  
Megatail worm**



get away.  
"He ran the same way the last one did. I turned his head. When he jumped, he could barely could get out of the water," he said.

That fish was Jake Ormond's personal best on a plastic worm, an artificial lure he's used ever since the father and son started fishing when he

was a boy. It also was one of 15 bass they caught that night from between two stumps 12 to 15 feet apart. Their biggest five went around 36 pounds.

"I fished a lot at night growing up," said Jake

Ormond, who honed his game fishing worms. "The worm was the No. 1 thing in the dark."

Now 32, Ormond has been fishing big tournaments for several years and guiding across northeast Louisiana. His penchant for plastic worm fishing starts after the spawn each year.

"It's hard to beat any soft plastics nowadays," he said. "The worm is mostly a summer deal for me. Once they get off their beds, I throw a big, ribbontail worm."

Ormond opts for an 8-inch, Grande Fishing Megatail worm as his go-to soft plastic or, if he needs an even-bigger worm, it's V&M's 10½-inch Wild Thang. His favorite color is blue fleck, followed by watermelon candy.

The most-important part of fishing plastic worms is determining the difference between an underwater stick or blade of grass and a bite. Fishing over the years has enhanced Ormond's feel.

"I can tell you if it's a piece of grass. You get a feel," said Ormond, who fishes 8-inch

worms on a 3/0 or 4/0 O'Shaughnessy offset worm hook and 10-inch worms on a 4/0 or 5/0 hook, usually under a ¾- or ¼-ounce Tungsten worm weight on 20-pound KastKing fluorocarbon. He uses a KastKing Cliff Crochet Spirale Series casting rod and a Bassinator Elite reel with an 8:1 gear ratio. ■

**“**The worm is mostly a summer deal for me. Once they get off their beds, I throw a big ribbontail worm.**”**

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## HEAVY COVER SWIM JIG DOES HEAVY LIFTING FOR CAPPO

**Q** uentin Cappo sure wants to get in the swim of things during the dog days of summer. A Bassmaster Elite Series angler from Prairieville, Cappo depends on one artificial lure when he's fishing for bass in July.

"If I'm fishing in Louisiana primarily because we have shallow water. ... If I had one bait to put in my hand, everybody says a jig," Cappo said. "I'm going to go a step further and say swim jig. As far as versatility, I'm going to say a swim jig is the bait I want to have."

A swim jig is effective anywhere, as he proved last year during the Bassmaster Elite stop in August at Cayuga Lake near Union Springs, N.Y. He caught all of the bass he weighed on a swim jig.

Cappo, 35, prefers to use a ½-ounce Strike King Hack Attack Heavy Cover swim jig the majority of the time. It's all about versatility, he said.

"I can cover any column of water," he said. "If I want it up in the column, I put on a Strike King Rage Craw, something that creates water displacement, drag. If I want it a little deeper, I put like a Rage Swimmer, a swimbait tail that creates less drag and allows the bait to dive deeper."

The same thing goes if he's targeting bass in vegetation, Cappo pointed out. The Strike King Rage Swimmer allows the jig to slide through the vegetation because there is little drag.

The jig's bite is what he really likes, the black-nickle. 5/0 Gamakatsu Siwash hook.

"It's got a very heavy wire hook; I'm not worried about bending it on a heavy fish," he said. "It's got a heavy weed guard on it to keep it weedless with that big of a hook," said Cappo, whose



Photo courtesy Quentin Cappo

favorite colors for the jig's redesigned skirt are white and black/blue. Those colors, he said, cover the whole spectrum of what the fish might be eating, whether it's shad or bluegill.

Cappo has caught bass on the swim jig everywhere from Louisiana to New York's Cayuga Lake. He has caught "a handful" of 5-pounders on it.

"It seems to get the bigger bites. The fish that hit the jig are

**“It seems to get the bigger bites. The fish that hit the jig are going to be keepers.”**

going to be keepers," he said.

He ties the jig to 17-pound Strike King Tour Grade fluorocarbon line on a Lew's High Speed Hypermag reel (8:1 ratio). Why does he choose fluorocarbon a majority of the time over braided line?

"You know, a lot of times I feel like I get more bites on fluorocarbon," said Cappo, who fishes the jig on a 7-foot-1 MH Fitzgerald rod. "It depends on what cover I'm fishing. But if I've got one rod in my hand, I want fluorocarbon to cover all the water that I'm around." ■



**V&M FLATLINE PACEMAKER FOOTBALL JIG >**

# STAINS 101

## THE SCIENCE OF STAINS MADE SIMPLE

Keeping your boat looking great is easy when you know the basics. Those basics include four common types of stains that can be frustrating if you don't know how to remove them. This handy *Stains 101 Guide* will help you properly identify and remove each of the four basic stains, and keep your boat looking like new.

*It's the science of stains made simple!*

### SURFACTANT TECHNOLOGY

TO COMBAT

## DIRT & GRIME

#### THE STAIN

Dirt, grime, gunk, muck. Fish blood, food, drinks. These are your surface stains.

#### THE SCIENCE

Most surface dirt will wash right off with boat soap and water. However, some gets ground in, especially on non-skid surfaces. That's where surfactants come in. Surfactant molecules fully surround the dirt molecules and lift them from the surface that you're cleaning. This allows them to be washed away with water. Chelating Agents are supercharged surfactants for specialized cleaning.

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Star brite Boat Wash will definitely remove most surface dirt. For tough grime and gunk, use a cleaner/degreaser, such as Star brite Xtreme Clean or choose a surfactant based on the surface: Non-Skid Deck Cleaner for non-skid, Vinyl Cleaner for vinyl, etc...



### ACID TECHNOLOGY

TO COMBAT

## RUST & TANNIC STAINS

#### THE STAIN

Tree leaves, hull stains, rust stains, waterline stains, hard water stains, orange stains.

#### THE SCIENCE

Tannins are naturally produced in the decomposition of plant-based matter, and their signature orange-hued stains are dyeing your hull and fiberglass. Rust stains occur on the fiberglass around metal, where water leaches color from underneath the metal and deposits it on the surface. Removing these stains requires a chemical reaction with an acid.

#### THE SOLUTION

Star brite Instant Hull Cleaner contains a modified oxalic acid that safely neutralizes tannins and rust. There's much more science behind it but trust us on this one, simply spray or wipe on and watch the stain disappear.



### BLEACHING TECHNOLOGY

TO COMBAT

## MOLD & MILDEW STAINS

#### THE STAIN

Black, brown, green, and pink mold and mildew stains.

#### THE SCIENCE

Similar to grass stains, these stains are caused by organic material, and need something stronger than a surfactant alone to remove them. The oxygen in a bleaching agent attacks and breaks up these types of stains, and removes any discoloration.

#### THE SOLUTION

While most people believe that regular chlorine bleach is the answer, it also causes a lot of problems, such as breaking down fabrics and stitching and destroying gelcoats. Instead use Star brite Mildew Stain Remover—a buffered bleach formula—that attacks the stain without harming the surface.



### ABRASION TECHNOLOGY

TO COMBAT

## SCUFF MARKS

#### THE STAIN

Black shoe marks, rub rail and bumper scuffs, marks left from dragging hoses and equipment.

#### THE SCIENCE

Scuff marks—or “transfer stains”—happen when material is transferred onto a surface and is mechanically bonded. Chemicals are rarely strong enough to remove these marks, since many times the material that has transferred is chemical-resistant (think of a rubber shoe). These abrasive marks require the same to remove them: abrasion.

#### THE SOLUTION

Star brite Ultimate Magic Sponge uses nano-sized scrubbers to grab hold and erase most marks easily. For your hull, use Premium Cleaner Wax to buff the stain away.



## GLEASON'S PACEMAKER FOOTBALL JIG SCORES OFTEN DURING JULY

**D**arold Gleason of Many has been hooked on a certain artificial lure since he caught a couple of huge fish and won a tournament on Toledo Bend a few summers ago.

Gleason, who fishes the FLW Pro Tour and Bassmaster Central Opens and qualified for the 2020 Bassmaster Classic, won that tournament with five fish that weighed 22 pounds, including a 9-pound fish and a 6-pound fish.

"I actually caught the 9-pounder first thing in the morning, so I knew it would be a good day no matter what, you know?" Gleason said.

What is the lure?

"A football jig," he said. "Man, I've been throwing a football jig about a dozen years. In the summer, when I'm not necessarily trying to catch a lot of fish, I like to throw a football jig. To me, that time of year the fish don't eat as often."

Gleason's football jig of choice is a ¾-ounce V&M Flatline Pacemaker with a V&M J-Bug trailer, in a color V&M named after him, Gleason Candy: green pumpkin with purple flecks.

"It looks like a bluegill. It's a really good color all over," he said.

Gleason said the jig has a custom, oversized, 30-degree strong hook for improved hooksets and a larger weed guard to help it move through cover.

"It's a hook that's very stout. The main thing for me is I want a hook that won't flex when I set the hook, especially with a football jig. You're fishing it to catch big fish," he said.

Gleason doesn't trim the skirt, which he said is designed perfectly, or the weed guard. If the bass are finicky, however, he might spread the weed guard apart like goal post to get a better hook penetration.

He fishes the on 15-pound test Hi-Seas fluorocarbon much of the time. Occasionally, he'll move up to 20-pound if the cover he's fishing dictates it. He likes to spool the fluoro on a fast-retrieve reel (7:3 or 8:1 ratio) with a wide spool and a lot of line capacity because he makes long casts and fishes deep water. His rod will be a 7-foot-4 Falcon Expert Series Amistad XH. ■



Photo by Don Shoopman

“I want a hook that won't flex when I set the hook, especially with a football jig. You're fishing it to catch big fish.”



## RAGE TAIL CUT-R: HACKNEY DOESN'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT IT IN JULY

**G**reg Hackney was chomping at the bit the past few weeks to get back into action on the Major League Fishing Bass Pro Tour, pumped to throw his favorite artificial lure in July.

"Honestly, a plastic worm is hard to beat in July," Hackney said, particularly his favorite, a 6- or 7-inch Strike King Rage Tail Cut-R.

"I think that worm's really special. I catch a lot of fish on it," he said. "Once the weather warms up, I never go without one tied on. I guess it's a little fatter worm, and it has a Rage Tail on it. The body's fat, like a Senko. I guess the 6-inch one is the best bite-getter. I'll use the 7-inch if I'm around big fish."

Last August, at the Bass Pro Tour stop on the Mississippi River in Wisconsin, he used the Cut-R to find 22 bass that got him second place with 40 pounds, 7 ounces.

Hackney, a 15-time Bassmaster Classic qualifier, said he has caught many bass on the worm and plans to catch even more. He favors two colors: redbug and junebug. He believes both are effective in mid-summer in and around Louisiana.

How does he work it?

"Just experiment with retrieves. I think that's what makes the worm so good. I catch a lot of fish swimming it by cypress trees," said Hackney, who pointed out it can be flipped, pitched, Carolina-rigged and Texas-rigged.

For the latter, he uses a 5/16- or 3/16-ounce worm weight, the heavier one for 3- to 6-foot depths and the other for shallower water. The worm's action is at its best if you peg the weight, because the worm is heavy and its tail pulls so much water, he said.

Hackney said he always uses a 4/0 Owner Offset worm hook, most of the time has it on 14-pound Gamma fluorocarbon. Sometimes in the Atchafalaya Basin, he'll use 15-pound test.



Photo courtesy Greg Hackney

"I really like 14," he said. "I think I get more bites ... not because I think they can see the line. It's just to get the right action, the right fall.

He fishes the worm on a 7-foot-3 Hack Attack jig rod and a Lew's Custom Pro baitcast reel. ■

**“**Just experiment with retrieves. I think that's what makes the worm so good.**”**



**BASS HOTSPOTS >**

# TOLEDO BEND'S OFFSHORE ACTION IS HEATING UP

Spend your time cranking deep ledges

**B**ass pro Brett Preuett of Monroe fishes so many different lakes in Louisiana and around the country that he sometimes needs a calendar to remember where he's headed next. But one thing he doesn't need help remembering is how to catch bunches of bass when he gets home.

