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CRAWDADS
FOR SLAB CRAPPIE?



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TIME FOR SOME
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Ray Miller of Madisonville knows that vertical jigging around deep brush piles is the ticket to big stringers of Northshore crappie in February. Photo by Keith Lusher Jr.

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Outdoor UPDATE

DUCK SEASON MET EXPECTATIONS

PREDICTIONS OF LOWER NUMBERS OF BIRDS BORNE OUT IN LOUISIANA MARSHES

By John Manion

ABOVE: Brian Vega with winter and summer "mallards." **BELOW:** Dustin Koepfel and blind mates back from a successful Venice hunt.

Duck hunters know the population of North American waterfowl has been in decline since record highs in the late 1990s. Annual waterfowl surveys in Louisiana have verified that decline, which continued this season. January's survey by the

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries found fewer than 2 million ducks in the state, a decline almost 250,000 ducks from December's numbers.

But Louisiana's hunters are not alone in having empty skies. Duck hunters across the Southeast, in major waterfowling states like Arkansas, Mississippi and Tennessee, are seeing a smaller migration, resulting in below-average bird numbers. Ducks seem to be staying north, where surveys in Montana and Illinois are higher than their historical averages.

Most hunters have shared similar experiences this season, with low duck numbers and only spotty successes. James Desormeaux, who hunts in the Mallard Bay area in the southwest part of the state, had a flat season.

"I'd say par. We did a little better than last year, but not as good as previous years," he said.

Most of Desormeaux's success came during the first split, with the number of birds falling off during the second split. Better hunts were decided by weather, which — wind direction — and hunting pressure.

"In our area, the birds feed in the rice, then tend to rest offshore to avoid hunting pressure," he said. "The south wind makes it too rough to sit out there. The second spit was mostly north wind."

Larry Reynolds, waterfowl program manager for LDWF, said while there is no study or scientific reporting, he shares the observation in the marshes around Creole.



"I've also noticed anecdotally that I see big flocks of birds on the large bodies of open water, even during closed seasons, after a cold, northern front," he said.

They are likely multiple drivers, but south winds tend to flood our marshes, which increases foraging opportunities for waterfowl. Particularly impactful were three tropical systems that hammered Louisiana this summer. The refuge from hunters in open water like the Gulf, Breton Sound, White Lake and Atchafalaya Bay becomes a whole lot less accommodating in a strong south wind, also tending to force birds back to waiting hunters.

Dustin Koeppel, who regularly hunts both sides of the Mississippi River in Venice, had a tough season compared to past years.

"I hunted the last weekend of the first split," he said. "We did terrible. They had a lot of birds; they were just going to big bodies of water."

Venice hunters reported seeing birds more consistently, but they were under a lot of pressure. Koeppel and his group pivoted and found some landlocked areas; he believes getting away from the pressure proved to be a difference maker.

"The first weekend of the split opener we did great," he said. "We shot two 3-man limits each day, but we could only get to the pond we hunted by dragging a pirogue."

Duck hunters like Brian Vega who hunts "the outside" in the Delacroix area, said they only managed a few good hunts.

"Our best hunt was 13 birds between 3 guys. It was all greys, but we were only seeing a few birds compared to other years," he said. The area he hunted is a classic saltwater marsh with more open water. Vega targeted larger ponds and bay edges. They also had to stay late to increase their chances.

"I'd say we would stick it out to around 10:30," he said. "You could've probably killed more limits if you hunted all day. The greys would just trickle in as the morning went along. We typically didn't get any teal at first light."

Regardless of poor hunting weather, habitat damage and degradation, even a migration shift, Louisiana duck hunters are trapped in a vicious cycle, with it becoming more difficult to fill a limit.

Reynolds summed up the season the best: "I think after our 2020 experiences, our expectations, were low, and the season has obliged." ■

James Desormeaux with a full strap of ducks.



Among ducks flying in the north Louisiana snow on Jan. 11 were many pintails and mallards, the two species most hunters consider the “prime rib” of duck hunting for shooting and table fare.



DUCK, DUCK, SNOW...

RARE JANUARY STORM WELCOMED BY HUNTERS

By Kinny Haddox

On the morning of Jan. 11, while much of the population of north Louisiana was out making snowmen or just admiring 3 to 5 inches of rare, soft snow sticking on everything in sight. Cole Barthel was doing what he does every other day this time of year — duck hunting. “We don’t get a chance to go duck hunt in the snow very often here in Louisiana, so it was something special,” said Barthel, 37, of Rayville. “The snow everywhere just made everything look so

great, and then the ducks we saw worked great. We got a limit of ducks, almost all mallards and pintails, and we were out of there by 8:30 a.m.

“It seems like when it’s snowy, the ducks just want to find somewhere to land. We’ve seen that in other places. They see the open water, then see some more ‘ducks’ and hear the call, and here they come. It was one of the best mornings we’ve had. The water had a little slush in it, but it wasn’t frozen.”

SNOW HELPED

Barthel helps produce the All Things Hunting TV show and works with Jeff Simmons on the daily Simmons' Duck Report, which records the group's duck experiences on a daily basis during the season. "When we get crazy weather of any kind down here, it does one of two things," Barthel said. "It either completely shocks the ducks, and they shut it down, or they just go dumb. We were lucky today that the snow just made them go dumb, and they worked just right."

"One thing that had us worried was that this front blew in from the west. Normally, when a front comes from the north, it's moving ducks down from Illinois through Arkansas and to us. But that wasn't the case with this one. I'm not sure if the weather pushed more ducks into the area, or if it just got those that were here up and moving. But everybody we talked to that braved the snow had good luck just like us."

The snow gave duck hunters a chance at a rare experience, but it did cause some problems in the northern end of the state. The white blanket of snow forced school and government office closures across the area. An estimated 100,000 customers in Texas and more than 45,000 customers in Louisiana were reportedly without power early the morning of Jan. 11. One meteorologist pointed out that his particular area has now been hit by two hurricanes and a snowstorm in less than 9 months.

This year's East Zone duck season closed on Jan. 31, while the season in the Coastal and West zones closed on Jan. 24. ■



Cole Barthel (left) and a group of hunters from Simmons' Sporting Goods limited out on Jan. 11, hunting in a rare north Louisiana snow.

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Members of the Foti family from Lafayette downed three impressive bucks in Tensas Parish on the same afternoon.



LAFAYETTE FAMILY SCORES "TRIFECTA" AT WINTER QUARTERS

By Glynn Harris

The Foti family from Lafayette scored an impressive "triple play" Dec. 18 in Tensas Parish, downing three bucks in a matter of a couple of hours on Winter Quarters hunting club.

Jared Foti, a Lafayette attorney, shared the story of how his wife, Ashley, his brother, Chris, and his father, Jerome, hit the trifecta that afternoon.

"It really started the day before, on Thursday, Dec. 17. My brother, Chris, and I had hunted a stand together, and we were wrapped up with deer, seeing probably 30 overall," Foti said. "Some small bucks were chasing does, and we had a favorable north wind that was right for the stand we were hunting."

The next morning, the wind direction had changed and was blowing out of the south. Jared called his wife, Ashley, and suggested that she take off work at noon and head to Winter Quarters for a hunt that afternoon because, as he said, "We're on a bunch of deer right now."

"When Ashley arrived, she and I headed

for the stand where we had seen all the deer the day before, although the south wind was not working in our favor," he said. "Chris had gone to a different stand, and within 5 minutes after getting into our stand, we heard Chris shoot. He texted me, reporting that he had shot a really nice buck."

BETTER-HALF'S BUCK

Then it was Ashley Foti's turn. After getting into the stand with the unfavorable wind direction, the deer didn't show up, at least not until late that afternoon.

"Right around 5, we saw a doe come out far down the field from us, and right behind her, a big buck stepped out at about 325 yards," Foti said. "Ashley got on him, aimed a bit high to compensate for the distance and hit the trigger. The buck humped up and took off across the field, and we saw him stop and tip over at about 400 yards."

Next, it was time for Foti's father, Jerome, to shine, and he did, with grandson Luke,

7, in the stand with him.

"It's starting to get rather late, and Ashley and I started walked down to where her buck had fallen," Jared Foti said. "As we were admiring the buck and taking photos, we heard Dad shoot. Ashley looked at me and said, 'There's no way we could have tripled! I tried calling him and got no answer, so I knew Dad was on to something.'"

Foti's father later told him that as it was getting late, he had stood up and begun to gather his gear to leave the stand when Luke said, "Paw, there's a big buck trying to cross the road!"

"Dad got the binoculars on him confirming this was a good buck, picked up his rifle and got on the buck just before he left the road to enter a grass patch," Foti said. "Dad shot but had no idea which way the deer ran."

GRANDSON'S HELP

Luke was his grandfather's "eyes." He said the buck had spun around and run back in the direction from which it had come, and



Jerome Foti got some help from his grandson, Luke, to take down this 10-point buck.

that he could see them sticking up above the grass for awhile.

"Dad drove to us to pick up Ashley's buck and Chris's buck before headed back to where he had shot his deer," Foti said. "Thanks to Luke, we were able to find blood where Dad had shot, and after searching for a few minutes, we found his buck piled up."

Here's the skinny on these three big Tensas Parish bucks, taken in a period of slightly more than 2 hours. Ashley Foti's 8-point buck measured 135 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches and weighed 240 pounds. Chris Foti's buck was an 8-pointer, weighing 215 pounds and measuring 136 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches, while Jerome Foti's buck was a 10-pointer, measuring 140 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches and weighing 245 pounds.

"Of all these, I'm more proud for my dad, because this is the biggest buck he has ever taken," Jared Foti said. "It wouldn't have happened had Luke not been such a good guide for my 66-year-old dad."

The trio of bucks weighed a little more than 700 pounds, with total inches of antler measuring 412 inches-plus. Not bad for a 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -hour hunt. ■

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READER REPORT**CATAHOULA PARISH TROPHY**

I got out of the Navy last July 20, so this was the first full season I could hunt in Louisiana since enlisting in September 2013. I was able those years to come home for holidays, but those times were short and I had to hunt with a gun.

That changed this year; I was able to fully commit to bowhunting the entire season. I got my first bow buck and doubled — a buck and a doe on the same hunt, 15 minutes apart — on Oct. 17. Since then, I have been after a big buck we had on camera.

I hunted hard, passing on a ton of young bucks. Early in the year, I walked to the stand where I killed my buck and had not seen so much buck sign in my life, I was going to clear shooting lanes, but when I jumped an 8-pointer at the stand, I decided it would be better to not touch anything at all and back out, seeing I had fairly good shooting lanes anyway.

I hunted that stand only on good winds and accessed it by pirogue only, leaving no trace. I hunted that stand probably four or five times before it finally paid off on the afternoon of Jan. 1. I got to the stand that afternoon at 2 o'clock and didn't see anything until around 5. I did a lot of grunting, mixed with doe bleats, and he came looking. At first, I saw only his antlers sticking out of the brush; he was just standing there, looking down in front of him. He began to walk down a trail I had seen a few deer take, and I knew he would come right through a gap in front of me.

I didn't have time to stand up but knew sitting would give me a better shot because of branches that would be in way if I stood up. I also felt way more stable shooting sitting because the tree I was hunting was 6 inches in diameter. All the limbs would shake if I tried to stand up.

