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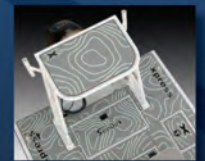
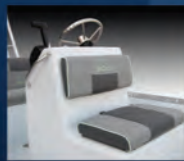


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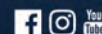
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LITTLE BLUE DOTS



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Saturday & Sunday, 8 am - 5 pm CST

LOUISIANA SPORTSMAN (USPS665390) is published monthly by Louisiana Publishing, Inc., Allen J. Lottinger, President, 14236 Highway 90, P.O. Box 1199, Boutte, LA 70039. Mailed at periodicals postage rates and paid at Baton Rouge, La., and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Louisiana Sportsman, P.O. Box 433294, Palm Coast, FL 32143. All rights reserved. Reproduction of contents is strictly prohibited without permission of Louisiana Sportsman. **EDITORIAL:** Louisiana Sportsman uses free-lance writers throughout the state. Call (985) 758-7217 for information on submitting articles and photos. Louisiana Sportsman is not responsible for the loss of queries, manuscripts or other materials.

P.O. Box 1199, Boutte, LA 70039-1199
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Deer season kicks off across Louisiana this month, and hunters know the peak of the rut is the best time to catch a buck with its guard down. Our Rut Report sets the dates. Photo by Matt Hansen.



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Outdoor
UPDATE

CAT 4 LAURA LEAVES DESTRUCTION ACROSS THE LOUISIANA OUTDOORS

By Kinny Haddox

ABOVE: Sidewalks and roads across Sam Houston Jones Park are blocked by fallen trees. Most buildings have been damaged by falling timber.

BELOW: A black bear scampered up this utility pole as the storm hit in Union Parish. The bear shorted out the transformer, shut off power to a large area and, unfortunately, did not survive.

Hurricane damage is nothing new to Louisiana, but when Hurricane Laura came barreling through, she left a swath of destruction more widespread than many have ever seen or imagined.

Laura made landfall at 1 a.m. on Aug. 27, 2020, as a Category 4 storm with 150 mile-per-hour winds, matching the Last Island Hurricane of 1856 as the strongest land-falling hurricane in Louisiana history and the fifth-strongest hurricane on record to make landfall on the continental United States.

THE DAMAGE

The storm's impact was felt from the Gulf of Mexico in Calcasieu Parish across the state to the Arkansas state line and all spots in between. Sustained winds were more than 50 miles per hour and included 75- to

80 mile-per-hour gusts as far north as Ruston and Monroe, downing trees, damaging property and affecting wildlife and fisheries all along the way.

The two parishes with the largest number of storm-related power outages were Calcasieu on the Gulf Coast and Ouachita in the northeastern corner of Louisiana.

The hardest-hit outdoor area was the 1,087-acre Sam Houston Jones State Park along the Calcasieu River near Lake Charles. The park, covered in a majestic pine forests with trees up to 45 years old, saw more than 900 of those acres seriously damaged or

completely wiped out. The damage is so severe that the only buildings left undamaged were the entrance station and one guest cabin. The park is closed at least through the end of 2020.

The second-heaviest damage was reported at Jimmie Davis State Park on Caney Lake, where cabins were still undergoing repairs from a destructive tornado in the spring of 2019. The park's popular Main Bath House was crushed by a giant pine tree.

Five other parks — Chicot in Ville Platte, Lake D'Arbonne in Farmerville, Lake Faussee Point in St. Martinville, North Toledo Bend in Zwolle and South Toledo Bend in Anacoco — were scheduled to be closed at least through the middle of September.

THE CLEAN-UP

The good news for state parks is that, thanks to a week of 14-hour days by park employees and others, a majority of state parks were open for the Labor Day weekend.

"Many of our state parks lost power, large trees were down over power lines, but great efforts were made to keep campers safe and clear the debris in time for Labor Day weekend," said Billy Nungesser, Louisiana's lieutenant governor. "If ever there was a time for us to gather with our families and show the world we are Louisiana strong, this is it."

TOLEDO BEND

Fishing and preparing for hunting season and other outdoor adventures were affected. At the Living the Dream Guide Service on Toledo Bend, fishing trips had to be cancelled for more than a week. Not only were



This guest cabin at Sam Houston Jones Park is destroyed, as was the pine forest surrounding it.

guides and Toledo Bend affected, many of their scheduled fishermen were as well.

"Due to all the power outages and all the damage, a lot of people have had to cancel trips," said Jerry Thompson, who has owned and operated LTD Guide Service for 20 years and has fished Toledo Bend the better part of his life. "Our guides haven't had power at their homes. A lot of our people come from the Lake Charles and Lafayette areas, and they haven't had power. Most of us still don't have power ... but we'll survive. In fact, we've seen this before, and when things settle down after a major storm, things actually get better. We're planning on that this time."

Thompson issued a word of warning to people coming fishing at Toledo Bend or any other major reservoir.

"Things aren't the same out there right now," he said. "I've been on the water one time since the storm, and we are seeing a lot of floaters out there in the lake. These are huge trees that were cut back in the 1980s and were on the bottom, but the turbulence caused by this storm has dislodged them. Unfortunately, there are a lot of them in the boat lanes."

Toledo Bend had 8- and 10-foot waves in many areas, and in water up to 20 feet deep, it caused major disruption, he said.

SCHEDULED EVENTS

Several groups that were planning dove hunts on Labor Day weekend found their sunflower patches and other agricultural areas totally blown to the ground. Thompson is one of those.

"We always have a youth hunt for doves, but after the storm, the fields are destroyed and there are just not any doves here," he said. "They either got blown away or knew something was coming and got out of here. In fact, we aren't seeing any kinds of birds at all, hardly any wildlife at all."

At least one major fishing event went on as scheduled after the storm. The American Crappie Trail had a national qualifier on the Ouachita River the weekend after the storm. Practice was halted by the storm, but Oklahoma angler Robert Carlile caught a two-day total of 14 crappie weighing 27.97 pounds to win the \$26,000 first prize. A total of 130 anglers from 11 states fished the event, many of them sleeping in their trucks because there was no power in Monroe/West Monroe area.

WMAS

Damage to the state's Wildlife Management Areas is still being assessed, according to a spokesman for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. The storm's aftermath should not affect any hunting seasons, although many of the areas will be affected by timber damage and secondary road issues.

"Although it is still too early to assess all impacts, Hurricane Laura certainly affected fish and wildlife resources and (department) property," said Ed Pratt, press secretary for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. "The department's



Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge in Cameron and Vermilion parishes experienced land loss as surge and storm-driven waves battered the Gulf shoreline. Marsh management units within the refuge that maintained fresh marsh for wildlife species and waterfowl were inundated with high-salinity sea water."

Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge is closed until further notice. All public fishing areas, including piers and boat docks, will be closed for an indefinite period of time. Hurricane Laura also forced the closure of the Woodworth shooting range in Rapides Parish; however, it has resumed operations.

Pratt also said that breaches in containment dikes will adversely affect refuge management goals for months to come. Additionally, refuge staff were displaced from their homes, offices and labs, and support facilities were severely damaged.

"Even our White Lake Wetlands Conservation area in Vermilion Parish experienced breaches in marsh management units, which will adversely affect our management of fresh marsh ecosystems and the waterfowl that depend upon it."

Agency staff is investigating a fish kill in Lake Charles in the wake of Laura. Staff will be conducting an assessment to determine what species are impacted and the extent of the fish kill. Fish kills can be associated with large amounts of rainfall and storm-water carrying organic matter into bayous and canals connected to lakes. This organic matter may consume high amounts of dissolved oxygen, thereby "suffocating" aquatic life. Additionally, high winds and rains from a hurricane can cause the varying cool and warm waters to mix too rapidly and deplete oxygen levels, which can also cause fish kills.

The State Parks System reservations vendor, Reserve America, is working to reschedule or refund all affected campsite and cabin reservations. People can call 877-2226-7652 for help with rescheduling if needed. ■

TOLEDO BEND SPITS OUT THREE HUGE LARGEMOUTHS

Bernard Fruge' of Noble with his monster 12.35-pound bass caught at Toledo Bend on Aug. 21.

TWO LUNKERS ON THE SAME DAY, TWO FOR THE SAME FISHERMAN

By Dan Kibler

Yeah, August is supposed to be a month that a lot of bass fishermen would like to forget. It's hell-hot, fish are sluggish and mostly deep, and sometimes, it doesn't even seem like fun.

Of course, don't count Bernard Fruge and Sean Page among those disgusted with the weather and the action. They struck it rich on Toledo Bend Reservoir in August.

Fruge, from Noble, got it started with an 11.43-pound monster on Aug. 1, caught in the San Miguel area. Then, Page showed up early on the evening of Aug. 21 with a 10.59-pound bunker. Later that evening, just to prove his first fish was no fluke, Fruge weighed in a 12.35-pound brute caught about 400 yards from the spot that gave up his first double-digit bass.

"I didn't think I would ever catch another one like that," said Fruge, who started fishing the evening of Aug. 21 around 7 o'clock, in a tournament out of Big Bass Marina, with no thought of matching or even coming close to his big fish of Aug. 1.

Both big fish came off brush piles; both were caught with Texas-rigged Zoom Ol' Monster worms in the South African Special color.

"Everything was the same about the second one as the first one except the first one came from about 12 or 13 feet of water, and they were on different brush," he said. "But both ledges the brush was on were set up exactly the same way."

And the second one, well, it was worth a little money.

TOURNAMENT TROPHY

Fruge was fishing a tournament with his nephew, Bryan Frey. He put in and ran a little more than 15 minutes to the San Miguel area, to a place where he'd caught several big fish. They arrived at 6:14, then "sat around shooting the breeze waiting for fishing time to begin," he said.

"My nephew said we needed a 10-pounder," Fruge said. "I said, 'I've already caught the fish of my life; I'll never beat that.'"

When fishing time arrived, Fruge caught a 2-pound fish very



Photo courtesy Toledo Bend Lake Association

quickly, then a couple of shorts. He moved a little ways to a spot that had been good to him, caught a 3-pounder, then another short fish.

"We kept hearing a big fish hit the top, two or three times, and we fished over to that spot; there was a gap between two brush piles," he said. "The first cast to the second brush, I felt one hard thump, then, the line went tight, and I set the hook."

"She got hung up in the brush, and I put the trolling motor on high and went around to the other side of the brush and got her out, real easy, then she started ripping drag. I thought it was a big fish, and we were right on top of here. I started easing her up, and she came right on up and jumped, and my nephew caught her in the air with the net. He said, 'That's a 10-pounder.'"

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"I said I thought she looked bigger than the other, and on my scale, it said '11.9, 12.1!' We put her in the livewell and called Buckeye Landing, said I was coming in with another big one. They were ready when I pulled up, and she weighed 12.35. When I put her back in the livewell, I looked at her and said, 'This is not real.' I looked at her three times.

"I kept opening the livewell; I couldn't believe I had caught one bigger than the first one. My mind had been made up. I knew I would never catch another one that big, never beat my personal best.

"After I got her certified (with the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program), we released her, and we decided not to run all the way back (to San Miguel). We just fished local, and I caught another 5-pounder. We ended up with 23.85 (pounds) and won everything: \$880 for the tournament and \$210 for the big fish."

Fruge caught both his big fish using a Dobbins rod and a Lew's reel spooled with 20-pound Seaguar fluorocarbon. The bigger bass was 25¼ inches long and 21 inches in girth.

Photo courtesy Toledo Bend Lake Association



Bernard Fruge with the 11.43-pound fish he caught at Toledo Bend three weeks before he caught the 12.35 pounder.

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SEAN PAGE

Page, from Hemphill, Texas, beat Fruge to the scales by about two hours, bringing his Aug. 21 lunger in around 7:30 that evening on a trip with Michael Brazil, also of Hemphill.

"We were fishing in the Indian Mounds area, about 7:30 that evening. We had gone out for about two hours and come back to this spot," he said. "We headed out first and picked a spot I'd been catching fish on. Right off the bat, he caught a 6, and I caught a 5. Then, they quit biting. We fished about an hour-and-a-half, went to some more spots and came back to that first one. We were about to leave, and I said, 'I'm making one last cast and catching a 10-pounder.'"

"I felt her and I set the hook and knew it was a big fish. I said, 'Here's my 10-pounder,' but (Michael) thought I was kidding. He didn't pay any attention. Then, she came up and jumped, and he saw her and freaked out.

"When I set the hook, she came straight up out of the brush, came right on out. It was almost easy. Michael lipped her and put her in the boat. I've caught a bunch of 8s and 9s, but there was no question this was the biggest fish I'd ever had on. It was exciting, to say the least."

Sean Page of Hemphill, Tex., with his 10.59-pound bass caught Aug. 21 at Toledo Bend.



Photo courtesy Toledo Bend Lake Association

OL' MONSTER

Page was fishing a Texas-rigged Zoom Ol' Monster worm, also in the South African Special color, on a Falcon rod and Shimano reel spooled with Saguaro Black Label fluorocarbon. The fish came off a brush pile in 15 feet of water.

"It was a little hump out in the middle of the lake that I'd put some brush on, and for that particular two-week period, they were on that spot good," he said.

Page headed to Toledo Town & Tackle, where the official scales put his monster at 10.59 pounds. ■

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Billy Willis caught this 10-pound, 9-ounce bass on Aug. 22 out of Kepler Lake.

KEPLER LAKE PRODUCES HUGE BASS

RUSTON ANGLER BOATS LUNKER ON FIRST TRIP TO HIDDEN TREASURE IN BIENVILLE PARISH HILLS

By Glynn Harris

North Louisiana is known for lakes that produce big bass; the state record came from Caney, with other lakes such as D'Arbonne, Claiborne, Bistineau, Black and Caddo getting in on the action as well.

There is one lake, however, that has quietly, without fanfare, been a quality bass producer since it was formed 63 years ago: 2000-acre Kepler Creek Reservoir, locally known as Kepler Lake.

Billy Willis, a 62-year-old angler from Ruston, has caught bass in virtually all these lakes but had not really tried for big bass on Kepler until Aug. 22 when he boated a 10-pound, 9-ounce fish.

"A guy I work with has a friend who has been telling him about catching big bass on Kepler, so I decided to give it a try," he said.

Arriving at the lake, which is virtually hidden in the hills of Bienville Parish, around 7 a.m., Willis went several hours without catching a bass. It was not until around 11 o'clock that his luck changed for the better.

"There were a couple of other bass fishermen on the lake, and they were picking up some schooling fish, nothing of any size," Willis said. "They eventually moved on, so I moved into the area where they had been fishing. This lake is loaded with stumps, and the bass had been schooling around a particular area. I noticed that the stump line was in about 3 feet of water, but there was a drop-off next to the stump line that dropped quickly to 6 feet. I decided to give it a try."

GEAR

Willis was fishing with a 7-foot-4 Falcon rod and a Shimano reel spooled with 20-pound fluorocarbon. His preferred method of fishing is using a Carolina rig, and below a swivel, he had tied a 2- to 3-foot leader of 12- to 15-pound line, and 2/0 hook on which was threaded a green pumpkin/gold flake Fluke.

"There were lots of shad in the area, so this color matched what the fish were feeding on," he said. "I caught a couple of school fish



around the stumps, and I decided to back off and fish the drop-off that was away from the stumps."

Casting to the edge of the drop, Willis let the lure go to the bottom and immediately felt something hit. He set the hook and knew it was into something pretty big, because it hardly budged.

"Fortunately, I was able to work the fish away from the stumps into the deeper water, but because it never came to the top, I assumed I'd hooked a big catfish, because most bass will come to the surface and try to shake off," he said. "This fish just kept pulling until it seemed to give up, and I was able to bring it to the boat. It was only then that I saw I'd hooked a really big bass."

Placing the bass in his livewell, Willis noticed that it quickly turned belly up. He had planned to release the fish but because of the stress or the heat of the day, the fish soon expired.

WEIGHT

Willis had no scale, and it was only after he returned home a couple of hours later that he weighed the fish, which tipped the scales at 10 pounds, 9 ounces. ■

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LWFC ADOPTS EAST-WEST ZONES FOR 2021-25 WATERFOWL SEASONS

From News Reports

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission adopted a two-zone, East-West boundary option for the 2021-25 waterfowl hunting seasons at its Sept. 3 meeting in Baton Rouge.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) recommended the option after consideration of hunter preferences from the 2020 Louisiana Waterfowl Hunter Survey and federal waterfowl harvest data over the past 20 years. The new boundaries combine the current West and Coastal Zones, as well as portion of the rice-growing region in southwest Louisiana, into a new West Zone.

The new waterfowl hunting zones will take effect for the 2021-22 season and run through the 2025-26 season. To see the upcoming 2020-21 waterfowl hunting zones and dates, go to <https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/seasons-and-regulations> ■



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TWO MEN ARRESTED FOR FISHING CONTEST FRAUD

From News Reports

Enforcement officers with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries arrested two men on Aug. 23 for alleged fishing contest fraud in lower St. Martin Parish.

Agents arrested Wade Bourg Jr. of Morgan City, and Justin Lane of Houma, for fishing contest fraud.

Agents received a complaint about possible fishing contest fraud on July 24 at a Fishers of Men bass tournament near Stevensville. Agents were advised that tournament officials and contestants believed that two of the contestants in the tournament knowingly violated tournament boundary rules.

Upon completion of an investigation, agents learned that Bourg Jr. and Lane allegedly fished outside of the allowed area for the tournament. Bourg Jr. and Lane then weighed in and entered their fish. They won the tournament and collected first-place prize money, first-place bonus bucks and first place in the big fish category for a total of \$5,562.50 in cash and prizes.

Agents secured arrest warrants for Bourg Jr. and Lane, and they turned themselves into authorities and booked into the St. Martin Parish Jail.

Fishing contest fraud brings up to a \$3,000 fine and one year in jail. ■

ANGLER CATCHES RARE BLACK JACK

Nicholas Bourgeois caught this black jack, aka black trevally, out of Fourchon in August aboard the "Southern Pride."



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PRESEASON HUNTING LEGAL CHECKLIST

By John Smith

Hunting season is right around the corner, and every year, hunters are injured or killed because of equipment failure or lack of safety equipment. Checking your equipment is the first step toward a successful and safe hunting season. While we're busy sighting in rifles, practicing with the bow and planting food plots, let's not forget to do some of the other things we don't always think about or want to think about. Here's the checklist.

- If you have liability insurance for your property or club, make sure it is in effect and covers any new members. Does the policy cover any new property acquired during the offseason? Are new members listed on the policy? Has anything changed in the nature of the club that would affect the policy coverage (i.e., pond fishing, ATV use, guest policy, camping, etc.)?

- Do you have or need ATV/SxS/UTV coverage? Homeowner's liability coverage generally does not provide coverage for recreational vehicle accidents occurring away from the property where the

covered resident is located. If you are transporting other people or allowing other people to run your bike, you may want to look into liability coverage.

- Check lights, safety chains and hitch on your truck, boat and ATV trailer.
- Inspect stands for defects, particularly if you invite guests to hunt. You want to make sure that ladders, straps, etc., are secure and in good shape. Check your lock-ons and replace any straps that are more than a year old. Metal ladder stands rust, so inspect for weak spots. Trees grow and move and may compromise a stand.
- Inspect your safety harness. Does it still fit? Check for tears, rips or other defects in the material.
- Inspect all climbing and harness safety lines. Squirrels love to chew them up. Will they support the weight of the heaviest person who will use the stand? When in doubt, change them out.
- Inspect ATV bridges for structural issues.

- Make sure any new stands comply with camp rules regarding location and line-of-sight issues. If someone put up a new stand and is walking in and out from a new direction, it's good to make sure everyone knows about it.
- If you are hunting public land, you are required to wear hunter orange. According to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, during the open firearms season for deer, any hunter in possession of buckshot, slugs, a primitive firearm or centerfire rifle must display on his/her head, chest and/or back a minimum of 400 square inches of hunter orange or pink. Hunter orange is a good idea no matter where you hunt during rifle and primitive deer season. You might also consider wearing it during archery season since some crossbows can shoot out to 100 yards or more. Hunting clubs should consider a policy of requiring it or not, just so everyone is on the same page.
- Check your boat registration, life jackets, running lights, kill switches, etc. in any boats you are using.

- Inspect climbing stands for weak spots, connecting bolts, washers, nuts, straps, welds, etc. Even aluminum stands can erode and deteriorate if left outdoors for prolonged periods. Sometimes the tree spurs get dull and may have to be re-sharpened. Check the paint and finish and touch-up as necessary. If it has a mesh or fabric seat, check for tears or weakness in the fabric. Check the bottom boot straps and the rope that connects the top and bottom to make sure they can withstand multiple trips up and down trees. Even if you have used the same tree for years, make sure it has not been compromised by storms, boring insects, etc., since the last time you used it.

- Check to make sure you have the licenses and permits you need to hunt your area. WMAs require self-clearing permits. Find out where the permit stations are before the hunt. WMA hunting permits are required for WMA hunters age 18 to 59. Federal and state duck stamps are required for migratory waterfowl hunting. A Hunter Information Program certificate is required to be on your person at all times while hunting migratory game birds. <https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/mandatory-harvest-information-program>

- Check your ATV for compliance with WMA rules. Tire size and width are specified. <http://www.eregulations.com/louisiana/hunting/wildlife-management-areas/>.

- Check your bow limbs, strings and arrows. If the bow string is frayed, change it out. If you shoot carbon arrows, check for any cracks or separation. Throw away any carbon arrows that don't look perfect. If you have any doubt about an older bow, have it inspected by a reputable bow shop.

- Make sure your gun is legal for the season and area. Lead vs. steel shot? Is your gun truly "primitive?"

- Consider using a pull-up

rope for gear and guns, leaving both hands free for safe climbing. If you are already using them, check to make sure that Mr. Squirrel hasn't chewed it and it is still strong enough to carry the load.

- Make sure someone always knows where you are and when you will be back.

- Get the kids a hunter-safety certificate. Youths must possess hunter-safety certification or proof of successful completion of a hunter-safety course.


- Inspect for wasps and hornets, because guaranteed they will be in those box stands.


Checking and repairing your hunting equipment before something goes wrong will help you enjoy your hunting season this year. Hopefully, some of these reminders will make your season more enjoyable and a lot safer. Good luck! ■




John H. Smith is an experienced trial attorney. Growing up in Houma, Louisiana, molded an avid outdoorsman. He now lives in St. Amant and works out of his office in Baton Rouge. A personal injury attorney, John's law firm has a superlative record representing those requiring legal assistance, redressing any number of civil wrongs committed against their life, limb or property. Visit www.smithshanklin.com to learn more.

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Austin Meche of Crowley shows his Lake Pontchartrain piebald flounder.



ANGLER LANDS PIEBALD PONCHARTRAIN FLOUNDER

By Kinny Haddox

Austin Meche works as a dispatcher for Acadian Ambulance in Lafayette, and it's been quite hectic down in that part of the state since Hurricane Laura passed through, leaving in her wake plenty of devastation.

So Meche, 28, was glad to get a chance to get some time off and go fishing on Wednesday, Sept. 9. But his favorite spots were all negatively affected by the hurricane, so he loaded up his Pelican kayak and made the almost 3-hour drive from his home in Crowley to Lake Pontchartrain for his first fishing trip on the 630-square mile lake between Mandeville and New Orleans.

There was another first, too. He caught a 3-pound flounder that, as he simply put it, "really looked weird." The fish was a regular greenish-brown camo pattern from the mouth to the gills, but from the gills to the tail, it was almost solid white, with one or two little brown spots.

"It was something," he said. "When I first reeled the fish up closer to the boat,

I thought it was half wrapped up in a white plastic Walmart bag or something, but once I got my hands on it, I could see the crazy color. At first, I thought maybe it had an accident and the scales were missing, but they were all there. They were just white."

PIGMENTATION DISORDER

Albino and piebald, aka leucistic colored flounder are rare, but they have been caught up and down the southeast coast and in brackish, inland waters like Lake Pontchartrain. The difference between albino and piebald coloration is that piebald has some of the regular coloring as well and isn't totally without color. There are several possible causes of this pigmentation disorder.

"The funny thing about this fish is that it was the regular, off-color white on its bottom side, but the white on the top of the fish was a brighter, vibrant white," he said.

Meche knew Ponchartrain would be tough to fish from a kayak, so he looked at Google Earth online and found some spots where he could get off the main lake. He found a little canal that crossed under a bridge and entered the lake. It ended up being the London Avenue Canal, a drainage canal used for pumping rain water into Ponchartrain from the Gentilly area to the lakefront, and he fished the mouth of it with some pretty good success.

TARGET FLOUNDER

"At first, I had it all to myself, but then another fisherman came to the same spot," Meche said. "We were catching some speckled trout up under the bridge, and after he left, I decided to try catching some flounder. I put on a chartreuse Berkeley Swimming Mullet and caught a few small ones," he said. "The other fisherman that was there told me there were some deep trenches up between the pilings, so I fished the lure along the edges of the trenches. I was fishing it kind of like a bass worm — pop it a couple of times, let it sink and then do it over again."