"When the water heats up and the biggest bunches of fish head offshore, there's no better place to be anywhere than on Toledo Bend," he said. "I love fishing 15 to 25 feet deep through the summer. We find fish north to south on the deeper ridges and humps out in the main lake. They navigate those ridges out from the main coves and set up where it isn't very far to their next meal."

Finding offshore fish in a 90,000-acre lake isn't an easy task, but when you find them, you can catch them in bunches. Preuett said when you first get on that pattern, you may spend more time riding and looking at electronics than fishing.

Both these chunky largemouth fell for deep-diving crankbaits around deep ledges on Toledo Bend.



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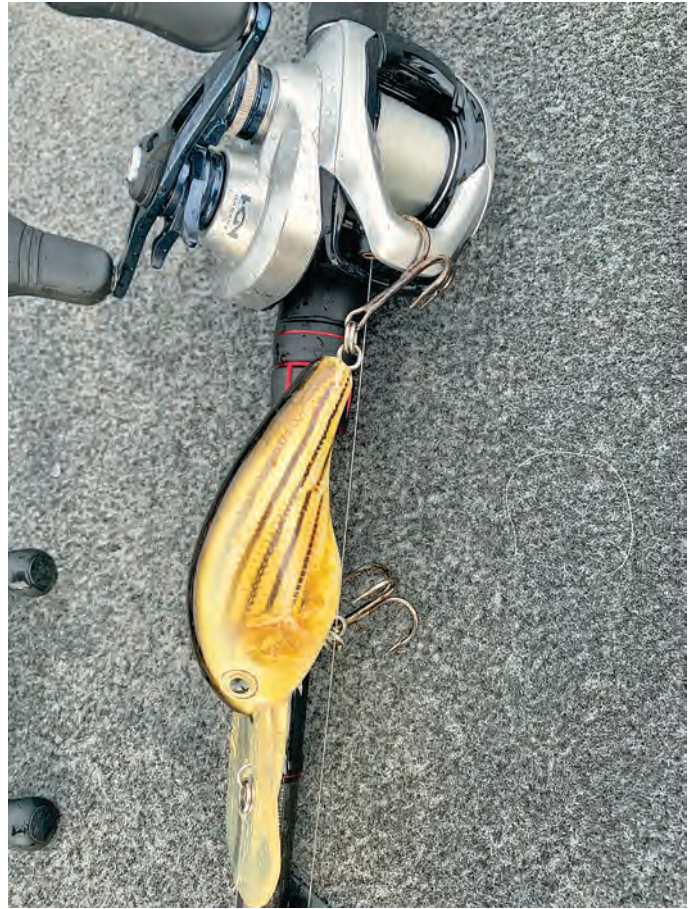
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"You'll spot fish setting up in two different ways," he said. "The ones that are easiest to catch are the ones setting up right along the drops on the ledges and humps. They'll look like little dots on your screen, and they will usually be lined up right on the bottom or a couple of feet off the bottom."

When he finds those fish, Preuett always starts out with a deep-diving crankbait. One of his favorites is the Strike King 10XD that runs 18 to 25 feet deep. He likes shad or natural colors when it's sunny and will go to chartreuse/black if it gets cloudy. He also likes to swap out the stock hooks and replace them with 1/0 or 2/0 trebles. The real key, however, is putting the bait right where the fish want it.

"I normally start casting the bait deep and drag it toward the shallower spot," he said. Sometimes, I'll try it from the left to the right or the right to the left of the fish. The thing is,

Brett Preuett said a Strike King 10XD crankbait is made to order for deep Toledo Bend bass.



there is always a sweet spot that really get the fish going. I switch angles and directions of my presentations until I find that angle. Once you catch one and get the school fired up, you might catch 8 or 10 from one spot.”

For deep cranking, Preuett loves the new 7-foot-6 Shimano Zodiac composite rod. He said it is extremely sensitive but really loads the fish up when they eat the bait, and he hardly ever loses a fish with that setup.

The second scenario he sees on his graph is that fish also often set up suspended over cover on the bottom or over dropoffs. Those fish are not actively feeding and are often just roaming, making it harder to catch them.

Fishing the grass is always good at Toledo Bend, but after two years of low water, the deeper grass isn't there like it was. When it comes back, that will help produce more big fish, he said. ■

— Kinny Haddox

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# PAD FIELDS HEADLINE

## Toledo Bend's July bass destinations

**S**ummer bass fishing this year, at least the beginning of it, may include rewarding casts in the flooded bushes before the water drops out at Toledo Bend.

Summer hasn't entered in all its blazing hot glory yet, but it's knocking at the door. When it stays hot and the water's lower, patterns will change.

Toledo Bend's level was just above 172 feet at the end of May, with plenty of rain falling in the region. I predicted correctly last month that the water would be in the bushes, and it is. Baitfish, including shad and bream, are in that flooded vegetation, and bass will be, too, until the baitfish leave and/or the water temperature warms too much. And of course, they'll leave if the water level drops.

I love this high-water stuff, and I'm not alone, because there are others who enjoy picking off bass in and around the bushes, where there's plenty of room for bass to roam and feed. Some of the best high-water bassing has been up north. We don't know how long it will last, but we'll be there until it fizzles out.

Once that happens, anglers have a choice to either fish shallow for the first hour or two of the day, concentrate on lily pads in 2½- to 6-foot depths, or probe the depths in the 20- to 22-foot range with the aid of marine electronics.

My choice will be the lily pads, first and foremost. Thank goodness there are large patches growing. Most pads are 5 to 6 inches in diameter, but they'll get bigger, up to 13 to 14 inches, and baitfish, particularly bream, get in them. Bass, big bass — 4- to 6-pounders — live in those lily pads, under the shade, dining.

Stanley Top Toads and Carolina-rigged soft plastics, junebug/red, redbug and cotton candy-colored Flukes will trigger the bass bite in pads. Also try weedless spoons, like the old Johnson Silver Minnow.

I throw a Carolina-rigged soft plastic on a 2½-foot leader under a ½-ounce weight on 40-pound Power Pro braid in the pads. As soon as I set the hook I strong-arm the fish to turn its head and get it coming to me. Otherwise, bass will wrap up the line in the lily pad stems, and you can kiss them goodbye.

Another choice for mid-summer bassing is to spend the first few and last few hours of the day in the shallows, fishing with a bladed jig — my pick is a Delta Lures Thunder Jig — plastic worms, a Senko, Stanley Ribbit or Stanley Top Toad plastic frogs, your favorite topwater (buzzbait, Chug Bug or Zara Spook), chrome Rat-L-Traps and, as it gets warmer and warmer, punching soft plastics.

There will be plenty of bass in deep water, where they can be caught on Carolina-rigged soft plastics, drop-shots, big shad-colored crankbaits and football-head jigs. Some fish are already out, but as I know too darned well, they bite when they want to after you pinpoint their location with marine electronics.

Another traditional summer pattern might be the most exciting of all. Hopefully, the schooling action kicks in early and lasts through the hot months. Most of it happens over drains and ditches in 20- to 25-foot depths where balls of shad hang out and the bass zero in on them, push them to the surface and

Photo courtesy John Dean



The author holds what he calls a “pad field pig” he caught fishing a Stanley Top Toad plastic frog at Toledo Bend. Late June and July are prime times to fish plastic frogs in the lily pads.

start smashing them in a feeding frenzy. Have a topwater or your favorite schooling bass bait handy.

Crappie fishing is good and getting better and better. In fact, it's through the roof right now over brush piles in 22- to 25-foot depths and should stay that way all the way into the summer. Then, when it's hot, the night fishing takes over. Shiners and artificial jigs are getting mauled. ■

— John Dean



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

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# WAGER'S CALCUTTA JIG

SYNTHETIC HAIR GIVES BLADED BAIT A DIFFERENT ACTION

**A**n Opelousas fisherman has given the bladed jig a new look, and bass apparently are going ga-ga over it.

It's all about the skirt, which is a synthetic hair material, something vastly different than the skirt on many bladed jigs.

Ross Wager's Calcutta Jig is turning the heads of bass and bass anglers near and far. The owner of Wager Baits — whose motto for his line of artificial lures is "So good you can bet on 'em" — is proud of the splash his jig has made in a short time.

The Calcutta Jig has caught bass after bass for bass pro Tyler Carriere of Youngsville; Andre Oliver of Eunice, who loves to chunk it at Chicot Lake; Zachary Dubois, who owns Cajun Lures in Nunez, and many others. Carriere has used the bladed jig to catch bass while pre-fishing and in tournaments on the Bassmaster Elite Series circuit, including a few weighing more than 5 pounds, according to Wager.

## A HAIRY WONDER

The feedback he gets is encouraging, he said. Perhaps its main selling point, he said, is the synthetic hair skirt.

"The way the hair works in the water compared to silicone skirt material gives the bait a bigger profile and looks more realistic the way it moves in the water," Wager said. "People are catching fish on them, big fish, too.

"Anglers are telling me it gives more of a thump in the water, more vibration in the water. I think that's due to the size of the split ring. It gives it more range of motion."

Wager, 32, who worked eight years with a machining company in Lafayette, began making sac-a-lait jigs about two years ago. He decided to make artificial lures full time in December 2019.

"I was just tinkering with different lures," he said. "After I discovered the material to use for a skirt, (that) is when I created the Calcutta Jig. It just blew up from there."

The skirt is a synthetic hair, he said; he likes it a whole lot more than the rubber and silicone skirts he fished with from his childhood years on up. The synthetic hair he's using has a longer life compared to standard bucktail hair.

Each Calcutta Jig is hand-tied.

"The only thing that separates mine from others on the market is the skirt material," he said.

Wager's sac-a-lait jigs are tied with marabou feathers and/or Krystal flash. Silicone skirt materials also can be used for the sac-a-lait jigs, he said.

## FOR SALTWATER TOO

In 2019, Wager's fledgling company sold between 200 and 250 Calcutta Jigs, mainly in Louisiana and nearby Texas, but some of them as far away as Georgia. His plan is to branch out and market the bladed jig for saltwater fishing, too, saying he has caught redfish on the Calcutta Jig.

"That's one way I want to go with it, to be universal with it," he said.

Wager also markets a Flippin' Finesse Jig and he makes football jigs that aren't sold on the website at [www.wagerbaits.com](http://www.wagerbaits.com).

Calcutta Jigs are made in only one weight: ½-ounce. It is the preferred weight of most bass anglers who use bladed jigs, Wager explained.

The skirt color schemes and matching



**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.

The Calcutta Jig is a bass-catching bladed jig.

head colors are striking, bold in their appearance.

"I have 10 available color patterns on the website, and I can customize any color needs the customer wants," he said.

The Calcutta Jig "hot craw" color's head is hand-painted rather than powder coated to match the color of the skirt.

The bladed jigs are armed with a 5/0 Mustad extra sharp hook, one so sharp that it'll nip your fingers or hands if you aren't careful. ■

For more information about the Calcutta Jig, call 337-692-7416, email [wagerbaits@gmail.com](mailto:wagerbaits@gmail.com) or visit [www.wagerbaits.com](http://www.wagerbaits.com).

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Logan Anderson shows off a nice bass he caught out of his kayak.

# KAYAK FISHING IN NORTH LOUISIANA

PADDLE BOATS OFFER NO-HASSLE SUMMER FISHING; THIS AVID ANGLER SHARES HIS TIPS FOR MAKING THE MOST OF THE QUICKLY GROWING SPORT.

By Kinny Haddox

**J**ody Wood effortlessly paddled his camouflaged kayak into the brisk wind through a maze of shallow-water stumps before he turned the boat to face an open pocket just ahead.

He cast a white spinnerbait across the opening and slow-rolled it past a little bed of dollar pads in a deeper hole.

Bam!

"It's a good one!" Wood said as he took turns reeling the bass toward the boat and letting the bass pull the kayak toward it. "Having a big bass drag you around in a kayak is awesome. It's one of the most fun things you can do fishing."