Staying seated, I drew my bow, and when he came trough the gap, I stopped him with a "meh", and let the arrow fly at 30

yards — the longest shot I've taken at an animal. I had been saying to myself before he came out that the stand I was hunting would be the best stand to self-film a big buck; it had the perfect branch to attach my Go Pro camera on for a second angle, and my fourth arrow camera arm was set up perfectly right by my side at the perfect level for me to I see the screen and have easy access to the controls.

We made the hard decision to wait until morning to try and find him; we had a lot of hunters that were looking for their bucks as well, and we didn't want to go in there and muck up the area in search for him in the dark.

I got 3 hours of sleep that night, knowing he was out there. Finally, at 8 a.m., we went in there to recover the deer; I came in from the other side of the stand, and he was laid up 50 yards from the 4-wheeler trail, 100 yards from the stand, no tracking needed. I took two steps into the woods and saw him immediately.

A quick and easy load up, and it was done. He weighed 208 pounds — he appeared run down, with little to no fat — a 17¾-inch inside spread, 22-inch main beams, 13-inch back tines. We scored him at 145⅜ gross and 142⅝ net, so an almost perfect 8-pointer. He appeared to be only 4½ years old, maybe 5½. I looked at the state-record books and there appeared to be only two archery bucks from Catahoula Parish, one 139 inches and the other 140 inches; if our score stands, it might be the No. 1 bow buck from the parish. Also, I believe it is the biggest 8-pointer self-filmed in Louisiana on YouTube — not the biggest self-filmed, however. Harmon Carson, the Bayou Bowhunter, has 150- and 170-inch deer on YouTube. ■

Tyler Bowen
Lafayette, LA



VIDEO: Go to louisianasportsman.com/catahoula-parish-trophy/ to see Tyler Bowen's self-filmed hunt.





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FALLS NEAR MARION

By Kinny Haddox

The escalating feral hog problem in Louisiana is out of control. In northeast Louisiana; deer hunting is suffering from wild hogs in areas where sounders of 20 to 30 can tear up an acre or more of woods overnight.

But one big feral hog, named "Mr. T" because of the prominent mane on his back — resembling the haircut of Mr. T from the old "A Team" television show — will cause no more problems. A local hunter shot the nearly 300-pounder recently while deer hunting near Marion.

Matt Talbert, a city councilman in Sterlington, was hunting on the Struttin' Buck Hunting Club when the big hog made a rare daytime appearance — barely.

"I had been deer hunting all week and hadn't shot anything," Talbert said. "I have an app that tells me when it's about to get too dark to shoot, and it said 5:32. It was almost 5:30, and I was gathering up my stuff, a big doe walked out. I picked up my binoculars and looked at her, hoping a big buck would be behind her.

"I was looking when the top part of my lens just went black. I adjusted them and thought at first it was a bear, but it was a huge hog. I stuck my Winchester Model 70 out of the window; by then it was 5:32. I could still see it good, and I shot. It dropped right where it stood."

HAULING HOG

After he broke the winch on his 800 Sportsman ATV trying to lift the hog, he



Matt Talbert broke the winch on his 4-wheeler and the tailgate on his pickup truck trying to load Mr. T, a huge hog he killed near Marion.

finally pulled it out of the woods with a chain. He had to get help to load it on the tailgate, and then, it broke, too.

"A hog like that sure makes you think twice about sticking your head up in one of those thickets late in the afternoon, doesn't it?" he asked.

Peyton McKinnie, one of the growing numbers of deer hunters who are fed up with the uncontrolled nuisance, had been trying to trap the big boar for more than a year. He got the hog from Talbert and took him to the Dubach Deer Factory and had it caped out to be mounted. The famous hog will be on display at the BBQ Pit restaurant in Sterlington when the mount is complete.

With the advent of advanced hog catching systems like the Hogg Boss, pens with video and cell cameras and social media, some big hogs like Mr. T have become famous. In fact, the big ones with special features are getting named just like big trophy bucks are by deer hunters.

"Everybody knew we were looking for him and followed it regularly. Every time he was spotted, we heard about it. He had

a range of over 10 miles. There was no denying it was him as big as he was and with that Mr. T haircut," McKinnie said.

MORE GIANTS

More than 600 hogs have been trapped on three hunting clubs in the past year, McKinnie said, and Mr. T may not be the biggest one.

"He was all cut up on his shield, and both his tusks were broken off, so he had been fighting with another wild boar as big or bigger than he was. We suspect it was a hog we've named Quasimodo because he has a huge hump on his back, and he is really bad."

Mr. T almost bit the dust about a year ago when McKinnie and his hog-trapping friends had just started out setting traps for hog sounders. They set up a drop gate but didn't have heavy enough wire on the bottom of the pen.

"The first night we dropped the gate, we had eight 200-pound hogs in there," he said. "By the time we got to the pen, they had already torn it up and gotten out. Mr. T was the leader of that bunch. Since

that time, he's been totally trap-shy. Just the other night, he was running with a sounder, and they all went in the trap but him. He just laid down about 20 feet outside the trap and wouldn't go in. Where Matt ended up shooting him the next day wasn't far from that."

A GROWING PROBLEM

McKinnie said the problem is just getting worse, and while they are making a dent in the population, they can't get them all. Plus, it is very expensive. Talbert agrees, saying if something isn't done, it will ruin deer hunting.

"You've got people coming out of their own pockets for trap pens, cell equipment and service and hundreds of dollars worth of corn and Delta Magic and other attractants to get rid of these things," he said. "I don't understand why the leadership of our wildlife and fisheries can't come up with some sort of incentive to help. I mean we have a bounty on nutria. Why not on feral hogs?" ■



Matt Talbert was hunting on the Struttin' Buck Hunting Club when he killed this nearly 300-pound big hog nicknamed Mr. T.



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TWO BIG CATS DINE ON DUCK FAMILY

By Monique Roth

Nick Price of Houma has caught and cleaned plenty of catfish, but nothing that prepared him for what he found when he started cleaning two fish he caught on Dec. 12.

"The first thing I did was take out my phone and started taking pictures," he said. "My hands were all dirty still, but I grabbed my phone and texted my dad and a few other people."

His father and uncle have been fishing for 50 years and said they've never seen anything like it — the two catfish bellies contained a duck and her ducklings.

"They just had some big bellies," Price said of the two blue cats, which weighed 19.5 and 20.2 pounds. "They looked really full... I was happy when I saw that they were that big."

Price said he usually filets catfish and didn't mean to cut the bellies open, but when he did, the results were surprising.

"I actually jumped back with surprise," he said. "I accidentally cut the belly and cut it open and BAM! Ducks started pouring out."

Price caught the two fish back to back in the same spot.

"The only thing I can think is that they were paired up and swimming together," he said. "One had babies, and the other one had one baby and the momma. They were obviously together for a little while."



Nick Price of Houma photographed the remains of a hen duck and her ducklings, which were in the bellies of two big blue catfish he caught.



These two big blue catfish, both close to 20 pounds, didn't duck a big meal before they were caught on Dec. 12.

CATFISH AREN'T PICKY

The contents of the fishes' bellies spurred Price to do some internet searching about catfish, and he said he stumbled upon a lot of videos of catfish attacking and eating ducks.

"Catfish ... bass ... it's surprising what these fish will eat," he said.

An avid fisherman, Price said catfish are normally what he goes after.

"I do a lot of catfishing at my uncles," Price said. "He lives right on top of the Intercoastal/Houma Waterway Tunnel. I have an unusual catfish bait ... it only catches big catfish. It won't catch a lot, but you catch bigger ones with more meat than five small ones."

His secret?

Speckled trout belly.

"It's prime catfish bait," he said. "They love it. I've been using it for at least three years. My biggest catch has been about 38 pounds." ■

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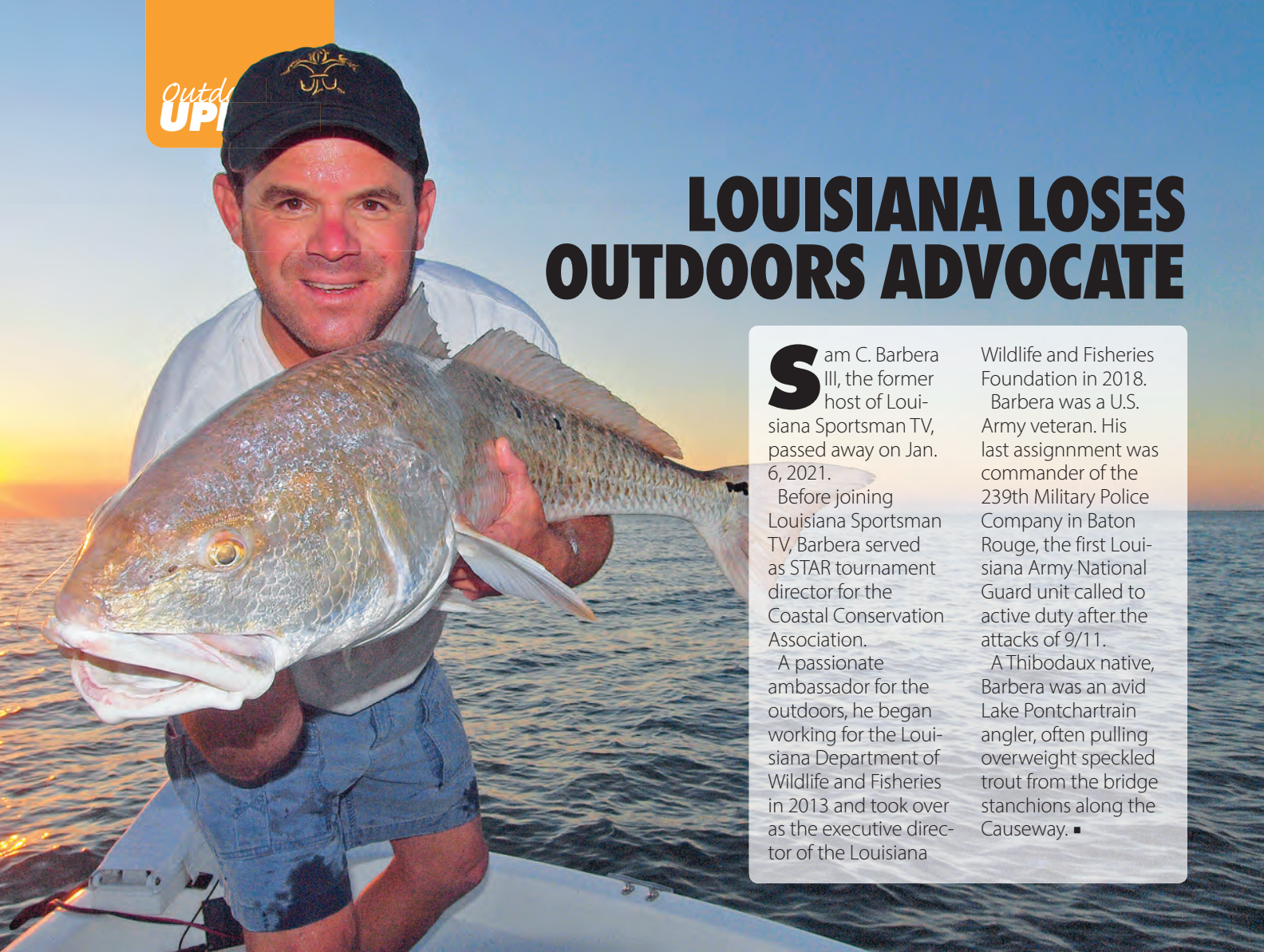
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LOUISIANA LOSES OUTDOORS ADVOCATE



Sam C. Barbera III, the former host of Louisiana Sportsman TV, passed away on Jan. 6, 2021.