It was about 3 p.m., and Meche was ready to head for home, when he decided on just a few more casts. That's when he hooked the unusual flounder; after that, he decided to call it a day. Back at the dock, several people looked at the fish, and none had ever seen one like it. Meche and his family fish all the time, and it was a first for any of them as well. He put the fish in his freezer and plans on having it mounted.

"I may have to go back over there and fish some more," he said. "It's quite a drive, but after Laura, it will be a while before the fishing here gets back anywhere near normal. I remember after Hurricane Rita hit, it was over a year before the ecosystem got back to normal." ■



When Austin Meche first pulled up this odd-colored flounder, he thought it had gotten caught up in a white plastic Wal-Mart bag.



THE RUT REPORT:

2020

■ By David Moreland

THE PEAK OF WHITETAIL BREEDING MAY BE EARLIER THAN USUAL THIS FALL DUE TO WEATHER CONDITIONS. DON'T MISS IT; IT'S THE TIME ALL HUNTERS NEED TO BE IN THE WOODS.

The COVID-19 pandemic has rocked the country, but hopefully, an early rut will give deer hunters a much-needed time of recreation in the Bayou State this year.

Breeding dates for white-tailed deer are established based upon embryo and fetal measurements. This management work started in the 1960s, and during my tour with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, we greatly expanded our understanding of breeding dates across the state. LDWF continues to conduct periodic herd-health collections and obtain additional information. The LDWF website has these dates and a breeding map for the state (www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/deer-breeding-periods). A breeding range is established for various areas using the earliest and latest known dates. This range may include three or four months. The average peak breeding period, generally two weeks, is given, based on many years of data collection. While certainly this peak is always a good time to hunt, the fact is, breeding can shift forward or backward every year by a week or two. If the rut comes early, hunters who wait until the average peak may miss out on some good opportunities that might occur earlier in the season. This rut prediction presents the expected breeding time for 2020; it appears the rut will be earlier than last year.

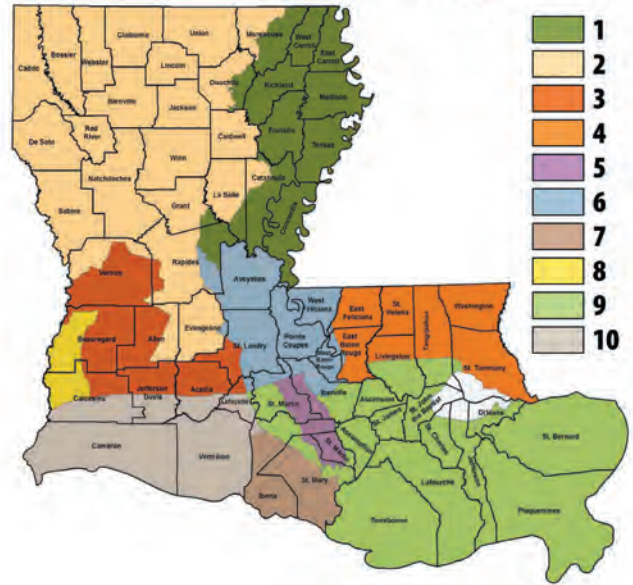
WHAT HAPPENED IN 2019?

Last season, I hunted Nov. 11-12 with a good friend on his lease in Bossier Parish (Area 2). I killed a 3-year-old, 8-point buck the morning of Nov. 12, the second day for the predicted time for the first breeding period for that area. The next day, my friend killed a 3-year-old 6-pointer.

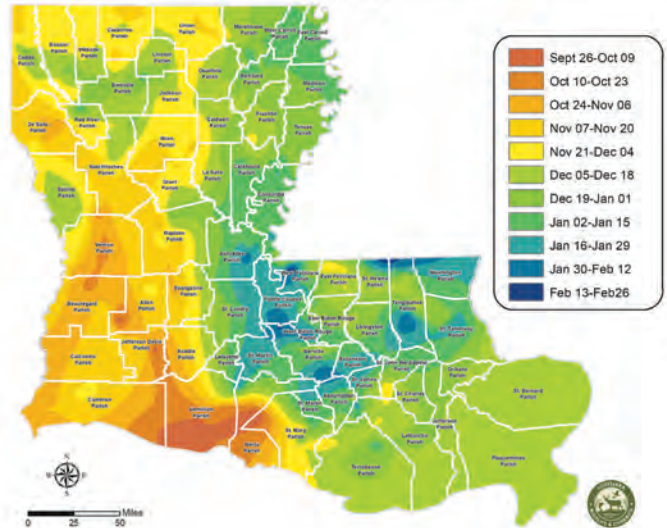
The bucks were on the move, and the rut was on. The club killed almost half its bucks during the first two weeks of the season, with the remainder being killed during this first breeding peak. We made an effort to shoot does on the club on Dec. 18-19, and examination of reproductive tracts revealed seven of nine does had been bred in November, a key month in Area 2.

I also hunt in Area 4 and Area 6 and on Pearl River WMA. Basically, while I saw and killed a couple of deer, rutting activity was almost non-existent. Warm weather had the grass growing and seeding out in January and probably impacted the buck

2020 - 2021 Deer Hunting Areas



LOUISIANA ESTIMATED DEER BREEDING PERIODS
10/13/2014



harvest in Areas 1 and 6. This generally will equate to a carry-over of adult bucks, so my hopes are high for a productive 2020 season.

BREAKING IT DOWN BY AREA ➤

THE 2020-21 RUT PREDICTION

AREAS 3, 7, 8 & 10

Pre-Rut

Aug. 8 - Sept. 16

1st Scraping Period

Sept. 17 - 30

1st Breeding Period

Oct. 1 - 15

2nd Scraping Period

Oct. 16 - 30

2nd Breeding Period

Oct. 31 - Nov. 14

AREA 2

Pre-Rut

Sept. 17 - Oct. 15

1st Scraping Period

Oct. 16 - 30

1st Breeding Period

Oct. 31 - Nov. 14

2nd Scraping Period

Nov. 15 - 29

2nd Breeding Period

Nov. 30 - Dec. 13

AREAS 4 & 9

Pre-Rut

Oct. 16 - Nov. 14

1st Scraping Period

Nov. 15 - 29

1st Breeding Period

Nov. 30 - Dec. 13

2nd Scraping Period

Dec. 14 - 28

2nd Breeding Period

Dec. 29 - Jan. 12

AREAS 1, 5 & 6

Pre-Rut

Nov. 15 - Dec. 13

1st Scraping Period

Dec. 14 - 28

1st Breeding Period

Dec. 29 - Jan. 12

2nd Scraping Period

Jan. 13 - 27

2nd Breeding Period

Jan. 28 - Feb. 1

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BREAKING IT DOWN BY AREA

AREAS 3, 7, 8, 10

Southwest Louisiana, Areas 3, 7, 8 and 10, is the region where the rut is earliest. Archery season opens in September, and gun

AUGUST 2020 Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8 Pre-Rut Starts
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

hunting begins in October.

This is not a land of big bucks, but a 130-class deer is possible. West Bay WMA and Fort Polk WMA are the primary public deer hunting areas. There are some federal refuges that offer limited hunting opportunities. While the weather is often warm, the rut is on, and it's time to deer hunt. Hunters in Area 10 need to be aware that the season limit is three and not six, as in most of Louisiana.

AREA 2 >

SEPTEMBER 2020 Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10

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



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Bucks are most active just before the peak of the breeding period, when they're scouring the woods for responsive does. Gage Maxwell shot this 7-pointer with a 7mm-08 in Morehouse Parish.

OCTOBER 2020 **Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10**

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1 1st Breeding Period Starts	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15 1st Breeding Period Ends	16 2nd Scraping Period Starts	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30 2nd Scraping Period Ends	31 2nd Breeding Period Starts

NOVEMBER 2020 **Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10**

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

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AREA 2

Northwest and central Louisiana make up Area 2. It covers a large portion of the state, and November is the key month to be hunting. However, with an early rut being predicted, the first primitive season and the opening week of gun season should prove to be productive for hunters. The landscape is dominated by pine timber, which does not grow trophy class bucks, but there are hardwood drains throughout Area 2 along with the Red River agricultural lands that produce trophies. There are within this deer area pockets of deer that, due to their genetic make-up, breed later than what one normally sees in Area 2. Check out the LDWF website to find these.

AREAS 4, 9 ➤

The author tagged this 8-point buck on Nov. 12, 2009, the second day of the predicted period of peak breeding in Bossier Parish.



SEPTEMBER 2020 Area 2

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

OCTOBER 2020 Area 2

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15 Pre-Rut Ends	16 1st Scraping Period Starts	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30 1st Scraping Period Ends	31 1st Breeding Period Starts

NOVEMBER 2020 Area 2

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

DECEMBER 2020 Area 2

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 2nd Breeding Period Ends	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

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AREAS 4, 9

Area 4 includes southeast Louisiana, north of Lake Pontchartrain, and is well known as the Florida Parishes. Area 9 includes some portions north of Lake Pontchartrain as well as those lands south of the lake. Area 4 is predominately piney woods habitat, while Area 9 includes marsh, swamp and hardwood forests along the Mississippi River. Both areas produce quality deer but are generally not producers of high-end trophy bucks. Habitat changes and suburban sprawl have taken its toll

on the deer landscape. Because of this both areas have a 3-deer limit rather than the statewide limit of six.

Early to mid-December is the average peak breeding period, but hunters may see activity in late November this year. I remember a few years ago during the early primitive season, there were several fresh scrapes in an area on our property, and on opening day, I killed a nice, 2-year-old, adult buck.

AREAS 1, 5, 6 >

OCTOBER 2020

Areas 4 & 9						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16 Pre-Rut Starts	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

NOVEMBER 2020

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

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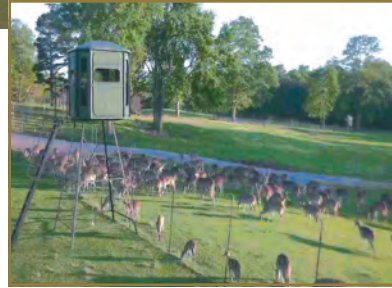
Robert Reames hunts along the Amite River in Area 4, where he bagged this fine 8-point buck in 2019.

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DECEMBER 2020

Areas 4 & 9

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 1st Breeding Period Ends	14 2nd Scraping Period Starts	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28 2nd Scraping Period Ends	29 2nd Breeding Period Starts	30	31		

JANUARY 2021

Areas 4 & 9

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12 2nd Breeding Period Ends	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						



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AREAS 1, 5, 6

Areas 1 and 6 include bottomland hardwood and swamp hardwood forests with agricultural lands along the Mississippi River. This is the land of the giant trophy bucks. Area 5 includes the lower Atchafalaya River Basin and is swamp/hardwood habitat with some agricultural lands. In recent years, this area has been hammered with heavy flooding. The rut in these areas generally occurs in January and February, and it is not uncommon for hunters to continue to see rutting activity in March — and even bucks with antlers in early April.

Hunters need to be patient and wait for the late season and not burn themselves out in November and early December. Does in these areas do not generally wean their fawns until after November,

The late James Stafford killed his last buck during the 2019 Season on family land in St. Helena Parish.

due to the late fawning.

So there it is, my best estimate of the 2020 rut; hunt the cold fronts when deer activity is generally high; hunt the cold fronts during the rut when deer are out and moving. The rut is the time to be offensive-minded and make use of deer calls, rattling and scents. Be aware of the scent regulations that are in place and adhere to them. Above all, be safe and report your kills. ■



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.



NOVEMBER 2020

Areas 1, 5 & 6

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

DECEMBER 2020

Areas 1, 5 & 6

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 Pre-Rut Ends	14 1st Scraping Period Starts	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28 1st Scraping Period Ends	29 1st Breeding Period Starts	30	31		

JANUARY 2021

Areas 1, 5 & 6

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12 1st Breeding Period Ends	13 2nd Scraping Period Starts	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27 2nd Scraping Period Ends	28 2nd Breeding Period Starts	29	30
31						

FEBRUARY 2021

Areas 1, 5 & 6

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

A doe the author killed during the last primitive season in Area 4 had bred on Dec. 21, based on embryo measurements. This was during the first peak of breeding on the Sportsman's Rut Chart.

DETERMINE BREEDING DATES

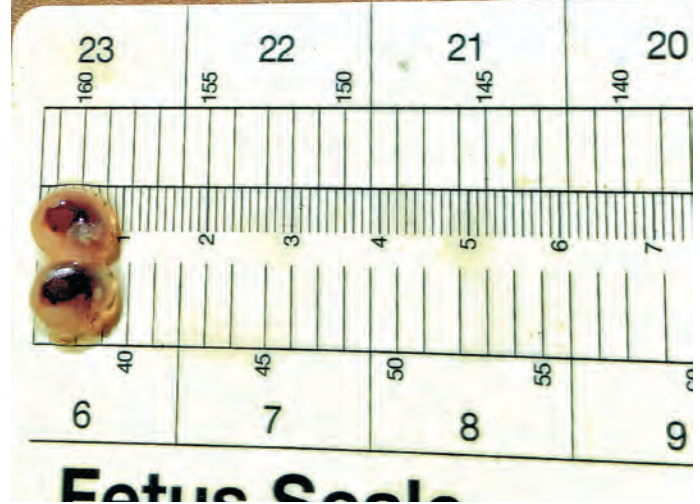
I spent a major part of my career studying breeding activity. Research in white-tailed deer biology discovered a relationship between the length of an unborn deer fetus with the age of the fetus (number of days old). By measuring the length of the fetus and then determining the number of days old the fetus is, that number can be used to back up from the kill date and determine the date the doe was bred.

This research along with a fetal aging scale has made it easy for a landowner or club to gather beneficial information regarding the rut on the land they hunt.

Generally it is best to examine does that have been pregnant for at least two months. At the age of 30 days, the fetus or embryo is a small, shrimp-like body that is only 7 to 9 mm long. The fetus scale is not designed to measure an embryo or fetus this small. At 60 days old, a fetus is about 75 mm and can be easily measured on the scale. Generally, in the month of January in Area 2, a fetus is large enough to measure on the scale and, breeding dates can be established for does, which is just what I did on my friend's place in Bossier Parish.

However, in late-rut areas, does harvested in late January are probably pregnant, but the embryos are too small to obtain a proper measurement. This just shows how late the rut is in Areas 1 and 6, and why the late season is important to the hunters in that part of the state. The fetal aging scale can be obtained from Forestry Supply in Jackson, Miss., or from Construction Safety Products in Shreveport. ■

East Feliciana 2
Area 4
Jan 30, 2020



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■ By John Flores

DON'T AVOID HUNTING LOUISIANA'S MARSHES FOR WHITETAILS, DESPITE THE FACT THAT OTHER AREAS GET MORE ATTENTION. THESE EXPERTS EXPLAIN THE HOWS AND WHYS.

GOING COASTAL



When Zach Badon created the Area 10 Deer Hunters Facebook page last year, its purpose was to share information and/or experiences about hunting this region of coastal Louisiana.

Through the page, Badon, who hails from Gueydan, wanted to showcase the local marsh deer he and others hunted in southwest Louisiana. By all indications, the page was a success as it had ballooned to 335 members by the end of the season.

Over the course of the 2019-2020 season, not only posted were the ubiquitous trophy pictures and videos, but there was a solid exchange from where to and how to harvest a deer in the marsh, to cooking them.

Questions like, “How often do you guys wash your hunting clothes?” “When is the peak scraping and breeding period for Area 10?” And, “How much fat do you mix with deer to make hamburger patties,” were just a few.

The thing about hunting the coastal parishes is that they


greatly differ from the upland piney woods, bottomland hardwoods and the batture lowlands of the Atchafalaya, Mississippi and Red river systems.

Essentially, the more northerly regions receive much of the attention when it comes to deer hunting in Louisiana. By contrast, coastal marshes are mainly considered duck-hunting habitat, and deer hunting takes sort of a back seat. However, nothing could be further from the truth when it comes to hunting marsh deer in Area 7, 9, and 10.

Rolan Fontenot of Lake Arthur has been a taxidermist for 35 years and has hunted Area 10’s marshes most of those years. Not only has he mounted some exceptional deer harvested in coastal marshes, but also is anecdotally familiar with the overall population of the region.

SIZE, NUMBERS, NUTRITION

“There’s a lot more deer in the marsh than people realize,” said Fontenot, 69. “There’s quite a population out there. When I started about 35 years ago, a 110-inch marsh deer was a good deer, and a 130-class deer was a monster. Well, some of them have grown over the years, because I’ve mounted several marsh deer that are knocking on the door of 150 inches.”



Deer in southwest Louisiana’s marshes rut early. This young marsh buck was in full rut in early October.

Johnathan Bordelon, deer project manager of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, said that Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) hunting clubs in New Iberia and St. Mary parishes, the latter in Area 7, have sustained harvest rates that rival bottomland hardwood habitats, while Area 10 harvest rates are lower.

The reason? Bordelon said is most of the marshes in Area 10 are not providing the diversity of desirable plants when compared to Area 7 habitat. However, he said it doesn't mean Area 10 hunters don't have success. On the contrary.

"Numerous canal banks and adjacent spoil banks can produce abundant forage for deer," he said. "While that abundance will have localized benefits to the deer, it will also have localized benefits for hunters. Properties containing ridges and spoil banks are capable of growing foods beneficial for deer."

"By controlling invasives such as Chinese tallow with chemical application in these areas," Bordelon said, "it will help increase the amount of sunlight reaching the ground, which will promote the growth of more desirable woody and herbaceous plant species. These will serve to attract deer, while improving the amount of available forage."

Bordelon also mentioned while contrasting coastal habitats, that Area 9's marsh, like Area 7's, is very diverse. However — and unfortunately — land loss and saltwater intrusion have degraded many marshes for a multitude of wildlife, including deer in this particular coastal region.

"In general, marshes are producing a higher percentage of

“When I started about 35 years ago, a 110-inch marsh deer was a good deer, and a 130-class deer was a monster. Well, some of them have grown over the years, because I've mounted several marsh deer that are knocking on the door of 150 inches.”

— Rolan Fontenot

herbaceous plants than upland sites," he said. "The growing season is almost year-round, which is helpful. However, deer in the marsh do not have the same access to hard mast as deer on upland sites. In addition, coastal habitats are extremely vulnerable to storms and inland flooding from surge, which can temporarily knockout available food resources. Upland sites are much more forgiving by comparison to such storms."

Bordelon said upland sites are on landscapes where active timber management can occur. As a result, active management allows sunlight to reach the forest floor, which increases the amount of forage available in the understory. Last, he said, not all marsh habitats are equal. The amount of open-water, salt-water influence and dominant plant types will influence the quality of available forage.

PUBLIC MARSH OPPORTUNITY >

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PUBLIC MARSH OPPORTUNITY

Louisiana cover some 33.32 million acres, and essentially, 95% of it is behind locked gates. By contrast, the federal government owns 1.4 million acres in Louisiana.

Aaron Hurst of Hathaway, a small, rural farm community just north of Jennings, is a bowhunter who hunts deer on public land in Area 10. For the past 15 years, Hurst, 36, has hunted on Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge, where bowhunting is allowed from Oct. 1 through the Friday before the Louisiana coastal zone waterfowl season opens.

Lacassine is a 34,724-acre refuge consisting of freshwater marsh with some natural ridges and levees.

In describing the refuge, Hurst said, “Up and down Lacassine Bayou, you have a little bit of swamp, but for the most part, it’s all marsh that you’ll be hunting. There’s a big section off of the north side of the Intracoastal Waterway as you head west towards Lake Charles. It used to be a big, ol’ island and was pretty open, then hurricanes Rita and Ike put a hurting on it. Now, it’s a big thicket with plenty of deer, but you also have Intracoastal canal bank that has a little bit of levee system on it that you can hunt, too.”

Hurst labels himself a meat hunter and spends much of October on the refuge filling at least one tag.

“That’s always my meat hunt,” Hurst said. “That’s usually a guarantee for me. I’ll usually kill at least one deer a year there. Now, I’ve never killed something big out there, but there are some big ones that have been taken; they just never crossed me. Probably, the oldest deer I’ve harvested as far as bucks go was a 4-point that was somewhere between 3½ and 4 years old.”

Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge covers 9,621 acres south of Lake Charles. The refuge also allows either-sex bowhunting during October.

Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in St. Mary Parish offers both archery and public gun hunting for deer. Check specific refuge regulations for season dates on this 9,028-acre refuge.

The Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area, also located in St. Mary Parish, offers archery deer hunting annually and is known for larger-horned marsh bucks.

Speaking with confidence about Lacassine, Fontenot said, “The refuge is generally open for the entire month of October for bowhunting. And, if you get out there and scout and you hunt religiously for just one month with just a bow, if you don’t limit out, you can’t shoot straight.”



Look for beaten-down, muddy trails leading into and out of the marsh along canal banks, levees, and bayou banks and hunt close by.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN MARSH >

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Important foods for deer in the coastal marsh include: marsh cowpeas (right), alligator weed (below, left) and willow leaves (below, right).



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN MARSH

In Fontenot's experience, there are plusses and minuses to hunting deer in the marsh, but he said they are easier to pattern than upland deer. Deer will make a beaten down muddy road in the soft terrain, creating easy-to-distinguish trails.

"Walking in the marsh is very difficult for both deer and humans," he said. "So, if you find a well-used trail in the marsh, you've pretty well got a deer patterned and know they're going to be passing that way. In that respect, marsh deer are easier to pattern than deer in the uplands."

"You're also looking for the normal things as you would in the highlands: trails, tracks, droppings and scrapes. The difference is, they are limited, so you want to look for a combination of marsh trails coming to the levee. If you find where two or three trails come together, get you a bucket and sit there and wait, because a deer is going to pass eventually."

Deer prefer certain foods in the marsh. Fontenot and Hurst both mention alligator weed. Marsh deer will also eat willow tree leaves, palmetto seeds, marsh cowpeas, briars, persimmons and, where available, water oak acorns.

To catalog deer foods in the region you hunt, one of the best books available is "Checklist of Woody & Herbaceous Deer Food Plants of Louisiana," written by Dave Moreland, a former deer study leader for LDWF. It's a great guide with numerous pictures to help you identify preferred deer foods.

If there are any drawbacks to hunting marsh deer during the early fall, it is the heat and mosquitos that go with the terrain.

"I've always said that if you want to hunt the marsh, you had to psych yourself out to do one of two things," Fontenot said. "One is, you agree to get eaten alive. Or two, put on so much clothing you suffocate to death to prepare yourself for the mosquitos. You've got one of the two."

Fontenot points out the marsh is also difficult to walk, using the example of walking through the water and sticky muck of a rice field and the effort it takes.

"It's difficult, and it's the same way in the marsh," he said.

"And, if you get on that floating turf — man! You've got to take small steps and step sideways or you'll break through and fall right through it."

The bottom line is, hunting marsh deer along the coast on public or private land doesn't get the attention that upland deer receive. But if you're willing to spend some time and effort in the marsh, you stand a very good chance of putting some backstraps on the rotisserie.

So why not give coastal deer hunting a try this season? It might surprise you just how good it is. ■

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John Flores was enticed in 1984 to leave his western digs in New Mexico for the Sportsman's Paradise by his wife Christine. Never looking back, the author spends much of his free time writing about and photographing the state's natural resources.

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WHEN YOUR FIELD POINTS SHOOT STRAIGHT, BUT YOUR BROADHEADS WON'T GROUP, EXAMINE YOUR BOW'S SETUP

Even though it was more than 30 years ago, I still remember the first arrow I ever shot at a deer like it was yesterday.

Deer were scarce where I hunted, and my mouth hung open as I watched my arrow shave the white hair from her belly at only 15 yards away. Other than her new haircut, that doe was no worse for the experience, but I was devastated and confused, having just blown a golden opportunity.

My mistake was not shooting my broadheads before hunting. Had I done so, it would have revealed that they were flying poorly and hitting the target 12 to 18 inches low at 20 yards. I learned a hard lesson that day, which is that fixed-blade broadheads always tell the truth, quickly revealing any flaws in the setup of your bow. I vowed to never let it happen again, and it instilled a desire to settle for nothing less than perfect arrow flight.

Fast forward to a recent Tuesday, just after 8 a.m. I had already been at work for several hours, tuning customers' bows, when I received a text message from an unknown phone number asking if I would be at the shop that morning. Since I'm famous for losing/destroying cell phones, I figured it was someone I knew who was no longer programmed in my contacts, so I answered the text.

When the customer arrived just as we opened, I realized I had never met him. He explained that he got my number from a mutual acquaintance, and he had just driven 3 hours seeking my help with a bow-tuning issue. He took a chance that I would be at work, texting me at the halfway point and planning to turn around if I wasn't going to be available.

TAKE NO CHANCES

You might wonder what would make someone so desperate. He had drawn a coveted elk tag in a unit of Wyoming after a 12-year wait. Once he drew the tag, he left nothing to chance; he purchased a new, flagship bow from an archery shop in his hometown, and it shot awesome — with field tips. But when he switched to fixed-blade broadheads, his arrows wouldn't even group at 20 yards and were flying spastically. He returned to the shop where he purchased the bow, but the answer there was "It left here paper-tuned."