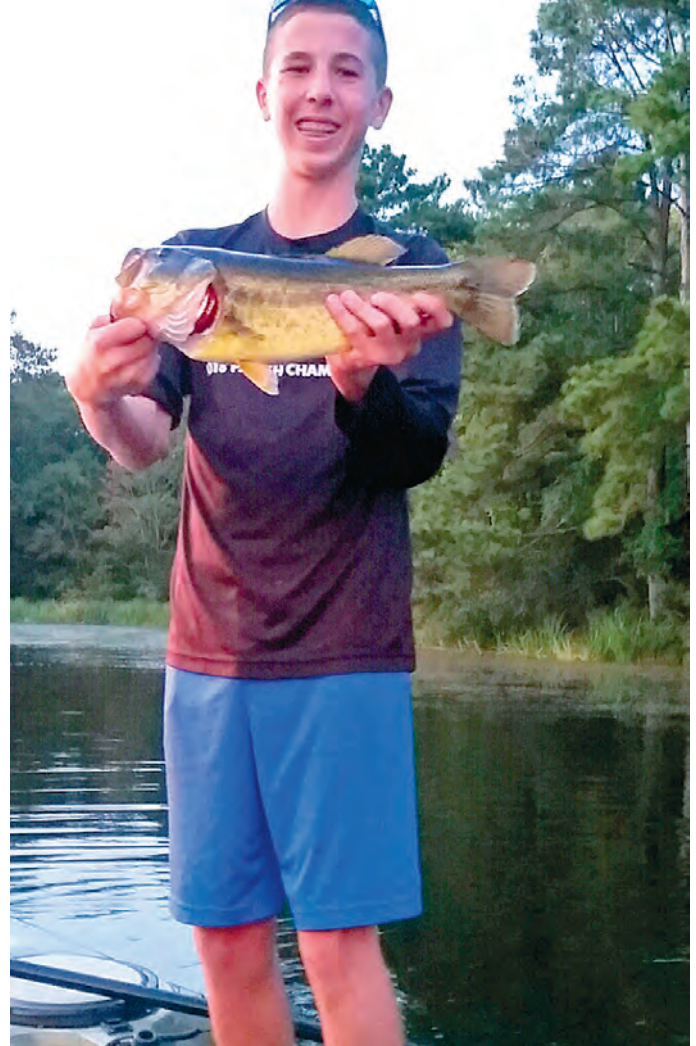
In short order, Wood was admiring a healthy largemouth from the back seat of the small boat — one in a growing number of fishing scenes that add credence to why kayak fishing is a growing trend in the Bayou State.

"It would have been hard to get to that spot in a bigger boat in this kind of water, especially in the wind," Wood said. "Kayaks and other small boats are not only fun to fish out of, but they can put you in spots to fish that other boats just can't."

Wood's son, Hudson agreed, but the youngster urged his father to quit talking and move him back where he could cast toward the same spot for another bass.

Wood isn't one to overlook fishing boats of any size. As co-owner of Wood Marine in Ruston, he deals with people's boating needs on a daily basis: from 8-foot kayaks to 20-foot bass boats with 250-hp motors.

"Kayaks, canoes and smaller boats aren't for everybody, but people who don't give them a try are missing out on a lot of fishing fun and opportunities," he said. "Paddling a boat also allows you



to fish areas without having to worry about the noise of a trolling motor or getting hung up on stumps and logs."

Across the lake, Wood's wife and daughter were fishing in another kayak, catching bunches of bluegills and having even more fun.

"That's the neat thing about these boats, too: There's nothing like taking your kids out in a kayak or canoe and teaching them to fish," Wood said. "It's an easy, no-hassle way to get on the water."

"No boat ramps. No batteries to charge. Just you and the fish."

## MODERN FISHING PLATFORMS

He said the popularity of kayaks for fishing is partially because of the innovation of the boats.

"Boats like this KC12 are very stable, and that makes fishing out of them more comfortable," Wood said. "And they are built to accommodate dozens of accessories for one or two people."

"Another thing is the great amount of information on where to go now available on handheld devices with Internet access. People can find out everything about smaller lakes like Lincoln Parish Lake near our hometown of Ruston, or just about any small body of water anywhere in the state."

He said current vehicle trends have encouraged more kayak fishing.

"I think the growth in popularity of SUVs has also helped make it easier to transport multiple kayaks, and take the whole family or friends and boats in one vehicle via trailer or car-top carriers," Wood said.

Choosing a kayak for fishing does take some effort. You need to find out what you want in a boat and look for those options.

Once you have one, the main advantage of fishing a kayak will become obvious quickly.

"Fishing out of a kayak is just so peaceful," Wood said. "Most of the time you are by yourself in the boat, and you can get back in some places other boats can't. You never know what you might find around the next bend or at the back of the next cove."

"Being close to the water also puts you more in touch with the lake and conditions."

Larger kayaks also provide great opportunities for families to enjoy fishing together.

"We often go to the 16-acre lake at our camp, and I'm able to put a life vest on my son, give him the paddle and let him go fishing," Wood said. "Of course I'm close by, but it teaches him how to handle the boat and learn to fish."

"Then, when we want, we can change to the two-seat configuration and interact together for a very enjoyable time."

Catching fish is important, too, but it isn't on the top of the list for most kayakers.

"My favorite way to fish out of a kayak is with a spinnerbait or topwater," Wood said. "That's what I recommend. My favorite color is white, but that can vary with the color of the water. Chartreuse is good, also."

"It is important to be able to fish with baits that you can hit multiple points with fast and retrieve rather quickly. Even on still days, the kayak will be moving, and you have to allow for that."

In the summer, he also goes to a worm or other soft-plastic bait, but it is hard to sit in one spot long enough to work it properly unless you make short casts.

## SPACE IS AT A PREMIUM

One thing kayak fishermen must do is plan ahead.

There is limited space, so if you are serious about fishing, you have to determine what species you are going after and make sure you carry the right gear — but not a lot of extra gear.

There just isn't room.

Wood's must-have list obviously starts with the boat. His preference for the KC12 goes to the basics: it's 12 feet long, weighs only 60 pounds and is 34 inches wide.

When it comes to gear, he's usually bass fishing, so he carries one or two 7-foot Impulse rods with Lew's Speed Spool reels spooled with 10- to 12-pound Stren.

He doesn't have a favorite

brand, but Wood recommends a double-ended lightweight paddle. He uses a 96-inch model for fishing sitting down but recommends you look at longer paddles if you plan to stand and fish a lot.

A manual or self-inflating life jacket also is best because it doesn't restrict your movements, is cooler in the summer and takes up less room in the boat when you aren't wearing it.

"Although it doesn't happen often, you obviously have a better chance of ending up in the water fishing in a kayak than in a big bass boat, so (a life jacket) is a critical piece of equipment," Wood said.

Other key items can include a small anchor, a soft-sided ice chest, a stringer or small fish basket and even a portable depth finder.

"All that is up to the individual," Wood said. "And if you don't need all that, the best thing about kayak fishing is you can just grab a rod and a small tackle box and hit the water."

"You are ready to go." ■

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This river crappie thumped a Jimmy Watt jig and ended up on the menu for supper.

# THERE'S NO VACATION FOR OUACHITA CRAPPIE

## Stable water spurs good summer bite

**F**or much of the year, the meandering Ouachita River rises and falls with the seasons. Spring fishing is good, but fish are always on the move in the backwater. Then comes summer, and while fish don't have to spend as much time figuring out where to go, they still have to eat.

With the water stabilizing in July and through the summer, it also stabilizes the bite. And that's something to which crappie fisherman Jimmy Watt of Bastrop looks forward.

"A lot of times, people ask fishermen what they look for when they go fishing, but on the Ouachita River this time of year, I just look for something that I think the fish will be on and go fishing," he said. "There isn't just one thing, and the best thing about the river and the system of bayous, sloughs and lakes is that you can literally catch crappie all the way from the Arkansas line south to below Columbia. That's a pretty long stretch."

There's another thing that Watt likes about river fish.

"They are just so healthy," he said. "Most crappie fishermen like to catch fish to eat, and these fish fit that bill really well all the way through summer. They are healthy because of all the food and nutrients in the water."

Sometimes the river is still on a slow fall all the way into the warmer months. When that's happening, Watt finds the fish deep in the thick tops. They hang there after leaving the backwater and before starting to school up in the river lakes or in the tops



Some of Jimmy Watt's favorite, hand-tied crappie jigs.

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along the edges of the actual river and bayous.

"When the fish are in the tops, it's tough fishing, but that's where you'll find some good ones," he said. "You'll catch a few around the edges of the bushes, but most of them will be up in the cover. Because of that, I like to use a stiff pole with a light tip and braided line. Depending on how aggressive they are, I like to use a 1/16-ounce jig most of the time, but when the bite is really on, I will go to a 1/8-ounce jig because I can get it down in there easier and fish it faster."

Watt's favorite jigs don't have a name. That's because he ties them himself, one of his favorite hobbies when he isn't fishing. His favorite summer colors in the river are silver/chartreuse, black/chartreuse, gold/chartreuse or plain chartreuse.

"There is a theme, isn't there?" he asked. "That's because I think chartreuse is a really good color for the river."

Later, as the river settles down, fish will often leave thick cover and roam in schools in the middle of the river lakes; they don't relate to cover as much. They just cruise around following schools of shad. When there is no current in the river itself, fish will also congregate in the tops and bushes on the edges of the main river.

"You have some options, so there isn't just one thing to look for," he said. "Just fish until you find them and stay with what's working."

One final tip. Watt said river crappie don't like current, so they will do everything they can to get out of it. And they like shade. The hotter it gets, the more they like the shade. That's one tip that fishermen won't have any trouble remembering either. ■

— Kinny Haddox



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Cypress Bayou Reservoir in Bossier Parish is known for its slab crappie, and summer fishing can be excellent.

# CYPRESS BAYOU SLABS

## offer some great summer fishing action

**C**ypress Bayou Reservoir is an overlooked gem located in northwest Louisiana, near Benton in Bossier Parish, a popular destination for pleasure boaters but home of one of the healthiest crappie fisheries in the area.

Cypress Bayou, which covers 3,300 acres, was created in 1975. Several types of natural structure can be found, including flooded timber, emergent vegetation, ledges, flats and points. Brush piles are scattered around the lake bottom; many dedicated anglers have sunk them in areas that allow them to hold fish year-round.

Russell Poe of Haughton said that being able to locate crappie is the most crucial part of having a successful trip.

"Crappie mainly move in relation to water temperature", Poe said. "This time of the year, when the water temperature reaches 80 degrees, the fish start to suspend back into deeper water and around channel ledges."

Poe uses his side-imaging sonar to locate schools of suspended crappie around channel edges, then employs his LiveScope to pinpoint areas to target. The result is slab crappie weighing up to and more than 2 pounds.

Another crucial element is bait presentation. Poe prefers to vertical jig using a 12-foot jig pole, a 1/8-ounce eyehole jig and pintail

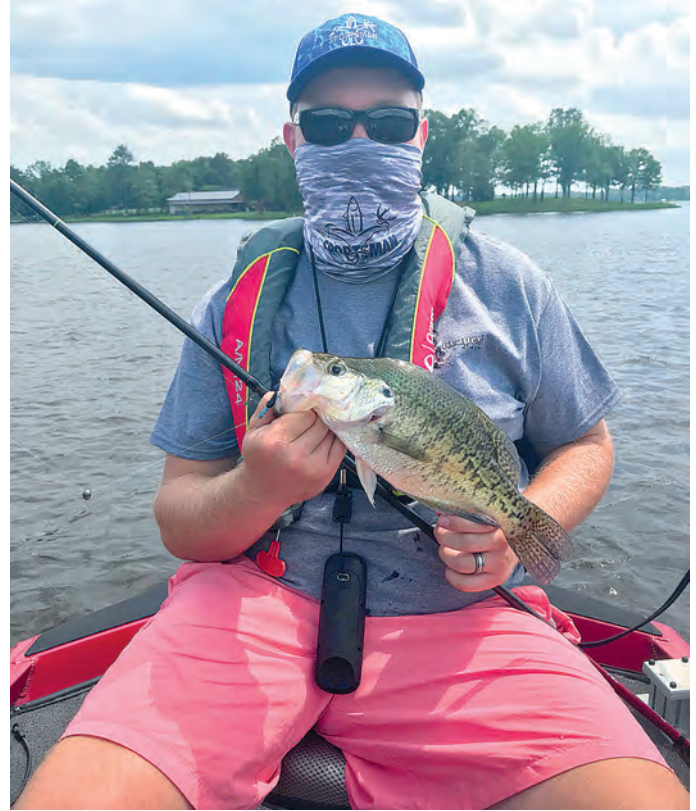


Photo by Justin Adkins

body from Gill Reaper Lures. He can inject scent into the jighead, which is important when fish have trouble deciding whether or not to strike. Normally, Poe uses 8-pound line and a small split-shot to make the jig sink faster in deeper water, but this varies depending on conditions.