Before joining Louisiana Sportsman TV, Barbera served as STAR tournament director for the Coastal Conservation Association.

A passionate ambassador for the outdoors, he began working for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries in 2013 and took over as the executive director of the Louisiana

Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation in 2018.

Barbera was a U.S. Army veteran. His last assignment was commander of the 239th Military Police Company in Baton Rouge, the first Louisiana Army National Guard unit called to active duty after the attacks of 9/11.

A Thibodaux native, Barbera was an avid Lake Pontchartrain angler, often pulling overweight speckled trout from the bridge stanchions along the Causeway. ■

SMITKO AND MCPHERSON ELECTED AS CHAIR, VICE-CHAIR OF LWFC

From News Reports

Jerri G. Smitko was elected chair of the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, and William "Joe" McPherson, vice-chair, during the Commission's January meeting on Jan. 7 in Baton Rouge. The two commissioners will serve in those positions through 2021.

Smitko is an attorney in Houma. She is a graduate of Nicholls State University and Tulane University School of Law. She was special legal counsel to the Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government from 1992 to 1998, and the assistant parish attorney for the same body from 1988 to 1992. She has served on various boards throughout her career.

Smitko is a member of the American Bar Association, Louisiana and Terrebonne Parish bar associations and the Association of Trial Lawyers of America. She served in the Louisiana Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve.

McPherson served six full terms — 1984-96 and 2000-12 — in the Louisiana Senate. A Woodworth resident, he authored several bills for outdoor causes, including the creation of three Wildlife

Management Areas. He was honored with the Governor's Award for conservation achievement in 2005. His work on behalf of outdoor heritage was recognized by various groups, including

Ducks Unlimited, Safari Club International, Louisiana Outdoors Writers Association, and the Louisiana Wildlife Federation.

He is a Life Member of the Louisiana Wildlife Federation, Quality Deer Management Association, and the National Rifle Association. He is also a member of Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, and Avoyelles Wildlife Association. McPherson is a veteran of the United States Army Reserve. ■





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WHERE DID LOUISIANA'S BIGGEST BUCKS LIVE AND DIE?

Since deer season cranked up last fall, *Louisiana Sportsman* writers have detailed the stories of 58 big bucks harvested across the Bayou State.

Of the deer profiled by the *Sportsman*, 40 cracked the 150-inch barrier, and of those bucks, 16 eclipsed the 170-inch mark.

We reviewed all of the big buck stories, and submit the following bucks for your consideration as the cream of this season's crop — the true 2020-21 Deer of the Year.

DEER OF THE YEAR

2020-21

HUGE CROSSBOW BUCK FALLS IN RICHLAND PARISH

When you see the biggest buck you've ever laid eyes on — a 46-point, 309-inch non-typical — standing 20 yards from you, and you release the bolt on your crossbow and know you have made a good shot, what is one of the first things you do?

"I threw up," chuckled 24-year-old Brennan Morris, who lives in Rayville.

Morris and his two brothers lease a 5,000-acre farm in Richland Parish, acreage where they grow corn and soybeans. The farm also serves as hunting grounds for the brothers and a few friends, and for the past eight years, they have tilled the soil and given



the deer on the property their serious attention.

"We keep out feed for the deer and utilize a series of covert cameras, the type that signals your phone when an image appears on one of the cameras," he said.

The woods where the brothers hunt is a prime area to hold good deer. Located near Little Creek, there is abundant, nutritious food for the deer, food sources such as acorn mast, greenbriar and persimmons.

"We have a 20-foot-tall ladder stand that has been up for about five years — one of our permanent bow stands," Morris said. "This stand is just off the creek sitting on a slight ridge and is situated between the creek and bedding areas the deer use, and we have taken a few good bucks in that area. One of our guys downed a big 12-point earlier this season."

THE FIRST GLIMPSE

Four years ago, images of a good buck began appearing on the cameras. In 2017, the buck, estimated to be 3½ years old, was a 6-pointer that looked like it had potential to be special for the following season.

"This deer had a couple of unusual characteristics," Morris said. "He had extra-long brow tines, and something had happened to his tail, because it was quite short. This enabled us to identify him any time he showed up on camera."

Fast forward to the 2018 season, when the group expected to consider this buck a shooter. But....

"Something happened that caused us to hold off on trying for





him that year," Morris said. "He had broken off both main beams and had only one long brow tine. The short tail let us know it was the one from a year ago, and we weren't going to target him with such a messed-up rack."

Running cameras before last season, the buck once again had a disappointing rack that gave him another grace period because he was not what Morris and his hunting partners were expecting.

"Last year, we were excited assuming the buck would be a definite shooter during the 2019 season," he said. "It was not to be, because he showed up as a 6-point with only a cow horn spike antler on one side, while the other side consisted of a main beam, G2 and G3 with the tell-tale long brow tines."

CAUGHT ON CAMERA

Bring on deer season 2020. Covert cameras continued in operation, feed and minerals were in place, but there was an air of disappointment because the only good deer to show up on cameras was the big 12-point one of the hunters had taken.

It was almost like the dream of the original targeted buck had



Brennan Morris of Rayville dropped this 46-point, 309-inch non-typical buck on a 5,000-acre farm in Richland Parish.

burst like a pin-stuck balloon, because based on last year's photos, he was nothing to be excited about and probably wouldn't be this season either.

"On Sunday night (Nov. 1), I was in bed when my phone 'pinged,' I clicked on it and there was an image of this unbelievable buck," Morris said. "The camera that showed the buck was near the tall ladder stand that belonged to another member of our group. I called him and told him it looks like a state-record deer is around his stand, and he thought I was kidding."

Nobody was able to hunt that stand the next two days, but trail-camera photos showed that the buck arrived right at daylight,

around 6 a.m., on Nov. 3. One of the group was on that stand that afternoon and the next morning and afternoon without seeing anything. One of Morris' brothers who hunted Nov. 4 saw that the corn was gone, so he drove his Ranger onto the plot and scattered feed, but not a single deer came in to feed that night.

TOO NOISY?

The next morning, Nov. 5, Morris decided to delay his plowing duties and spend a couple of hours on the stand before going to work.

"I had been running a tractor all week, and since nobody else was planning to hunt that morning, I decided to give it a try," he said. "I like to bowhunt, but I hadn't been able to practice, so I borrowed a friend's crossbow. It was a good one, a Raven, but I was not familiar with it.

"When I got on the stand before daylight, I realized I had forgotten to cock it before getting in the stand, so I had to do that, and I was pretty noisy. Then, when I tried to put a bolt in it, it bumped a limb, I dropped it (and) it clanged on steps all the way to the ground. That left me with only one bolt, but I doubted I'd need it since I was sure I had scared away any deer in the area."

MONSTER BUCK

Then, he heard a deer walking in the palmettos behind him suddenly stop; Morris assumed the deer had winded him. He happened to look down, and there stood the monster buck, behind some brush, 20 yards away. Morris pivoted around to have a shot as soon as the buck stepped out of the thicket.

"When he stepped out, I got the scope on him, hit the trigger and it clicked; I had forgotten to press the safety," Morris said. "I can't believe he was still standing there, giving me another chance, but I hit the trigger, felt I had made a good shot. He ran about 75 yards, and I heard him crash.

"I called my brother, and then a friend, and I was so totally shook up that I had to hang up on the friend because I was about to throw up, and I did," he said.

Cecil Reddick, a Buckmasters scorer, got 46 scoreable points on the 7½-year-old buck, with an astounding 309½ inches of antler.

After a 60-day drying period, Morris's buck was scored by a Boone and Crockett scorer, who measured the rack with 275½ inches. The state-record crossbow buck is a 186½-inch whitetail taken in Madison Parish in 2015. The largest non-typical taken in Louisiana by any means is a 281½-inch buck killed by James McMurray in 1994. The Morris buck will rank No. 2. ■

— Glynn Harris

SOYBEANS TRANSLATE INTO BIG BUCK IN RED RIVER PARISH

GRIFFITH DOWNS 10-POINT TROPHY NEAR COUSHATTA

John Egan Griffith, a 24-year-old deputy with the Red River Parish sheriff's office who lives with his wife in Coushatta, hunts on his family's 1,000-acre property, land that backs up to the Red River in Red River Parish.

"My grandfather used to farm the acreage, but after he retired from farming, we converted all but 30 acres to CRP, and we planted trees," Griffith said. "We have reserved the 30 acres to soybeans. We plant them not to sell, but for the deer to feed on and to harvest and put in our feeders year-round."

This field of soybeans, on rich, Red River soils in the middle of a CRP that provides excellent cover, has been a serious deer magnet. Griffith reported documenting 26 bucks feeding there this season, including the a 10-point, 174-inch trophy he downed on Dec. 1.

QUALITY BUCKS

Griffith said the property has paid off in big bucks through the years. Since 2010, Griffith has 25 bucks mounted, and all but three have come from this property.

"The buck I got was one of three I have been seeing on my trail cameras and had targeted for this season if I had a chance," he said. "One of them with double main beams is in the 200-inch range. We had one measuring just over 200 inches taken off this property several years ago by a dentist, Dr. Jason Dupree, a friend of my dad."

"I had been working nights, and I got off work around 5:15 the morning of Dec. 1. This buck had been coming out in an area where I don't have a stand, so after going to my mom's house to change clothes, I drove to my spot and picked up a chair and tucked it back in the bushes near the area where he had been coming out."

"When I got there and sat down, the moon was full and bright in the western sky, and I could make out the body of a big deer in the field. I couldn't tell what it was, but when it chased a doe



Dec. 1
John Egan Griffith
Red River Parish
174

off the field, I had an idea it may have been one of the big ones we have on the property."

A BEAST

As daylight approached and Griffith was pouring himself a cup of coffee, he looked up to see a big buck step out at 138 yards.

"When I saw him, I knew it was one of the three I was after this season," he said. "I shoot a Tikka .300 Short Mag, and when I got him in my scope and touched the trigger, he flipped over and dropped right there."

When Griffith walked down to where the fallen buck lay, he knew which one of the big three it was. The buck had a rack of 10 points, a 20-inch inside spread with 6½-inch bases with mass that carried throughout the rack and main beams of near 24 inches. The buck weighed in at a whopping 260 pounds and was unofficially scored at 174 inches of antler mass. ■

— Glynn Harris

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DAY-LONG HUNT PAYS OFF FOR THOMPSON

Bob Thompson, 60, has a philosophy about deer hunting that has worked well for him over the years. "I'm a dark-to-dark hunter, meaning I usually get in my stand before daylight and stay there all day, hunting until dark," he said. "I don't walk around my property so deer can feel safe and not pressured; I just crawl into my stand and stay there."

That strategy worked out on Dec. 6, when Thompson dropped a huge-bodied buck with a rack that carried 18 points and measured 180 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches.

Thompson, a retired state employee, is currently assistant administrator for the Johnny Robinson Boy's Home in Monroe. He hunts his own land, 100 acres of hardwood bottomland that sits at the junction of the Lafource and Beouf rivers, 11 miles north of Rayville in Richland Parish.