Although I was way behind and already had a full schedule, since he was desperate and had driven 3 hours, I agreed to help. I adjusted his bow back to specs, resetting the wheel timing



and arrow rest to the proper alignment and paper tuning it, but his broadheads still flew wildly. After some thought, I decided his arrows were improperly spined and slightly too stiff. He told me that he had called the manufacturer, and they told him which arrow to shoot, which, according to their charts, was correct. But as I said earlier, broadheads will ultimately tell the truth, often hurting your feelings in the process, and this case was no exception.

I cut him six new arrows, and they immediately solved the problem, with tight groupings of both field points and broadheads to the same point of impact. After some quick sight adjustments, he left satisfied and headed home to shoot at longer ranges. I received a text from him several days later; he was shooting tight groups all the way out to 60 yards.



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.

COMMON PROBLEM

Although it inspired this month's topic, his story is by no means unique. Almost daily this time of year, I have a customer come in distraught because their broadheads do not shoot like their field tips. Although they may weigh the same amount, leading to identical ballistics, the fixed-blade broadhead differs a great deal aerodynamically, because its exposed blades acting as a planing surface, magnifying any arrow flight deviations.

Poor broadhead flight is often a symptom of a larger problem in the setup of your bow, your form, or both. In a pinch, mechanical broadheads can be a Band-Aid on a bullet wound, but given time, it is always best to fix the underlying issues with your setup.

SYMPTOM, SOLUTION

Other than the obvious problems of improper center shot, nock height, wheel timing and rest timing, arrow spine is probably the No. 1 gremlin when it comes to achieving field point-like accuracy shooting fixed-blade broadheads. Whenever I set up my personal bows, I start with the arrow first, only cutting a couple of shafts. After achieving a good paper tune, I sight the bow in with field tips. Once these are sighted in, I switch to a broadhead target and shoot a fixed-blade head. Assuming it hits close to center, I then "chase it" with a field-point arrow.

If both the broadhead and the field point tipped arrows don't group tightly together, I go back to the drawing board, adjusting and trying different spines until they do. This is the best method I have found. If the two arrows are impacting the target close to each other — within a few inches — but not quite the same, you can make small adjustments by moving your bow's nocking point or center shot slightly towards the broadhead-tipped arrow's point of impact, as compared to the field point arrow. Make sure this doesn't cause the arrow to be drastically out of level or center shot, however, as these can lead to other issues.

Once you have your bow shooting fixed-blade broadheads accurately, then and only then are you truly ready to hunt. A bow that will do this will be more forgiving and shoot any tip you choose to point of impact. Although this often requires a lot of work, the results are more than worth the effort. Archery is a mental game, first and foremost, and knowing that your broadheads will shoot exactly where you point them is key to confidently taking a shot at a trophy animal. ■

FIELD NOTES ➤

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Rattling during the pre-rut should be understated; you're just trying to get a traveling buck's attention, not bring him in snorting, looking for a fight.

BIG RACKETS ARE FOR TENNIS

PRE-RUT RATTLING, GRUNTING SHOULDN'T BE LOUD

Jeff Burleson

By Dan Kibler

Few people in the hunting industry would ever describe Marshall Collette as “understated.”

The big, garrulous hunter, a long-time pro-staff member for companies like Mossy Oak and Quaker Boy, is rarely at a loss for words or opinions.

But on the subject of attracting deer during the pre-rut period in October and November, Collette is more likely to go with “understated” as a description for his calling and rattling tactics.

“October is a little early, I think, for real aggressive calling,” he said. “All I’m trying to do is get their attention and get them moving my way.”

Collette said he’s more apt to do a little doe-calling with a Quaker Boy Bleat-in-Heat can call or grunting on a Swash-buckler grunt call, but he’s not going to be doing any calling that might be taken as a challenge to bring in a dominant buck for a fight.

ATTENTION GETTER

“I’m just grunting to get their attention; I won’t take it to the next level until ... when you start to see some chasing,” Collette said. “I want to watch them and watch their body language: That will tell me how aggressive I should be.”

He’ll take a set of rattling horns with him every time he climbs into a tree stand, but this month he’s not rattling hard to try to draw bucks in to watch a fight over a doe — he’s just wanting to crank up a little curiosity on their part.

“I will do some light rattling, just tickling the antlers,” Collette said. “If I get a good, cool morning or afternoon, I might try to get a little more aggressive.”

“Again, I’m just trying to get a buck’s attention, to get him interested and coming my way.”

MAKING SCENTS

As far as scents are concerned, Collette

keeps it simple. He doesn’t make any mock scrapes or drip glandular scents around rubbed trees. Instead, he soaks a drag rag in Tink’s 69 scent so he leaves a scent trail going into his stand, and he uses scent to cover his own aroma.

“I wear a pair of L.L. Bean 16-inch hunting shoes — the ones with rubber bottoms — and I’ll cut a strip of T-shirt and tie it to the laces, let it hang down 4 or 5 inches. I’ll soak it in Tink’s 69 and walk in,” Collette said. “When I get to my stand, I’ll walk around it. I’ll loop to the left and loop to the right around the tree. If I walk straight in, they’ll walk straight in. I want them to go around the sides of my tree and show themselves.”

“Once I get in my stand, I’ll spray Tink’s aerosol to get the aroma in the air and help cover up my own scent. I don’t mess with any rubs or scrapes or hanging stuff. I’ll get some wicks out once the rut gets here, but October is too early.” ■



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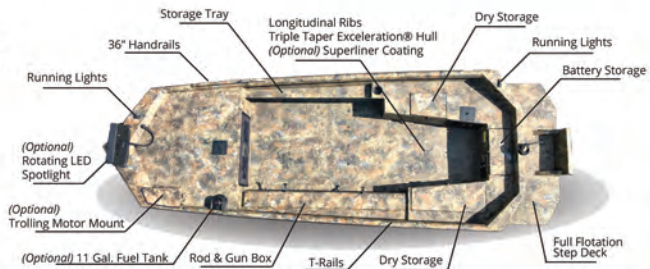
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Deer often travel along edges, places where two different kinds of cover or habitat meet. **INSET:** Lines of rubbed trees and other signs of buck activity are often found in edge areas.

PHOTOS FROM THE EDGE

USE TRAIL CAMS TO SCOUT EARLY ON

By Bill Garbo

When it comes to early season scouting for bucks with trail cameras, monitoring rubs and rub lines can be very effective to better understand just what bucks are using your property and how they travel around and through it.

Deer hunters have always considered rubs to be common fixtures in the fall woods, but by using buck signposts as indicators to aid in the early season placement of trail cameras, we can greatly magnify our buck movement knowledge — and increase harvest success. Before you roll your eyes, let's set the

record straight: rub locations and rub lines are great early season indicators of just where bucks live and travel. That's all.

There are definite preferences when it comes to where bucks tend to rub and where their travel corridors are located.

Unravelling this puzzle and taking advantage of what is learned can have a profound effect upon hunting success and enjoyment.

LIVING ON THE EDGE

Let's take a look at the role that habitat edges have in defining where rub



Dan Kibler

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locations tend to be concentrated.

A habitat edge is the defining line between two types of habitat. Deer research has clearly shown the majority of buck rubs occur in the linear parallel corridor that is roughly 60 feet of either side of an edge.

Some call this the "edge affect," and you need to take full advantage of it.

Deer are classic edge creatures. A habitat edge can either be an abrupt hard edge, such as the transition from dense woods to open habitat like a field or food plot. It can

also be a soft edge, where the transition zone is more gradual as with a change in timber type and/or timber age.

Early in the season, spend time scouting edge areas, looking specifically for rubs and rub lines. Place trail cameras in good vantage spots to catch the bucks that are moving through edge habitat.

WHERE DID HE GO?

As the rut approaches, bucks produce rub lines along their preferred travel corridors. What you should find is, within the roughly 60-foot band on either side of a given edge, the highest concentration of rubs will fall within the first 15 to 20 feet from the actual edge, in both directions.

This gives hunters a rough 30- to 40-foot-wide area to closely investigate.

Since the term edge defines a line of habitat transition, we can also refer to it as a "linear feature."

Linear features can be further expanded to include things like roads, log skidder trails and creeks, in addition to habitat edges. While roads and creeks display some edge effect, it is not as pronounced or strong as habitat edges.

One exception involves abandoned log skidder roads and trails, which do produce a noticeably strong edge effect.

COVER, FOOD

All habitat types are not the same when it comes to buck preference. In order for a habitat type to be prime for buck utility, it had to contain and provide both security cover and quality browse. That combination produced the highest rub densities.

The most-productive habitat types, from the standpoint of buck utility, included young pines, young hardwoods, sapling thickets and mixed tall grass/saplings.

Place your trail cameras in favorable locations during the early season time frame to better pin down buck movement patterns on your hunting property. ■



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THE SPIKE MISTAKE

'ONCE A SPIKE, ALWAYS A SPIKE' BELIEF CAN LEAD TO POOR DEER MANAGEMENT By Dan Kibler

Deer hunters interested in improving the quality of bucks in their local herds often make big mistakes when it comes to deciding which bucks need to be culled.

And many times, those poor decisions involve spikes.

"Once a spike, always a spike" is one of deer-hunting's oldest and most-incorrect beliefs. Studies and surveys over the past 20 years have proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that spikes are not genetically inferior deer that need to be taken out of the breeding pool.

The No. 1 reason a buck wears spikes as his first set of antlers is age. Buck fawns born later in the year than others will be behind the 8-ball in terms of body weight and condition — and it might take them a year or two to catch up in terms of antler size.

"A lot has to do with the biology of the fawn," said Evin Stanford, a veteran deer biologist. "When the fawn was born and the body condition of the fawn when it's going through antler development are more important.

"If a buck is born late, that will definitely affect him compared to deer that have been born early. That's a fact."

Mature does breed in November and December across much of the Southeast, so fawn birth is centered on the weeks between Memorial Day and July 4.

Does that are missed by bucks during their first estrus period and are bred a month later will drop fawns a month later.

Does that are bred even later — normally does that were fawns the previous spring — will drop their offspring well into the summer.

"Frequently, when a (doe) fawn goes into estrus, she'll skip through the (normal) estrus period and come in much later," Stanford said. "Her buck fawn is going to have a very rough time putting any kind of energy into antler development his first year."

For one thing, that late buck fawn finds itself entering its first winter at perhaps five months of age, which puts it far behind older buck fawns coming out of winter in March, when the process of body development and antler development begins.

"In that first year, from the time a buck is a fawn through 1½ years old, they're putting all of their energy into growing, putting on more body mass, more bone mass," Stanford said. "Antler

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development is secondary at that time. It won't be until his second year that antler development takes on a bigger role."


So a late-born fawn that is a spike at 18 months of age might be the offspring of a buck with a 140-inch, 10-point rack — but it won't begin to show those trophy characteristics until age 2½ or 3½, when it catches up with older cousins.

Stanford also pointed to the concept of "buck dispersal" as a reason to pass up spikes.

Young bucks, he said, are subject to move away from their home areas as they mature, often moving a considerable distance. Once relocated, they set up their home ranges and core areas.

So a spike buck you kill in the fall to keep it from breeding and passing "poor genetics" down to the next generation likely wouldn't have been part of the local herd the next season anyway. ■

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TIPS FOR EARLY SQUIRRELS

DIE-HARD SMALL-GAME HUNTER SHARES SECRETS TO OCTOBER SUCCESS

There are squirrel hunters who hit the woods a couple times each season and knock down a handful of tree rats. And then there are those who are just eaten up with the sport.

Jeffrey Wood falls into the latter category: The man just can't get enough of it.

"I find it a challenge to sneak up on and call up squirrels with a squirrel call early season," Wood said. "When I was a kid, my dad would take us squirrel hunting. That was the main thing — we hunted still and with dogs."

Wood owns Etehoma Creek Kennels and produces his own line of calls, Swamp Boys Custom Calls, and he spends upward of 100 days every season in the woods, and trains squirrel dogs almost every day of the year.

Here are his tips for getting the most out of the early season:

KEEP INSECT FREE

Wood never goes into the woods without spraying down with Sawyer permethrin tick and mosquito repellent, but it's heavy-duty stuff that shouldn't be sprayed on your skin.

"I spray my clothes with this a few days prior to going hunting," he said. "Never spray your skin — only your clothes."

WATCH FOR NO-SHOULDERS

October can be nice and brisk, but it also can be fairly warm. And that means snakes can still be out.

So Wood said he wears a pair of good snake boots.

"The first of squirrel season, snakes are out in full force looking for squirrels and other small rodents," he said.

You don't want to make a step and get a nasty surprise.

GET COMFORTABLE

While stalking can be productive, sometimes the best strategy is to find a den or feed tree and wait for squirrels to come to you. A dove stool helps ensure you can endure the down time.

"I use a dove stool for sitting long periods of time while watching and waiting on squirrels feeding on acorns and hickory trees," Wood said.

SQUIRREL CALL OR BARKER

Stalking is easier if you actually have an idea where a squirrel might be in the dense cover of early season.

"I use these calls while sitting still watching acorn flats or hickory ridges," Wood said. "When I have a squirrel answer my call, I start slipping closer to get a shot."

THE RIGHT GUN

Because trees have yet to lose their leaves this month, Wood uses a shotgun instead of a .22.

"I use a 20-gauge or 12-gauge loaded with No. 4 or 6 shot, high-brass (shells)," he said. "These loads will penetrate the leaves and get your squirrel."

"When the leaves come off later in season, I will use a .22 loaded with 40-grain solid-tip bullets like CCI mini mags." ■

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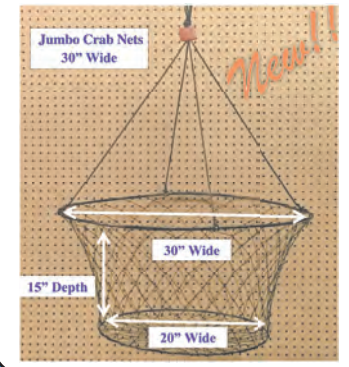
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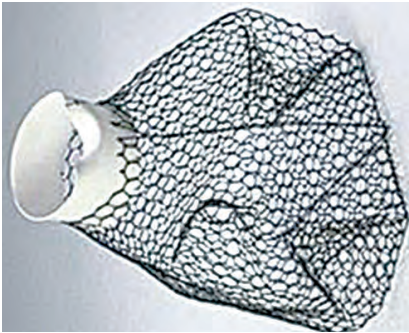


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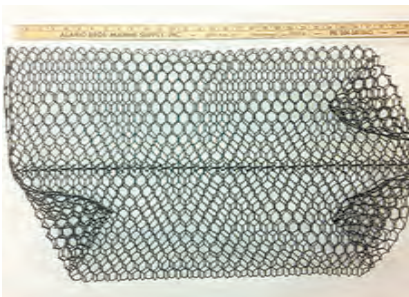
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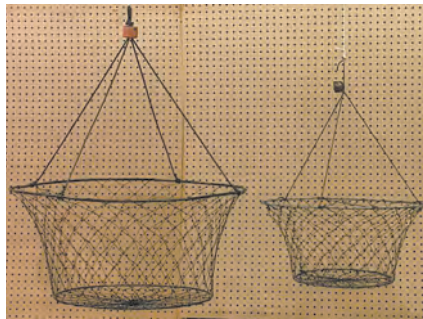
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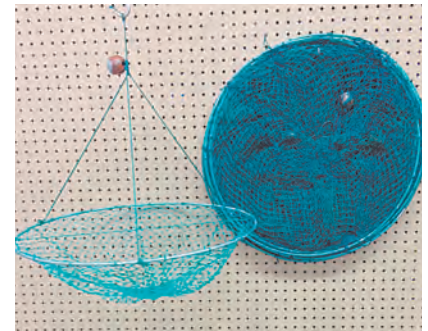
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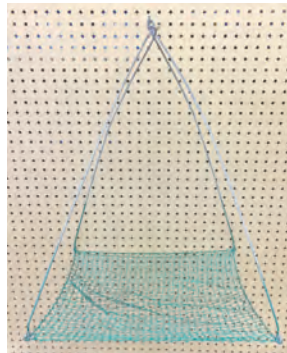
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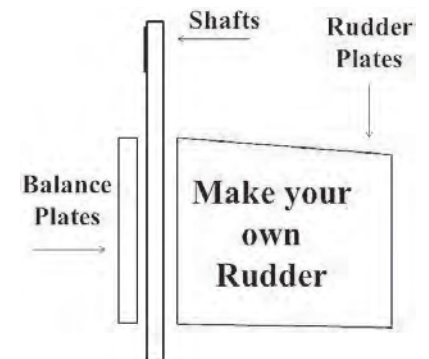
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The redfishing in Delacroix is as hot as a fever blister on a june bug. That's no surprise; it looks like there could be a redfish on every shoreline, but the enormity of the marsh can make consistently finding hungry ones a challenge.

One guy who always seems to know what cove to look in is Casey Brunning of Hurricane Bay Charters, who calls Delacroix his home waters; he's fished them since he was a kid.

"I've been fishing since I could walk," he said. "My dad was a top-10 Louisiana bass angler in the mid-70s, and (he) drug me along fishing all over the state."

Brunning developed an affinity for the Delacroix area while fishing tournaments in the early 90s when Caernarvon was the place to be.

"It's has always been special place," he said, "and back then, you could go out to Whiskey Bay and crush the trout by 7 a.m., then catch all the redfish you wanted on your way back in."

ON THE CLOCK ➤

RATTLE DELACROIX'S REDS

By John Manion

STUDY THE BOTTOM, THE WATER, THE BAIT AND FIND PLACES THAT ARE HOLDING REDFISH FOR A REASON. THEN, THIS GUIDE SAYS, GO CATCH 'EM.

ON THE CLOCK

Now, after better than six years at the helm of his guide business, Brunning is on the water for more than a hundred trips a year, but the time guiding is only part of the story.

“When I started, I’d spend 12 hours on the water in advance of every trip,” he said. “Even now, I don’t want to be the guy who doesn’t know where the fish are.”

Spending time on the water means Brunning can execute two strategies that ensure he can produce fish. The first is eliminating water that isn’t holding fish. To that end, Brunning scouts from a Majek RFL Tower boat, which offers an unbelievable view. From the elevated cockpit 12 feet above the surface, Brunning is able to drive in and out of shallow coves, through tiny trenasses and backwater ponds and find redfish without wetting a line.

Beyond the boat’s mobility in skinny water, the elevation advantage compared to a traditional boat is the difference between LSU’s offense last year and the previous 125. The entire playing field comes into focus: depth changes, submerged-vegetation patterns, baits and the actual reds.

Brunning is not only trying to hone in on areas holding fish;

he’s not just looking for a redfish fish here or there — he’s searching for pockets of fish. Locating a group of fish tells Brunning that the conditions are conducive to holding fish, and that likely means that the fish may sit tight for a period of time.

THE BOTTOM COUNTS

At surface level, the marsh’s shoreline looks consistent, but perched on a tower, anglers can see the variations in the bottom. Whether it’s holes where oyster shells pile up or more shallow banks where a point is dissolving, these geographically changes provide refuges for bait and potential ambush points for predators. Brunning targets these changes to find fish.

Changes in the bottom contour also changes the submerged aquatic vegetation. What appears at first glance to be a solid grass mat may have holes and gaps that are visible from a bird’s-eye view. There are too many types of submerged grasses to count, and they are continually growing, dying and re-growing. Stagnate, floating slime is as bad as it looks, but new growth is another story.

“I like the brand-new, bright-green slime on the bottom,” he said. “Redfish like to sit in it.”

Viewing the marsh from an elevated platform allows an angler to get a better look at the bottom contours, submerged vegetation and even spot reds.

OPPOSITE: If Casey Brunning finds reds in an area, he knows he’s in the right habitat and can begin to pattern fish across the Delacroix marsh.



This eagle-eyed vision is dependent on a major variable: water quality. It sounds counter-intuitive, but locating the prettiest, gin-clear water is not always the goal. Anglers are just as visible to the fish in crystal-clear water. A calm, clear, leeward shoreline will virtually erupt with activity if a tower looms over the water. Any mullet in a 5-block radius will scatter like roaches with the lights on, alerting redfish that something's off.

"This is why I prefer clean to stained water," Brunning said.

Water a few shades darker keeps the environment calm and easier to stalk redfish. It's particularly important in the stained water, that anglers should start looking for the telltale redfish push instead of an obvious orange glow.

**NOT ALL BAIT IS
CREATED EQUAL >**



NOT ALL BAIT IS CREATED EQUAL

Contrary to its moniker, sight-fishing doesn't mean actually seeing the redfish you're targeting. Most of the time when Brunning is running, he's looking for the distinctive, heavy push a redfish makes as it swims. Fish behave differently, and their behavior produces a distinct pattern in the water. Mullet appear to be nearly in panic mode as they swim away from the slightest disturbance, dodging and darting in all directions. Reds pulse and produce a straight, heavy wake.

It's because of a mullet's panicky nature that Brunning doesn't consider them a particularly good indicator.

"I generally don't fish around mullet," he said. "The schools will bump the redfish off, because they are so spooky and turn everything up."

Balls of fingerling mullet, small crabs and even freshwater species like bream are good signs of a productive area. Stingrays are also a good sign, and not because reds are eating the rays, but stingrays and redfish share the same tastes in habitat. It's common to see stingrays resting and feeding while sight-fishing for reds.

Brunning's go-to artificial bait is the Matrix Craw in cobalt color. He pairs this with a Knotty Hooker jighead, and it doesn't take much imagination to see a small, blue crab. He ties this it to 50-pound Suffix Braid, and when a red takes the bait, it ain't going nowhere. One time, on a hookset, Brunning actually jerked a 5-pound red completely out of the water.

In addition to his usual boat, Brunning is a veteran kayak fisherman, having competed in a number of kayak tournaments, winning a world championship in the process.

"Being in a kayak sharpens your skillset," he said. "You're limited in the amount of opportunities to fish. Instead of fishing every point in a bay, you are forced to fish every detail on the shoreline, every ripple, every blade of grass. This makes you fish slower. When you're fishing that slow you become hyper away of bumps on the line. You learn to feel a drag on your line and know it's a fish."

A PRO'S OUTLOOK

There are a few snags to avoid if you're thinking about scratching that tournament itch. Anglers should consider avoiding the philosophy of chasing a weight. Limiting the fish you keep to only those above a specific weight can lead to inadvertently missing winning fish. Something as simple as low-tide range may have the fish not feeding actively, producing lower weights across the board. Brunning's advice is: "We target two 26¾-inch fish; Mother Nature is going to determine how heavy an individual fish is."

Lockjaw is another hurdle to overcome.

"When I go to three spots, and the fish aren't eating, it tells me they are community fish," Brunning said. "They've been hit by other anglers (and) bowfishermen or bumped by boat traffic. It's tough to leave fish, but we get out of an area when they won't bite."

Casey Brunning's tower and casting platform gives him a number of advantages when it comes to finding and catching marsh reds.



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Sight-fishing for redfish is what bowhunting is to deer hunting. You might catch better numbers drowning shrimp, but the thrill of watching a redfish inhale your lure is worth a couple fewer fillets. The other benefit is the increase in your fish IQ. Any bowhunter will tell you, you learn a lot more when deer are at 20 yards than at 200.

Brunning's success isn't about his GPS waypoints. It's the volume of experience with all types of fish, locations, and techniques. Whether you're in search of a box of reds or a tournament pig, take a page out of Brunning's play-book and put in the work. ■

Capt Casey Brunning can be reached at captaincaseyfishing@gmail.com or 985-966-1735. Find out more about Hurricane Bay Charters at hurricane-baycharters.com.



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The name of Casey Brunning's guide service came from a joke he used when trying to keep a hot fishing spot to himself.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

All weekend warriors have the same question for a guide:

"Where you'd catch them at?"

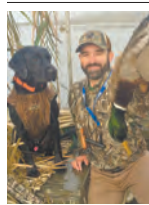
Any good guide **won't** tell you, "In the mouth." With the speed that good news travels on Facebook, Instagram and a host of other gossip platforms, a spot holding fish will get plenty of attention.

One summer when Casey Brunning started guiding, he and a buddy were consistently on fish in a spot known as "Pole Cat Bend" near the Rigolets. The old wives' tale was, that particular area had been created by the storm surge from a hurricane that created a large washout in the small island.

As Brunning recalled, "All the reports were struggling. Even guides weren't posting good catches. But we were crushing the fish on every trip."

Naturally, Brunning started fielding a lot of questions about where he was catching fish. With the skill of a seasoned veteran he didn't hesitate: "They're in Hurricane Bay." When no one could find Hurricane Bay on the interweb, Brunning said, "You gotta look at an old map, like your grandpa's old paper maps."

And so, Hurricane Bay Charters was formed. ■



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

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Piecing together the Gulf puzzle

By Jon Miller

Biodiversity is an intriguing concept, laying out the existence of many functional parts that together run a very complex system, maybe the most-complex system in the cosmos.