"If I notice light strikes and fish running from my jig, I remove

the split-shot from the line so it will sink more naturally," Poe said. "Being able to inject the scent dough into the jighead also allows me to keep a smaller presentation instead of kneading it onto the hook."

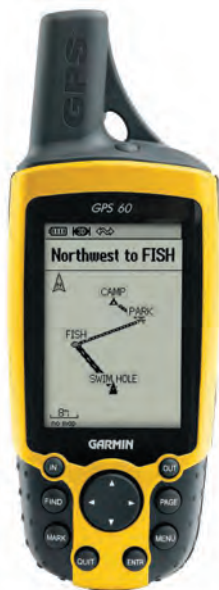
He likes to use the scented dough to make the fish strike harder and hold the jig longer.

Poe said Cypress Bayou's crappie will become extremely spooky when low-pressure systems move in; they'll scatter at the approach of a boat and trolling motor. When this happens, he changes techniques, going to a tiny, micro crankbait and fishing it over flooded timber and around laydowns.

"Casting the small crankbaits allows us to stay further away from the fish than when we were vertical-jigging, and this keeps the fish from running from the boat," Poe said. "When the weather starts heating up, the action starts heating up." ■

— Justin Adkins

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You can catch big bluegill like this mixed in with the catfish at False River.

## FINDING CATFISH IS EASY AT FALSE RIVER

**T**he catfish lake that south Louisiana anglers know and love is in Lafourche Parish, more than 100 miles from the Pointe Coupee Parish town of New Roads.

However, those who have launched from New Roads and the surrounding area to fish False River this spring and early summer understand why the Central Louisiana oxbow could easily be renamed Catfish Lake.

It could also be called giant bluegill and chinquapin lake, too.

All spring and summer, fishermen have been finding abundant channel, blue and flathead catfish across the lake. Often, those



Colby Ardoin with a nice-sized catfish caught in March.



anglers are searching for bluegill and chinquapin, aka lake runners, shellcrackers, redear sunfish, and end up catching 20 to 30 or more catfish mixed in with big bream.

And the bream rival and exceed the size of those in more famous panfish haunts like Lake Verret and Henderson Swamp.

Fishing for and finding catfish has been easy. All one needs is an adjustable or sliding cork, a split shot and a long-shank panfish hook and a bucket of worms. The fish have been holding on a variety of structures including bulkheads, docks, shoreline riprap, brush piles, drop-offs and the north flats gravel beds.

Early morning catfish have been mixed with bass along bulkheads, gorging themselves on the lake's extraordinary shad population. As the sun gets higher in the sky, catfish will move off the banks to docks and submerged structure.

On the flats, fish are holding tight to gravel beds, which are

scattered along the north end in 4 to 5 feet of water. The best way to locate flats cats is to drift along with the wind or to bump along with the trolling motor with a ¼ or ⅜-ounce drop shot rig until the weight begins dragging across a noticeably harder bottom.

Most of the flats catfish have been in the 10- to 14-inch range, while those on shoreline structures and docks have been in the 2- to 6-pound class. Much larger catfish can be found, biting live or cut shad or chunks of bream or even hitting spinnerbaits or plastic worms. Louisiana allows 100 catfish per day per angler in aggregate among channels, blues and flatheads, 25 of those can be less than 11-inch channels, 12-inch blues or 14-inch flatheads.

The return of the catfish and bream along with some trophy bass catches this spring is being celebrated by the scores of Baton Rouge-area anglers who grew up fishing False River but unfortunately watched the lake decline severely over the last three decades.

Efforts to improve drainage in surrounding farm land and prevent property flooding inundated False River with sediment, covering the clam beds on the north and south flats and killing the extensive submerged vegetation that made the oxbow one of the most productive big bass lakes in the country in the 1980s.

With the loss of the vegetation and with sediment covering critical bass, bream and catfish spawning grounds, rough fish like buffalo, gar and carp began taking over the lake.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pointe Coupee Parish Policy Jury and the state legislature worked to help revive the lake. Sediment traps were installed on drainage canals to stop silt from entering the lake. The lake was drawn down by a couple feet in 2014 to dredge the south end and create a small island. In 2016, it was lowered 5½ feet from early September through January 2017 to allow sediments to compact and vegetation to

take root, resulting in much better spawning habitat for gamefish. The lake was lowered again in late 2019 and future draw-downs are expected.

Gravel beds were built on the north flats to mimic the historic clam shells that attracted spawning chinquapin and bass. And, future restoration efforts call for the installation of artificial reefs to build upon the drastic improvements in water and fishing quality anglers are experiencing this year. ■

— Chris Macaluso

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# THE BEST CONDITIONS FOR ATCHAFALAYA BASIN FISHING SUCCESS

Falling water in the Atchafalaya River means great fishing for all species of bream in the Atchafalaya Basin.

**W**hile many factors come into play in successfully fishing the Atchafalaya Basin, what the Atchafalaya River is doing dominates decisions on whether and where to go fishing.

Two things are important: the level of the river and whether it is falling, rising or at a standstill.

Like pretty much everybody who fishes the vast swamp, John Langlois is a river-gauge watcher.

Unlike many, though, he doesn't monitor the Butte Larose gauge. Instead, he favors the gauge at Krotz Springs.

"The best fishing starts at 14 feet and

falling," Langlois said. "It's prime for everything. By about 10 feet, activity slows for sac-a-lait. I feel that a lot of them hang in deeper water as the water becomes more stagnant and hotter.

"But it's still good for bluegill, goggle-eye and bass. That holds until I start to prep for hunting season."

Water color is important in fishing the Basin, as well.

"Look for water that's not muddy but not black-clear," Langlois said. "I like in between green to milky root beer color.

"Don't shy away from murky water; I've caught a lot of fish in murky water."

Fish just don't bite well in muddy water,

he said, and black-clear water holds no oxygen and hence no fish.

Timing-wise, Langlois stressed the best fishing occurs after receding water levels have exposed bayou and canal banks, a common indicator of where to fish for experienced Atchafalaya hands.

"I love to fish cloudy days, too," Langlois said. "When it's real clear, hot and still, the fish can almost quit biting in the middle of the day.

"When it gets breezy and cloudy, they start biting." ■



Andy Randall, 11, who attends Episcopal Middle School in Baton Rouge, had a great day bream fishing in her neighborhood.

# TOP BREAM BAITS

By Kinny Haddox

**B**ass fishermen aren't the only ones with a wide variety of lures from which to choose. Bream fishermen do, too. Here are top picks for a summer bream buffet from Dr. Ray Jones, aka Dr. Bream, and why he picks them:

- **Crickets.** It's probably the first bait a bream is going to hit in summer. They don't have to think about it; they just eat it.

From the fisherman's view, they are easy to catch and get on the hook quickly. That's important when fish are really biting.

- **Red worms.** Of all the bream baits with which you can fish, red worms give the greatest confidence level. anytime, anywhere. They would be ranked first except for the mess and time it takes to get them on the hook.

- **Wax worms, aka meal worms.** Technically, there are some differences in those two, but as far as the fish know, they are just good bait. You usually don't get as many nibblers with these worms because you can catch most fish that hit them.

- **Spinners.** Look for mini-spinnerbaits that have plastic bodies and a tiny spinner blades above them. They can be fished fast or slow, and can cover a lot more ground than live bait.

They work best when the fish are really aggressive and you are fishing more open water. And you don't have to rebait your hook after a catch.

- **Artificials.** Fake corn, little scent-infused plastic worms and the like will catch fish. They are easy to keep and won't die on you. Again, they work best when the fish are really aggressive.

- **Catalpa worms.** This is one gourmet item that could move all these baits down a notch were it more accessible and available.

"To be honest, the No. 1 bait for me would be catalpa worms,

but those are pretty hard to find," Jones said. "I love them. You can catch a half-dozen good fish off one piece of bait. They are tough, and the fish love them."

There's more. Fishing with a popping bug is great for shallow-water bream. It's also good to help locate spawning beds.

Then, there are grasshoppers (the slender, green ones) and snails or grubs.

Grass shrimp are good if you can catch them, and don't forget tiny crawfish. These are particularly good for chinquapin, aka shellcrackers.

Basically, Jones said, you can catch bream on just about anything you can thread on a hook. Did we mention little pieces of chopped-up hot dogs or corn niblets?

And Jones' background in botany can't be ignored when he suggests that he even once caught bream on the small red berry of an ornamental eleagnus plant.

But there is one bait that bream seem to pass up on the bream buffet. In the summer, you can often find swarms of black crickets out at night around street lights and such.

"One summer, my dad got me an old drum and painted a broad, white, glossy ring around the inside of the drum," Jones said. "He sent me out to fill it with those swarming crickets, and I did. I must've had 5,000 of them.

"If I ever caught a fish on one of them, I can't remember it. It's usually late in the summer when this happens, and these mature crickets have a hard shell. For some reason, just don't appeal to the bream." ■

**GIVE SNAPPER FULL MEAL ➤**

Leslie Golden with a big snapper from a trip last July with WhipaSnapa Charters.



# GIVE SOW SNAPPER 'THE FULL MEAL DEAL'

BILOXI CAPTAIN BELIEVES IN THE 'BIG BAIT, BIG FISH' MANTRA

By Bobby Cleveland

**C**apt. Robert Earl McDaniel decided that the fish pecking around our baits weren't what he was looking for and got serious about his search for his favorite fishing target, the ones he calls "the sows."

As in big female red snapper, which at full maturity can:

- Surpass 30 pounds;
- Fill a fish box even at the modern limit of two per angler;
- Break a grown man's spirit and strain his muscles.

"Here, drop this down there, and if I was you, I'd have a good firm hole on that pole," McDaniel said, grinning.

This time, instead of a small, 2-inch slice of cut bait, this rod/reel combo had a big, 5- or 6-ounce chunk of king mackerel — probably more like a half-pound of meat.

"That's a pork chop; that's what the sows like," he said. "I've had enough of this pecking from little fish that can't even swallow the hook. Let's offer them a grownup-sized portion. I know there's big ones down there; I can see them on the graph."

The bait sank quickly, dropping through the little nippers too fast for them to grab a bite, until it hit the bottom 128 feet below our feet.

"Reel it up about 20 feet and get ready," McDaniel said as he prepped a second rod with another big hook, a heavier weight and, of course, a pork chop portion of mackerel sliced right through the backbone. "Won't be much of a warning. It'll just suck it down and keep on going."

Which is exactly what happened, a millisecond later.

The stout rod — resembling a full-fledged tuna stick, like a broom stick with a rubber handle — bent in a giant arc, bigger than you'd think geometrically possible. The fisherman uttered a deep guttural moan, sounding more painful than you'd think possible.

"Yep, that's a sow," McDaniel said. "Enjoy the ride."

It took a good 5 minutes to break the fish's initial power, another

5 minutes to start moving it up the water column, and five more to get it up all 128 feet to the surface.

It took two men to get the 34-pound red snapper over the rail. By then, the second pole was bent in another arc, and a second angler was groaning under the strain.