"I have hunted his property for years and have killed some really big bucks, most of which were taken out of this same scope of woods and out of the same box stand," he said.

The day of his encounter with the big buck, Thompson was set to do his all-day thing, getting to his deer stand early with plans to stay all day.

"I have a big food plot that I have kept up since the mid-90s," he said. "It's 130 yards long and 40 yards wide, and I usually plant it in oats and clover. This year, I didn't plant because of all the damage from the hurricanes we had, and it had grown up in 4-foot high weeds. A neighbor came and mowed (it) in strips, leaving clean ground next to strips of weeds, giving deer a bit of cover rather than just being out in the open."

PLENTY OF ACTION

Does started coming onto the food plot early, feeding on the corn and rice bran he had scattered on the plot.

"At one time, I counted 20 does feeding, and I could hear bucks grunting in the

woods," Thompson said. "Before long, three bucks came into the plot: a spike, a 4-point and a big 8, probably 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ years old, one I wanted to let grow another couple of years."

"The bucks would harass and push the does around, and after a while, the show was over, ending my morning hunt."

Sitting the rest of the day as is his custom, the does began filtering back onto the food plot late in the day; he counted 18 at one time.

"A big 6-point buck walked out and began harassing the does," Thompson said. "He was joined by a high-racked 8-point and a big 4-point. They were putting on a real show, with chasing going on in and out of the woods and criss-crossing the food plot. Then, I happened to notice another big buck I had never seen before chase a doe across the food plot."

"I try not to shoot a buck under 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ years old, and I was convinced this one met the minimum because of his big rack and body. Just as he stuck his nose in the woods to follow the doe, I had my scope on him and got off a shot. I saw him run off and was pretty sure I heard him crash."

A REAL GIANT

Climbing down from his stand, Thompson walked over to where he had last seen the buck, took one step into the



Dec. 6
Bob Thompson
Richland Parish
180 $\frac{3}{8}$

woods and saw it on the ground, less than 20 yards from where it had been standing when it was shot.

"I called my wife as I was trying to drag the buck out to the food plot, and my wife asked me if I was okay. I was puffing and panting so hard she thought I was having a heart attack," he laughed.

Actually, Thompson had to call a neighbor to help him load the buck, which that weighed at least 300 pounds. The massive rack carried 18 points with inside spread of 20 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches, main beams of 26 and 24 inches. The buck was determined to be 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ years old, with a rack that carried a gross score of 180 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. ■

— Glynn Harris

Dec. 7
Tyler Jordan
Catahoula Parish
190%



TYLER JORDAN DOWNS HIS BEST BUCK EVER IN CATAHOULA PARISH

T Tyler Jordan, 28, works with Realtree, one of the world's best-known manufacturers of camouflage, started by his father, Bill Jordan, more than 30 years ago.

Tyler Jordan works in marketing and video production and has had the opportunity to hunt all over the country, including states known for growing big bucks. He has chased them in Montana, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Kansas, Iowa and Illinois and has taken some real trophies. But he had to come to Louisiana to take his personal best buck.

"If you had told me I'd get my biggest and highest-scoring buck (a 190-inch, 14-point trophy) in Louisiana, or any state in the deep South, I'd never have believed it," he said.

HONEY BRAKE

Realtree became involved with Honey Brake a couple of years ago in a business partnership. Honey Brake is located on 20,000 acres of the old Louisiana Delta Plantation in Catahoula Parish; it sits on the banks of Larto Lake.

"I hunted here for the first time last year, and we identified a really good buck we judged to be 4½ years old," Jordan said. "The decision was to wait until he reached his maximum potential, probably age 6½, before deciding to take him. The big buck was given the nickname 'Stomper.'"

Arriving Dec. 4 from his home in Columbus, Ga., Jordan was interested in seeing what the buck looked like as a 5½-year-old. However, something had happened to the buck the previous season, as trail-camera photos showed him with a serious problem with one of his feet.

"He had developed foot rot, a bacterial infection, and had lost the hoof on one foot and was struggling to get around," Jordan said. "A year ago, he probably weighed in the 250 range (pounds),

and from the photos, it was obvious he had lost an excessive amount of weight. We felt that he would likely not survive the rest of this season, so it was determined to take him, if for no other reason than to relieve him of his obvious misery."

STOMPER

On the afternoon of Dec. 7, Jordan climbed into a box blind that overlooked a 5-acre food plot surrounded by thick brush. A big 8-pointer had been showing up in trail-camera photos in the area, so after talking with Drew Keeth, Honey Brake's CEO, it was decided that Jordan would target either the big 8-pointer or Stomper, the old, club-footed buck.

"The afternoon was getting late and I had seen a 2½-year-old 8-point step out as well as some does," Jordan said. "Just before the end of legal shooting time, I could see a deer coming through the brush. I identified him as a buck and could see that it was 'Stomper.'"

"When the deer stepped onto the food plot at 120 or so yards, he appeared nervous at first and didn't want to challenge the 8-point on the plot. As soon as he turned broadside, I got him in the scope on my Franchi .308 and pulled the trigger. He ran about 50 yards and dropped."

The buck, a 5½-year-old, had lost so much weight it checked in at only 150 pounds. The massive rack held 14 points with a 21-inch inside spread. The buck was taken to Simmons Sporting Goods in Bastrop and entered in that store's big buck contest. The antlers were measured at an astounding 190⅞ inches.

"I spend a lot of time in the woods," he said, "and I can't say I have ever seen a buck with a rack that big." ■

— Glynn Harris

COUSINS HAVE QUICK SUCCESS ON CONCORDIA PARISH LAND

Jason Enlow and his brothers purchased about 100 acres in Concordia Parish this past summer, and he and a cousin, Brad Adams, started working on the prime piece of land almost immediately. The land is in its second year of CRP and provides plenty of cover for deer.

"We wanted to get it ready for this year's deer season, so Jason and I got equipment in there to open some lanes and make a food plot," Adams said. "We ended up with clearing some 7 acres for the food plot and planted a mixture of Buck Busters, rape and oats."

"It started growing good, and we put out 1,500 pounds of fertilizer just before Hurricane Laura dumped 9 inches of rain. Man, it just exploded, with a crop growing knee-high and the deer were just tearing it up, bypassing the food troughs we had with corn, soybeans and rice bran."

Enlow lives in Baton Rouge, while Adams resides in Monterey. They were anxious to give the property a chance, to see what deer it would produce.

"Jason drew first blood," Adams said. "On Nov. 30, he downed a big 10-point buck that scored 152½ inches, a buck that weighed in at a whopping 280 pounds."



Nov. 30
Jason Enlow
Concordia Parish
152½

There was another buck the previous property owners knew about and had trail-camera photos of, but neither Enlow or Adams had seen the deer nor had photos of him.

MILK CRATE SET-UP

On Dec. 17, it was Adams' turn to give it a try. He got to the land that afternoon, and instead of climbing into a stand, he took along a milk crate to sit on.

"I had the milk crate set so I could watch a trail where I had seen lots of deer tracks where they were crossing," he said. "The bigger bucks had not been hitting the food plot during daylight hours, so with the rut being on, I wanted to watch the trail where I knew deer had been crossing. I hadn't been there long when some does came out and crossed the trail!"

In a moment, Adams became aware of more action in the thicket; he could see deer moving around, but not clearly enough to know what they were. He decided on another plan of action.

"I got up off my milk crate and stepped down into the trail and set up my shooting sticks, standing and waiting for what might happen next," he said. "I didn't have long to wait, because some does came across the trail in a hurry, followed by a small, 8-point buck."

"With all that action taking place, I felt like a big one could be following, so I had



Dec. 17
Brad Adams
Concordia Parish
172¾

my .35 Whelan on the shooting sticks and cocked back the hammer. The big buck stepped into the trail at 50 yards, and I was ready. One shot, and he fell right there."

HEAVY MASS

The buck was impressive with a rack of 14 points; one tine on the left side had been broken off even with the main beam, which would have made it a 15-point rack. The buck weighed 275 pounds and had heavy mass all the way out to the end of the rack. It was determined to be 5½ years old.

"At nearly every measurement, the mass was around 6 inches; I could hardly get my hand around it above the (third tine)," Adams said.

He took the buck to Simmons Sporting Goods in Bastrop to enter it in the big buck contest, and the measurement came out to 172¾ inches. ■

— Glynn Harris

HAMMONS DOWNS 15-POINT BRUTE IN LINCOLN PARISH

On Christmas Eve, Reggie Hammons, a 76-year-old retiree from Weyerhaeuser Co., outvoted his son, Toby, who wanted him to hunt a stand where a big buck — a 15-point trophy with a 170-inch rack — had been showing up on camera during daylight hours.

Hammons, however, had other ideas. He was interested in hunting a different stand, one he had been hunting, and he wanted only to shoot a doe for the freezer.

The buck had been showing up on camera on a neighboring piece of property, and the wife of one of the members hunting that property had actually shot at it a few days earlier. When the deer appeared on camera a couple of days later, everybody knew she had missed and that he was still around.

On Dec. 24, Christmas Eve, Hammons and his son headed for the 150 acres in Lincoln Parish where they planned to hunt.

"I told Daddy that his best chance at getting a crack at the big buck would be on a particular stand, but he insisted he wanted to hunt the one he was accustomed to hunting, and (he) only wanted to shoot a doe," Toby said.

Around 6:30, Hammons crawled in and got settled in his favorite stand, a box blind that overlooks two shooting lanes where they had placed piles of rice bran; directly in front of the stand; 200 yards farther away was a creek with hardwoods.

"Not long after I got in the stand," Hammons said, "a spike came out and began nibbling on the rice bran. Then, a

doe came out and began feeding when, all of a sudden, both deer took off and left the lane in a hurry; I figured maybe there was a bigger deer they had seen or heard."

HAMMONS' CHANCE

A few seconds after the two deer left, a big buck stepped out of the woods and took a couple of bites of rice bran, then started moving in the direction the spike and doe had run off.

"I knew it was a good buck, but I had no idea it was the big one we had on camera until he turned facing me, and I saw the split brow tines the photos had shown this big one had," he said. "Man, I started to get nervous by then, when the buck turned broadside at around 90 yards."

Getting the crosshairs behind the shoulder, Hammons hit the trigger on his bolt-action Remington .30.06 and watched the deer take off running low to the ground.

"I felt like I had made a good shot, but 10 minutes later, when I walked down there, I could find no blood, nor any hair, so I called Toby and told him I thought I had shot the big one," Hammons said. "I had dropped Toby off at his stand and drove to my stand in his truck. He told me to come get him, and when we got to where I had shot the buck and not finding anything,



we started looking; I went down toward the creek to see if he had crossed while Toby went in the direction I told him the doe and spike had run."

A SPECIAL MOMENT

It was only a matter of a few minutes until Toby let out a yell: "You got him!"

The deer had gone only 30 yards after the shot and was down for good.

"It was really special to be out hunting with your 76-year-old dad and getting to share in something like this," Toby Hammons said.

The buck sported a rack with 15 points, bases more than 5 inches in circumference and main beams of 23 inches, with an inside spread of 16½ inches. The buck was taken to Simmons Sporting Goods in Bastrop to enter in that store's big buck contest, and the rack was measured at 170¾ inches.