Biodiversity can be defined as the variability among living organisms. It supplies plenty of functioning parts that together run the immensely complex system of organic life on earth. The functions of living organisms include capturing and storing energy, producing organic material, decomposing

organic material, cycling water and nutrients, controlling erosion or pests and much more.

We humans are also part of this biodiversity, and as we grow in population and technological power, we make more and more of an impact in the ecosystem. We also cannot live outside of the natural organic system, so being aware of how biodiversity makes the world work and how our actions might improve or worsen biodiversity could help us survive with joy.

BIODIVERSITY EXPLAINS HOW ALL PARTS IN THE GULF COAST'S FISHERY DEPEND ON EACH OTHER, AND HOW CHANGES CAN HAVE FAR-REACHING EFFECTS, ESPECIALLY ON RECREATIONAL FISHING.

BIODIVERSITY AND FISHING >

BIODIVERSITY AND FISHING

How can we frame the importance of biodiversity as it relates to the interests of recreation fishermen?

Recreational fishermen are like car buyers. At least subconsciously, car buyers know it is important that there is an impeller for the car's water pump, but they are focusing on the car as a singular item when they sign the purchase papers. As fishermen, we subconsciously know that something is keeping the water clean by eating the detritus, but it is the large speckled trout and redfish on which we are focused. In the same way car buyers know that the functioning of all the little parts in the car is critical to their satisfaction, we need to recognize that the functions provided by all the organisms in the water ultimately give us the recreational fishing experience we seek.

A few years ago, I read Mark Kurlansky's fascinating book about cod fish, *A Biography of the Fish That Changed the World*. The cod was responsible for many changes in human society, including the growth of nations, wars between nations and the introduction of fish into the diet of residents of this country's Midwest. Cod fishing brought Basque fishermen to the New World long before Columbus arrived, but they were so secretive about where they caught their cod, they didn't get credit for the discovery.

The Atlantic cod fish industry eventually collapsed from extreme overfishing, largely due to unregulated harvest and the belief that no amount of harvest would be too great to impact

the Atlantic cod stock.

Alexandre Dumas, a fishery expert of sorts, famously stated in 1873 that his calculations of cod reproduction showed that if all the eggs hatched and each cod grew to full size, "It would take only three years for the sea to be full of cod, so that one could walk dry-shod across the Atlantic on their backs." This belief in the everlasting existence of the cod stock nearly resulted in its total demise.

MANAGE BIGGER SPECIES

It is common for anglers to focus on harvest controls for the large species as the metric for successful fisheries management. Over the past two years, Louisiana's inshore recreational fishing community has been engaged in an ongoing discussion about sustainable recreational harvest limits for the preservation of the speckled trout stock. The elimination of nearly all commercial harvest of trout has ensured that the stock will not collapse like the cod, but anglers also recognize other factors that are applying pressure, including an increase in fishermen and the destruction of habitat. A concern less-frequently heard is how overfishing of the speckled trout's food sources can damage trout stocks by reducing biodiversity.

The Gulf of Mexico is an important resource for people living on its shores, and many people make their livelihood from its bountiful seafood. Louisiana blue crabs often find their way into crab cakes in New England, and Louisiana shrimp have supplied the Northeast since a shrimping moratorium began in 2014 after the collapse of the northern shrimp stock.

Louisiana Fisheries Forward reports that the Louisiana seafood industry provides more than \$2.4 billion annually to the local economy. Louisiana's seafood industry directly supports over 30,000 people and is one of the most-productive fisheries in the country. Louisiana harvests more shrimp than any other state and more than half of all menhaden. The menhaden harvests in Louisiana are reported to generate more than \$90 million.





In Louisiana, the debate about speckled trout harvest limits outshines arguments focusing on the fate of organisms that supply those same specks with food. **OPPOSITE:** Louisiana's shrimping industry is the largest in the United States, supplying markets far from the Gulf Coast.

David Cresson of the Coastal Conservation Association said that while the value of commercial fishing to Louisiana is immense, a certain amount of damage to the recreational fishery is inevitable. There will always be a small percentage of gamefish killed as by-catch from commercial fishing, and commercial fishing removes forage fish on which the recreational species feed. Some commercial fishing activities also destroy recreational fish habitat, one example being dredging for oysters, which flattens the vertical oyster reefs and so destroys very productive habitat.

The CCA's stated purpose is to "advise and educate the public on conservation of marine resources, and the objective is to conserve, promote, and enhance the present and future availability of coastal resources for the benefit and enjoyment of the general public." Cresson said one of the primary ways that CCA-Louisiana fulfills its mission is to participate in public policy making, which often means working with the commercial fishing industry to achieve mutual benefit.

Sometimes, CCA must oppose practices of the commercial industry to defend recreational fisheries. A recent example was championing the ban on oyster dredging in Calcasieu and Sabine lakes. Now, oysters are harvested only with tongs in Calcasieu, which is preserving vertical reefs and enhancing the recreational fishery's habitat. Incidentally, this policy has begun to restore oysters and is one success story on how recreational and commercial interests can align.

THE MENHADEN ISSUE >

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More than half of the total menhaden harvest in United States waters comes from Louisiana., where factory boats encircle huge schools.



THE MENHADEN ISSUE

Commercial menhaden fishing has gotten the attention of many Louisiana recreational fishermen this year, chiefly because the commercial fleet has been visiting the same waters that inshore anglers are fishing and visibly harvesting what appears to be vast numbers of menhaden. Menhaden are a major food source for speckled trout and redfish, so

anglers directly seeing the harvesting of menhaden have created a backlash on social media.

Many forage species, including menhaden, form bait balls for protection, which is effective when they are being attacked by larger fish species. But because of bait-balling, humans with spotter airplanes and nets can scoop up the majority of these fish in a local area rather quickly.

The Gulf menhaden is arguably a Louisiana species. The 2015 Gulf Menhaden Management Plan highlights studies of tagged menhaden that show adult fish from states east and west of Louisiana slowly migrate toward the Mississippi River Delta, and that high densities of larvae are found near the Mississippi River. That supports researchers' conclusions that spawning is concentrated near the mouth of the river. Not surprisingly, more than half of all menhaden harvested in U.S. waters are caught in Louisiana.

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Because menhaden ball up in tight schools for protection from predators, they're subject to being easily netted.



WHERE FORAGE FISH WIND UP

The Smithsonian Institute reports that forage fish account for one-third of marine commercial fishing harvests, and around 90% of forage fish are not consumed by humans — shrimp being the exception. Most forage fish are processed into fish meal, which is used to feed farmed fish, larger fisheries, livestock, poultry and pets. They are also used in products, including fertilizers and dietary supplements. Menhaden is one of the most useful of all forage fish due to its high oil content.

Cresson said the CCA is monitoring developing information about the commercial menhaden fishing in Louisiana waters. He said there is no harvest limit on menhaden, but the by-catch is limited to 5%. Adherence to the by-catch limit is self-enforced by the fishing fleet. Cresson said CCA is seeking

to understand the effect of the 5% by-catch on recreational species that may be feeding on the menhaden while commercial netting is occurring.

Given the large amount of change occurring along the Gulf Coast, both in destruction and restoration, a major concern over the past few years is whether various government and non-government institutions are working together to ensure that projects don't address one problem at the expense of others. Are restoration projects addressing coastal protection but also biodiversity and fishery habitat? Cresson was affirming that the various parties — including the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the Coastal Preservation and Restoration Association, the Gulf fisheries commission and CCA — do communicate and are bought together by governor's office.

Weekend warriors getting away from our jobs or commercial fishermen on the job, the coastal waters that are shared are meaningful to all, and collaboration on holistic approaches to keeping the ecosystem strong is needed. ■



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

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Todd Masson

Topwater-crushing speckled trout were already established in inside waters in August.



Photo by Todd Masson

IT'S GOING TO BE A GOOD FALL, Y'ALL

Speckled trout follow a predictable, annual pattern. In spring, lengthening days and rising water temperatures trigger something in their pea-sized brains, and they get the signal it's time to move to saltier water to create future generations of speckled trout.

That's what they do throughout the summer, meeting nightly in deepwater passes to partake in massive fish orgies, producing fertilized eggs that move inland with the tides.

You would think the males, at least, would never grow weary of such a lifestyle, but apparently they do. By the end of summer, speckled trout have had enough of gettin' busy and are really gettin' hungry, so the bulk of them begin to move back inshore, not coincidentally at a time when white shrimp are leaving the skinny backwaters they've called home since their birth just a few months earlier.

Contained in those thin, shrimp shells is all the fuel the exhausted speckled trout need to recover from the rigors of the spawn and actually add fat layers in preparation for lean times in the winter.

Exactly when that move inland begins depends on the year. Sometimes, the only specks in interior waters in August are juveniles that weren't ready to spawn. But then, there are years like this one, when those fish are joined by early migrators who get off the spawning grounds and commence to filling their bellies.

EARLY THIS YEAR

I got a clue this might be an early-migration year during a mid-July trip out of Hopedale with Capt. Charlie Thomason. We were targeting redfish that day in skinny-water ponds and coves, and it seemed like everywhere we went, the trolling motor kicked up schools of tail-snapping white shrimp that went

airborne in protest of our intrusion.

Before that trip, the earliest I had ever seen THAT many shrimp in interior waters was mid-August.

We didn't catch any specks that day, but a couple of weeks later, Chas Champagne, who owns Matrix Shad, boated a 3-pound speckled trout, as well as a handful of smaller fish, while fishing an inside lake.

Not too many days later, I was deep inside the marsh on a hunt for bass and redfish when I came across a bayou loaded to the gills with shad and white shrimp. The bass were there, too, and I caught a bunch of them, but I kept seeing something explode on the bait in the



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

Ian Lovell, 9, caught this nice speckled trout in Hopedale.



middle of the bayou.

So even though it was August and the sun was well above the horizon, I reached for a rod that had a topwater Matrix Mullet tied on and made a long cast down the middle of the bayou. I don't think I twitched the bait three times before something exploded on it.

I set the hook, reeled in a keeper speckled trout and repeated the process several times that morning. I was giddy to see the seasons change before my eyes — and at the prospects for excellent fishing this fall.

FANTASY OCTOBERS

October can be a tricky month for inshore speckled trout fishing. Sometimes, like last year, the transition is late, and the fish are incredibly scattered. But when the migration is early, like it appears to have been this year, the fish are entrenched in their autumn patterns by October, and easy to find.

My favorite pattern this month is to watch the buoys for falling-tide trends and schedule my trips accordingly. I'll set up at the mouths of major bayous, where they dump into big lakes and bays, and keep my eyes peeled for popping shrimp.

Once you find them, limits are almost a foregone conclusion. It's usually not a great month for trophy-sized fish, but if you're looking to host a weekend fish fry, it's hard to beat October during an early-migration year. ■

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Summer is too hot. Winter is too cold. Ahhh, fall is just right. Louisiana kayak anglers are blessed with great, year-round fishing, and there is no doubt that good fishing can be had in any month. However, October generally makes for pleasant days on the water marked by short paddles and lots of action.

Kayak-fishing is great exercise, but can be uncomfortable on a sweltering 95-degree August day or a damp, bitter, February morning. Exposed directly to the elements, kayak-fishing on these days can frankly be not much fun. But ah, when fall rolls around, those crisp mornings and mild days make for the best times to be on the water.

Trout and redfish are the main quarry of Louisiana's inshore kayak anglers, and there is no better time to chase them than October. The coastal marshes are in transition, and speckled trout are finishing their move from the outer coast to the interior marsh where they gang up until dispersing coastward for the beginning of the spring and summer spawning season. Of course, slot-size redfish are ever-present, but the lower water temperature puts a little extra kick in their fins, and they bite like crazy.

Live bait is still available at most marinas and is never a bad bet. Managing live bait in a kayak can be difficult without a properly set-up live well, but it can be done. During the peak of summer, keeping bait healthy is difficult due to the water's surface temperature being close to hot-tub status. The cooler fall weather makes it much easier to keep them happy and alive. A simple, floating bait bucket or one with a small air bubbler is all you need to keep your bait frisky and ready for action.

However, the good news is that artificial lures really shine during the fall. Pick out a few of your favorite plastic tails, jigheads and a popping cork and you're set for some great action. If you like fishing hard-plastic lures, topwater and suspending plugs also do the trick. The main idea is to have a variety in order to cover the water column. No subtle winter bites here. The fish are hungry and let you know it.

Both trout and reds can be found in small schools at all the high-percentage areas. Don't overlook any point, cut or other irregular shoreline feature. Of course, areas with moving water or active signs of bait are always a good bet. Having a couple rods rigged with different set-ups makes locating fish and dialing in on what they want much easier. Since fish are less scattered this time of year, find where they are holding, and you might not have to make many moves.



Don't overlook topwater action when chasing redfish. This small wake bait worked over submerged grass had the reds fired up. They may miss it a time or two, but if you can resist overreacting and pulling it away, chances are they will take another shot at it.

PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

continued

A popping cork is a great search bait. It is fairly easy to cover every direction, and that popping sound surely gets noticed when you hit the right spot. Try a little bit of everything, in every direction, before giving up on a particular location. You can literally miss the fish by just a few feet if the area isn't thoroughly worked. Although the surface may look the same, there may be an unseen feature that has the fish where they want to be. An oyster reef, a ledge, a current break or anything that provides a change of structure is key to congregating the fish. Covering the water column is just as important as covering different areas. Even in marsh areas just a few feet deep, fishing on the bottom can be more productive than under a cork or vice versa.

Did I mention short paddles? I'm a firm believer that fish do not know where the boat launch is. Kayak anglers would do well to heed this principle. I rarely see anyone launch a powerboat and immediately starting to fish. There is something in that key switch that requires cranking up and heading out. How many fish are passed up at 40 mph looking for what is thought to be greener pastures?

Unless you launch in an extremely high-traffic area, fish your way to your intended area. On many fall trips, great action is found literally in sight of the boat launch. If you like paddling or

need some extra exercise, head for parts over yonder. However, if the goal is to catch fish, get a lure in the water as soon as possible.

It may be a bit cool in the mornings, so dress in light layers; you can adjust accordingly as the temperature rises. Although it is not hot, sun protection is still needed. Sitting so close to the water, you can get a mean sunburn from the glare without even noticing. Technical fishing pants, long-sleeve shirt, and a face covering, all with SPF protection, keeps you cool and comfortable.

At this time, many anglers have switched their attentions to hunting and several will be off at deer camp bowhunting or preparing for gun season. October is in between teal and big duck seasons so there will be no duck hunters out, except for a few in the marsh working on blinds. The bottom line is that the marsh is less crowded.

Fall can be the most comfortable and productive time to be a kayak angler in south Louisiana, marked by hungry fish, mild days and short distances to cover. While many anglers across other parts of the country are preparing their kayaks for winter storage, we're out there enjoying some of the best kayak fishing there is to be had. ■

TROUT, REDFISH AND FLOUNDER HOTSPOTS ➤

Lance Burgos admires a nice speckled trout caught in the south Louisiana marsh. Fall fishing is here, and kayak anglers can look forward to mild weather and good numbers of close-in specks and reds.



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TROUT, REDFISH AND
FLOUNDER HOTSPOTS

SABINE LAKE FISHERY GETS LAURA BOUNCE

Plenty of reds, trout, flounder showing up
in crystal-clear waters after hurricane

We can agree that both southwest Louisiana and southeast Texas have seen their fair share of hurricanes and tropical storms over the past 10 to 15 years. It seems we all have to become experts at disaster preparedness and response. The communities in both states have shown such resiliency and persistence.

My first time back on the water was 10 days after Hurricane Laura, a much-needed retreat from the stresses and hard work of cleaning up and trying to get things back in order on the home front. Our predictions of a positive effect on the fishing for salt-water species on Sabine Lake appear to have been correct thus far. Redfish have been hoarding shrimp up and down the banks of Coffee Ground Cove, while trout have been schooling underneath birds just a few hundred yards off the shoreline.

Redfish were traveling mostly in pods of four to six fish; however, some schools were much larger, and there have been singles and doubles cruising the banks. They have been mostly in the 20- to 26-inch class and very willing to eat. The majority of



Maybe this year will be the fall and winter with flats full of big speckled trout like this one Brad Deslatte is holding up. Only time will tell but it is looking good right now.

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YAMAHA

Father-and-son trips are great, especially when getting to cast at feeding redfish all morning. Monty Latiolas and son, Mason, had a great first trip out on Sabine Lake after Hurricane Laura.



fish caught were on a 3-inch Bubba Clucker Mullet in chicken- on-a-chain-gang color. It was my first time throwing that soft plastic and I was impressed. It held up well and caught a decent number of fish before needing to be replaced. The size was very close to the size of shrimp fish were chasing and easy to make precise and accurate casts. For fish we caught out deeper, in 3 to 4 feet of water, we utilized a 3½-inch Vudu shrimp in pepper/chartreuse tail rigged underneath a popping cork.

Flounder could be seen assaulting unsuspecting shrimp and small finfish. The water resembled the crystal-clear water we typically see in January and February. Hundreds of crabs were visible along the shorelines, with what seemed an endless line of mullet and shad. Bull sharks and stingrays rounded out the rest of the action visible in the shallows. I suspect that our freshwater species did not fare as well, but I have not ventured into the marsh yet. There was a rather pungent aroma coming from the marsh and down the Sabine River though.

I would be cautious if you are planning to wade-fish Sabine anytime soon. I have seen more stingrays cruising the bottom close to the shorelines than ever before. Shuffle your feet and wear ray guards if you have them; buy some if you don't.

Recovery from Hurricane Laura will undoubtedly take months, if not years. But if the fishing on Sabine continues on this current track, I believe it will be the best fall and winter we have had in years. ■

— Capt. Adam Jaynes



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

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Capt. Cami Mantilla caught this nice flounder in Lake Borgne around Alligator Bend.



HOW TO HOOK A FLOUNDER

By Phillip Gentry

Flounder are gregarious fish. If they bit like redfish, you'd regularly see a lot more flounder in magazines and on social media.

The problem with flounder is the way they attack prey by latching onto it and then turning or positioning it to go down their throats. That makes them more difficult to hook and often leads novice anglers to believe that flounder won't take large baits. Nothing could be further from the truth.

"It takes patience to consistently hook flounder," said guide Wilson Hanna. "My rule of thumb is, the larger the bait, the longer the wait."

Hanna said for the average, shallow-water, legal-sized flounder he is targeting with a 2- to 3-inch baitfish, he will start counting as soon as he feels the bite and wait anywhere from 10 to 30 seconds before setting the hook.

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Phillip Gentry

Giving a flounder time to grab a bait and get it ready to slide down its throat will usually result in a good hookset.

If he's fishing a deeper drop-off for doormats, he's more inclined to use a 5- to 6-inch bait. Under those circumstances, he's going to wait anywhere from a minute to two.

"After the initial bite, I'll bring the rod tip up just to make sure there's still something live on the end of the line," he said. "I don't want to aggravate the fish, just confirm he's still down there chewing."

Two things tell him when it's time to set the hook. The first is the fish turning and starting to swim away. The second is reaching the appointed time.

"I don't really set the hook in a conventional sense," he said. "The Kahle hooks I prefer act sort of like a circle hook, and to set the hook, I just start cranking the reel handle and let the hook sink in."

Hanna said setting the hook when fishing artificials is totally different.

"The bite on an artificial is a reaction bite, like a bass," he said. "The fish on the other end is not going to hold on, so you set the hook and hope the hook finds it's mark." ■



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Brian Cope



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: TARPON

THE ACROBATIC SILVER KING MAKES ANGLERS HAPPY UP AND DOWN THE GULF AND SOUTH ATLANTIC COASTS

Tarpon, *Megalops atlanticus*, is a highly-prized gamefish for recreational anglers throughout its range. A combination of reasons contributes to tarpon's status among anglers.

These fish are highly acrobatic, usually jumping numerous times once they are hooked. During these fights, they attempt to throw the hook, which more often than not, they do. A battle with a tarpon — even a losing one — often sticks in an angler's mind as one of their greatest angling feats.

Most anglers have far fewer chances at tarpon than other fish. Other than along the coast of Florida, tarpon do not spend the entire year in range of most anglers. Along the Mississippi and Louisiana coasts, they usually appear in late spring or early summer, and most leave near the end of summer. Smaller numbers stick around through the end of September, and even fewer remain into late October.

Another reason for anglers' fondness of these fish is that they grow to enormous sizes. Every single tarpon in Louisiana's Top-10 list weighed at least 220 pounds.

The Louisiana state record tarpon weighed 246.63 pounds. David Prevost caught the fish in the West Delta Block in October 2015. The Mississippi state record, caught by Don Ruiz on Aug. 2, 2019, weighed 185 pounds, 8.80 ounces. The world record tarpon tipped the scales at 286 pounds, 9 ounces. Max Domecq caught the fish in March 2003 out of Rubane, Guinea-Bissau.

NO CLOSE RELATIVES

Belonging to the family *Megalopidae*, tarpon are the only member of this family to occur regularly along the eastern and southern U.S. coastlines. They are silvery in appearance, looking very much like super-sized herring with very large scales and a long body. When young, they are often confused with eels.

Tarpon have flat sides; sides and belly are silvery. Their backs are often dark blue to greenish-black, but this color changes depending on the waters they visit or in which they reside. The dorsal fin's last ray is greatly elongated.

Female tarpon reach sexual maturity at about 70 inches long, usually in their 10th year. Males reach sexual maturity at about 50 inches long. Females in the wild can live as long as 55 years. Males normally don't live longer than 43 years.

Tarpon mostly travel in small schools of 10 to 12 fish. They sometimes gang up in large schools of more than 100, especially when making long runs as seasons change.



Brian Cope of Borden, 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.

Capt. Dave Marino with a 180-pound tarpon caught while fishing out of Venice with Mike Stromeyer on the M/V "Pass a Good Time."



APEX PREDATORS

These fish are apex predators. They eat pretty much whatever they want, and their presence — even for short periods of time — means the water quality and presence of other fish is excellent. They are unusually tolerant of freshwater.

Most tarpon that are caught along the eastern seaboard and the Gulf of Mexico come from Florida, where they spend their winters. They travel in good numbers up to the North Carolina/Virginia state line, with smaller numbers of fish traveling farther north, even as far as Nova Scotia. Others move along the Gulf Coast states, to Texas and farther south.

The tarpon fishery in Louisiana has a long history, with Lake Charles forming its own tarpon club in the 1930s. The oldest fishing tournament in the United States is the International Grand Isle Tarpon Rodeo, which has been held annually since 1928.

Anglers catch tarpon on numerous lures and with numerous strategies. Sight-fishing is popular, and when an angler spots one, he usually casts topwater lures or big jigs with long streamers. Fly anglers catch their share with giant flies. Live croakers or other small fish are also great baits. ■

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OF GOOD TIMES FOR
THE SAVVY ANGLER.

● By Kinny Haddox

LITTLE BLUE DOTS

Look at a map of most any Louisiana parish, and you'll see little blue "dots" everywhere.

They come in all shapes and sizes. Some are in the woods. Some are in open fields.

The little blue dots are small fishing ponds and lakes, and they are full of big fishing opportunities. In fact, many young anglers land their first fish from them.

Many ponds and small lakes can best be fished from the bank, but some larger ones are conducive to fishing in boats, everything from small aluminum bass boats to jon boats powered by electric motors or wooden paddles. They are especially attractive to kayak and canoe fishermen.

So how do you get the biggest bang out of your small water? Follow the same approach you would in bigger lakes. Answer these two questions and you'll find the fish.

- With the growing trend of small-boat fishing, small lakes are also natural spots for kayak and canoe fishermen to take on any species that's available.

- Where is the bait?
- Where is the cover?

It's kind of ironic, but if you watch anglers fish small lakes, you'll see the natural inclination for fishermen on the bank to cast out as far as they can to catch fish. Then you'll see somebody in a boat, and they go around the edge, fishing the bank.

That's the "grass is greener" approach.

But the truth is, except during the coldest month, most fish in small lakes are in shallower water. That's where most of the cover is, and unless something moves them out, the bait will, for the most part, be tight in to brush tops, laydowns and aquatic vegetation. Some small lakes have man-made fish-holding structures that attract bait and fish.

"Waters that don't have current usually stratify in the summer," said Mike Wood, whose Mike Wood Services manages small lakes for landowners. "That means a layer of warm, oxygenated water forms over a layer of cooler water without dissolved oxygen. Fish can swim down in the sour water, but they can't stay long. The layers mix with seasonal cooling called the 'fall turnover' and that also affects where the fish go this time of year."



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LITTLE BLUE DOTS

- Small bodies of water can produce some awfully nice fish, like this trophy largemouth bass caught from the bank.

Wood (318-376-3474) said a healthy, small lake usually has a balanced fish population and the essentials of good quality water, a firm bottom and a low to moderate coverage of vegetation. A balanced fish population includes a mix of small, medium and large fish of every species. For the most part, small lakes are best for bream, bass and catfish. Crappie can often take over a small lake and stunt the growth of everything.