"With big snapper, it's go big or go home," McDaniel said. "When they get ready to eat, they don't mess around, and I don't know that they're never not ready to eat a big pork chop piece of cut bait."

Two hours later, four two-man limits of two red snapper each, nearly 200 pounds worth, were iced in the box. There was little room for anything else.

## GO BIG OR GO HOME

"When the limit is two per person, as a captain, you try to get the biggest you can for your customers," said McDaniel, owner of the aptly named WhipaSnapa Charter boat out of Biloxi, Miss. "That's why we threw back those smaller keepers that were biting when we got to the (oil) rig. Those were nice 'eaters' — 18 to 25 inches, some in the 5- to 6-pound range — and we could have limited on those quick.

"But I knew there were some big fish there. I could mark them. They were suspended about 20 feet off the bottom, above the smaller ones. That's why I had y'all drop to the bottom and reel it up. I wanted you in their strike zone."

Tristan Armer, an attorney and avid fisherman from Ocean Springs, has a different philosophy that serves him well, as evidenced by a May trip off the Gulf coast. Pinpointing the exact depth of the fish is his key.

"The size of the bait doesn't seem to matter to me as much as where the bait is dangling," Armer said. "Those fish (in May) were caught in 95 feet of water but the fish were hooked at 45 to 50



Mitchell Prokasy (right) and Shannon Prokasy with sow snapper. Mitchell's weighed 22 pounds.

feet. On the sonar, the fish were swimming around the reef and a good 50 to 70 feet above the reef."

As for bait, Armer used two different types.

"Two were caught on a half piece of a good-sized pogey and the others on half a piece of good-sized squid," he said. "The bite was slower, and when it's slower, the fish are more select. At least that's what my anecdotal fishing evidence says."

McDaniel remains adamant about the big-bait, big-fish theory.

"You noticed the sows didn't hit anything until we dropped the big pork chop down there, and there was no pecking like you normally get when snapper fishing," he said. "They just come up, eat it and go own about their business until you set the hook. Then, they aren't so happy."

That day, a few years ago, was not the typical sow snapper day, McDaniel said, simply "because there's no such thing as typical with them. Sows vary in their positioning in the water column.



Jodi and Dane Landry with a red snapper taken the last weekend of May in Grand Isle.

## GOT RED SNAPPER PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

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Some days, they are bottom-huggers. Some days, like today, they are suspended just off the bottom. But, there's also days when I find them about 40 feet deep in 200 feet of water." ■

*The Gulf of Mexico, Mississippi and Louisiana red snapper seasons are currently open. The limit is two red snapper per day per person with a 16-inch minimum length. Mississippi's first segment of its 2020 season runs through July 12, when it will close and the catch determined before the second part is set. In Louisiana, the season will remain open until recreational landings approach or reach the state's private recreational allocation of 784,332 pounds.*

**SPECIES SPOTLIGHT:  
RED SNAPPER >**

## SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope

The majority of red snapper harvested from the Gulf of Mexico are between 2 and 7 years old.



# SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: RED SNAPPER

THIS SPECIES IS COVETED BY RECREATIONAL ANGLERS

**R**ed snapper, *Lutjanus campechanus*, are large snappers that are important to recreational and commercial fisheries. These fish are found from North Carolina down the east coast, throughout the Gulf of Mexico, and to the Yucatan Peninsula.

These fish are most often found near reef habitats, livebottom habitats, platforms, shipwrecks and artificial reefs. They live in three distinct habitats in their lifetimes. As juveniles, they live in mud/sand bottom areas relatively close to shore. Around 3 years old, they move to structure. At about the age of 10, they move off of structure and into very isolated, deep waters.

While many offshore species migrate long distances as seasons change, red snapper travel very little, other than for changing habitats as they age. Red snappers that are tagged as part of research studies are often caught within a mile or two of where they were tagged.

Fisheries biologists note that red snapper are very unlike most other fish in an interesting way. They can estimate the age of most species by the size of the fish. This is completely unreliable when it comes to red snapper. A 5-year-old red snapper can be as little as 13 inches long or up to 32 inches in length.

Female red snappers reach sexual maturity between 2 and 6 years old. Males usually mature at younger ages. Their spawn-

ing season runs from May through September. During most years, May through July sees the majority of spawning, but that deviates in years with severe weather during those months.

## CONTROVERSIAL MANAGEMENT

During the spawn, females release a batch of eggs every five or six days. These releases may be as few as 1,000 or as many as 2.5 million eggs, depending on the fish's size. Throughout one spawning season, mature larger females can drop up to 75 million eggs.

Snappers up to 58 years old have been recorded, but most don't reach the age of 20. In both commercial and recreational sectors, the vast majority of harvested red snapper are between 2 and 7 years old.

Red snappers are opportunistic feeders. Their diets consist of just about anything they encounter that will fit in their mouths. Other fish, tunicates, squid, crabs, shrimp and zooplankton make up much of their diet.

Red snappers have been a constant source of contention between anglers and



**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.

Evan Clark caught this great red snapper off one of the Timbalier rigs out of Port Fourchon last July.



fisheries managers. Lots of controversy surrounding surveys have plagued the efforts to protect these fish, which are seen as overfished in some areas, but widely abundant in others.

Short harvesting seasons mean anglers targeting other fish often catch — and must release — many quality red snapper throughout the year. Due to the depths these fish are usually caught, this often results in the death of released fish, adding further concern to the stability of the species.

## LOUISIANA RECORD IS ALSO WORLD RECORD

Red snapper have a sloped profile, and their bodies are bright red on the backs, a lighter red or pinkish color along the sides, and pinkish-white on their bellies. They have red irises, medium to large scales and a spiny dorsal fin with 10 spines and 14 soft dorsal rays. They are sometimes confused with vermilion snapper and cubera snapper. Smaller red snapper often have a large dark spot on their upper sides, but these almost always fade completely away as the fish grows.

The Louisiana state-record red snapper weighed 50.25 pounds and was caught by Capt. Doc Kennedy in June 1996. Kennedy caught the fish in South Timbalier Block 185. This fish is also listed as the IGFA world record.

John J. Bullock caught Mississippi's state record red snapper in August 1995. The fish weighed 37 pounds, 11.2 ounces. ■

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# VENICE'S BLUEWATER FISHING LOOKING UP

## Tuna, Mahi, snapper head July's list

**V**enice has been called the "Tuna Town," and for good reason. This small fishing village at the very tip of Louisiana is where the Mississippi River empties into the Gulf of Mexico, which creates the ideal conditions for big gamefish.

Last year, yellowfin tuna fishing didn't compare to previous years, partly due to spring flooding and the resulting dead zone. This year, that's not going to be an issue, as the catches have been showing, according to Capt. Martha Spencer, co-host of Bayou Wild TV and a mate for Southern Catch Outfitters.

"Summer fishing is looking better; it's all rig-fishing about 50 to 70 miles offshore," she said. "During this time of year, the blue-water is usually further out, but it's worth it. The big mahis are showing up with the rip lines. Snapper season is always good whenever it is in. And swordfish have been relatively good so far. Venice has definitely been producing more this year than the three previous years."

Summer fishing season in Louisiana, June through August, is known for quality weather conditions for being out on the water and the diverse species that are relatively easy to target, as long as you know what to look for. Around June and July, the grass lines and bluewater rip lines begin to appear, which are excellent for trolling for pelagic species or sight-casting for more common offshore species that frequent Louisiana's waters. Red snapper season is open until the quota is met, and trophy yellowfin tuna are not uncommon.

"It's been an exceptional tuna season so far," Spencer said. "We are catching tuna pushing into the three digits, which isn't standard size for this time of year. Standard size is usually 50 to 60 pounds."

Aside from the yellowfin tuna and red snapper, anglers have the opportunity to hook up with tripletail, gag grouper, red and



Big yellowfin tuna have been common around rigs about 50 to 70 miles south of Venice this season.



Swordfish aren't a common catch out of Venice, but this spring and summer have been better than usual.

yellowfin grouper, scamp, cobia, king mackerel and the rare rainbow runners. Marlin and sailfish are occasionally caught offshore, too. Most trips end with a cooler full of fillets. However, the amount of fillets is dependent on whether the livewell is filled with the right bait.

"The key is to catch more than you think you will need," she said. "You can never have too much bait. Pogies (menhaden) don't survive well in bluewater. They will work for a bit at the beginning of July, but don't count on pogies being reliable as the month progresses. Bring Sabiki rigs or a heavy cast net to catch live bait such as cracks, discos and hornbellies around the rigs. You will need them for live chumming, which is more effective than chumming with dead bait."

Offshore fishing in Venice should be consistent through July. There will be little difference between the beginning and end of the month when it comes to the bite, aside from the common day-to-day fluctuations. ■

— Dora Lambert

# JUST BROWSING AROUND

■ By Dave Moreland

FOOD PLOTS ASIDE, NATURAL BROWSE IS THE MOST-IMPORTANT OF ANY FOOD AVAILABLE TO DEER IN LOUISIANA. LEARN TO RECOGNIZE WHICH PLANTS ARE IMPORTANT AND WHEN CAN HELP YOU MANAGE YOUR DEER POPULATION TO THE FULLEST.



**W**hen it comes to a club or landowner having a quality deer-management program, nutrition is at the top of the list. As the saying goes, one is what one eats. Most hunters are looking for adult bucks with racks that score 130 Boone & Crockett points or better. That's a pretty tall order for much of Louisiana's deer habitat; it's not going to happen in a dominant pine forest. Urban sprawl is having an impact on much of the mixed pine/hardwood habitat, and that is having an affect on herds in many parishes.

In southeast Louisiana, state biologists reduced the deer limit to three in response to the idea of declining deer numbers. Not all of that area has seen this decline. On our property in East Feliciana Parish, deer numbers have remained good, as they have in most of the parish. The most-productive deer habitat is bottomland hardwoods, located in agricultural areas. The fertile crescent formed by the Red River and Mississippi River is the heart of big buck country.

A deer browse survey will reveal to a landowner or club what plant species are on the landscape, the quality of the forage, how much quality forage is available and what forages deer are eating. A browse survey can also provide hunters with a good estimate of deer numbers. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has biologists willing to assist clubs and landowners with survey work. Now is the time to be looking at the habitat.

On our habitat, I have seen the browsing pressure go from moderate in early March to heavy in late May. Spring and summer are the growing months for whitetails. Bucks are increasing in body size and growing a new set of antlers. Does are pregnant and will be dropping fawns as early as May. If quality forage is available, the response of deer to good nutrition will be positive. If nutrition is lacking, body growth, antler growth and fawn production will be poor. Consequently, nutrition is the key for a successful program.

**THE PLANTS DEER EAT >**

## THE PLANTS DEER EAT

Deer forage can be listed by groups: trees, shrubs, vines, herbaceous plants and agriculture. In spring and summer, the focus of nutrition should be on plants rich in protein. During fall and winter, the nutritional needs of deer changes to forages that provide fat and carbohydrates — foods that will help maintain deer during the stressful winter.

The key is to maintain habitat that will provide the foods that deer need during the changing seasons. Intense pine management has eliminated the mast foods — acorns and pecans — from the landscape and that is why we see so much emphasis on feeding corn. If managers learn to recognize the important species in these plant groups, they will be ahead of the game. Managers can determine if their habitat provides the nutrition deer need and make plans to improve deficiencies.

### TREES

Forest hardwoods provide deer with browse and mast — both hard and soft — and fruit. Important species in this group are the oaks, pecans, persimmons, black cherry, elm, red mulberry, pears,



This clump of Asters has been heavily browsed. **BELOW:** Verbena is a green, square-stem forb with opposite leaves that is readily eaten by deer.





**TOP:** Red mulberry leaf and fruit; this tree can be heavily browsed because the leaves have a high calcium content. **ABOVE:** Elderberry is a woody shrub with opposite compound leaves and can be used as an indicator species of habitat quality.

crab apples and mayhaws. Of course, these are not all of the hardwood species that provide browse, fruit or mast for deer, but these are some of the best. From a browse perspective, deer are feeding on the tree regeneration, seedlings that are one to three years old. Oaks can be heavily browsed in the spring, and sometimes, it is necessary to cage oaks. Black cherry provides both browse and soft fruit. Red mulberry is an excellent tree for deer. The leaves are rich in calcium, and the black fruit is eaten by everything.