"After hunting all these years," Hammons said, "this was the biggest one I ever shot, and it was special to be in the woods hunting with my son." ■

— Glynn Harris

DEER OF THE YEAR
2020-21

NEW IBERIA HUNTER DOWNS BUCK HE MISSED A YEAR AGO

Dylan Cagnina, a 23-year-old electrician from New Iberia, hunts with his father on a hunting club in Bienville Parish. He connected with a big buck on Dec. 12, a buck he is sure is the one he missed a year ago: a 12-point, 172-inch trophy.

"I was hunting on the Bienville Parish lease last year, when I watched a big buck walk out of a swampy area near my stand, stop behind a big tree and then stepped out, and I shot," Cagnina said. "My bullet hit a branch or a tree, and the buck ran. We went down to look and found no evidence I had hit him."



Dec. 12
Dylan Cagnina
Bienville Parish
172½

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This season, Cagnina had the big buck on his mind when he and his dad made the long drive from New Iberia to the Bienville Parish lease to hunt.

"After getting off from work Friday, my dad and I drove up to hunt the weekend," Cagnina said. "After the morning hunt the next day, Dad and I went to put out feed and check our game cameras. I had one camera set on video, pulled the card and found a big buck, probably the one I missed a year ago, on the plot, feeding, Friday at 11:11 a.m.

"Here I was, walking on the plot at the exact time he had been eating the day before, and I was afraid I had messed up leaving my scent."

ANOTHER CHANCE

Climbing into his box stand at 1 o'clock that afternoon, Cagnina was not feeling hopeful, afraid his scent was still on the plot and that a mature buck was not likely to come out of the woods — at least not in daylight. The stand, which has a food plot out front with a shooting lane, also has an oak bottom directly behind it.

"I sat on the stand all afternoon with no action until around 4:30 when a hog came running out of the woods, across the food plot and into the woods on the other side, squealing and making all kind of racket," he said. "Once again, I figured my chance at a deer was really messed up, with all the racket the hog was making."

Around 5 p.m., Cagnina was surprised when he looked up and saw the buck he missed a year ago, the one on his video the day before, step out of the thicket at 40 yards.

"I shoot a Remington 7 Mag, and I got it out the window and on the buck," he said. "The only problem was, the buck began walking directly away from me, and I was faced with a decision as to whether I should take a risky shot or pass. Thankfully, at 65 yards, the buck turned, giving me a broadside shot, and I took it. His chest hit the ground, and he took off through the woods."

IMPRESSIVE BUCK

Cagnina called his father and told him what he had just done. His father told him to go look for blood, to sit tight until dark, and he would come help him look.

"When I got down to where the deer was standing when I shot, I found lots of blood," Cagnina said. "I got back in the stand and waited for my dad. We walked down there, followed a blood trail for about 40 yards and walked up on him where he had fallen and died."

The buck was impressive, with a rack of 12 points, an inside spread of 17½ inches, 5-inch bases and one main beam that was 27 inches long. The buck was aged at 6½ years old and weighed in at 200 pounds. Cagnina took the buck to Simmons Sporting Goods in Bastrop to enter it in that store's big buck contest, where the rack was measured at an impressive 172¾ inches. ■

— Glynn Harris

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BIG BUCK GALLERY



Oct. 1
Dustin Clouatre
East Baton Rouge Parish
145%



Oct. 1
Chris Felder
West Feliciana Parish
152



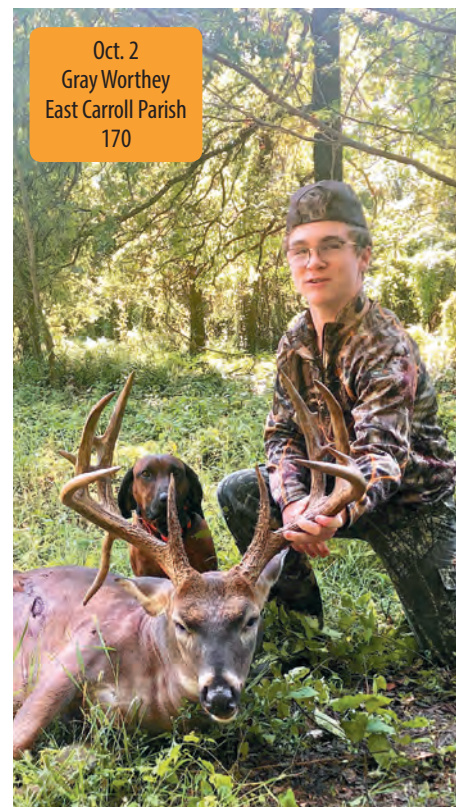
Oct. 1
Matthew Hawkins
Claiborne Parish
145%



Oct. 1
Brandon Winters
Claiborne Parish
11-point



Oct. 2
Mike Chandler
Lincoln Parish
140



Oct. 2
Gray Worthey
East Carroll Parish
170



Oct. 11
Kayslyn Hall
Natchitoches Parish
140



Oct. 19
Walt Bordelon
Avoyelles Parish
143

To get all the details on every single deer Louisiana Sportsman has covered this season — and in past years — head to www.louisianasportsman.com/bigbucks.



Oct. 21
Bob Wallace
Caldwell Parish
170%



Oct. 24
Rick Guillot
Red River Parish
142



Oct. 25
Lance Kelpie
Jackson Parish
145%



Oct. 25
Aaron Wood
Jackson Parish
157%



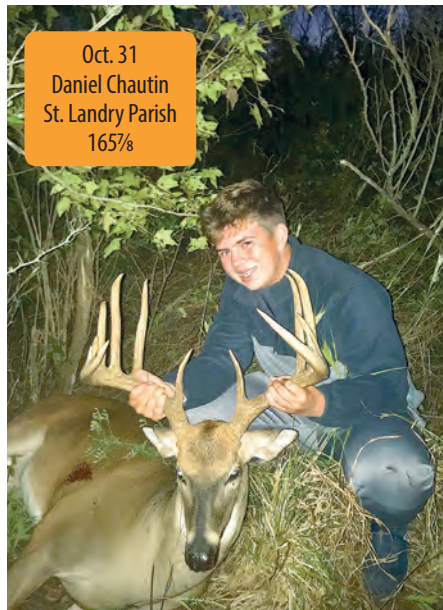
Oct. 27
Beau Johnson
Sabine Parish
156%



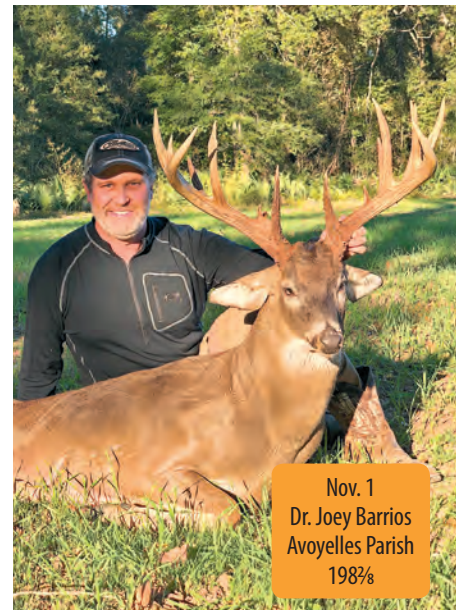
Oct. 29
Ben Brallier
Concordia Parish
172%



Oct. 29
Shawn Key
Union Parish
153%



Oct. 31
Daniel Chautin
St. Landry Parish
165%



Nov. 1
Dr. Joey Barrios
Avoyelles Parish
198%

BIG BUCK GALLERY



Nov. 1
Chris Lewis
Lincoln Parish
166½



Nov. 2
Scott Simmons
Lincoln Parish
143



Nov. 2
Patrick Kennedy
Red River Parish
13-point



Nov. 3
Kolton Jones
Washington Parish
140



Nov. 5
Kaylee Hall
Natchitoches Parish
140



Nov. 7
Zach Jones
Ashbrook Island
152



Nov. 7
Riley Smith
Union Parish
144½



Nov. 8
Will Hanna
Red River Parish
186½



Nov. 13
Jay Smith
Lincoln Parish
166½



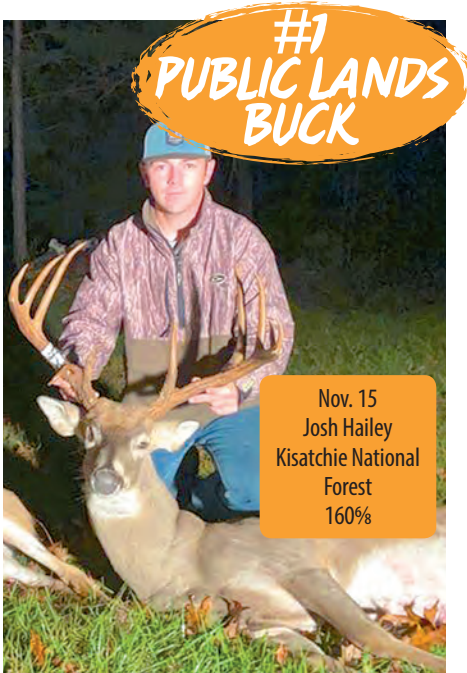
Nov. 13
Joel Masters
Sabine Parish
147½



Nov. 15
Brett Nobles
Lincoln Parish
140-plus



Nov. 15
Kelly Downey
Bossier Parish
159%



Nov. 15
Josh Hailey
Kisatchie National
Forest
160%



Nov. 20
Ray Mangrum
Bienville Parish
174%



Nov. 20
Carlos Stewart
Beauregard Parish
174%



Nov. 20
Lee Sullivan
Red River Parish
150

Nov. 20
Kenny Sullivan
Red River Parish
140



Nov. 22
Teddy Dupuy
Kisatchie National
Forest
153¾

BIG BUCK GALLERY



Nov. 23
Lane Cox
Tensas Parish
153%



Nov. 23
Melissa Maddox
Lincoln Parish
155



Nov. 23
Donald Lee
DeSoto Parish
174%



Nov. 26
Monroe Roark
Winn Parish
162%



Nov. 27
Greg McMillen
Ouachita Parish
162%



Nov. 28
Greg Felts
Tensas Parish
155



Nov. 28
Brandon Scott
Bossier Parish
149%



Nov. 29
Levi Madden
Madison Parish
152%



Nov. 30
Wesley Miller
Webster Parish
178



Dec. 2
Steve Davidson
Claiborne Parish
160%



Dec. 4
Ashley Jacobsen
St. Mary Parish
145



Dec 3
Colton Kyle
Madison Parish
153%



Dec. 11
Lee Greer
Richland Parish
162%



Dec. 12
Melissa McKinley
Madison Parish
155%



Dec. 17
Hannah Odom
Madison Parish
150



Dec. 22
Kylie Brown
Richland Parish
168%

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HUNTER OF THE MONTH

Derek Fontenot

Derek Fontenot, of Pride, with a trophy buck he killed on Dec. 30 in Clinton. The big buck scored 151.



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OF THE MONTH



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ANGLER OF THE MONTH

Paul Walker

Paul Walker has enjoyed the Louisiana outdoors for more than 45 years, and he recently took a three week camping trip to Crawford Landing in Slidell. Walker and a friend began fishing a drain coming out of the marsh with falling tide that was dumping out into the Intercoastal Waterway near the great wall of Chalmette.

“We limited out on redfish then worked out way into the marsh to catch our limit in bass. We caught over 50 bass that day.

“I just love taking people fishing and seeing the joy they get from reeling in the big one.”