Wood is also a fisherman and his best tips for small-lake fishing start with bass.

“Stealth is the best approach for bass in small waters,” he said, noting that fish spook easily. “Smaller offerings and light line are usually more productive, too.

“I like to cover ground to find bream. They aren’t too finicky, and they like to hang out together. Put a Beetle Spin or a cricket in front of them, and they’ll cooperate. Ponds with catfish usually have feeders, and the fish congregate there. Drop a night crawler in or throw out baited noodles, and you’ll catch them.”

There’s also no better place to take youngsters fishing. They can either fish from the bank or have short, easy trips in smaller boats. It’s a good place to learn how to cast, fish with a cane pole and learn the basics of baits and finding fish without having to worry about anything else. ■



Kinny Haddox has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 45 years. He publishes a daily website, lakedarbonslife.com and is a member of the Louisiana Chapter of the Outdoor Legends Hall of Fame. He and his wife, DiAnne, live in West Monroe.



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BUILDING YOUR OWN SMALL FISHING LAKE

Want to build your own small lake or large pond? A farm pond or recreational pond can serve many purposes: a source of food, an aesthetic enhancement to property, a fishing opportunity, a swimming area, wildlife habitat, or a stock tank for livestock, irrigation and fire-fighting needs, according to the LSU AgCenter, which publishes a free booklet entitled "Management of Recreational and Farm Ponds in Louisiana". Here's just one of the good tips this booklet offers. "Although fish pond levees vary widely in eight from one site to another, they should be at least 6 to 8 feet high. A minimum average depth of 4 feet should be maintained throughout the year, and design specifications should make sure no part of the pond is less than 3 feet deep to avoid problems with rooted, aquatic vegetation. Conversely, water depths of more than 6 feet are generally of little use in Louisiana and do not increase overall fish production." ■



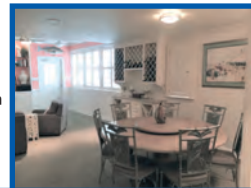
● Evie Davis and Stewart Haddox, two of the author's grandchildren, show that small lakes can also be home to big bream.

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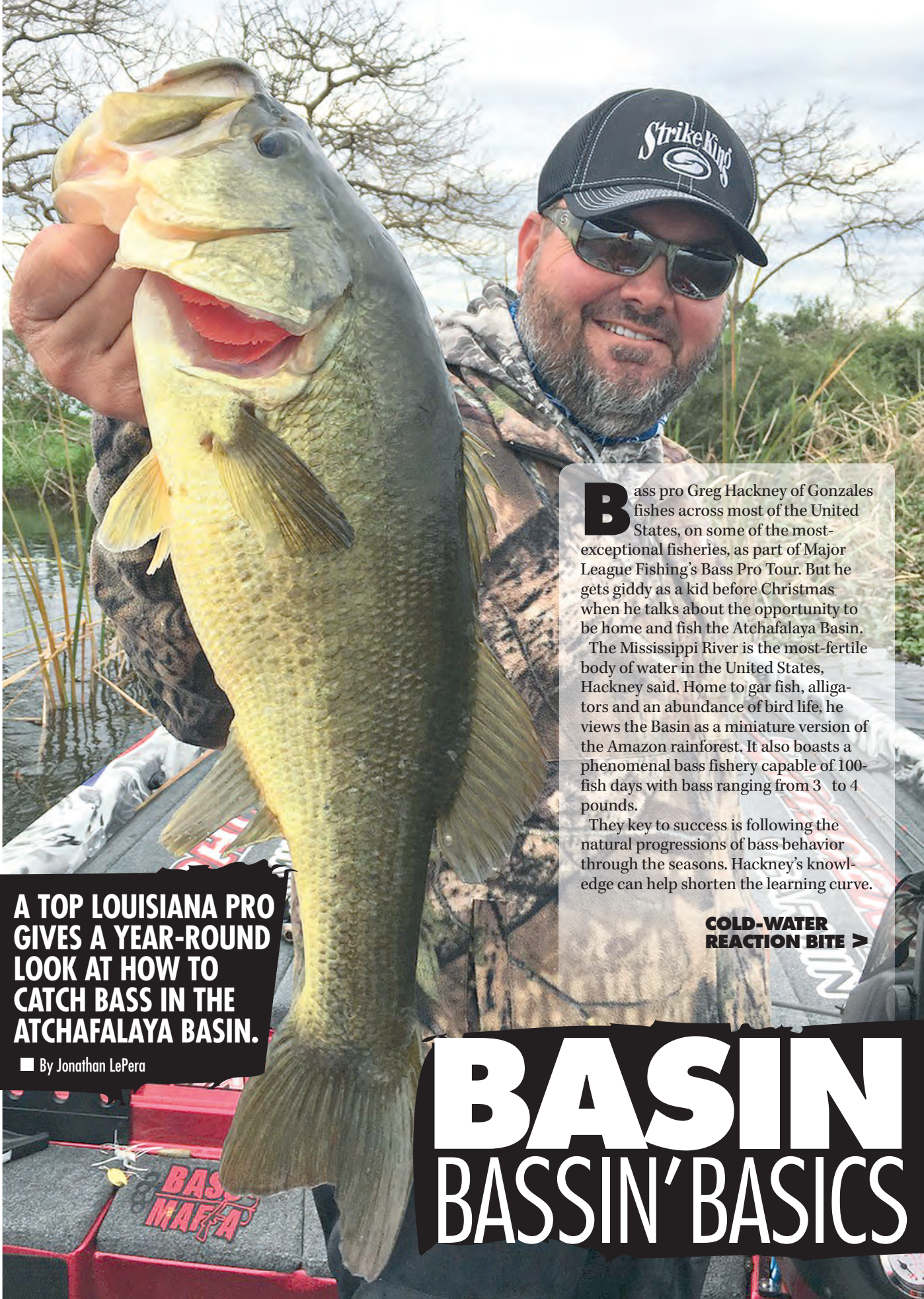
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Bass pro Greg Hackney of Gonzales fishes across most of the United States, on some of the most-exceptional fisheries, as part of Major League Fishing's Bass Pro Tour. But he gets giddy as a kid before Christmas when he talks about the opportunity to be home and fish the Atchafalaya Basin.

The Mississippi River is the most-fertile body of water in the United States, Hackney said. Home to gar fish, alligators and an abundance of bird life, he views the Basin as a miniature version of the Amazon rainforest. It also boasts a phenomenal bass fishery capable of 100-fish days with bass ranging from 3 to 4 pounds.

They key to success is following the natural progressions of bass behavior through the seasons. Hackney's knowledge can help shorten the learning curve.

COLD-WATER REACTION BITE >

A TOP LOUISIANA PRO GIVES A YEAR-ROUND LOOK AT HOW TO CATCH BASS IN THE ATCHAFALAYA BASIN.

■ By Jonathan LePera

BASIN BASSIN' BASICS

COLD-WATER REACTION BITE

The period between the end of October and New Year's Day represents the best fishing of the year, as the water is low and cold, combining to create the best water quality.

Once winter rolls through and water temperatures get into the low 40s, Hackney heads into the backs of dead-end canals, also known as "black water." Water temperatures will stay colder until the end of the spawn in February and into March.

The Mississippi River flows south, all the way from Minnesota, bringing cold water into the typical warmer winters for which Louisiana is known. Dead-ends where shad have migrated are the best ones, and bass will stay there until they're finished spawning.

"Even though a lot of those banks have cypress trees, in the cold water, those fish stay out in the middle, more on the outside breaks where the grass grows, in 3 to 6 feet of water," Hackney said. "A lot of these canals are 8 feet deep, but they're silted in."

Hackney fishes those canals with small, Strike King crankbaits like the Series 4, Red Eye Shad and KVD 1.5 and 2.5 square-bills and Lucky Shad on a 7-foot, Lew's Hack Attack Cranking Special paired with a Lew's BB1 Pro casting reel (6:5:1 retrieve ratio) spooled with 16- or 20-pound Gamma Edge fluorocar-

bon. Series 4s in black/chartreuse and blue/chartreuse are his favorites, as bass don't see many of them, and the action is incredible for enticing bites from reluctant fish.

THE WARMING TREND

As the water temperature begins to climb into the mid- to high 40s, everything starts to fall into Hackney's wheelhouse.

He'll fish a jig on the bottom, targeting wood and grass he finds on his electronics that isn't visible from above the surface.

Once the water turns gin clear, he really likes swimming a ¼-ounce Strike King Hack Attack swim jig with a matching Rage Craw trailer on 50-pound Gamma Torque braid in the deepest part of the canal.

"I call it slow-rolling a swim jig," Hackney said. "I crawl that sucker out there, and they'll slack-line it every time. You won't even feel them bite."

Hackney prefers to swim a jig on 50-pound braid spooled on a Lew's Custom Pro casting reel (8:3.1 retrieve ratio) paired with a 7-foot-2 Hack Attack frog/swim jig rod. A black/blue swim jig paired with a black/blue fleck Rage Craw trailer or a bluegill-colored swim jig with a junebug-colored trailer are his main choices.

PRESPAWN TUNE-UP ➤





Dead-end canals that have little or no current are Greg Hackney's personal favorites as the weather cools. **ABOVE:** Big, healthy bass are the norm in the Atchafalaya Basin because of the excellent habitat and abundance of forage.



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PRESPAWN TUNE-UP

As largemouth set up in their typical prespawn patterns, Hackney rarely puts down a bladed jig. It's that productive. "These fish hit the Strike King Thunder Cricket like they've never seen a lure before," he said. "I caught a 20-pound bag of 4-pounders from a place they weren't even supposed to be because it gets pounded with fishing pressure. (It's) like throwing live bait before they spawn. I can even catch them off the bed with it if there is some color in the water."

When life gives Hackney lemons, he makes lemonade. Should a cold front roll through, he'll get to flipping and punching with a black/blue or black/neon Punch Bug on a 7-foot-11 Hackney Tour flipping stick and Custom Pro casting reel spooled with 65-pound braid.

"I can catch them here year-round punching mats, because we have mats 365 days a year," Hackney said. "I always have a 1¼-ounce weight or bigger rigged up all the time. That is the best punching bait ever made; I'm totally blown away by it."

Due to its dense nature and lack of appendages, Hackney can get away with a much smaller weight.

"My son, Luke, and I were working a spot, and I was fishing a Rage Bug, but I couldn't get the bait to go through the mat," Hackney said. "I picked up a Punch Bug, and I'd just commented to Luke I'm going to have to go to a 1½-ounce (weight) because I can't get through this stuff. The wind was blowing

pretty hard and the vegetation was bunched up pretty good. The (3½-inch) Punch Bug got through that mat effortlessly where the Rage Bug couldn't."

POST-SPAWN/SUMMER ➤

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BASIN
BASSIN' BASICS

POST-SPAWN/SUMMER

Once the spawn concludes, bass will disperse into natural bodies of water, and the fishing is good as long as there's current.

"The problem is that 30% of the overly flooded Mississippi River is running through the Basin, which knocks the spillway part of the Basin out until the river stabilizes and you can fish there again. When it's too high and messed up, I fish in the parts that are out of the spillway," Hackney said.

In 2019, the Basin wasn't fishable until August.

Once it gets hot, Hackney looks for bass to migrate to the mouths of the dead-ends. Sometimes, the mouths will intersect with the through-canals because they have current, or the dead-end can come into a natural body of water. Current is imperative. They'll get into cypress trees, bayous and brown grass, but they typically like current, Hackney said.

Wind-driven current, tidal current and tidal movement all

create the moving water needed to get summer bass active due to the poor water quality in the Basin during hot weather.

"Those fish get in those places with current because of the oxygen and because crawfish, bluegill and goggle eye are in that area," Hackney said.

All the pond-raised crawfish come from the Atchafalaya Basin and are used to seed the area, Hackney explained, so there is no shortage of food or hungry bass.

"When the water gets hot, the crayfish get hard. When the crawfish season goes away, they catch the crawfish out of the Basin and put them in rice fields. That's where the crop comes from next year.

"There are a lot of natural lakes in the Basin, and you get wind in there which attracts the fish."

Hackney will fish those natural lakes through the fall to combat the algae that depletes oxygen in stagnant water. ■

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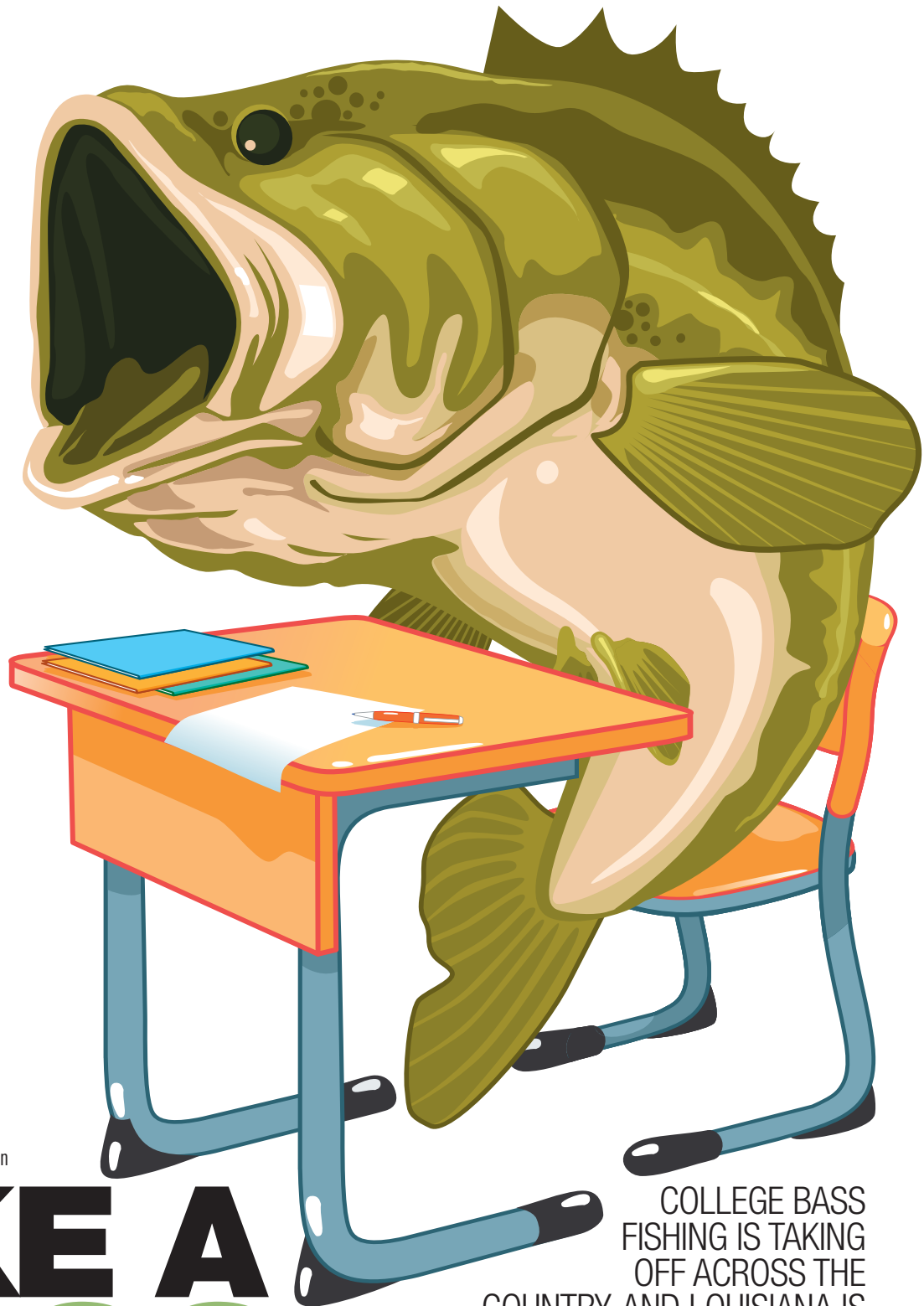
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Jonathan LePera is an avid angler and outdoor writer from Ontario, Canada. He lives near Lakes Erie and Ontario, home to world class bass, walleye, and trout fishing, which are separated by the Niagara Falls.



■ By Don Shoopman

TAKE A BASS TO CLASS

COLLEGE BASS FISHING IS TAKING OFF ACROSS THE COUNTRY, AND LOUISIANA IS NO EXCEPTION, WITH ALMOST A DOZEN SCHOOLS ACROSS THE STATE SENDING TEAMS OUT TO NATIONAL COMPETITION, A STEPPING STONE TO THE PROS FOR MANY. AND HIGH SCHOOL BASS FISHING ISN'T FAR BEHIND.

THERE ARE PLENTY OF DAVIDS: BETHEL UNIVERSITY, BRYAN COLLEGE AND MURRAY STATE; CAPABLE OF BEATING THE GOLIATHS: OHIO STATE, PENN STATE AND CLEMSON — AT LEAST IN ONE COLLEGE SPORT.

That's because the green fish the players love to chase and catch don't care about the budgets and size of the school they're representing when they compete in college bass-fishing tournaments. Bass have a way of leveling the playing field so that skill, savvy and perseverance are the keys to success.

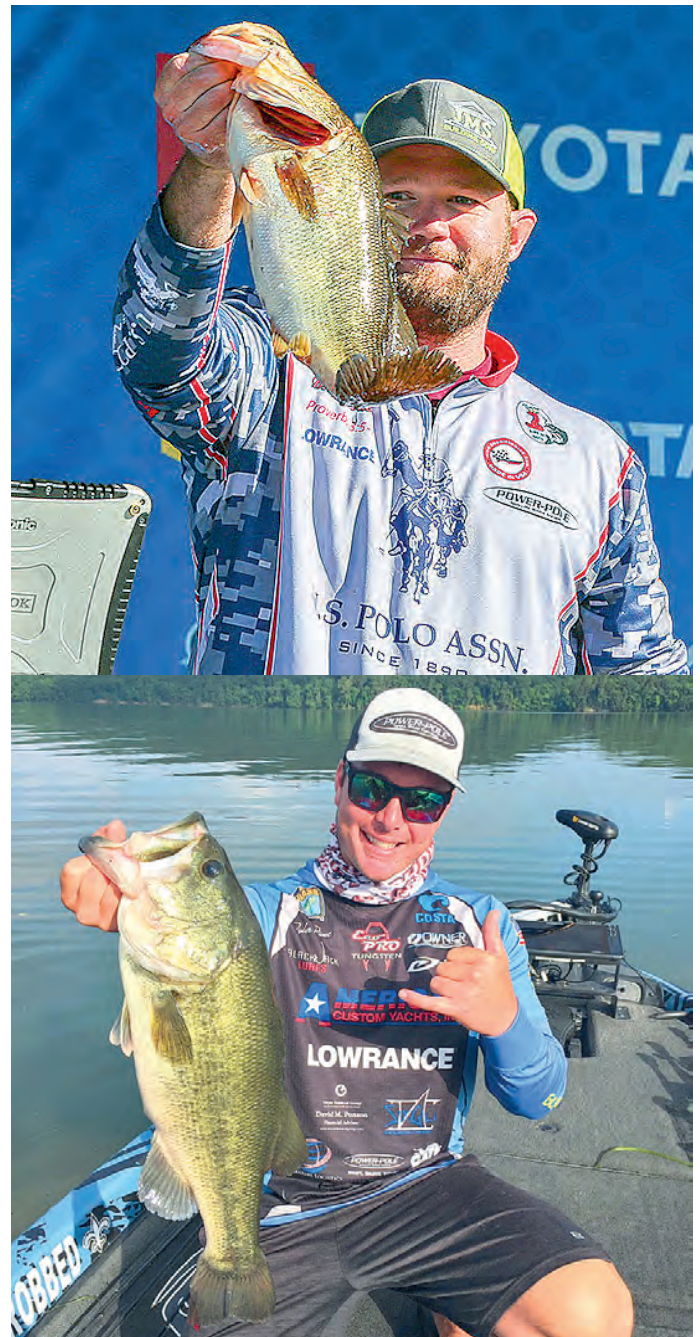
Nearly a dozen colleges and universities in Louisiana have bass fishing teams, multiple two-man teams that regularly compete and have won regular-season and national contests. They have proven they must be reckoned with on any body of water, in-state or out-of-state.

A poster boy for college bass fishing in Louisiana is Brett Preuett of Monroe, who overcame an accident that blinded him in his right eye the day after he graduated from high school, effectively ending his dream of playing college baseball. He helped start the team at the University of Louisiana-Monroe, won the 2014 Bassmaster College Classic Bracket, earned a berth in the 2015 Bassmaster Classic, started cashing in Bassmaster Opens and now fishes the Bassmaster Elite Series. Other ex-Louisiana college anglers who have made waves as pros are Tyler Rivet of Raceland (Nicholls State), Tyler Stewart of West Monroe (ULM) and Hunter Freeman of Monroe (ULM).

Braxton Resweber of St. Martinville, a senior at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette, is hopeful of following in their footsteps.

"That's been my dream since I was 5 years old, watching Bassmaster on TV," said Resweber, who fished his first tournament, with his father, Paul, on Henderson Lake in St. Martin Parish the next year. "It's been a great learning experience. I would encourage any high schooler that's a serious bass fisherman to give it a shot. I have learned a lot."

Resweber gave up one sport he loves for another. He was on the mound after a sterling career at St. Martinville Senior High, when he decided to leave LSU-Eunice. He wanted a fishing rod in his hand instead of a baseball.



College bass fishing at Louisiana schools has produced these fine anglers (clockwise, from top left): Brett Preuett (ULM), Tyler Stewart (ULM), Hunter Freeman (ULM) and Tyler Rivet (Nicholls State).

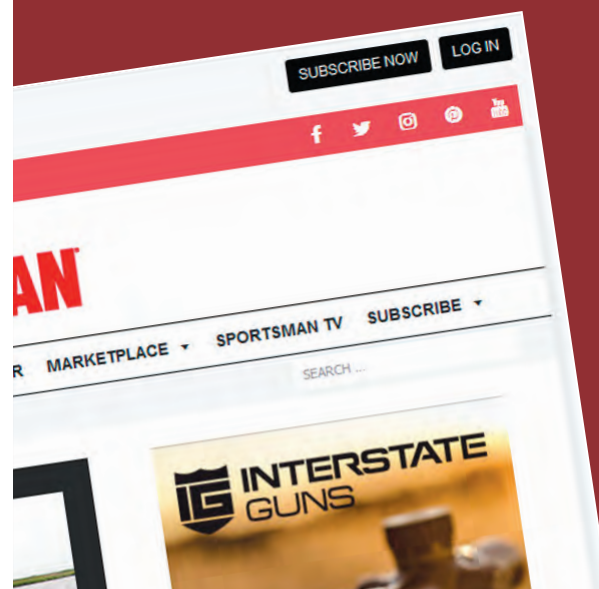


Photos courtesy flwifishing.com

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“I started (fishing collegiately) in the fall of 2017. I wanted to do it because I didn’t want to miss out on the opportunity. That’s why I transferred to ULL,” he said.

Resweber has fished both Louisiana B.A.S.S. Nation and FLW events for three years on the Ragin’ Cajun bass fishing team.

Two highlights were during the 2019-20 season, starting with a first-place finish in a 66-team college national championship qualifier on Texas’ Lake Sam Rayburn. Resweber and Charles “T.J.” Norris of New Iberia boated a five-bass limit weighing 20.69 pounds to win \$2,400 and earn a berth in the 2020 Bassmaster College Series Championship this month on Florida’s Harris Chain of Lakes.

After the win in November 2019, Resweber said the team “kept the momentum going” in January with an eighth-place finish in a 250-boat Bassmaster College Series tournament on Toledo Bend. The rest of the year’s schedule was sidelined by the COVID-19 pandemic, resuming only a month ago.

Resweber faces plenty of stiff competition this month on the Harris Chain. The Bassmaster College Series Championship will have as many as 130 teams representing colleges and universities across the nation. The top four teams from the event earn a chance to compete for a berth in the 2021 Bassmaster Classic in March at Texas’ Lake Ray Roberts. Those two-man teams are also competing for a berth in November at the Bassmaster College Series Bracket Challenge on Alabama’s Lay Lake.

Eugene Hoover of Gonzales, who recently retired as Louisiana B.A.S.S. Nation Youth director, has guided college, high school and junior Bassmaster events since 2012. Tommy Abbott of Central succeeded him earlier this year.

Resweber appreciated Hoover’s assistance in getting started and keeping up with the college circuit.

“He’s always real nice. He really helped the organization get to where it is,” he said. “He was always trying to push the college



Braxton Resweber (left) of St. Martinville and Charles “T.J.” Norris (right) of New Iberia, fishing for Louisiana-Lafayette, finished eighth at the College Tour stop in January at Toledo Bend. **BELOW:** Earlier, they won a qualifier for the Outdoors College National Championship, set for Oct. 29-31 in Florida.

state championship the day after the B.A.S.S. Nation. That gives you another chance to qualify for the national championship.”