## SHRUBS

Important shrubs for deer include elderberry, arrowwood, deciduous holly, dogwoods and privet. Elderberry is at the top of the list, and if elderberry is missing on your habitat, a red flag should go up; it is time to determine why. Privet is considered an invasive species, but the fact is, it is a mainstay in the year-round diet of deer in many areas of Louisiana.

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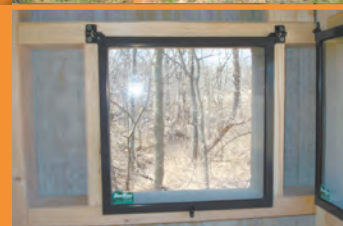
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## VINES

Vines are important from a browse standpoint. Top vine species for deer include trumpet creeper, muscadine (browse and fruit), smilax or greenbriar, blackberry and dewberry, yellow jessamine and honeysuckle. Smilax, aka greenbriar, is a good species to use in evaluating your property. If all you have are greenbriar stems with very few leaves, you may have too many deer for the habitat. Trumpet creeper is a quality browse that I find to be the No. 1 browsed plant on many browse surveys. Deer will eat shade-tolerant vines such as poison ivy and Virginia creeper.



## HERBACEOUS PLANTS

There are many species of native plants that deer will browse, and for the most part, they make up a large portion of a deer's diet. This group is often referred to as forbs, and the species deer eat varies from season to season. In spring and fall, the



Blackberry makes large, climbing vines that arch over, forming large briar patches. This plant is a mainstay in a deer's diet.  
ABOVE LEFT: Dewberry is easily recognized by its spiny red stems; deer browse leaves and stems and fruit.

sunflower family provides lots of forage for deer. Asters are commonly eaten in the spring, as are the various species of goldenrod. Verbena, a square-stem green plant with opposite leaves, is heavily eaten during the spring and summer and is a top-notch deer forage. A well-fertilized weed patch can do as much good for deer as an agricultural green patch. Deer readily eat weeds such as teaweed or leaf flower.

## AGRICULTURE >

Privet is woody shrub common to Louisiana that is eaten year-round by white-tail deer.



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This patch of clover has been mowed down by heavy deer browsing.

### AGRICULTURE

Clover should be at the top of this list. Planted in the fall, a good clover patch will provide deer with high-quality protein forage during the important spring and summer growing season. Of course, peas and beans also provide great nutrition for deer. American jointvetch is my go-to summer and fall plant for deer. This legume will provide forage until the first frost and the bowhunter with a great stand location.

There are hundreds of different plant species that deer will browse, but not all pro-



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vide the good nutrition deer need. If a manager learns to recognize these important ones, he will be able to develop a sound deer program that should produce desired results. If the hunter learns to recognize these important browse plants, he will have a leg up on other hunters. Literature is available from many sources about the plants that deer eat in Louisiana that will help you learn identify them in the field. ■



David Moreland is a former wildlife biologist with LDWF, having served as the State Deer Biologist for 13 years and as Chief of the Wildlife Division for three years. He and his wife Prudy live in Baton Rouge and own property in East Feliciana Parish.

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# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



**Tim Vallet**

Tim Vallet poses with a 7½-year-old Kentucky buck that green scored 160 as a typical 8-point.



**Brecken Figueiredo**

Brecken Figueiredo hit the trifecta! He killed a 225-pound sow on Jan. 10, a doe on Jan. 11 and this would-be 11-point — two points were broken off — on Jan. 12 in St. Landry Parish.



**Trent Sparacino**

Trent Sparacino was excited about his bass caught at Richard Yancey WMA.



**William, Kate & June Jans**

William, Kate and June Jans spent Mother's Day fishing Lake D'Arbonne for these nice sac-a-lait.



**Caden Bruce**

Caden Bruce landed this beautiful Mahi while fishing aboard "Chaos" out of Port Fourchon.

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# PICK 'OLD' FOR 'NEW'

■ By Andy Douglas

**T**he dog days of summer are upon us — lots of sportsmen and women are spending time power-trolling for crap-pie, punching through grass beds for big bass, fishing deep for killer cats or dreaming of late-summer alligator hunting.

Other sportsmen, like die-hard deer hunters, have other things on their mind.

It's the best time of year to buy that perfect, new deer rifle you've always dreamed of — you know, the one that never misses, puts them down in their tracks and doesn't leave a bruise on your shoulder.

Does it exist? You bet it does. This time-proven quarter-bore, the .25-06, which has been around for a century, could be the right rifle for you.

## HISTORY

The .25-06, aka quarter-bore, came into being a little more

than 100 years ago, in 1912, when Charles Newton necked-down the .30-06 Springfield cartridge to accept a .25-35 Winchester bullet. It was a wildcat cartridge for half a century, meaning that rifles were custom builds and ammo couldn't be bought off the shelf; it had to be hand-loaded.

Things changed in 1969 when Remington started producing its Model 700 rifle in .25-06, along with ammo. It was marketed and quickly became known as “the western cartridge” due to its effectiveness on deer and antelope in open country.

## WHY BUY?

The .25-06 is a hunter's cartridge and was developed to kill deer-sized game with authority out to 400 yards. Many professional hunters worldwide consider it the perfect killing cartridge, possibly due to the combination of high velocity, good bullet weight and low recoil.



**CONSIDER THE .25-06, A CENTURY OLD CARTRIDGE, IF YOU'RE GETTING READY TO LOOK FOR YOUR NEXT DEER RIFLE. IT MIGHT JUST BE THE BEST PURCHASE YOU EVER MAKE.**

"I bought my .25-06 in 1989; it was a used gun, and I got it from a friend," says Matt Shell of Brookhaven. "I like it because of the flat trajectory and low recoil. It's also extremely accurate."

There is a lot of hype and attention given today to newer and long-range calibers such as the 6.5 Creedmoor, causing the old quarter-bore to fly under the radar. The .25-06 isn't a magnum cartridge, and isn't a 1,000-yard shooter for plinking steel. It is, however, a killing machine and, make no mistake, it delivers bullets at blistering speeds.

#### **PERFORMANCE ➤**

Lincoln County's Matt Shell took out this gray fox using his .25-06. ABOVE: Remington offers the traditional Model 700 in .25-06, and it offers upgrades like the Model 700 Long Range with a Bell & Carlson stock, aluminum bedding block, and 26-inch heavy contour barrel.



**PICK 'OLD' FOR 'NEW'**

**PERFORMANCE**

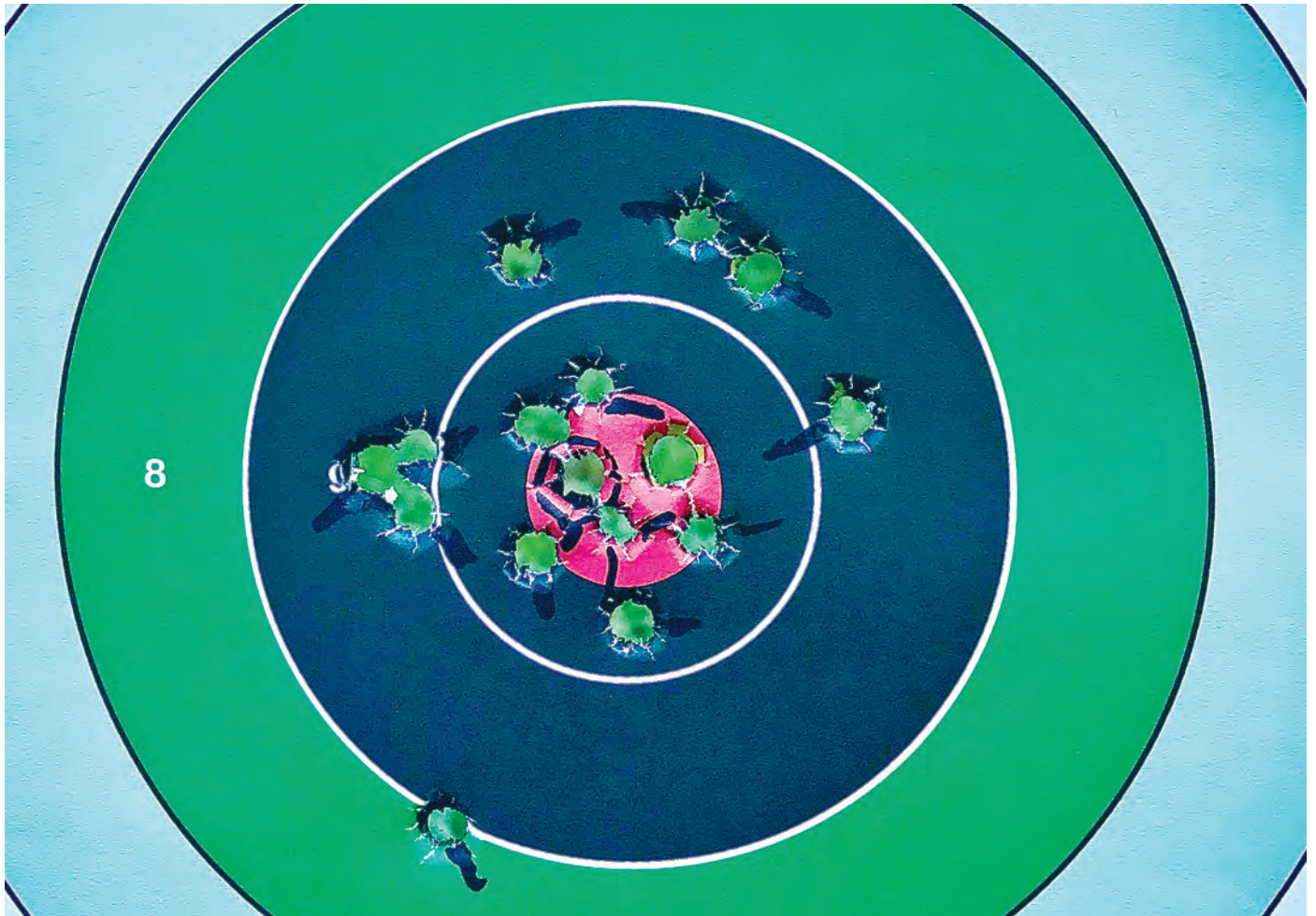
The .25-06 cartridge is not a magnum load, but it delivers bullets at blistering speeds. Shown here are the 7mm Mag (right), the .25-06 (center) and 22-250 (left). BELOW: The .25-06 is a flat-shooting, low-recoil and deadly accurate deer load.

The 6.5 Creedmoor will outperform the .25-06 past the 500-yard mark due to its better-developed ballistic coefficients. Arguably, however, any shot longer than 500 yards for the average hunter could be considered unethical.

The .25-06 will make all other calibers of rifles, including the 6.5 Creedmoor, blush with the numbers it produces out to 400 yards. It's a speed demon and will deliver a 115-grain Nosler Partition bullet in a Federal factory load at 3,030 feet per second out of the muzzle. The same load sighted-in at 200 yards is 1.5 inches high at 100 yards, 6.8 inches low at 300 and 20 inches low at 400. If you go with a slightly lighter bullet, the numbers get even more impressive.

"I upgraded to a Hogue stock and put a Steiner 3x15x56 scope on my .25-06," Shell said, "It's my 'go-to' gun. It shoots a Federal Premium 117-grain BTSP extremely well. I guess that over the years, I have killed two or three hundred deer and hogs, combined, with it — plus a few coyotes."

The biggest downfall to the .25-06's performance would be that it doesn't hold its accuracy in rifles with shorter barrels. For optimal accuracy, choose a rifle with a barrel at least 26 inches long. Anyone who loads their own cartridges needs to know that it also needs a slower-burning powder for optimum accuracy. Factory loads already have this in consideration.