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SALESMAN



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SALESMAN

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 ENGINE: 3.6L V6
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PRICE.....\$23,997

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PLANT NOW, PROFIT THROUGH THE YEAR

FOOD PLOTS PLANTED DURING WINTER WILL BE AS IMPORTANT TO THE HEALTH OF A DEER HERD AS THOSE FALL PLANTINGS USED TO ATTRACT WHITETAILS. HERE'S HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THEM.

■ By Dave Moreland

As deer populations began to increase around Louisiana due to the restocking efforts of the wildlife and fisheries agency in the 1950s and 1960s,

HUNTING SEASONS SLOWLY BEGAN TO OPEN.

During the 1970s, the state enjoyed an explosion in deer numbers, and by the early 1980s, most parishes with deer habitat had plenty of deer. In the 1980s, deer-management programs began to expand in an effort to improve deer quality and increase the number of older-age bucks.

“Let ‘em go and let ‘em grow” became the prevailing management cry, and today, more adult bucks are being harvested by Bayou State hunters than at any time in our history.

Todd Amend



Justin Perritt killed this 15-point, 134-inch, 231-pound buck in West Feliciana Parish on Dec. 6. **OPPOSITE:** Winter forage plantings that are mixed and planted in strips allows for the staggering of forage availability that enhances spring wildlife habitat.



Early on, hunters took a page from the farmer's deer book and learned that deer really enjoy agricultural crops and forages. The idea of food plots for deer came around, and today, planting a food crop for whitetails is a common practice.

Nutrition is the key for growing quality deer: bucks and does. Nutrition quality during the spring and summer is critical, because these are the important months for body and antler growth, as well as reproduction. Healthy does are more productive, and antlers grow larger when quality food is available.

For the most part, the focus of most hunters is planting food plots in early fall for hunting season.

As native forage declines in late fall and winter, deer are readily attracted to a well-managed food plot. Most hunters plant some sort of winter grass, but the smart hunter who sees the big picture will plant forages that provide both fall hunting opportunity as well as quality nutrition during spring.

Food plots are normally planted from early September to mid-October; this allows time for the seeds to germinate and begin growing, especially if the planter has done the right groundwork. Most hunters focus on winter grasses, wheat and oats, which provide better nutrition than rye grass, but rye grass is much easier to grow and, if fertilized, will attract deer for hunting.

The smart deer manager will incorporate a diversity of seeds in his plantings, mixing winter grass with clover. Both provide forage for hunting purposes, but the clovers will provide deer with quality nutrition during the spring and summer, provided rainfall occurs on a regular basis. Last year, I had red clover mixed in my winter planting strips, and the clover lasted well into late summer and was being heavily eaten by deer.



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So, if one plants a food plot in the early fall, why would one want to plant one late in the hunting season? One reason would be that the first planting did not do well and good forage was lacking; the plot was taken over by winter weeds that deer may not eat. Another would be that the deer jumped on the plot early and basically ate it up. This will happen in years when the mast crop is poor and quality native forages are lacking.

One way to correct the problem would be to simply sow more winter grass such as wheat or rye in late November or early December and hopefully get a late crop of forage for hunting in January.

Another reason to plant late is to focus on clover and other quality forages high in protein that will be available during spring and summer. Crimson clover, red clover, arrowleaf clo-

ver, white clover, osceola clover and chicory are some species that will provide deer with quality protein during the growing season. As I previously mentioned, the red clover was browsed heavily into August, when jointvetch patches really kicked in and deer moved into them. This year, I have planted additional clover and chicory strips next to the jointvetch patches, which die back after the first frost.

My hope is that the deer are familiar with these plantings and will stay around and take advantage of the available nutrition. I am also hoping that perhaps the time clover is available for deer may be extended since these patches were not available for browsing in October and November.



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.



Providing forage and browse in late-winter food plots will not only improve the condition of the herd and individual deer, but they may keep deer on your property. **OPPOSITE:** Winter grasses planted in mid-September show heavy browsing from deer late in the hunting season.

I planted these at the end of November; germination has been good, and the new plantings should become well established in December. Our property is small, and a key for us to have success is to provide deer with quality food and pull them in from the pine-dominated forests around us.

I have spent a good bit of time with hardwood tree plantings, and at some point, this property should become an acorn oasis for deer during the fall and winter. Tree planting is long-term management, and while I will not benefit from it, my sons and grandsons will. In the meantime, I will use the cool-season forage plantings to attract and hold deer. ■



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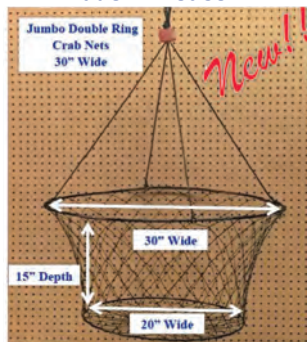
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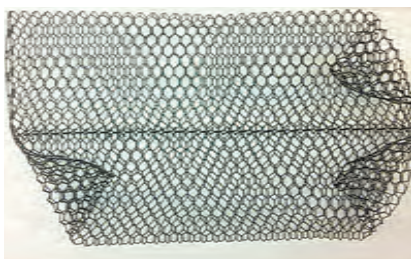
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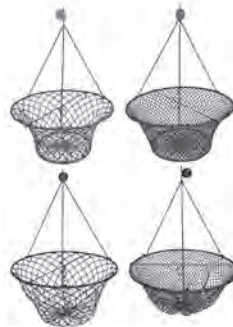
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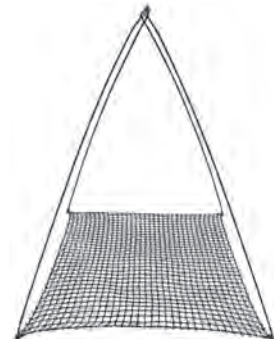
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■ By Kinny Haddox

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BAIT THAT A SAC-A-LAIT
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THE SPAWN APPROACHES.**

CRAWDADS FOR SLAB CRAPPIE?

HERE'S A QUESTION:

Why would fishermen spend money and time buying and fishing with dozens of lures that imitate live creatures but not fish with the real thing?

Consider the crawfish. Crappie fishermen use all sizes and shapes and varieties of crawfish-colored jigs, small crankbaits, plastic tails and spinners, but you rarely hear of a fisherman using a live crawfish. In Louisiana, what could be more natural? And it's a bait that crappie, especially slab crappie, won't back down from.

"Crappie tear crawfish up, but you won't see many folks fishing with them," said pro crappie angler Jason Thomas of Monroe. "These things are full of nutrients, and they are all over

the place where the crappie are trying to spawn, especially around shallow cypress trees and the grass mats. It's the same principle as fishing grass shrimp, but with a little bigger profile."

Thomas said crawfish and crawfish-colored lures start working best in February when the water starts warming up a little bit. There's no doubt that artificial baits and minnows are the top lures for crappie, day-in and day-out, but things like worms, grubs, grass shrimp and even meal worms will also become meals for a hungry crappie.

MATCH THE HATCH

And then there is the crawfish. The key to using crawfish for crappie is matching the time of the year with the crappie's lifestyle.

The season for crawfish that people consider eating-size can last from November to July, especially during an exceptionally warm, wet winter. But the most reliable months — and the time you'll find the best crawfish — are



Try lures that imitate crawfish or lures in crawfish colors: Bobby Garland Baby Shad, Bill Lewis Tiny Trap and Rebel Tiny Wee in crawfish colors, and Uncle Buck's panfish creature. **OPPOSITE:** Louisiana fishermen aren't the only ones that eat big crawfish this time of year.



in the winter and spring, from late February through May. Smaller crawfish are around all the time; The key is having water warm enough for them to be active.

"In late winter and early spring, when we are starting to fish shallow, we often catch fish to eat, and it is amazing, when we clean the fish, how many of the bigger crappie have crawfish in their bellies," Thomas said.

The majority of crawfish in most bodies of water are small this time of year, and it's important to match that with the bait you fish. Usually, the bigger fish will go for bigger crawfish, though. Thomas said that if you want to try fishing with a live crawfish, rig one up under a slip cork with a small weight and fish it close to structure, like boat docks and cypress trees, where fish will be looking to spawn.

The ideal size crawfish for crappie is around 2 inches, but in a pinch you can use 3-inchers.

THINK SHALLOW >



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

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Crawdads for slab crappie?

Big slabs like this can be caught on a variety of baits this time of year, including live crawfish

THINK SHALLOW

Fish are going to attack anything that gets in their spawning zone, and while they may just push some baits out of the bed, with a crawfish, you've got a good chance of getting the fish to take the bait in its mouth. Most of the best water for fishing this technique is 2 to 4 feet deep.

Thomas says that even though crappie feed up — they are most-often looking up toward the surface for what they eat — spawning time turns on a more-aggressive bite. You can stick a hook through a crawfish and fish it weightless, allowing it to settle to the bottom, where it looks more natural. Try to put the hook through the bait where it won't stop the bait from moving its tail and having plenty of action. You might think that crawfish would die pretty quickly on the hook, but in cold water, you might be surprised.

"Crawfish are tough creatures," Thomas said; they'll stay alive longer than you might think.

Fishing a live crawfish for shallow crappie is similar to fishing grass shrimp around the grass beds or live shrimp for speckled trout.

Thomas said areas in certain lakes always warm up earlier and more quickly than others, and the fish move in shallow earlier in those places than on the main part of a lake, especially big reservoirs. Try crawfish in those spots for the best results.

There is the question of finding bait. You can't walk into the local bait stand and buy two dozen crawfish, and if you try



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to get them from your local crawfish boiler, they'll likely be too big — unless you make a deal with him to save you small ones. But you can get your own bait by putting out crawfish nets or dredging a net in shallow, grassy ditches. They will often be just the right size in those places. You can keep them alive for several days in wet moss or wet newspaper. Here's a trick, too. If you want to add more color to your crawdads, put them in a small styrofoam ice chest with a layer of wet, colored paper. Within a day, they'll soak up the pigments from that paper and turn more that color.

One other thing about catching big crappie on crawfish. Don't tell anybody you are doing it, okay? Fishermen just can't keep a secret. ■

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Ray Miller's tried-and-true technique of fishing vertically around deep brush piles does the trick on crappie in Northshore waters.

NORTHSHORE'S COLD-WATER CRAPPIE BITE CONTINUES

Vertical jig around brush for chilled sac-a-lait

In crappie fishing, many factors can come into play: barometric pressure, sunlight, wind and tide. All are important components in figuring out how sac-a-lait will behave.

Ray Miller of Madisonville has been fishing on the Northshore for more than two decades. From the Tickfaw River to the Pearl River, he has logged thousands of hours on the water figuring out these fish. While many things are worth paying attention to, he said the most-important factor in February is water temperature.

Miller has had a very successful early winter fishing for sac-a-lait in the Tchefuncte River. Water temperatures have been fairly consistent, hovering from the upper 40s to the low 50s. His tried-and-true method of deep-jigging around brush piles in 20 feet of water in the main river has paid off; he's caught more than 30 fish on several occasions, with one trip yielding 60 slabs.

In addition to numbers, Miller said the size of the fish has been good as well; he has caught several weighing at least 2 pounds.

WHAT'S BEEN WORKING?

Miller uses the side-screen feature of his Humminbird 899 CI sonar unit until he spots a cluster of fish gathered around structure along the outer ledges of the main river.