At least three major collegiate bass-fishing circuits compete in Louisiana: the Bassmaster College Series, Fishing League Worldwide College Fishing and Collegiate Bass Fishing.

Up-and-coming college anglers include ULM’s Connor Nimrod and Morgan Jalaldin, who won an FLW event earlier this year at Lake Texoma; Southeastern Louisiana’s Wyatt Ensminger and Dawson Andrews, who won the Louisiana B.A.S.S. Nation College State Championship in March out of



Berwick, and LSU's Heath Pinnell and Jordan Davenport, who reeled in a second-place finish at Berwick, followed by ULL's Bruce Bellot and Chris Scallan.

Hoover said nine Louisiana schools fish the Bassmaster College Series: UL-Lafayette, Southeastern Louisiana, Louisiana Tech, Nicholls State, UL-Monroe, LSU, LSU-Shreveport, McNeese State and Northwestern State. For information, visit www.bassmaster.com/college-bass-fishing.

Kevin Hunt of Benton, Ky., FLW's director of tournament operations for college and high school fishing, said the FLW field includes 300 colleges and universities from 30 states. Louisiana colleges and universities that active recently in FLW events include ULM, LSU, McNeese, LSU-Shreveport, Northwestern State, Louisiana College, Louisiana Tech and UL-Lafayette. For information go to flwfishing.com.

One of three McNeese teams — Alex Murray and Trent Manuel — finished 14th at the FLW College Fishing National Championship in June 2019 on the Potomac River, the highest-finishing team from Louisiana.

Louisiana colleges and universities also try to qualify for the BoatUS Collegiate Bass Fishing Championship. Active on the circuit have been LSU, LSU-Shreveport, ULM and McNeese. LSU's Alec Louque and Jordan Davenport finished 13th in the national tournament June 10-11 on Alabama's Pickwick Lake. For information go to www.collegiatebasschampionship.com. ■



Eugene Hoover (left), retired as Louisiana B.A.S.S. Nation Youth Director earlier this year after eight years in that position.



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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START 'EM YOUNG: HIGH SCHOOL BASS FISHING

On the morning of Nov. 2, 2019, the sun was rising over a bayou near Stephenville, turning darkness to light and shining on the water dotted with nearly 200 boats.

Mother Nature's grandeur got even grander a few minutes later as a bass boat carrying the American flag idled through the boats to start the Louisiana High School B.A.S.S. Nation East Qualifier.

Tommy Abbott of Central knows the feeling well. A 54-year-old outdoorsman, he succeeded Eugene Hoover of Gonzales a few months ago as Louisiana B.A.S.S. Nation youth director. He remembered calling boat numbers with Jim Breaux of Central for the beginning of a tournament.

"I'm standing out there calling numbers. Jim's calling on the other side. I walk out there, and I get to see all those faces. I get a warm feeling. I get chills," he said, likening the experience to begin in an athletic competition himself.

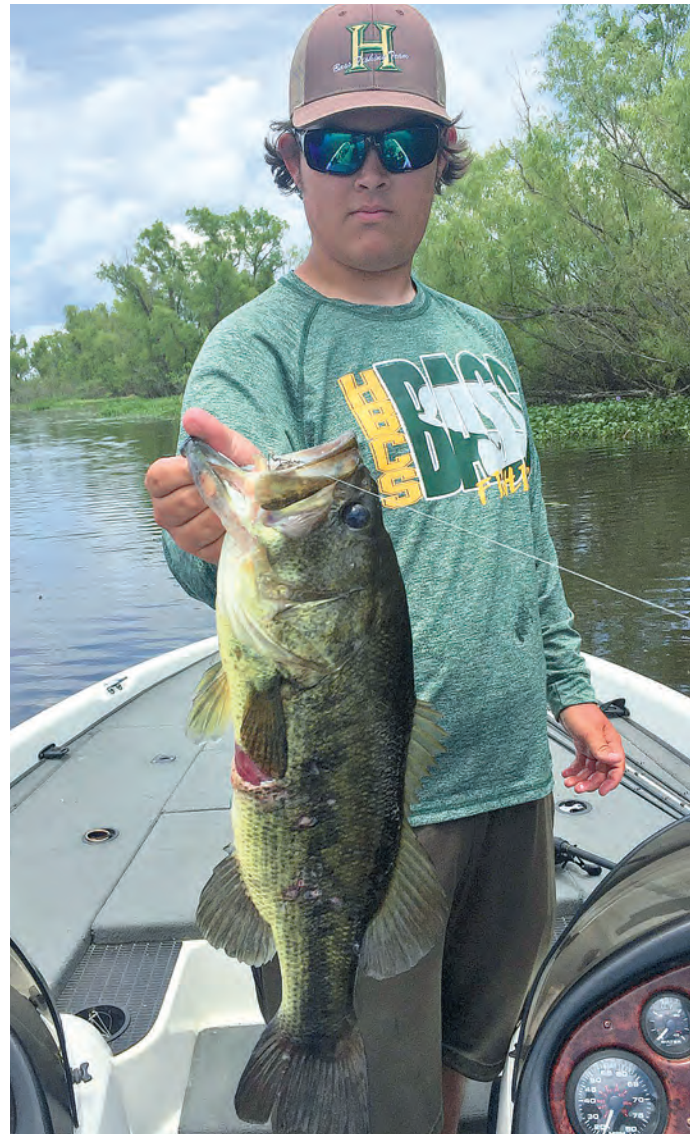
What pleases Abbott the most is the young bass anglers go out, compete against each other and, no matter how they fare, always return with a smile on their face. Hoover agrees.

"They come in one big family. I've never been so satisfied with something in my lifetime, no doubt," said. Hoover, 62, who retired in 2013 after seven years as principal at Lutcher High School.

He started bass fishing soon after he moved to Lutcher in 1980. He became the Louisiana B.A.S.S. Nation youth director in 2012, in charge of three age groups — Junior Bassmasters (pre-high school), high school and college.

High-school bass fishing has grown by leaps and bounds, Hoover said recently.

"It's been great. When we first started, we had little participation. About all we had was 30 boats," he said. "Participation at



Hunter Neuville of Loreauville has fished four years for Highland Baptist Christian School in New Iberia.

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this time is probably 100 high schools, nine colleges and five Junior Bassmasters."

Hunter Neuville of Loreauville was a freshman when he started bass fishing for Highland Baptist Christian School in New Iberia.

"It was something I wanted to get into," he said. "More schools were starting a team. It was growing and growing. Oh, it wasn't hard at all. I just pretty much talked to who was in charge of sports (at HBCS) and just went from there."

HBCS had two teams Neuville's first year, three his sophomore year, two as

a junior and senior. He usually fishes with teammate Avery Derouen.

Neuville said high school bass fishing has been a great experience. He has made good friends from other high school teams, including Connor Rushing, who graduated last spring from Central High in Baton Rouge, and Peyton Grizzaffi of Morgan City High. Tournament fishing has honed his game to the point he is sponsored by Cajun Lures and Kajun Boss Outdoors.

Neuville recommended that interested young bass fishermen give high school competition a try.

"Oh, yeah, definitely. I think if they're trying to grow into the sport of fishing, that's the best way to go," he said.

Abbott agreed: "There are plenty of opportunities out there. We have, I think, 500 teams compete with us. That's 1,000 kids, 500 adults."

The Louisiana High School B.A.S.S. Nation fishes nine qualifying tournaments and a state championship annually, according to Abbott, whose son fished three years on the team at Central High. That's what hooked Abbott, who got involved in 2018.

"When he graduated, we loved it so much we just wanted to give back to the kids," he said.

Breaux, Abbott said, is president of the Junior Southwest Bassmasters of Denham Springs, which has more than 120 members between 7 and 18. He schedules 11 tournaments each year.

"He helps us. I help him. We put on well over 30 tournaments a year," Abbott said.

When Hoover stepped aside as director, Abbott stepped up. Hoover and his wife, Joan, remain valuable volunteers.

"He's still tournament director for the Eastern Division. He's given so much of his time the last 10 years, he deserves a break," Abbott said.

Hoover plans to take 22 high school teams and three Junior Bassmaster teams to the national championship in October. The high schoolers will fish at Kentucky Lake, while the youngsters will fish at Carroll County Lake in Tennessee.

To find out more about Louisiana High School B.A.S.S. Nation, go to louisianahighschoolbassnation.com or go to the organization's Facebook page.

Louisiana's high school anglers have another avenue to fish tournaments and earn a shot at nationals, one provided by FLW High School Fishing. FLW aligned itself

“It's been great. When we first started, we had little participation. About all we had was 30 boats. Participation at this time is probably 100 high schools, nine colleges and five Junior Bassmasters.**”**

with the Louisiana High School Athletic Association and schedules three regional tournaments and a state tournament on a circuit featuring approximately 30 high schools and 90 teams across Louisiana.

Kevin Hunt of Benton, Ky., a former youth minister, has overseen college and high school bass tournaments across the country for FLW since 2004.

"I think it's a dream come true for me," Hunt said. "It's great to see them go from one circuit to the next," he said.

To find out more about FLW High School Fishing, call 270-252-1000 or go to flwfishing.com. ■

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4 BASS PROS, 4 FAVORITE BAITS

By Don Shoopman

Based on the picks of four Louisiana bass pros, there's an overwhelming buzz about what lures produce bass in October.

Three of four bass pros — Robbie Latuso of Gonzales, Cliff “Cajun Baby” Crochet of Pierre Part and Greg Hackney of Gonzales, the host of Sportsman TV — chose a buzzbait as their artificial lure of choice this month.

Derek Hudnall of Baton Rouge, however, will stick with a soft-plastic creature bait that he'll punch as often as possible in isolated vegetation mats.

DELTA LURES BUZZBAIT PUTS BUZZ INTO OCTOBER FISHING FOR LATUSO

October is a prime time to throw topwaters almost anywhere, according to bass pro Robbie Latuso of Gonzales. His top pick is a buzzbait, namely, a ½-ounce Delta Lures buzzbait that's very productive for him as fall arrives.

“You start getting fronts, and the fish start feeding more. You just cover a lot of water with (a buzzbait),” Latuso said.

Latuso recommends fishing a buzzbait around grass or any kind of vegetation, shallow or deep. He chooses Delta Lures' models because “he (Fred King, the manufacturer) makes a good one. Yeah, I like the hook, the way the head is shaped, and it runs good.”

Latuso will switch out the original blade on the ½-ounce model for a smaller blade, then add either a glacier-colored or black/red Zoom Z-Craw Jr. or a white or black/red Strike King Rage Menace. He can get more distance on his casts that way, he said.

Latuso ties the buzzbait to 40-pound Fitzgerald Vursa Braid. If he's fishing clear water, he'll go to monofilament or fluorocarbon.

“If I can get away with braid, I'll throw braid first,” said Latuso,



Photo courtesy Robbie Latuso



“ You can cover a lot more water with a (buzzbait). ”

who fishes the buzzbait with a Shimano Metanium reel seated on a 7-foot MH Fitzgerald Rod.

Latuso has had many memorable bites on his favorite buzzbaits, including in months other than October. For example, while practicing in early June for a Bassmaster Elite tournament on Alabama's Lake Eufala, he enjoyed heart-stopping catches on a small, white Delta Lures buzzbait.

"The shad spawn had just started," Latuso said. "They were killing that thing. Each day, I had at least three over 7 pounds and one day I had five over 7 pounds." ■

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'CAJUN BABY' FINDS OCTOBER A GOOD TIME TO SMASH THE BITE WITH CRUSHER LURES BUZZBAIT

With the shad bite on and getting stronger in October, one of Louisiana's most-recognizable and personable bass pros chunks a modified buzzbait more often than not, whether he's fishing in his big "back yard," the Atchafalaya Basin — or anywhere else.

Cliff "Cajun Baby" Crochet of Pierre Part takes the skirt off his favorite 3/8-ounce Crusher Lures Pro Buzz with a gold blade and replaces it with a pearl/white NetBait Paca Craw.

"The buzzbait comes into play this time of year," said Crochet, who fishes the Major League Fishing Bass Pro Tour.

"Let me tell you this; that's my No. 1 October bait," he said. "What I do with it is cover water. I don't put it down. The water's cooling down. When the water temperature drops and you've got shad moving around, that opens up a bigger window on the topwater bite."

In other words, the buzzbait comes into play more than just early and late in the day.

Crochet has been adding a soft-plastic trailer to the buzzbait for years. It's deadly..



Photo courtesy Cliff Crochet

"It's been a while now. I guess all of us figured it out together about six, seven years ago. You put a soft-plastic on there and that'll slow it down," he said, noting that some anglers add a Zoom Horny Toad, but that bait makes it too heavy for his liking. Crochet plans to fish a buzzbait as much as possible this month.

More than likely, he'll catch bass on it in the Atchafalaya Basin, the nation's last great overflow swamp. And, according to him, the water color doesn't matter, unless it's new, white chocolate water.

"Generally speaking, there's not any water too muddy for a buzzbait," said Crochet, who said the Crusher Pro Buzz has a "real good squeaking sound right out of the pack, no modification."

Crochet throws it exclusively on braided line.

"Absolutely, 100%, no matter what. Braided line," he said, adding he relies on 50-pound Seaguar Smackdown and a

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“Generally speaking, there’s no water too muddy for a buzzbait.”



Bassinator Elite reel with a 8.1:1 retrieve on a 7-foot-4, Kast King Cliff Crochet Spirale Series casting rod.

It’s how you use that rod on the retrieve that counts with successful buzz bait fishing, i.e., getting a bass in the boat.

“What you want to do is keep the rod between, like, 10 o’clock and 2 o’clock, so when the fish bites, you can get the slack out (of your line), giving you time to set the hook,” he said. “Stay away from pointing the rod at the buzzbait during the retrieve. You just want to reel into the bite. Then you can move that fish.” ■

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Photo courtesy crusherlures.com

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DESPITE SEASONAL CHANGE, HUDNALL WANTS TO PUNCH D BOMB IN OCTOBER

Derek Hudnall's south Louisiana bass-fishing experience over the past few decades tells him that just because it's October, doesn't mean it's fall in the Sportsman's Paradise. So, he fishes accordingly.

"If I had to have one bait in my hand in October, hmmm, I would have a big stick in my hand and I'd be punching," Hudnall said. "I'd have a 1½-ounce tungsten weight, a 4/0 Gamakatsu Super Heavy Cover hook and I'd be flipping 100% a Missile Baits D Bomb on 65-pound braided line. I use Power Pro," said Hudnall, who fishes the Bassmaster Elite Series.

Why a soft-plastic creature bait? Unlike other parts of the country, Hudnall believes October isn't fall in Louisiana, but late summer, at the least, making it a good time to coax bass to bite that aren't reached by other, conventional bass-fishing tactics.

The key, he said, is to find matted vegetation: grass or lily pads, anything that creates a canopy for bass to get under. And especially in Louisiana, he looks for isolated cover. The more, the better.

"At that time of year, fish tend to scatter," said Hudnall, who is from Baton Rouge. "The fish really love to put their head under something," he said, adding there's got to be at least 8 to 10 inches of water under the mat that, preferably, is near deep water or, especially, current. Natural or wind-blown flow water movement will suffice.

Trying to locate isolated, bass-producing patches in football field-sized areas of matted vegetation is a challenge, but it's worth it, he knows from his hours on the water.

"I will, absolutely, cover as much water as I can doing that. I specifically look for those isolated patches," he said. "I could typically go an entire practice and shake off everything. (During a tournament) I'm looking for bites, as many bites as I can, because eventually I'll run into the right one," said Hudnall, who favors a bait in a dark color.

"You know, for punching under cover, where it's dark, you can



Photo courtesy Derek Hudnall

never go wrong with a black/red flake," he said. "Typically, in south Louisiana, crawfish are really dark that time of the year. That black/red flake is really hard to beat."

Hudnall doesn't soak the D Bomb. It's drop-and-move most of the time.

"Really, I don't think about it, but I punch once or twice, then I'm gone," he said. "Ninety percent of the time, a fish will hit it as soon as it breaks the surface. It's very important to watch your line as it breaks through."

Sometimes he'll drop it five to eight times if he suspects a fish is there.

Hudnall fishes the soft plastic creature bait with a 7-foot-6 St. Croix Legend Xtreme Heavy Action rod and a high-speed reel, at least a 7:1 ratio. ■

“ You know, for punching under cover, where it's dark, you can never go wrong with black/red flake. ”



Photo courtesy outdoorsmanproshop.com

HACK ATTACK SELECT BUZZBAIT CALLS UP BASS FOR HACKNEY IN OCTOBER

When the oven that was this summer turns down or off, bass pro Greg Hackney of Gonzales favors going up top with his favorite sputtering artificial lure for October.

"I would say October is probably my favorite month to fish. Fish become active again. You can cover water," he said, picking a Strike King Hack Attack Select, a buzzbait.

The topwater bait triggers more and more strikes as the water temperature drops with summer changing to early fall, according to Hackney, who said there's a 0% chance he'll start a day of fishing this month with anything but a buzzbait in his hand.

Hackney takes advantage of the change in water conditions, but there's more to it than that, said Hackney, a 15-time Bassmaster Classic qualifier who fishes the Major League Fishing Bass Pro Tour. There's more to the early fall bite than just cooling water.

"The big deal is, more than water temperature, is daylight is shortening," Hackney said. "You can really, really, have good days in the fall. Fish that haven't been active become active again. There probably won't be a day I don't start with it (the buzzbait). There are certain days when things line up right and you catch all day, catch for a longer period of time. You'll know. They have certain weather days, like right before a front, when it will be silly. The windows of opportunity open up. The best bass fishermen are opportunists."

He'll make the most of the fall opportunities with the 3/8-ounce buzzbait that bears his name. It's his signature buzzbait, one that he throws with either a black or white skirt.

Hackney often replaces the skirt this time of year with a Strike King Gurgle Toad.

"I very seldom fish a buzzbait at any time of the year with a skirt," he said. "The biggest reason I like to have a frog on my buzzbait instead of a skirt is because the hookup is so much better with the frog. The frog is like a piece of meat on my buzzbait."

Another advantage of fishing a frog trailer is that it allows you to reel the buzzbait much slower than possible if the buzzbait has a skirt. If you slow a buzzbait with a skirt on it, the lure will sink. The soft-plastic frog more or less floats the buzzbait, he said.

Around waters close to home, Hackney noted bass are usually



Photo courtesy Greg Hackney

within 5 feet of a target area because of the depth and habitat. His buzzbait gets the attention of those bass.

Hackney fishes the buzzbait on 20-pound Gamma Edge Fluorocarbon spooled on a Lew's BB1 baitcaster with an 8.3:1 retrieve. He also uses a 6-foot-10 Hack Attack spinnerbait/buzzbait rod.

The most-important thing if and when a bass angler misses connections on a bite or two on a buzzbait is to either change colors or increase the speed of the retrieve, he emphasized. The change will add bass to your catch rate. ■

LURE REVIEW ➤

“I seldom fish a buzzbait at any time of the year with a skirt.”



LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman



GORILLA BUZZ

Photos courtesy Derward Mauldin

ARKANSAS LURE DESIGNER HITS A HOMER WITH THIS LURE

Buzzbait aficionados and bass have been going ape over the Gorilla Buzz since it was introduced four years ago by Prototype Lures after being designed by Derward Mauldin, an Arkansas lure designer.

Mauldin, a hairstylist by trade and an angler his whole life, is oh-so proud of the Gorilla Buzz, which he put all of his bassing know-how into around 2016.

Prototype Lures has a fitting slogan for the Gorilla Buzz: “Don’t be monkeying around when you have time to catch a gorilla.”

Mauldin repeated another slogan and said, “The Gorilla Buzz is designed to catch gorilla bass. Now get out and get you some.”

LET’S GET SMALL

Don’t think lightly of the smallest of the four Gorilla Buzz baits, the 1/8-ounce model.

“It’s probably the biggest hidden secret of this line,” he said. “I had a pro, who’s sponsored by other people, who called it “power fishing with a finesse touch.”

Mauldin lives and breathes topwater fishing.

“I have been a topwater man my whole life. There’s nothing more exciting than a fish blowing up on topwater,” he said.

Mauldin began throwing buzzbaits during his early teens with his father and brother. They gave him a buzzbait tied to line strong enough to pull in a mule, well, a tree limb or two.

He loved fishing and catching bass with a buzzbait. He learned their ins and outs and how to fish them. Soon he had a good idea of what it takes to make a productive sputtering topwater like a buzzbait.

“There’s quite a few different buzzbaits out there,” he said.

The Gorilla Buzz was designed to have a metallic squeaking sound with an audible knock if the angler prefers to bend the wire so the blade touches the flat head. The elongated, flat head is the key to getting the buzzbait up with one to three cranks of the reel.



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.

It features a long, stainless steel hook, either 4/0 or 5/0, and a barbed keeper to keep a soft-plastic trailer in place.

It's all according to plan, one developed through many years of experience.

BLADE TRIALS

"As a fisherman, I'm always thinking how I can adopt each lure to your type of fishing," Mauldin said. "I've played with buzzbaits and blades probably 10, 15 years. I've got the blade the way I want it, the bend, pitch, size and thickness. On a buzzbait, I wanted a bait to come up quick, I wanted it to move a lot of water (minus a lot of splash) and I wanted it to create a lot of noise."

Gorilla Buzzes are available in 1/8-, 1/4-, 3/8- and 1/2-ounce models. The 1/4-, 3/8- and 1/2-ounce buzzbaits are 4 inches long, the 1/8-ounce model is 3 inches.

Width and thickness of the blades were designed for each of those sizes, Mauldin said. The intent was to get as many revolutions of the blades as possible.

Extra attention was paid to the blades in an effort to create different sounds through thickness, added paint and/or added coating.

"Every blade's going to make a different sound," he said about the nickel, white, gold, black and chartreuse.

One has a "matte finish, almost a primer color that turned out to be probably the best sounding of any of them, more of a click than a ding," he said.

QUICK RISER

When Mauldin said the buzzbait was designed for a quick climb to the surface, he wasn't kidding. If an angler wants to get the artificial lure up and buzzing in a 3- to 5-inch open pocket in a lily pad field, he or she can do in two or three turns of the reel handle, he said. The buzzbait

also tracks back straight with no pull to the right or left, also one of his prerequisites.

"You know, when I went into designing it, I wanted the buzzbait to run straight. When you parallel the grass or rocks, you don't want to fight the buzzbait," he said.

Fishermen can add a small, soft-plastic swimbait, plastic frog or any kind of soft-plastic creature that mimics shad or any type of baitfish.

For more information, go to www.facebook.com/Prototype-Lures-1975010389411732/. ■

BASS HOTSPOTS >

Derward Mauldin put all his experience into making a buzzbait that catches big bass.



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Ryan Lampman, a Pennsylvania angler visiting Toledo Bend, smiles after hooking and boating a hefty 3-pound bass on a Thunder Jig from lily pads while fishing with John Dean.

FALL IS HERE; BASS AT TOLEDO BEND WILL PUT ON THE FEED BAG

Higher, cooler water leads to active fish

We sure didn't want or need a hurricane in Toledo Bend country, but that's what we got Aug. 27 when Laura made landfall near Cameron, with 100- to 115-mph winds, moving up the corridor between Louisiana and Texas, the eye passing over Many.

A Category 4 hurricane, Laura whipped the lake we love to fish; there reportedly were 9- to 11-foot seas on the main lake, and from what I've heard, boathouses, piers and headwalls were damaged or destroyed. Those structures in creeks fared better, I'm told.

So this is a good time to talk about bass fishing in October. The lake level definitely went up after the storm because of the 5 to 8 inches of rain dropped around here. Toledo Bend rose from 169.04 the day before the hurricane hit to 169.72, according to the reading I saw on Aug. 30. I'm pretty sure the lake will continue to rise with all the rain associated with that storm and rain that followed. I wouldn't be surprised if the lake got into the 170s, quite unusual for early fall.

Bassing success in the coming weeks, especially this month, will get better and better as we experience more fall weather and cooler air temperatures, which lead to cooler water temperatures. It's a time when bass follow baitfish and put the feedbag on for the fast-approaching winter — what winter we do have.

By late September and, for sure, before the second week of October, we can officially say good-bye to summer. And when the dog days are behind us, expect bass to start tearing up topwaters, particularly buzzbaits and plastic frogs — or whatever you like to work on top. It'll be like spring, except they won't be moving shallower to make babies. They'll be going into 3- to 8-foot depths to eat bream, shad and crawfish. Big pigs will be trying to get fatter before the winter. It's going to be a slugfest, particularly when the water temperature gets down to around 75 degrees.

It'll be time to store away the drop-shots, Carolina-rigged soft plastics and deep-diving crankbaits and forget about fishing deep. When the heat was on this summer, it wasn't difficult to find fish



Photo courtesy John Dean

deep, but it was a challenge to find bass that wanted to bite.

In October, bass will be on the move to feed. Topwaters, Thunder Jigs, Stanley spinnerbaits, Rat-L-Traps, etc., are sure to trigger bites. Golden bream is my favorite color for spinnerbaits and bladed jigs, followed by shad colors, depending on the water color.