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

Matt Shell of Brookhaven will choose a .25-06 every time. He whacked this 308-pound hog with his Remington 700 in .25-06.



**NUMEROUS USES**

The .25-06 has been used to harvest every known big-game animal in North America, including grizzly bear. It's a little too much gun for squirrel and ground hog-sized critters and really not the best choice for elk or bear. It's absolutely lethal to deer, hogs and coyotes in the hands of a southern hunter.

**AVAILABLE LOADS**

The most-popular companies producing loads for the .25-06 are Barnes, Nosler, Federal, Remington, Winchester and Hornady. Reloading supplies are plentiful, too. The best-killing bullets for the .25-06 are the Nosler Partition, Swift A-frame, and Barnes TTSX. A Nosler Partition bullet in .25-06 traveling around 3,000 fps is devastating to a whitetail.

**LAST WORD**

The old quarter-bore is largely overlooked and forgotten by many hunters today. If you are considering a new deer rifle, find someone who owns one and talk to them about it.

"I have access to plenty of other guns: 7 Mags, .30-06s, .270s and more," Shell said. "But I will grab the .25-06 every time; I know what it will do, and I have that much confidence in it."

This traditional deer rifle is quick and flat-shooting with low recoil. It's very attractive when you take a hard look at it. When it comes to deer rifles, it really is the total package. ■



Andy Douglas is an outdoor writer and photographer from Brookhaven. A native of Lincoln County, he's chased deer, turkeys, bass and most anything else the past 35 years. He lives the outdoor lifestyle and is passionate about sharing that with others through stories and photos.

**VENOMOUS SNAKE I.D. >**

**SALTWATER**

**STATE REGULATIONS (0-10.357 miles<sup>^</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>^</sup> & Black <sup>^</sup>	24" TL	4/day (aggregate)*
Scamp <sup>^</sup>	16" TL	
Nassau & Goliath	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
Yellowfin <sup>^</sup>	20" TL	
Red <sup>^</sup>	20" TL	2 of 4 grouper total
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>^</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.

# SNAKE I.D.

## LOUISIANA'S 7 VENOMOUS SNAKES

By Kevin Hood

Photo by CJ Hillard

**L**ove them or hate them, snakes are a part of life in Louisiana. I manage a snake-identification and education page on Facebook called Louisiana Snake ID. My passion for snakes began at a young age as my mother helped me learn about them and catch the ones in our yard. I became more and more fascinated with them over the years, having caught ribbon snakes, kingsnakes and water snakes.

After graduating from LSU, I married my high-school sweetheart; we have two sons. I've shared my passion for the outdoors with them since they were born and have taught them to respect snakes rather than fear them. Children who are taught to fear snakes in general usually grow up to be adults who say things like "The only good snake is a dead snake." This is a common phrase that couldn't be farther from the truth, as all snakes, even venomous ones, serve a vital purpose in the ecosystem that helps to keep our hunting and fishing grounds healthy.

People fear things they don't understand, so we thought if we could help them learn more about snakes then they would be less likely to kill them. Our Louisiana Snake ID page was created in 2017 for this purpose, and since then, we have won over countless numbers of people who used to believe that common, yet untrue mantra mentioned above. We respond to dozens of messages daily from people needing help identifying snakes and have more than 12,000 followers. Our Facebook LIVE videos have

been getting tens of thousands of views, and we have up-close encounters with snakes on our YouTube channel: LA Snake Boyz. We are so thankful social media gives us a platform to educate and share our "Snake Life" with others who want to learn.

You can visit [www.louisianasnakeid.com](http://www.louisianasnakeid.com) for all of our social media and contact information.

### VENOMOUS SNAKES

Forty-eight species of snakes can be found in Louisiana, but only seven of them are venomous.

There are three different venomous rattlesnakes. The rattles on the end of their tails are made of interlocking rings of keratin, which is the same material our fingernails are made of. Similar to a dog growling or a cat hissing as a warning, a rattlesnake will vibrate its tail to make a distinct and chilling sound in an effort to make the potential threat go away. As part of the pit viper family, they use heat pits to sense their prey's body heat. They are typically ambush predators that get close, then curl up and wait for the prey to cross their path. Their venom is hemotoxic, which kills blood cells and causes tissue damage. While they have elliptical (cat-eye) pupils, pupil shape is unreliable for a few reasons:

- You have to get within striking range to see their pupils.
- Pupils dilate in low light, appearing round.
- Many venomous snakes have round pupils.

### EASTERN DIAMONDBACK RATTLESNAKE (CROTALUS ADAMANTEUS)

It's the largest venomous snake in North America, with a diet of rodents and occasionally birds. Usually a brown to brownish-yellow color overlaid with a series of dark, brown to black diamonds along its spine that are outlined by a row of cream or yellowish scales. Generally between 3½ and 5½ feet long, they can grow to better than 7 feet. Due to habitat destruction and predation by humans, approximately five have been spotted in our state in the past decade in the eastern Florida parishes. These snakes are listed on the critically endangered list.



Photo by CJ Hillard



Photo by Kyler Hood

## **TIMBER RATTLESNAKE, AKA CANEBRAKE RATTLESNAKE (CROTALUS HORRIDUS)**

It's diet consists of rodents, squirrels, rabbits, birds and other small animals. Colors can range from a light tan/grey to darker browns, but its identifying feature is the black chevron, or "V", pattern along its back that points to the tail. You may hear them called "canebrake" rattlesnakes in areas with sugar cane fields. It can reach up to 6 feet in length but average around 4½ feet as adults. They often won't rattle when you initially come upon them. Found all over Louisiana, but are uncommon in the south-west portion of the state and along the coastline.



Photo by CJ Hillard

## **PYGMY RATTLESNAKE (SISTRURUS MILIARIUS)**

The smallest rattlesnake in the world, the pygmy rattlesnake's diet is mice, lizards, snakes, frogs and birds. It can vary in color, but is typically a silver or gray background color with equally spaced dark brown or black spots down the back and sides. It has a dark stripe that runs through the eye and extends to the back of the head and may have a faint orange stripe down the center of the back. Average adult length is about 15 inches, with a maximum length of only 25 inches in Louisiana. Found mainly in the Florida parishes and western portions of Louisiana, but have become increasingly rare in the state. They do not occur along the coast or on the western edges of the Mississippi River.



Photo by Kyler Hood

## **EASTERN COPPERHEAD (AGKISTRODON CONTORTRIX)**

The eastern copperhead is one of the most-common and easily recognized venomous snakes in Louisiana. This species occurs across the state, except for the coastline and prairie of southwest Louisiana. Adults reach a maximum length of about 50 inches, with the average adult about 36 inches. The copperhead is characterized by a light grey to orange background color with a darker orange or brown pattern along the entire body that is often and accurately described as "Hershey Kisses" when viewed from the side, or hourglass figures when viewed from above. Their heads are typically slightly darker than their bodies. Juvenile copperheads will have a bright yellow/green tail tip that they use as a lure to attract insects, frogs and small mammals. This brightly colored tail will fade away as the snake grows and approaches adult size.

**CORAL SNAKES ➤**

We have two types of venomous coral snakes. They are NOT members of the pit viper family but rather the Elapidae family with short, fixed, hollow fangs in the front of their upper jaw. Coral snakes are highly secretive, spending most of their lives under logs and leaves or underground. They are small and slender with a blunt head that is solid black to just behind the eyes, which have round pupils. While their mouths are not very large, they do inject a neurotoxic venom that causes paralysis and respiratory failure in their prey. Their main diet consists of small snakes, lizards and the occasional rodent. They have sometimes been known to cannibalize their own species. Unlike the other venomous snakes in the United States, coral snakes lay eggs in

the summer that typically hatch in the early fall. Coral snakes are most often brightly colored in red, yellow and black bands, but as colors vary for dogs or cats of the same species, some coral snakes display very dark reds, light yellows to almost white, and/or very narrow bands, which make the “red touches yellow/red touches black” rhyme most people were taught as kids unreliable. Harmless non-venomous scarlet snakes, king snakes and milk snakes are also similarly colored, so your best bet if you come across a brightly colored snake is to simply leave them alone. The main difference in these two is the locations in which they are most likely to be found.



Photo by CJ Hillard

**TEXAS CORAL SNAKE**  
(MICRURUS TENER)

Average around 2 feet long and are found in much of the southwest, central and northern portions of Louisiana



Photo by CJ Hillard

**HARLEQUIN (AKA EASTERN) CORAL SNAKE** (MICRURUS FULVIUS)

These snakes are typically 18 to 30 inches long but have been found to reach close to 4 feet in length. Limited to the eastern Florida parishes of Louisiana.

**NORTHERN COTTONMOUTH WATER MOCCASIN**  
(AGKISTRODON PISCIVORUS)

These very common yet often misunderstood snakes are the world’s only semi-aquatic viper. Cottonmouths have become legends of the swamps, but like most good fishing and hunting stories, the details have been greatly exaggerated. People say they will chase you, but I’ve interacted with countless moccasins and worked with others who study snakes for a living, yet we have not been able to get a single one to chase us. Typical moccasin behavior is to curl into a coil and proudly display their bright white mouth as a deterrent to potential threats, then slither away when the coast seems clear. A moccasin may be intrigued by your fish stringer or move in your direction, but this behavior is not “chasing.” Chasing implies it will follow as you run in different directions.

Juvenile moccasins also have a bright, neon-green/yellow tip on the end of their tails, and they ARE NOT more dangerous than adults, because they are capable of regulating their venom output. Adults average 30 to 48 inches in length, with a record specimen reaching 74½ inches. Moccasins have a dark “Zorro mask” line that runs from the tip of their nose and through their eyes. It’s typically outlined by a lighter colored line on top and bottom, and unlike nonvenomous water snakes, their eyes are not visible from the top of their heads. Moccasins are avid swimmers, both on top of and under the water, with a diet consisting of fish, frogs, rodents and even other snakes. They are found throughout nearly the entire state of Louisiana.



Photo by Kyler Hood

So what should you do if you are bitten by a venomous snake?

- Stay calm;
- Seek medical attention immediately.
- Remove your watch or any jewelry near the bite that may restrict blood flow due to swelling.

Do not bring the snake to the hospital with you. Medical personnel only need to know whether it was a coral snake or not, as there are only two types of antivenom administered in the United States — one for coral snakes and the other for all vipers, including rattlesnakes, moccasins and copperheads.

Snakes are typically docile, but I would not advise anyone to approach them, simply give them space and snap a picture from a safe distance while showing them the respect they deserve. ■

## STICKS AND STRINGS

Sammy Romano

The Genesis bow can put any member of the family, including small children, into the sport of archery relatively inexpensively.

# A NEW GENESIS FOR BEGINNERS

GET THE KIDS AND MOM STARTED WITH THIS GREAT BOW PACKAGE



In these trying times of the Covid-19 pandemic, the world as we know it has changed. Social distancing is the new norm, and team sports are having their seasons cancelled.

If there is any silver lining, perhaps it is that our youth have “unplugged” from their electronic devices and are spending more time outdoors. Much like golf, archery is a sport in which you can compete against yourself by seeking to improve. It also helps youths build self-esteem, because they aren’t comparing themselves to others, but rather seeking to better their own shooting.

There is something about watching the flight of an arrow that is hard to explain, and I’ve met very few people who aren’t captivated by it. With many, if not all, schools and summer camps closed, archery can be an affordable, enjoyable source of entertainment for kids as well as an entire family.

A unique and affordable way to begin archery is the Genesis bow. This bow is unique in that it will fit all members of most families without any adjustment required. As long as all members of a family have the same eye dominance (right-eyed or left-eyed), they can share one bow, because rather than having substantial let-off, the Genesis uses its cam as a force multiplier, thus providing additional thrust to the arrow.

At its maximum draw weight of 20 pounds, the Genesis shoots with the power of a 35-pound recurve. The draw cycle and shot is similar to a recurve without the issues of limb twist and warping. This is a great way for a beginning archer to get into the sport with a reasonably priced, low-maintenance setup. With prices starting at only \$170, the Genesis is well within most consumer budgets.