He also uses a 10-foot jig pole with 10-pound fluorocarbon. His bait of choice is a Bobby Garland jig or a Lil' Hustler Scale Head tube jig threaded on a 1/16-ounce jighead.

Miller admits loving plastic baits but isn't too proud to bring

along a bucket of shiners just in case.

"Some people may disagree, but it's my opinion that the three best baits this month are shiners, shiners and shiners," he said.

When using shiners he ties on a 1/0 hook with two No. 7 split-shot set a foot above the hook.

Like most rivers on the Northshore, the Tchefuncte is affected by tides. If the tide is moving fast, Miller adds a third split-shot to hold the line taught against the current.

Sac-a-lait can be very temperamental. That's why Miller insists on taking the extra time to approach his next spot.

"You can't just run up on the spot," he said. "I like to put the trolling



Ray Miller likes fishing tube jigs for the Tchefuncte River's winter crappie, but he won't hesitate to drop down a live shiner minnow if it will produce more fish.



THE 60-DEGREE TRIGGER

All of his winter fish have been caught in water that was less than 50 degrees; that's why anglers need to keep an eye on the water temperatures in February. Miller said the magic number to look for is 60.

"When those water temperatures hit the lower 60s for a few days, I find the fish start to move," he said.

That's enough of a change to break the winter pattern and send fish into shallower water to spawn. For most of the country, February is considered winter; in Louisiana, all it takes is one cold front to sputter out, resulting in temperatures climbing into the 80s.

Miller said until that happens, he sticks with what's working.

"I'm going to stay in that main river and do what's been working for me all winter," he said. ■

— Keith Lusher Jr.

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motor down about 30 yards out and quietly approach where I want to fish."

When he's close to the spot, he drops his line straight down, just above the submerged structure, and gives the rod a few quick twitches. I doesn't take long before he knows if crappie are there or not.

"I don't give a spot too long when I'm fishing it," Miller said. "They're either they're or they're not. With numerous spots on the river, it's just a matter of finding the ones that will produce."



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CRAPPIE

LAC DES ALLEMANDS CRAPPIE SPAWN

Tim Bye said February and March are prime times to be in the canals around Lac Des Allemands, with water temperature dictating when the crappie spawn occurs.

Sac-a-lait can spawn in the Lac Des Allemands area starting in January, but Tim Bye of Luling said February is when it's most likely the fish will pull onto the banks.

"If that water hits 60 degrees, they're going to move closer to spawning," Bye said. "And when it hits 65 degrees, they're doing it."

"If you go in a canal and (water temperatures are) 65 degrees, and you don't catch any fish, there are no fish in the canal — they didn't show up."

The first key is to head to the dead-end canals around Lac Des Allemands, with water clarity being of paramount importance.

And then, ignore all of the sloping banks. Instead, look for banks where the water drops immediately to at least 2 feet.

"There are stretches of canal that they'll spawn on every year," Bye said. "They'll be right on the bank, right next to the cut grass. Where they're at, they're all together."

He said once the water hits 60, he goes into a canal watching the banks, looking for slight surface disturbances that give

away their locations.

"You'll see there's something strange about the water," Bye said. "If you don't see movement on the bank when that water is 65 degrees, move to the next spot."

Bye uses a 10-foot B'n'M crappie pole to drop his jig right off the grass, targeting 2 to 5 feet of water.

"That's where that long pole comes in handy," he said. "I can put that jig right where I want it; I don't have to cast. I can just pick it up and drop it down where I want it."

"I'll catch three fish to your one (on a casting rig) because you're too busy reeling in."

But having the jig dangling at the same depth as the fish is critical.

"They won't go down (to bite)," Bye said. "If they're feeding, they might go up a little, but they'll never go down."

Bye's lure of choice is a Crappie Assassin jig — he never fishes live bait — but he doesn't have a favorite color.

"I don't think color makes a difference," he explained. "Crappie are reaction-bite fish."

If a cold front pushes through and drops

water temperatures, don't get all worked up, because crappie haven't moved far — and if the spawn has already begun, there will still be some on the banks.

"Once the water temperature hits 65 degrees and the females drop their eggs, the males are going to stay on that bank no matter what," Bye said. "They will sit on that nest; they won't leave."

But actual spawning activity isn't a prolonged affair.

"When they move up, they'll spawn quick," Bye said. "Two or three days, and they move back out."

Fortunately, the spawn happens in waves, so there will be fish moving in and out of the shallows for the next several weeks.

And then they'll disappear from the canal systems.

"They'll be in (Lac Des Allemands) at the end of March," he said. "When the water hits 70 degrees, don't even go in a canal — they'll be gone." ■

TARGET BIG SLABS ON TOLEDO BEND

START ON LOWER END, WORK YOUR WAY UPLAKE

You couldn't pick a better time to be on Toledo Bend than February, according to Jerry Thompson of Living the Dream Guide Service.

"February is the annual transition when they're moving from their winter haunts to their spawning areas," said Thompson (844-LTD-FISH, ltdguideservice.com).

That means the month is split into two portions: the first half when fish will be located around the deep waters of river and creek channels, and the last part when fish will be moving into smaller bays and pockets to prepare for the spawn.

When fish are holding to the channels, Thompson said jigs and minnows are the ticket to success, but when the water temperature moves into the upper 50s, it's time to gear up for big fish — and that means a welcome change of tactics.

"When the fish start moving up to spawn, what you can do is throw a Road Runner," Thompson said.

Well, "throw" might be too restrictive a word; many anglers also troll the lures in likely crappie hotspots.

This is the time Thompson lives for. He said the key is to start at the south end of the lake in the creeks with hydrilla, including Toro and Yokem.

"You'll find sac-a-lait in 6 to 10 feet of water, and you'll catch them over the grass," Thompson said.

As the winter breaks and water temperatures rise farther up the lake, Thompson will move with the fish until he gets to the 1215 area — that's the farthest north he

generally fishes, but he said the pattern will hold all the way up the lake.

He said anglers will troll slowly, pulling Road Runners over the grass. His personal approach is to troll until he catches a fish, then switch to casting.

"Trolling is a way to locate fish," Thompson said. "Once you catch one or two, you can go back and cast that area."

Best colors are black/chartreuse and, maybe, blue.

"I don't know if they make any other colors," he said. "If they won't bite those colors, they won't bite anything else, either."

And he said fishing Road Runners isn't a

Miller McMath, 7, had a great Toledo Bend fishing trip with Living the Dream Guide Service. He was excited to catch the first keeper of the day.



numbers game, but a great way to catch huge crappie. And he's talking bruises.

"You can get bit 25 times a day, and it'll wear your arm out," Thompson said. ■

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LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

Clyde Folse has added to his line of crappie-fishing products a jighead he's been using for 25 years.



HAMMA HEADS

CRAPPIE PSYCHIC DEBUTS FLAT JIGHEADS HE'S BEEN USING FOR DECADES

The Crappie Weapon, Crappie Trailers and Crappie Ammo all became even more dangerous to the crappie population about three months ago when The Crappie Psychic introduced Hamma Heads.

Clyde Folse, the lure manufacturer's founder, is letting everyone in on something that has given him a decided edge to putting fish in the boat for the past 20 to 25 years. It's been all about the lead jighead he has been making for himself, hammering them out at home in Raceland.

It's easy to see the difference between the Hamma Head and other leadheads on the market. The Hamma Head's head is about as flat as can be.

That wasn't the case when he started experimenting with them years ago, Folse said.

"Nobody made flat jigheads," he said, noting there have been triangle-shaped jigheads on the shelves, just not flat ones.

"I would take a triangular (or round), go in the shop and hammer" it flat, he said, noting that the big difference is the jighead's action in the water column. Drop a marble in an aquarium, and it will fall straight to the bottom. Drop a quarter in the aquarium, and it will slide or wobble to the bottom.

"I haven't used a round jighead in 25 years," he said, whose family business got Hamma Heads on the market in late fall 2020.

Folse said that as he was getting ready to launch his line of new jigheads, he was going to call them "Flatheads," or something similar to that. However, his wife, Janelle put her foot down.

"My wife said, 'I've been watching you for 15 years with a hammer in the shed, hammering round jigheads. You're not going to call them Flatheads,'" he said.

Thus, the name Hamma Heads were born.

The flat jigheads come in $\frac{1}{32}$ - and $\frac{1}{16}$ -



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.

Misha Mann and his father, David, slammed the slabs with Clyde Folse, The Crappie Psychic, in the Bayou Black area.

ounce sizes, both with bronze Mustad hooks: a No. 4 for the 1/32-ounce and a No. 2 for the 1/16-ounce.

People at seminars conducted by Folse, a working guide, repeatedly ask him why he puts a No. 2 hook on a 1/16-ounce jighead. And they wonder why he prefers a 1/16-ounce jighead with a larger hook — many 1/16s use a No. 1 — when they rely on a 1/32-ounce model that has a slower fall.

“I don’t want to catch (bream),” he said. “That’s why I use a 1/16, why all the 1/16s have a No. 2 Mustad hook, which is a high-quality hook.”

The Hamma Heads also feature a bait holder to help keep a soft-plastic bait snug against the head.

Folse doesn’t paint the jigheads, because often, paint cakes the line tie, plus, it would add to the cost. But he shared a valuable tip. Get a bottle of Salon Perfect Neon Pop Professional Nail Lacquer, which literally shines underwater. There is only one color, as far as the lure manufacturer is concerned: orange.

“It has to be Neon Pop, because it’s like traffic-cone orange, almost a fluorescent orange, my favorite color. I put one little dot on each side,” he said.

Folse’s second color preference is pink. ■

For more information about the Hamma Heads, visit thecrappie-psychic.com or call 985-790-0862.



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The X-Bay Series from Xpress Boats has been enhanced for 2021 with the addition of the new X23Bay Lounge. This addition to our padded hull X-Bay line up takes the already popular bay boat to a whole new level with features designed for the angler and whole family. Key standard features include Hyper-Lift Hull, all-welded construction, longitudinal rib construction, unibody injected foam construction, gulfsand paint with xtreme coat liner, large bay lounge console with fish box, fold down grabrail, removable windshield, seat cushion, back-rest cushion, Humminbird Piranha Max 4 graph, Minn Kota Riptide 46 trolling motor, 300 HP rating, and appearance package options.



Length 23'	Beam 102"	Capacity 9	Max HP 300
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2021 XPRESS X23B DUAL

The addition of the X23B Dual to our padded hull X-Bay line up takes the already popular bay boat to a whole new level with features designed for the angler and whole family. Key standard features include Hyper-Lift Hull, all-welded construction, longitudinal rib construction, unibody injected foam construction, gulfsand paint with xtreme coat liner, large bay lounge console with fish box, fold down grabrail, removable windshield, seat cushion, back-rest cushion, Humminbird Piranha Max 4 graph, Minn Kota Riptide 46 trolling motor, 300 HP rating w/ two Yamaha F150XB's (the first of its kind for our company), and appearance package



Length 23'	Beam 102"	Capacity 9	Max HP 300
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2021 XPRESS XT16

The newly redesigned Xpress Tactical Series has laser-like construction, engineered precision to provide the hunter and outdoorsman the finest outboard hull "HD:3" capable of handling most conditions seen by timber hunters to backwater fisherman. Open floor plan, narrower beam, wider bottom, deeper v for optimum outboard excitement. Redesigned transom, center keel and a SeeLite LED lighting system to illuminate even the darkest of destinations. Key standard features include a Hydro-Dynamic hull, all-welded construction, longitudinal rib construction, unibody injected foam construction, camo paint, xtreme coat liner, duck boat accessory rail, and step pod transom.