It's also a time in which soft plastics such as Senkos and Super Flukes, my top two choices, and Neko-rigged Senkos will add to the catch. Black, black/blue and green pumpkin should be the preferred colors, but it won't be long before watermelon red comes into play.

I'm looking forward to some fantastic bass fishing in October. ■

— 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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This Month On SPORTSMAN TV, we've got all the info you'll need for fall fishing. Captain Charlie Thomason will be breaking down the inshore tactics for fall and Greg Hackney will be showing fall bass fishing. We've also got some great duck hunts from the guys at Daybreak Outdoors. Come go with us!

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ICW BASS FISHING SHOULD TAKE OFF IN COOLER OCTOBER

Bass hang on ledges, gorging on shad

If a few cold fronts cool the water in south-central Louisiana this month, some of the hottest bass fishing will be enjoyed in two big bodies of water that many anglers just use as watery highways.

Angler Bill McCarty of Morgan City said the bassing gets good to excellent, weather and water conditions permitting, because shad move into main channels like the Intracoastal Waterway that spans the coast east to west and the “offshoot” of the ICW inside the levees of the Spillway starting around his home town.

“After a couple of cold fronts come through and the water temperature gets cooler, the bass start gorging on shad,” said McCarty, who started reeling in bass after bass after bass in those stretches every October soon after graduating from LSU. His friend, Sidney “Peanut” Michel, introduced him to the pattern, apparently knowing the ledges along the waterway very well, that knowledge leading him to the bass.

“What we try to do in October is fish the Intracoastal Waterway from Amelia almost to Houma,” he said, noting his favorite stretch is from the Bayou Black Landing east toward Houma.

Bass-fishing success also heats up, he said, along another main stretch as late summer turns to early fall along the Port Allen Route, an offshoot of the ICW that goes from Morgan City to Port Allen.

“We concentrate on an area that goes from Morgan City to Bayou Pigeon,” McCarty said. Even more specifically, McCarty and others tap the bass population along the Intracoastal Waterway inside the Atchafalaya Basin from Doiron’s Landing to Belle River Landing.

The bass bite along those stretches actually started already this year.

“In fact, I caught 26 (the first week of September),” he said.

“They’re just starting to move out. In 4 to 6 weeks; it’ll be fun.”

One of the plusses of this perennial pattern is that, traditionally, there is little bass-fishing pressure in October. Many outdoorsmen are dialed in to the hunting mode, he explained, and markedly fewer bass anglers are on the water.

“A lot of people that time of year are getting into the hunting seasons. People are getting ready for the deer season, getting ready for the duck season,” said McCarty, whose top artificial lures are a ¾-ounce white or chartreuse/white Humdinger spinnerbait with silver Colorado and willow-leaf blades, a similarly colored ¾-ounce buzzbait and a shad-colored 200 Series Bandit crankbait. Also, after the sun gets high overhead, he said, it’s hard to beat a red shad, Texas-rigged plastic worm.

How does he fish this imposing body of water?

“I like to fish the drop-offs, the ledges where it drops into the channel, 3 feet down to 6 feet down,” he said. “If you can find stumps and laydowns, fish them — and drains.”



Frank Grizzaffi, the major of Morgan City, holds a nice bass caught while he was fishing with Bill McCarty along the Intracoastal Waterway.

Photo courtesy Bill McCarty

McCarty advised anglers to look for pretty, green Atchafalaya Basin water that “ain’t too clear.”

The bite hinges on the level of the lower Atchafalaya River. If the river stage at Morgan City is 3 feet or lower, the fishing should be good, he said.

Some good-sized bass can be caught at this time along both stretches of the Intracoastal Waterway, according to McCarty.

“Oh, yes, absolutely. They average 2¼ pounds, but you catch 4s and 5s,” he said.

Don’t always expect to catch bass in the same place two days in a row.

“They definitely move,” McCarty said. “They move with the shad. You can catch them in a stretch of trees one day, and they may 200 yards away the next day, or across the Intracoastal.”

McCarty also doesn’t mind the tugboat traffic along the busy water highway.

“I like tugs because they create current,” he said. “That helps. Tugboats are generally your friend.” ■

— Don Shoopman

Corey LaBostrie, aka the Marsh Martian, calls Bayou Lacombe home and said it only takes a few lures to cover most fishing situations.



MARSH MARTIAN KNOWS WHAT'S UP IN BAYOU LACOMBE

Fishing can be simple as water cools

Strange happenings have been discovered along the waters of Bayou Lacombe. As the temperature cools, the fishing has heated up, and the “Marsh Martian,” a local legend, has not only dialed in which tackle is favored, but has also pinpointed where to catch them.

Corey LaBostrie, known on the water and on YouTube as the “Marsh Martian,” has fished Bayou Lacombe for most of his adult life. You can typically find him in his canoe before sunrise or late in the evening. He always seems to go home with a bag of fish.

According to LaBostrie, the best fishing is before sunrise and late in the evening. The science is simple and not determined by fishing reports and tide charts.

LaBostrie said that what makes Bayou Lacombe so special is that the approach does not differ between seasons. The only thing that does is possibly the addition of one more lure and maybe an increase in the number of species available to be caught.

“You can always catch bass on Bayou Lacombe,” he said. “Fall brings the reds and the speckled trout too.”

LaBostrie’s recipe for success is no secret. He informs his viewers where to fish on Bayou Lacombe and identifies the bait to use.

“You can use what I use year-round,” he said.

Fishing at sunrise is simple; there’s no need to weigh down the boat with an abundance of tackle. The lily pads offer the best action. Throw a redbone Z-Man FrogZ on a 3/0 offset hook. Fish it weightless and let it crawl over the lily pads and drop into the water. Give a count of two seconds before setting the hook; that should yield success.



When the topwater bite turns off, switch to a 3-inch Z-Man Bad Shad MinnowZ on the same offset hook. Cast at the pads and let it swim to the boat. As with the frog, give the same count before setting the hook.

The fascinating wonder of Bayou Lacombe is that anglers can utilize the same tackle combination all along the bayou. Drains offer additional action, and if the traffic on the main bayou gets heavy, fish can be found in the ponds that flank the main bayou. They might be challenging due to shallow water, but piloting the right boat will make the difference.

“I like my little canoe,” he said. “I can go anywhere I need to go. A lot of times I’ll get a tow up and down the bayou.” ■

— Nick Vaccaro

ELECTRONIC TROUBLES ➤



ELECTRONIC TROUBLES? WIRED!

WIRING IS AT THE HEART OF MOST PROBLEMS WITH MARINE ELECTRONICS

By Brian Cope

Today's marine electronics perform more functions than those of yesteryear, and many anglers rely on them more than ever.

These products are also more efficient than older models; they can do more while using the same amount of power. And while a lot of anglers scour over the details of trolling motors, depth finders and marine batteries, many overlook one piece of the puzzle that is just as important: the wiring.

"The wiring is the one area that most boaters don't even think about when adding electronics to their boat," said John Long, who runs a marine sales and repair dealership. "That's especially true when they've purchased a boat that has wiring already in place."

And that causes a lot of problems, according to Long.

"People will return brand-new fish finders and trolling motors, because the first or second time on the water, they notice problems," he said. "A lot of these problems are intermittent problems. The unit works great for a while, then, all of a sudden, it stops working. Or some functions stop working while the unit itself stays powered on. They put a meter on

the battery which shows fully charged. So they think they got a bad depth finder or trolling motor."

LIVE WIRES

Long said any time a customer calls him or brings a boat in with such problems, the first thing he asks about is the wiring from the battery to the trolling motor or depth finder.

"First, I want to know what gauge the wiring is, and how old it is. I also ask them if it's marine-grade wiring," he said. "The majority of people don't know the answer to any of those questions. All they know is they have a brand-new, fully charged battery, good fuses and brand-new electronics. But they're missing some features or losing functionality at some point during a trip."

In the majority of those cases, Long said, the culprit is an issue with the wiring. That issue can change from one case to the next.

"If wiring is involved in any boating malfunction, it is almost always the problem, especially when everything else is brand new," he said. "But wiring is also the hardest thing to check. You can swap out a trolling motor or a fish

finder just by unplugging it and putting a new one in. Same with the battery. But the wiring is hidden under floors, sometimes runs through fuse panels and is often spliced in areas you can't readily see. Unless you ran the wiring yourself, it's a bit of a mystery."

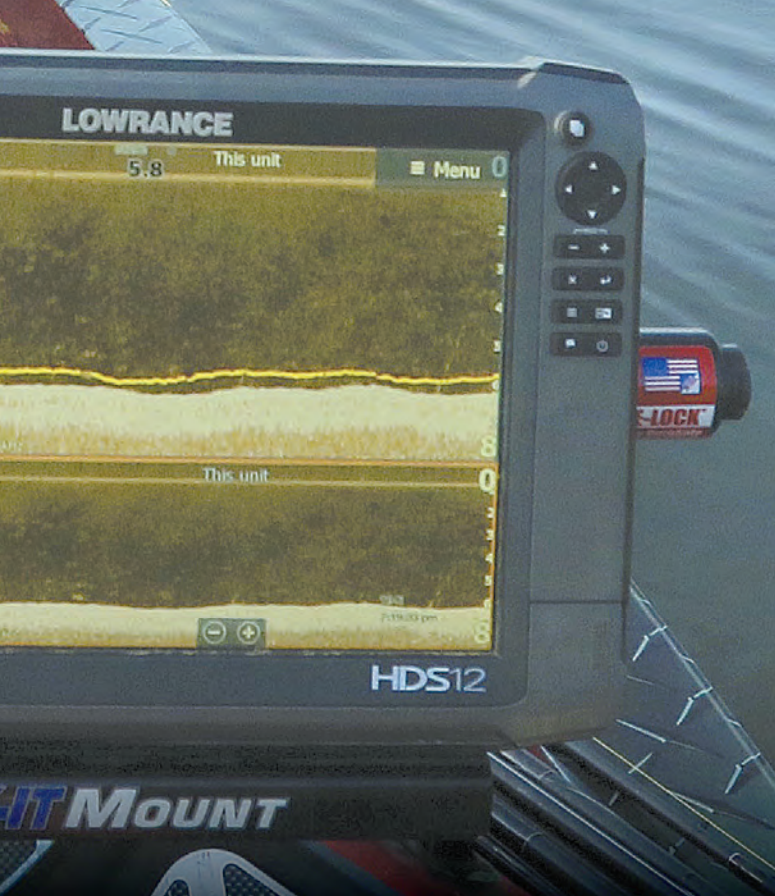
Long said checking the wiring connections, however, is fairly simple. He said you might have to open or even unscrew a panel, but once you can see those connections, you can tell whether they are corroded or broken. It's not uncommon, especially if the wiring is several years old.

If those areas look fine, Long determines what gauge the wiring is. To do this, he looks at the jacket on the wiring.

"It will have something printed on it like '10 AWG Marine Grade,'" he said. "That means it is 10-gauge wiring, rated for use on boats. When it comes to wiring, the bigger the number is, the thinner the wire is. And the thinner the wire is, the less power you can run through it. Many, many, many times, that's the problem I see."

GAUGE MATTERS

One example Long gave was a customer who had inherited a boat and



GO OVERBOARD

Long said wiring is one instance where he doesn't mind going overboard.

"In that guy's case, the manufacturer recommended a minimum of 8-gauge wiring. I recommended 6-gauge, and he agreed. That's overkill, but one thing's for sure: if he ever has another problem with his trolling motor, it will not be because the wiring is too thin," he said. ■

SNAKE I.D. ➤

If that high-tech depth finder doesn't work properly, there's a much better chance that there's a wiring problem than some kind of trouble with the unit.

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added a brand new battery and a Minn Kota iPilot trolling motor. With a fully-charged battery, everything worked fine except for the Spot Lock feature on his trolling motor.

"He could troll all day just fine, and when he hit the Spot Lock button, his trolling motor would hold him in one spot for about 30 seconds," Long said. "But then it would release for no apparent reason. Everything else on the motor worked fine except that one feature. Minn Kota replaced the circuit card for the head unit on the motor, and he still had the same problem."

Long checked the connections and fuse panel. They looked fine, but he said the wiring, which was in place when the customer inherited the boat, was 10-gauge. Minn Kota's rating on that particular motor called for at least 8-gauge wiring.

"All the manufacturers — Minn Kota, MotorGuide, Humminbird, Lowrance — they all have their wiring recommendations on their websites," he said. "They'll tell you what gauge wire you need to run 'X' number of feet away from your battery. When someone buys a boat — old or new — and it's already pre-wired, most people don't even think about the wiring. It's just not something they would consider could be a problem."



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SNAKE I.D.

Photo by CJ Hillard

LOUISIANA'S SNAKES IDENTIFIED PART III: WATERSNAKES

By Kevin Hood

There you are at your sweetest fishing hole. You're surrounded by the beautiful swampy terrain of the Louisiana landscape, with cypress trees and palmetto leaves as far as your eyes can see.

You've been here before, but this time, something is different. Nearby there is a rustling sound among the leaves and water. To your startled surprise there is a 4-foot snake slithering right past you, about to snag your most recent catch for his dinner!

You fear the worst and send pictures to a few friends, all of whom swear it has to be a cottonmouth, a copperhead or something most definitely terrible for this reason or that. You then remember that Louisiana Snake ID can identify it for you, so you send a message to that Facebook page. You'll get a response in a few minutes and learn it is merely a harmless diamond-backed watersnake. Your fears are calmed, and you go ahead and let him have that little guy you weren't going to keep anyway. He's full and happy, and you've made a new friend.

This story, or some variation of it, happens to us at Louisiana Snake ID on a daily basis — exactly what we're here for. We are excited to share a little more information about snakes native to Louisiana. You can read about the difference between constrictors and live eaters in our previous articles. All of the snakes listed in this one are live eaters and therefore, do not kill their prey before eating it. Over the past few months, we've covered slightly more than half of the 48 species found in our wonderful state. Now let's take a look at six more.

All of these snakes are in the *Nerodia* genus and are commonly known as watersnakes. These are non-venomous, semi-aquatic snakes. They all have a very similar diet, so I will mention that here rather than in each description. Their prey consists of cold-blooded, primarily aquatic animals. Watersnakes love to eat various species of small fish, minnows and amphibians, including tadpoles, frogs or salamanders. Just like us, they will from time to time enjoy a crawfish. Being exceptional climbers, they are often found lounging on a log or tree limb and will even hang off a

limb with their head submerged, waiting for an unsuspecting fish or frog to swim close enough to bite. Contrary to popular belief, water moccasins are not good climbers and are very rarely found lounging up in a tree, so if you have a snake fall into your boat, it's most likely a harmless watersnake.

These snakes have highly keeled scales, meaning that they feel rough to the touch. They occur throughout the state, and they typically live around ponds, lakes and wetlands, but they are known to venture away from water in search of their main prey: frogs. If threatened, they often secrete a foul-smelling liquid comprised of digestive system by-products called "musk" — it smells very similar to a skunk!

It's important to use more than one indicator when trying to determine whether or not a snake is harmless from a safe distance. This is definitely true with the many color variations that are possible among watersnakes. Their best individual indicators are the dark vertical lines/stripes along the side of the mouth. The actual color of these lines can vary from black to dark green to brownish-green, but they will be darker than the lighter color of their jaw line and chin area. Since there is a chance that you could find yourself looking down at the snake from the top and you can't see the side of its mouth, if the eyeballs are visible from the top of the head, you can know you're not dealing with a venomous pit viper like a water moccasin, copperhead or rattlesnake. Remembering, this is also very helpful because watersnakes are notorious for flattening their heads and bodies to look more dangerous. Often, this gets them killed due to misinformation. Our goal is to minimize the chances of that happening. Not all non-venomous snakes have these lines, but if you see them on a snake in the United States, then it is non-venomous.

The following species are among the most commonly found snakes in Louisiana especially for anyone who spends time around the water while hunting, fishing or just enjoying nature. There are easy ways to recognize them, but remember, that individual snake patterns and colors can vary.



Photo by CJ Hillard

COMMON WATERSNAKE (NERODIA SIPEDON)

The only subspecies of common watersnake that exists in Louisiana is the midland watersnake, *Nerodia sipedon pleuralis*. These snakes have a light tan or grey color with red or brown bands that are thin near the belly and wider near the spine. The bands connect with saddle shapes near the head but become distinct bands and saddles about a third of the way down the body. Their bellies are mostly white, with small red or black triangle markings arranged in groups that look kind of like Christmas trees, and they typically become more dense near the tail. These snakes average 2 to 3½ feet long, with a record of 59 inches, and spend their lives primarily around some kind of water source. While often confused with water moccasins, these guys don't actually look very much like their venomous "counterparts." They have been found primarily in the Florida parishes with an isolated sighting in Ouachita Parish.

SOUTHERN WATERSNAKE (NERODIA FASCIATA)

The only subspecies of southern watersnake in Louisiana is the broad-banded watersnake, *Nerodia fasciata confluens*. Averaging 2 to 3½ feet long, with a record of 62½ inches, these gorgeous snakes are found across almost the entire state of Louisiana. They vary in coloration more than any other watersnake species, from nearly completely black to light grayish/brown with broad bands, to even brightly orange colored on occasion. The bellies of these snakes are vividly colored in bright reds, oranges and maroons and are my favorite thing about these amazing snakes. Since they vary so much in color, these harmless snakes are often mistaken for both venomous cottonmouth water moccasins and also venomous copperheads.



Photo by Kyler Hood

DIAMOND-BACKED WATERSNAKE (NERODIA RHOMBIFER)

These harmless snakes are green to brownish-green in color and have a darker distinct "chain link" pattern along their backs. As the largest species of North American watersnakes, they average 3 to 4 feet long with a record of 69 inches. They are the most likely to flatten their head into a "diamond-shape" when threatened, and their size makes this defense mechanism more noticeable as compared to the other species listed. These curious snakes have been known to approach a fisherman hoping for an easy meal. Diamond-backed watersnakes use their size to their advantage by eating larger fish and frogs than most of the other watersnake species and are often spotted by docks and boat launches eating fish, even catfish. They're found across the entire state, yet many are unfortunately killed because people assume that any snake found near the water is a "water moccasin."



Photo by Kyler Hood

MORE WATERSNAKES ➤

PLAIN-BELLIED WATERSNAKE (NERODIA ERYTHROGASTER)

Adults are a solid black or grey color. Their bellies are white or yellow with no physical markings, hence the name "Plain-bellied" watersnake. These snakes average between 3 to 4 feet with a record size of 64 inches. Juveniles have unique patterns down their backs. Their pattern consists of bands on the side of the body that connect with the saddles on their backs near the head but will become disconnected bands and saddles further down the body.



Plain-bellied juvenile



Plain-bellied adult

Photo by CJ Hillard

Photo by Kyler Hood



Photo by CJ Hillard

MISSISSIPPI GREEN WATERSNAKE (NERODIA CYCLOPION)

These snakes are typically a dark or olive green color with dark bands on the side of the body that don't reach the back. The larger ones often become too dark to notice any pattern, but their bellies are quite unique; they are light yellow with no markings near the head. Near the middle of the body, the color becomes a dark brown or reddish color with light markings that resemble "half-moons" or semi circles. Mississippi greens reach around 3 feet with the record of 51 inches. This species is found throughout south Louisiana, excluding much of the coast. They also occur along the Mississippi delta. They are not known to occur in central or west Louisiana or in the Florida parishes. They typically occupy larger bodies of water such as creeks, rivers, lakes, and large ponds where they prey on fish almost exclusively.

SALT MARSH WATERSNAKE (NERODIA CLARKII)

These tend to be a little smaller than the other watersnake species. They are most often black with two yellow or orange stripes that run the length of the body. Sometimes, there are disconnected spots, instead of stripes, that run the length of the body. Their bellies are also black, with a single row of yellow or red triangles, and the dark vertical lines on their jaws aren't typically quite as obvious as in other species. Like all watersnakes, these also have keeled scales that will make them feel rough to the touch. They'll usually reach around 2 feet long, with a record length of slightly more than 3 feet. Unlike any other snake in Louisiana, this species is only found in the brackish and saltwaters of the coast where they feed almost exclusively on fish, but will snag a small crab now and then. They are not typically found more than a few miles inland. ■

Thanks for taking the time to learn important facts about snakes any of us could encounter during almost any outdoor activity in Louisiana.



Photo by Elizabeth Henry

Don't forget to check us out on Facebook at Louisiana Snake ID for lots of snake facts and fun. We can also be found at LA Snake Boyz on YouTube and louisianasnakeid.com. Snake education is our passion!



GAMAKATSU STAINLESS STEEL PLIERS

When a serious fisherman finds a pair of pliers that he likes and trusts, he'll guard them almost as much as he guards his favorite crankbait. Gamakatsu, the fish-hook people, have given anglers one more item to like and trust with their 6- and 7-inch stainless steel fishing pliers, which debuted this past summer.

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worry about them heading overboard because of a lanyard attached to the handle.

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SPRO POWER BUCKTAIL HD

SPRO has long produced excellent baits for fishermen of all backgrounds, and its recent offering of a beefed-up bucktail jig, the SPRO Power Bucktail HD, brings even more great features to the fishing world.

Previous models were designed to be trolled for big striped bass or jigged for flounder, but a bigger, stronger hook gives anglers another weapon to drop down on a deep rock pile to try and fool a grouper, or to cast at a curious cobia.

Made in sizes from 1/4 to 8 ounces, the Power Bucktail HD features a 4X-strong Gamakatsu O'Shaughnessy hook that will penetrate even the toughest mouths. It comes in two colors: white and crazy chartreuse.

The semi-flat face of the jig allows it to work equally well being trolled or jigged vertically. A prominent eye is a focal point for predators. In addition, more bucktail has been added to the jig to give it a bigger profile to attract bites from bigger fish.

MSRP: \$11.12.

For more info, visit: www.spro.com



STYRKA S3 RED DOT

Stryka's top-drawer optics have been updated by a pair of new red-dot offerings, the S3 Open Style and S3 Tube Style scopes.

Perfect for mounting on shotguns for turkey or deer hunting or on pistols for hunting or target shooting, these are reflex sights with 1 MOA adjustments, good eye relief, 1X magnification, and 10 brightness settings.

The S3 Red Dot includes a riser mount for most AR platforms and most types of firearms with a Picatinny style rail/base. The body is constructed of aircraft-grade aluminum alloy for durability and strength.

The S3 Tube Style Red Dot sight features a unique, double-lens optical system which, coupled with dot color indexed coatings, virtually eliminates parallax and point-of-aim errors.

The red dots are available in a 2.5 MOA red dot model, a 5 MOA red dot and a 5 MOA green dot. All three models have a 21mm objective lens and weigh less than 6 ounces

MSRP: \$289.95, \$329.95.

For more info, visit: www.styrkastrong.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, a lunar ahead at 2021, and more. Comes with FREE 2020 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for \$8.95, plus \$3 s&h.
Book: "How to Know When to Go" by Rick Taylor. \$14.95 (plus \$4 s&h). 100 pages, 43 illustrations. A comprehensive look at the main factors influencing fish and game activity periods, plus how to devise an effective when-to-go game plan using any year's PrimeTimes calendars. Individual assessments of bass, panfish, deer, turkey, and more.