## BOW SPECS

The Genesis bow has an axle-to-axle length of 35½ inches and weighs 3½ pounds. It offers a draw-length range of 15 to 30 inches and has an adjustable draw weight of 10 to 20 pounds. This makes it the ideal bow for an archer of nearly any size. For younger, smaller archers, the Genesis-mini is an option. With a shorter axle length of only 29½ inches and weighing only 2 pounds, its adjustable draw weight of 6 to 12 pounds and draw length range of 14 to 25 inches is ideal for small children. A third option is the Gen-X, a hunting capable

bow that offers even more room to grow in the sport with a draw length range of 21 to 30 inches and adjustable draw weight from 25 to 40 pounds. All of these bows are available as bow only or with accessory kits.

The Genesis bow is the standard bow for the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP), 4H archery programs, the church-based Centershot archery program, and many more. Arrows for Genesis bows are manufactured by Easton, made of aluminum and are reasonably priced at less than \$6 each. Many target manufacturers are producing special NASP targets for Genesis bows, also affordable at less than \$50 retail.

## NOT A BIG INVESTMENT

Now more than ever, the Genesis bow makes sense. For less than \$300, it will provide hours of quality, healthy entertainment for the family while still maintaining social distancing practices. It can also provide some sanity for parents who are out of options for kids’ activities. With a proper backstop, a bow can be shot in far more settings than a firearm — in many cases even the backyard.

Genesis bows are available at many retailers across the nation, as well as online at [www.genesisbow.com](http://www.genesisbow.com). As always, I recommend purchasing your Genesis from an archery shop for the best results. A pro shop will help to determine eye dominance and proper bow size, as well as instruction on both correct form and safety. This will help to ensure success, thereby increasing the desire to shoot more often.

Unlike many hobbies which quickly fall by the wayside, I find kids will shoot archery tirelessly for hours on end. Not only does this great sport build self-confidence and self-esteem, it provides physical activity that is sadly much needed amongst today’s youth who are all too often addicted to “screen time.”

Check out a Genesis bow today and get them out shooting. ■



Sammy Romano is a lifelong hunter who has worked in the archery industry for more than 25 years. His expertise includes compounds and crossbows. He can be reached at [samboka31@aol.com](mailto:samboka31@aol.com).



**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 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.

**2020 Ultimate PrimeTimes software for PCs.** \$29.95 (plus \$3 s&h, or no s&h if downloaded from web). The world's best forecaster allows you to fine-tune the peak times to your exact location, quarry, and even weather. Too many features to list here, including making your own App. For more details, please call us or visit our web site (see below).

**SPECIAL PACKAGE OFFERS:**

- #1: **Wall Calendar, Astro Tables and "How to Know..." book...** \$19.95 (plus \$5 s&h).
- #2: **Same as #1, plus Software...** \$47.95 (plus \$6 s&h).
- #3: **Same as #2, minus book...** \$38.95 (plus \$5 s&h).

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For credit/debit card orders, call **515-964-5516**, or go online to **primetimes2.com** and click **Catalog**.

2020 JUL	BEST DAYS				VALUE
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	
Wed 1	██	██	██	██	51
Thu 2	██	██	██	██	58
Fri 3	██	██	██	██	67
Sat 4	██	██	██	██	70
Sun 5	██	██	██	██	59
Mon 6	██	██	██	██	49
Tue 7	██	██	██	██	39
Wed 8	██	██	██	██	35
Thu 9	██	██	██	██	35
Fri 10	██	██	██	██	36
Sat 11	██	██	██	██	43
Sun 12	██	██	██	██	55
Mon 13	██	██	██	██	49
Tue 14	██	██	██	██	47
Wed 15	██	██	██	██	51
Thu 16	██	██	██	██	63
Fri 17	██	██	██	██	65
Sat 18	██	██	██	██	77
Sun 19	██	██	██	██	88
Mon 20	██	██	██	██	93
Tue 21	██	██	██	██	83
Wed 22	██	██	██	██	72
Thu 23	██	██	██	██	60
Fri 24	██	██	██	██	53
Sat 25	██	██	██	██	48
Sun 26	██	██	██	██	49
Mon 27	██	██	██	██	55
Tue 28	██	██	██	██	42
Wed 29	██	██	██	██	34
Thu 30	██	██	██	██	32
Fri 31	██	██	██	██	40

25 50 75  
AVERAGE

For more, visit [primetimes2.com](http://primetimes2.com)

MOON RISE	LUNAR PERIODS				MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
	TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED						
	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD						
5:07 pm	9:52 pm - 11:04 pm	3:03 am	9:15 am - 10:43 am			☾	
6:15 pm	10:56 pm - 11:54 pm	3:44 am	10:17 am - 11:29 am			☾	
7:22 pm	11:57 pm - Midnight	4:30 am	11:21 am - 12:19 pm			☾	
8:23 pm	Midnight - 12:49 am	5:22 am	12:22 pm - 1:14 pm			☾ FULL	
9:17 pm	12:55 am - 1:47 am	6:19 am	1:20 pm - 2:12 pm			☾ LOW	
10:04 pm	1:50 am - 2:46 am	7:20 am	2:15 pm - 3:11 pm			☾	
10:44 pm	2:40 am - 3:42 am	8:22 am	3:05 pm - 4:07 pm			☾	
11:18 pm	3:23 am - 4:39 am	9:23 am	3:48 pm - 5:04 pm			☾	
11:48 pm	4:03 am - 5:31 am	10:22 am	4:28 pm - 5:56 pm			☾	
12:11 am	4:38 am - 6:24 am	11:19 am	5:03 pm - 6:49 pm			☾	
12:16 am	5:11 am - 7:13 am	12:15 pm	5:36 pm - 7:38 pm			☾	
12:43 am	5:44 am - 8:02 am	1:10 pm	6:09 pm - 8:27 pm			☾	
1:09 am	6:15 am - 8:51 am	2:05 pm	6:40 pm - 9:16 pm			☾	
1:37 am	6:50 am - 9:40 am	3:01 pm	7:15 pm - 10:05 pm			☾	
2:06 am	7:26 am - 10:32 am	3:59 pm	7:51 pm - 10:57 pm			☾	
2:40 am	8:08 am - 11:24 am	4:58 pm	8:33 pm - 11:49 pm			☾	
3:18 am	8:53 am - 12:19 pm	5:58 pm	9:18 pm - 12:44 am			☾	
4:04 am	9:43 am - 1:15 pm	6:57 pm	10:08 pm - 1:40 am			☾	
4:56 am	10:37 am - 2:13 pm	7:54 pm	11:02 pm - Midnight			☾ HIGH	
5:56 am	11:38 am - 3:08 pm	8:46 pm	Midnight - 2:38 am			☾ NEW	
7:01 am	12:39 pm - 4:01 pm	9:32 pm	12:03 am - 3:33 am			☾	
8:09 am	1:40 pm - 4:50 pm	10:13 pm	1:04 am - 4:26 am			☾	
9:18 am	2:42 pm - 5:34 pm	10:49 pm	2:05 am - 5:15 am			☾	
10:26 am	3:43 pm - 6:15 pm	11:23 pm	3:07 am - 5:59 am			☾ Perigee	
11:34 am	4:44 pm - 6:56 pm	11:56 pm	4:08 am - 6:40 am			☾	
12:42 pm	5:44 pm - 7:36 pm		5:09 am - 7:21 am			☾	
1:50 pm	6:44 pm - 8:16 pm	12:29 am	6:09 am - 8:01 am			☾ HALF	
2:57 pm	7:45 pm - 9:01 pm	1:04 am	7:09 am - 8:41 am			☾	
4:05 pm	8:46 pm - 9:48 pm	1:42 am	8:10 am - 9:26 am			☾	
5:11 pm	9:46 pm - 10:42 pm	2:25 am	9:11 am - 10:13 am			☾	
6:13 pm	10:45 pm - 11:37 pm	3:14 am	10:11 am - 11:07 am			☾ LOW	

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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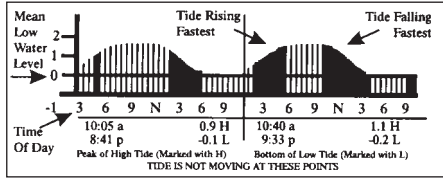




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## How to use the SPORTSMAN Tide Guide



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

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## RADICAL PAN

The cast-iron skillet is a must-pack item for anyone who cooks a lot on camping trips, but there are a few things the old-faithful item can't do.

For one thing, clean-up can be a bear, at a time when you need it to be quicker and easier. Forget having to scrub up after fixing eggs. And if you like a heartier breakfast, flipping pancakes in a skillet may not be that easy.

Enter the Radical Pan, designed by a chef who was sitting on the beach, thinking about cooking. The pan has a chemical-free, non-stick surface and comes in three

sizes: 8½, 10 and 12 inches, so you can match it to the size of your camp stove or fire.

Better yet, it comes with a 3½-inch, high-rise lip on the front of the pan to make it easier to flip those pancakes, get those eggs just right or even splurge for some campfire stir fry after a day in the woods or on the lake.

**MSRP: \$89-\$109.**

**For more info, visit: [www.radusa.usa](http://www.radusa.usa).**



## CORROSIONX FOR GUNS

Locked away in your gun safe, you figure your firearms are protected from just about anything. Maybe not — unless you treated them with CorrosionX for guns before storing them.

A cleaner, lubricant and rust preventative — the latter widely used throughout the marine industry — CorrosionX, features Fluid Thin Film Coating (FTFC), which fills in the microscopic grooves in metal, bonding with metal and alloys to seal out moisture, prevent corrosion and protect your firearm.

In addition, its lubrication values will help prevent gun fouling and sticking, and once

applied, it's not going anywhere.

Not only that, it's a must-have for gun cleaning to remove the junk that winds up in your barrel after a long day in the duck blind, keeping from future fouling and protecting against the elements while you're knocking down that limit of ducks or geese in a place where saltwater can do plenty of damage.

CorrosionX comes in several sizes: 1- and 4-ounce bottles, 6-ounce aerosol and 16-ounce trigger spray.

**MSRP: \$3.99 to \$18.49.**

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

## CZ 457 VARMINT PRECISION CHASSIS

With coyotes becoming more of an offseason target for hunters across the Southeast, and with plinking and target shooting as popular as ever, gun manufacturer CZ has breached the rimfire rifle market with a stunning offering.

The CZ 457 Varmint Precision Chassis, chambered for .22LR, is built on an aluminum chassis, weighs only 7 pounds and is ready to go, right out of the box.

The Luth-AR stock can be configured to fit nearly any shooter, comfortably. Likewise, the trigger is adjustable for weight, creep and over travel, so it can quickly and easily be fine-tuned for each shooter.

The CZ 457 has a bolt that rotates just 60°,

allowing plenty of room between bolt handle and scope for easier cycling of rounds from the detachable, five-round magazine. The receiver will accept bigger scopes and lower rings.

The rifle is available in two different barrel lengths, with 16½-inch and a 24-inch versions.

**MSRP: \$999.**

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



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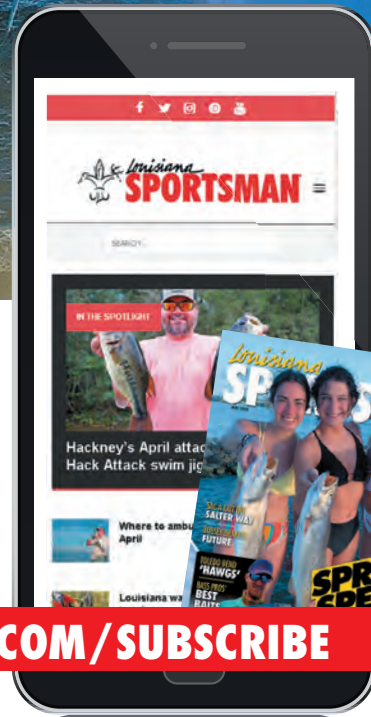


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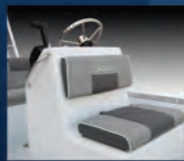


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