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 OCT	BEST DAYS				VALUE
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	
Thu 1	██	██	██	██	60
Fri 2	██	██	██	██	53
Sat 3	██	██	██	██	45
Sun 4	██	██	██	██	39
Mon 5	██	██	██	██	38
Tue 6	██	██	██	██	40
Wed 7	██	██	██	██	43
Thu 8	██	██	██	██	49
Fri 9	██	██	██	██	60
Sat 10	██	██	██	██	51
Sun 11	██	██	██	██	46
Mon 12	██	██	██	██	45
Tue 13	██	██	██	██	53
Wed 14	██	██	██	██	61
Thu 15	██	██	██	██	68
Fri 16	██	██	██	██	71
Sat 17	██	██	██	██	57
Sun 18	██	██	██	██	43
Mon 19	██	██	██	██	30
Tue 20	██	██	██	██	22
Wed 21	██	██	██	██	21
Thu 22	██	██	██	██	24
Fri 23	██	██	██	██	34
Sat 24	██	██	██	██	25
Sun 25	██	██	██	██	21
Mon 26	██	██	██	██	22
Tue 27	██	██	██	██	23
Wed 28	██	██	██	██	35
Thu 29	██	██	██	██	45
Fri 30	██	██	██	██	56
Sat 31	██	██	██	██	63

25 50 75
AVERAGE

MOON RISE	LUNAR PERIODS				MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
	TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED						
	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD						
7:15 pm	Midnight - 1:43 am	6:46 am	12:10 pm - 2:08 pm			○ FULL	
7:41 pm	12:16 am - 2:32 am	7:41 am	12:41 pm - 2:57 pm			○ Apogee	
8:08 pm	12:49 am - 3:21 am	8:36 am	1:14 pm - 3:46 pm				
8:37 pm	1:21 am - 4:11 am	9:32 am	1:46 pm - 4:36 pm				
9:08 pm	1:56 am - 5:02 am	10:28 am	2:21 pm - 5:27 pm				
9:44 pm	2:35 am - 5:51 am	11:25 am	3:00 pm - 6:16 pm				
10:26 pm	3:18 am - 6:44 am	12:23 pm	3:43 pm - 7:09 pm				
11:13 pm	4:05 am - 7:37 am	1:19 pm	4:30 pm - 8:02 pm	☀			
12:08 am	4:55 am - 8:31 am	2:14 pm	5:20 pm - 8:56 pm	☀		○ HALF	
	5:49 am - 9:25 am	3:04 pm	6:14 pm - 9:50 pm	☀		○ HIGH	
1:09 am	6:49 am - 10:15 am	3:50 pm	7:14 pm - 10:40 pm	☀			
2:14 am	7:49 am - 11:05 am	4:32 pm	8:14 pm - 11:30 pm	☀			
3:23 am	8:51 am - 11:51 am	5:10 pm	9:16 pm - 12:16 am	☀			
4:33 am	9:54 am - 12:34 pm	5:45 pm	10:19 pm - 12:59 am	☀			
5:45 am	10:58 am - 1:16 pm	6:20 pm	11:23 pm - Midnight	☀			
6:57 am	12:02 pm - 1:58 pm	6:54 pm	Midnight - 1:41 am	☀		○ NEW & PERIGEE	
8:11 am	1:07 pm - 2:43 pm	7:31 pm	12:27 am - 2:23 am	☀			
9:25 am	2:14 pm - 3:30 pm	8:12 pm	1:32 am - 3:08 am	☀			
10:39 am	3:19 pm - 4:21 pm	8:57 pm	2:39 am - 3:55 am	☀			
11:49 am	4:24 pm - 5:16 pm	9:49 pm	3:44 am - 4:46 am	☀			
12:53 pm	5:25 pm - 6:13 pm	10:45 pm	4:49 am - 5:41 am	☀		○ LOW	
1:50 pm	6:21 pm - 7:13 pm	11:45 pm	5:50 am - 6:38 am	☀		○ HALF	
2:39 pm	7:12 pm - 8:10 pm		6:46 am - 7:38 am	☀			
3:20 pm	7:57 pm - 9:05 pm	12:46 am	7:37 am - 8:35 am	☀			
3:55 pm	8:37 pm - 9:59 pm	1:47 am	8:22 am - 9:30 am	☀			
4:25 pm	9:13 pm - 10:49 pm	2:46 am	9:02 am - 10:24 am	☀			
4:53 pm	9:47 pm - 11:39 pm	3:44 am	9:38 am - 11:14 am	☀			
5:19 pm	10:18 pm - 12:30 am	4:40 am	10:12 am - 12:04 pm	☀			
5:45 pm	10:49 pm - 1:19 am	5:35 am	10:43 am - 12:55 pm	☀			
6:11 pm	11:22 pm - Midnight	6:30 am	11:14 am - 1:44 pm	☀		○ Apogee	
6:39 pm	Midnight - 2:08 am	7:26 am	11:47 am - 2:33 pm	☀		○ FULL	

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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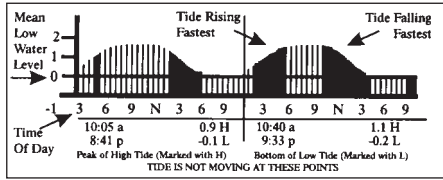
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How to use the SPORTSMAN Tide Guide

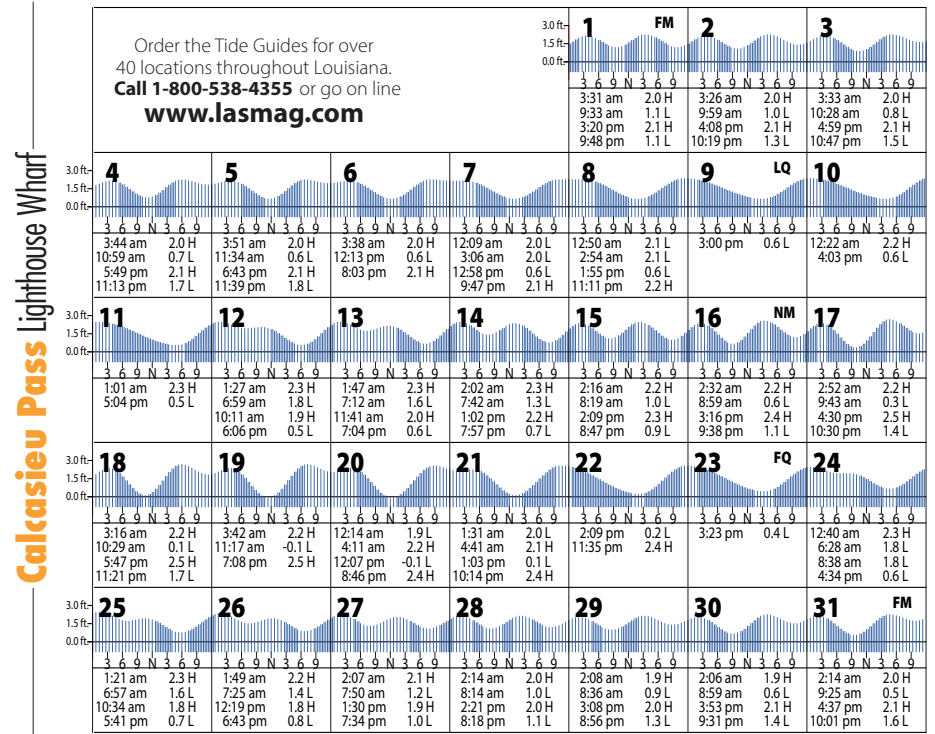
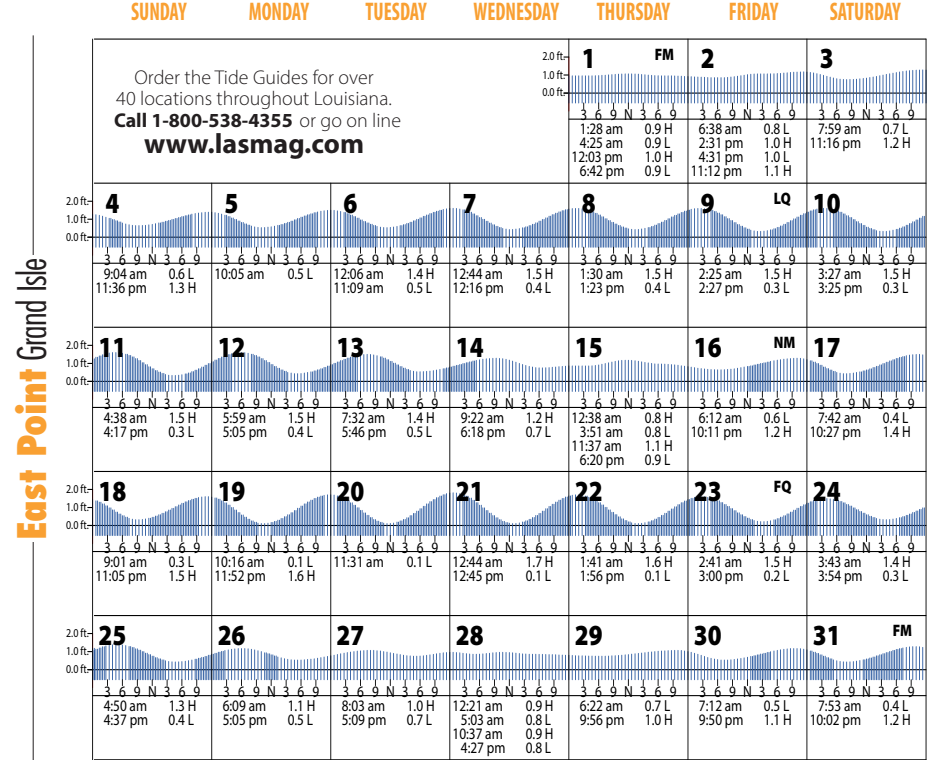


Fish feed most actively when the tide is falling. Louisiana Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most-active feeding periods each day in the Tide Guide. Just fish those times indicated in black. To find the best time to fish your favorite honeyhole, find the spot under Tide Corrections that is closest to the area, and add or subtract the time from the corresponding daily prediction.

Tide Corrections

East Point, Grand Isle	HIGH	LOW
Barataria Pass	+1:00	-0:10
Bastian Island	+0:41	+0:12
Bay Gardene	+2:51	+2:44
Bayou BonFouca	+9:59	+10:11
Breton Islands	+0:54	+0:48
Caillou Boca	+0:40	+0:48
Caminada Pass	+0:20	+0:12
Chandeleur Light	+0:37	+0:34
Chef Pass	+5:17	+5:07
Cocodrie	+1:22	+1:33
Comfort Island	+1:34	+0:54
Delacroix Island	+3:42	+3:31
Empire Jetty	-1:03	-1:45
Four Bayou Pass	+2:18	+0:17
Gardner Island	+0:40	+0:47
Grand Pass	+1:48	+1:16
Head of Passes	-0:48	+0:00
Hopedale	+4:17	+4:56
Independence Island	+2:29	+1:59
Jack Bay	+1:59	+1:28
Joseph Bayou	-0:36	-1:37
Lafitte	+1:45	+2:51
Long Point, Lake Borgne	+2:28	+2:11
Manila Village	+2:32	+3:13
Michoud Substation	+5:24	+5:02
New Canal (Bucktown)	+10:34	+10:49
North Pass	-0:31	-0:37
Paris Road Bridge	+5:53	+5:58
Pelican Islands	+2:26	+2:26
Pointe a la Hache	+3:12	+3:01
Port Eads	-0:17	-1:37
Raccoon Point	-0:03	-0:20
Shell Beach	+4:32	+4:25
Ship Shoal Light	-1:54	-1:50
South Pass, Miss. R.	-1:13	-1:20
Southwest Pass, Miss. R.	-0:38	-1:33
Tchefuncte River	+10:23	+11:01
Timbalier Island	+0:19	+0:23
Wine Island	+1:08	+1:02

Calcasieu Pass, Lighthouse Wharf	HIGH	LOW
Cote Blanche Island	+4:33	+3:40
Eugene Island	+1:49	-0:39
Lighthouse Point	+0:58	-0:53
Mermentau River ent.	+0:20	+0:25
Point Au Fer	+1:53	-1:02
Point Chevreul	+3:16	+0:30
Rabbit Island	+2:01	-0:36
Shell Island	+3:08	+0:45
South Point	+1:55	-0:33
Southwest Pass, Vermillion Bay	+1:42	+0:51
Weeks Bay	+3:58	+3:56





Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK

Scott Gibson with a redfish caught in the Hopedale marsh on an H&H Gold Spoon during a beautiful sunset on June 29.

GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

Send us your photos, and you may appear on the pages of the most widely read outdoor magazine in the Bayou State. Send clean, sharp shots of you with your fish, deer, ducks, rabbits, squirrels, etc. to images@LouisianaSportsman.com

Digital images must be at least 500KB and in jpeg format.



Scott Gibson



Jax Armentor

Four-year-old Jax Armentor shot his first deer on Nov. 16 in St. Martin Parish while hunting with his father Zack Armentor and grandfather Scott Neuville.



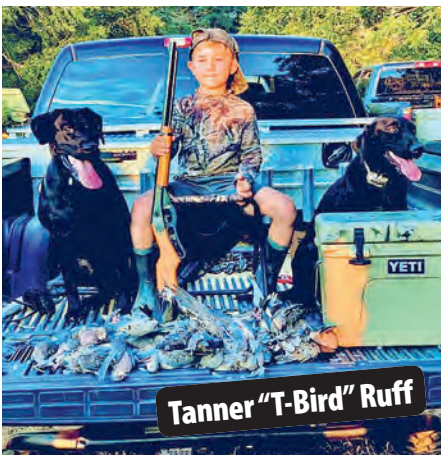
Natalie & Hadley

Natalie Nunez Grace and Hadley Grace, 6, pose with an alligator taken on Aug. 30 at Pearl River Wildlife Management Area.



Dixie Belle

Dixie Belle kisses every bass she catches before releasing it. This one was caught from a farm pond in St. Helena Parish.



Tanner "T-Bird" Ruff

Tanner "T-Bird" Ruff after a great dove hunt in Calhoun County, S.C.



Kenny St Romain

Kenny St Romain caught this alligator gar out of Hackberry on 12-pound test.



Jarro Hayes

Six-year-old Jarrod Hayes of Plaquemine shows off a stringer of bream he caught at his Big Papa's secret hole in Grant Parish.



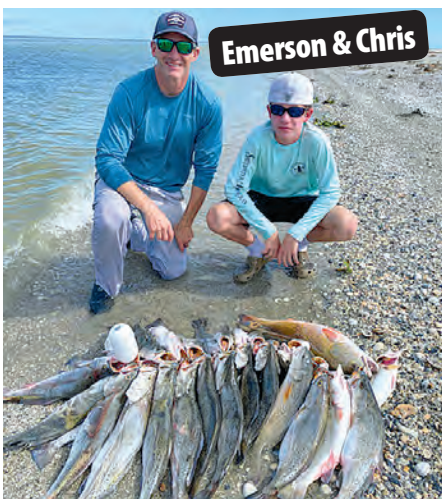
Robert Kennedy

Robert Kennedy with the 13-foot -1½-inch alligator he took Sept. 13, 2019, at Sherburne WMA.



Alana Ballard

Alana Ballard displays a Hopedale redfish.



Emerson & Chris

Emerson Piacun and his dad, Chris, were fishing at Curlew Island on May 3. They were throwing 4-inch bone colored Badonk-a-Donks. All of the trout were from 2 to 5 pounds.



Sophia Hebert

Sophia Hebert with a nice speck caught in Big Lake on June 27.



Elise Cormier

Elise Cormier got her first deer with her Savage .243 at 75 yards on Nov. 3, 2018.



Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



Pailyn Fruge

Pailyn Fruge, 7, killed her first deer on Nov. 24, 2018 at North Caney Hunting Club.



Gabriel Andrus & Karter Constantin

Gabriel Andrus, 5, (right) and Karter Constantin, 6, after they helped put the smackdown on some reds at Marsh Island on June 5.



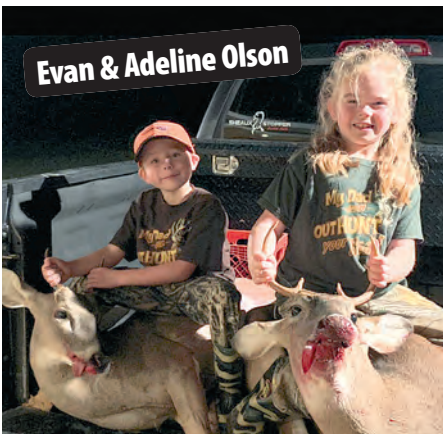
Kenley, Craig & Caroline

Kenley, Craig and Caroline Mirambell hold up a cobia caught in Venice.



Juliana Boleyn

Juliana Boleyn killed this fallow doe in Bronte, Tex., on Dec. 10.



Evan & Adeline Olson

Adeline, 7, and Evan Olson, 5, doubled up on Oct. 29 in East Feliciana. This was Evan's first deer and Adeline's first buck.



Robin Bashrum

Robin Bashrum with her first snapper of the season caught out of Venice over Memorial Day weekend.



Peyton Cormier

Peyton Cormier harvested her second deer of the 2018-19 season with her Savage .243 at 100 yards.



Jordyn Daigle

Jordyn Daigle, 7, caught this big bass in Lake Verret. This was her second bass and her first time catching it on an open face reel.

Parker Landry, 13, of Houma, killed this 225-pound big boar hog in Thibodaux on March 2, 2019.



Parker Landry



Shae Stevens

This speckled trout was caught by Shae Stevens, who was free-lining live shrimp in Grand Isle on May 22.



Zaidyn Claiborne

Zaidyn Claiborne, 8, and his pappy took a bass fishing trip at Cleco Lake and ended up catching a 32-pound flathead catfish.



Eric Daigle

Eric Daigle with a nice red caught and later released in Montegut around the Lake Barre area.



David Quatrocci, Jr.

David Quatrocci, Jr. took out these two pigs with his 10mm 1911 while archery hunting for deer on Oct. 5, 2019, at Hunt'n Freedom in Laurel, Miss.



Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



Jessie Argrave

These two nice bass were caught in the Spillway by Jessie Argrave on April 28, 2020.



Logan LeBleu

After many seasons of hunting with no luck, Logan LeBleu, 10, never gave up. He took this 3-point, his first deer, on the last day of the youth hunt on Sept. 27, 2019. He was hunting that morning with his grandfather, Gregg Rayborn, in Vernon Parish.



Karsyn & Joey Clark

Karsyn Clark, 5, and her father, Joey Clark, after a successful alligator hunt in Holmwood.



Tate Buquoi

Tate Buquoi with a 2½-pound redfish caught in Myrtle Grove.



Sidney Shetley

Sidney Shetley hooked this nice 4-pound trout in Maya while fishing with Capt. Brandon Picou at Southern Salt Outdoors on Lake Calcasieu.

Not an official document. Refer to LDWF's official hunting regulations pamphlet or www.wlf.louisiana.gov

HUNTING SEASONS

SPECIES	SEASON DATES	BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT	
DOVES+	(South Zone) Sept. 5 - 16 Oct. 17 - Nov. 29 Dec. 19 - Jan. 21	(North Zone) Sept. 5 - 27 Oct. 10 - Nov. 15 Dec. 26 - Jan. 24	15	45
WOODCOCK^	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31	3	9	
TEAL (blue-winged, green-winged, cinnamon)	Sept. 12 - Sept. 27	6	18	
RAILS* King & Clapper Sora & Virginia	Sept. 12 - 27	Nov. 14 - Jan. 6	15	45
	Sept. 12 - 27	Nov. 14 - Jan. 6	25	75
GALLINULES*	Sept. 12 - 27	Nov. 14 - Jan. 6	15	45
SNIPE	Nov. 2 - Dec. 6 Dec. 19 - Feb. 28		8	24
QUAIL	Nov. 21 - Feb. 28		10	30
RABBIT	Oct. 3 - Feb. 28		8	24
SQUIRREL	Oct. 3 - Feb. 28		8	24
	May 1 - 23**		3	9

*An extended falconry season for ducks, rails and gallinules will take place from Nov. 4 - Jan. 31. ^An extended falconry season for woodcock will be Nov. 2 - Jan. 31. +An extended falconry season for mourning doves will be Sept. 17 - Oct. 3. **Spring squirrel season is CLOSED on the Kisatchie National Forest, some National Wildlife Refuges, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property and some Wildlife Management Areas. (Check WMA season schedule)

WATERFOWL SEASONS

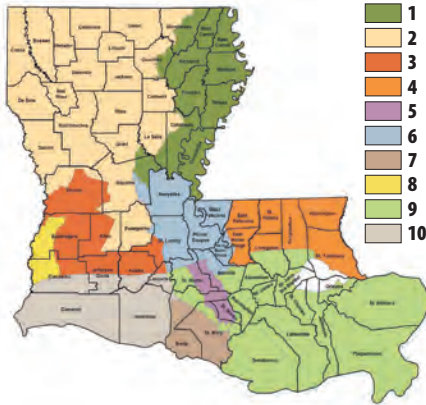
	EAST ZONE	WEST ZONE	COASTAL ZONE
DUCKS*, COOTS & MERGANSERS	Nov. 21 - Dec. 6 Dec. 19 - Jan. 31	Nov. 14 - Dec. 6 Dec. 19 - Jan. 24	Nov. 14 - Dec. 6 Dec. 19 - Jan. 24
The daily bag limit for ducks is 6 and may include no more than 4 mallards (no more than 2 females), 3 wood ducks, 2 canvasbacks, 2 redheads, 1 mottled duck, 1 black duck and 1 pintail. Only 1 scaup may be taken for the first 15 days of the season with 2 per day allowed for the remainder. Daily bag limit for coots is 15. Daily bag limit for mergansers is 5, only 2 of which may be a hooded mergansers. The merganser limits are in addition to the daily bag limit for ducks. Possession limits for ducks, coots and mergansers is three times the daily bag limit. Youth only: EAST - Nov. 14 & Feb. 6. WEST - Nov. 7 & Jan. 30. COASTAL - Nov. 7-8.			
GEESE (snow, blue, Ross & white-fronted [specklebelly])	NORTH ZONE Nov. 7 - Dec. 6 Dec. 19 - Jan. 31	SOUTH ZONE Nov. 14 - Dec. 6 Dec. 19 - Feb. 7	Nov. 14 - Dec. 6 Dec. 19 - Jan. 24
Daily bag limit for light geese (snow, blue, Ross) is 20, with no possession limit. The daily bag limit for white-fronted geese is three, with a possession limit of nine.			
CANADA GOOSE SEASON	NORTH ZONE Nov. 7 - Dec. 6 Dec. 19 - Jan. 31	SOUTH ZONE Nov. 14 - Dec. 6 Dec. 19 - Feb. 7	The daily limit for Canada geese is one per day, with a possession limit of three.
CONSERVATION ORDER FOR LIGHT GEESE	NORTH ZONE Dec. 7-18 Feb. 1 - March 7	SOUTH ZONE Dec. 7-18 Feb. 8 - March 7	No bag or possession limit. See pamphlet for more detail.



Only snow, blue and Ross geese may be taken under the terms of the conservation order, which allows the use of electronic calls and unplugged shotguns, and eliminates the daily bag and possession limits. Shooting hours begin one-half hour before sunrise and extends until one-half hour after sunset.

DEER SEASONS

2020 - 2021 Deer Hunting Areas



AREA	ARCHERY (Either-sex)	PRIMITIVE FIREARMS (All either-sex, except as noted)	STILL HUNT (No dogs allowed) (All either-sex, except as noted)	WITH/WITHOUT DOGS (All either-sex, except as noted)
1	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Nov. 14 - 20 Jan. 25 - 31	Nov. 21 - Dec. 11 Jan. 4 - 24	Dec. 12 - Jan. 3
2	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Oct. 24 - 30 Jan. 18 - 24	Oct. 31 - Dec. 9	Dec. 10 - Jan. 17
3	Sept. 19 - Jan. 15	Oct. 10 - 16, Jan. 4 - 10	Oct. 17 - Nov. 29	Nov. 30 - Jan. 3 (certain areas)
4	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Nov. 14 - 20 Jan. 25 - 31	Nov. 21 - Dec. 11 Jan. 4 - 24	Dec. 12 - Jan. 3
5	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 14 - 20 (either-sex) Jan. 25 - 31 (bucks only)	Nov. 21-22, Nov. 27-29 (either-sex) Nov. 23-26, Nov. 30 - Dec. 11 (bucks only)	Dec. 12-13, Dec. 19-20 (either-sex) Dec. 14-18 (bucks only) Dec. 21 - Jan. 24 (bucks only)
6	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 14 - 20 Jan. 25 - 31	Nov. 21 - Dec. 11	Dec. 12 - Jan. 24
7	Sept. 19 - Jan. 15	Oct. 10 - 16 Jan. 4 - 10	Oct. 17 - Nov. 29	Nov. 30 - Jan. 3
8	Sept. 19 - Jan. 15	Oct. 10 - 16, Jan. 4 - 10	Oct. 17 - Nov. 29	Nov. 30 - Jan. 3
9	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 14-20 (either-sex) Jan. 25 - 31 (bucks only)	Nov. 21-22, Nov. 27-29 (either-sex) Nov. 23-26, Nov. 30 - Dec. 11 (bucks only)	Dec. 12-13, Dec. 19-20 (either-sex) Dec. 14-18 (bucks only) Dec. 21 - Jan. 24 (bucks only)
10	Sept. 19 - Jan. 15	Oct. 10 - 16, Jan. 4 - 10	Oct. 17 - Jan. 3	

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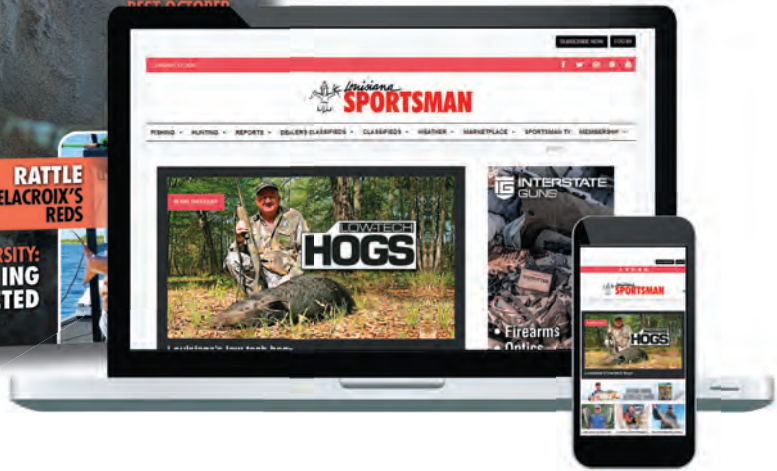
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