Length 16'	Beam 68.5"	Capacity 3	Max HP 50
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2021 XPRESS H17

Built on the foundation of the famed Hyper-Lift Hull, this sleek, superbly appointed, open floor plan H17 is your solution to getting you to and from your destination safely and most certainly, quickly! Key standard features on this bass boat include Hyper-Lift Hull, all-welded construction, longitudinal rib construction, unibody injected foam construction, choice of five hull colors, xtreme coat liner, SeaDek liner on decks, 7.5' capable rod storage, aerated livewell in rear deck, Humminbird Helix 5 graph, Minn Kota 45 Edge trolling motor, and appearance package options.



Length 17'	Beam 93"	Capacity 4	Max HP 90
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2021 XPRESS H18

The new H18 is built to go head to head with Mod-V style boats, which offer a rough, uncomfortable ride, however the introduction into this category with a padded hull design is truly a game changer. Built on the foundation of the famed Hyper-Lift Hull, this sleek, superbly appointed, open floor plan boat will provide you with years of excitement. Fast, dry, pad hull design is your solution to getting you to and from your destination safely and most certainly, quickly. Key standard features on this bass boat include Hyper-Lift Hull, all-welded construction, longitudinal rib construction, unibody injected foam construction, choice of five hull colors, xtreme coat liner, SeaDek liner on decks, 8' capable rod storage, aerated livewell in rear deck, Humminbird Helix 5 graph, Minn Kota 45 Edge trolling motor, and appearance package options.



Length 17" 10"	Beam 93"	Capacity 4	Max HP 115
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2021 XPRESS H190B

The H190 Bay is the ideal option for anyone who is looking for a high-performance, beautifully styled, economically priced 19' bay boat. Built on the foundation of our Hyper-Lift Hull, this dream craft packs performance, fishability, and comfort into one amazing cost effective boat. Thin water or rough seas, you will not find a better solution. Key standard features include a Hyper-Lift hull, all-welded construction, longitudinal rib construction, unibody injected foam construction, choice of four hull colors, xtreme coat liner, Humminbird Piranha Max 4 graph, Minn Kota Riptide 46 trolling motor, and appearance package options.



Length 18' 10"	Beam 93"	Capacity 4	Max HP 115
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Model	1860	1960	2072	2172
Length	18'	19'	20'	21'
Beam	60"	60"	72"	72"
Capacity	5	5	5	6
Max HP	115	115	150	175

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Model	BP230	BP220	BP203	BP183
Length	23'	22'3"	20'3"	18'3"
Beam	102"	94"	94"	94"
Capacity	10	8	7	5
Max HP	250	200	150	115

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- Hydraulic steering



Length 20' 3"	Beam 97	Capacity 8	Max HP 150
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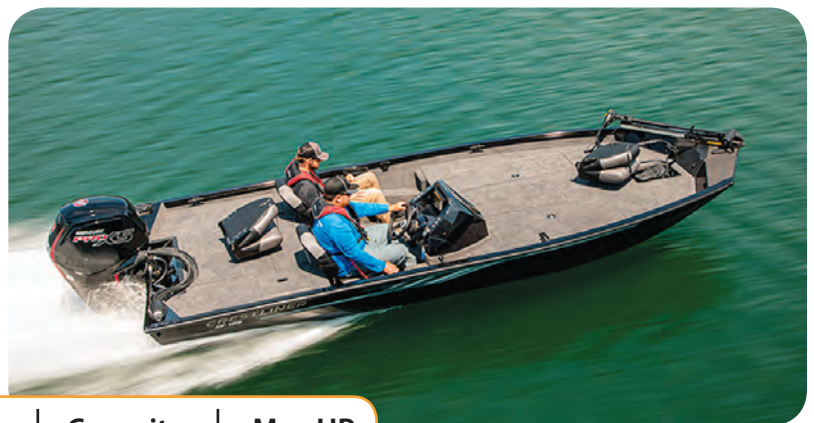
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Length 18' 10"	Beam 90	Capacity 4	Max HP 150
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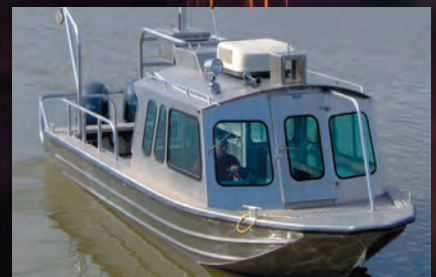
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■ By Don Shoopman



THE GREAT **ESTIMATE**

Lake Fausse Pointe's reputation for giving up quality bass in late winter and spring ratcheted up many notches in 2020, with eight bass weighing more than 7 pounds caught and released, including six fish that weighed more than 8 pounds.

IT WAS A SPRING/EARLY SUMMER BIG BASS BONANZA LIKE NO OTHER.

The streak started in February and ended in May, which coincides with the time frame so many people know as the bass spawn at Fausse Pointe, a 17,000-acre lake system in Iberia and St. Martin parishes.

The parade began with an 8.17-pounder reeled in Feb. 15 by Joseph Martin of Baton Rouge and ended four months later with the biggest catch of the spring, a 9.21-pound bass boated by Wesley Verret Jr. of Lillian, Ala., a native of Jeanerette, on May 16.

February marked the beginning of the surge with two bragging-size bass. Four hawks were boated in March, apparently the prime time, and two more big 'uns were caught in May.

Of the proud bass anglers who caught them, four were locals, including a 17-year-old Andre Weber, a high-school student from Jeanerette who doubled his pleasure by hoisting two fish weighing more than 7 pounds in a four-day period: a 7.25-pound fish on March 19 and an 8.5-pound fish on March 22.

The second-biggest bass of the streak was caught by a local, Dustin Dore of New Iberia, who was fishing on Feb. 25 when he got his hands on an 8.99-pounder.

New Iberian Bo Amy's 7.20-pounder on March 8, and New Iberian Jarrod Derouen's bass, which had a spring scale teetering between 8½ and 9 pounds, were the others lifted into the boat by local bass anglers.

Three out-of-towners, including Martin, who kicked it all off in mid-February, joined in the big-bass hit parade. The other visitors were Travis Meche Sr., of Branch, responsible for an 8.82-pounder on May 2; Martin, and Verret.

Travis Meche caught this 8.82-pound lunker on May 2. The fish hit a jig.



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The news spread fast with each hookset on a lake that fished smaller than usual because of low, muddy water conditions from early spring to early summer.

Only two of the Great 8 came from Sandy Cove, an area lined with cypress trees that's one of the lake's better-known spawning areas. Meche, 31, and Dore, 35, both slammed the steel home to their big bass there.

Martin's bass came from the Texaco Field, Weber's two, Amy's and Derouen's came from borrow pits along the West Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee below Lake Fausse Pointe State Park, and Verret's came from in the cypress trees of Lake Fausse Pointe.

Verret, 39, a Navy veteran who grew up fishing Fausse Pointe before moving to Alabama in 2017, was fishing with his father and father-in-law when he caught the biggest bass of his life and the lake's biggest bass for 2020.

Before that big girl got hungry, Verret had 4-pound and 5-pound bass in the boat on a black/green H20 Popping Frog. He was fishing it slowly, deliberately, when the bass moved under it and sucked it in. She gave the 60-pound braid a workout with runs that tangled line around cypress knees, but teamwork with his fishing buddies resulted in a good grab and celebration.

"I think everybody was speechless for about 15 seconds," Verret said, describing a bass 24 inches long with a 16-inch girth that capped the wild run that was hard to beat anywhere not named Toledo Bend.

Martin, 23, started it while scouting for a Fishers of Men tournament with a fishing buddy in Texaco Field. He made an extra-long cast past wooden structure in an oilfield canal and felt the chartreuse/blue Strike King KVD 1.5 crankbait he was throwing get heavy. The rest is history.

"When we got it in the boat, we started hollering," Martin said.



Bo Amy of New Iberia caught this 7.2-pound bass on March 8
BELOW: Dustin Dore caught an 8.99-pound largemouth from Lake Fausse Point on Mardi Gras.



THE 2020 LAKE FAUSSE POINTE HAWG HONOR ROLL

- Wesley Verret Jr., 9.21 (May 16)
- Dustin Dore, 8.99 (February 25)
- Travis Meche Sr., 8.82 (May 2)
- Jarrod Derouen, between 8 ½-9 (March 7)
- Andre Weber, 8.50 (March 22)
- Joseph Martin, 8.17 (February 15)
- Andre Weber, 7.25 (March 19)
- Bo Amy, 7.20 (March 8)

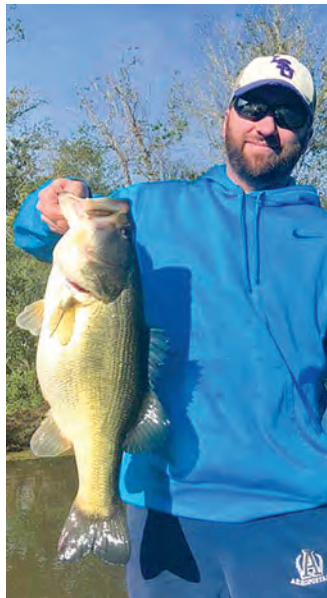
March roared in like a lion for Amy, 33, who was fishing with Mike Segura of Broussard. They had boated several nice bass before making their third move, then Amy scored his biggest-ever Fausse Pointe bass on an Okeechobee-colored Reaction Innovations Sweet Beaver.

"In the lake, you don't catch many fish like that," Amy said. "You really don't see many big fish in the lake."

Dore was alone on the water on Fat Tuesday when he caught his fat bass, the biggest of his life. He cast a junebug-colored Gambler Big Easy swimbait toward a clump of tall reeds just before 11 a.m. The bass bit, lost the ensuing battle and wound up in his hands.

"I had to sit down and take a break for a while. You cannot not get an adrenalin rush after catching one that size. You always hope for it and dream about it and hope it comes true. It was an awesome day, for sure," he said.

Derouen, 35, who has a 35-pound redfish and 5½-pound speckled trout to his credit, pulled in his big bass while fishing with a friend, Troy Lavolette. In the first moments after the 8.17-pounder inhaled the junebug-colored Baby Brush Hog he was flipping, he thought it was a 5- or 6-pounder but was glad he was wrong.



TOP: Jarrod Derouen caught this lunker, which weighed between 8½ and 9 pounds, on March 7 near the West Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee. **MIDDLE:** Andre Weber caught this 8½-pound bass on March 22, three days after he caught a 7¼-pounder. **RIGHT:** Wesley Verret finished off the spring big-bass season with this 9.21-pound lunker on May 16.

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“Oh, it’s awesome, definitely the fish of a lifetime, for sure. It feels great. I’ve been trying for a long time to catch one that big,” he said.

Weber had two days of heavenly fishing for big bass. He was by himself when he boated the 7.25-pounder on a spinnerbait but couldn’t get a good photo of it after weighing it while videoing with his cell phone, which upset him, but he was more than pumped to get the 8.50-pounder and for his grandfather to take plenty of photos. His biggest fish hit a black/blue, 3/8-ounce Strike King Hack Attack jig.

“Ah, it’s unbelievable. I’ve been fishing my whole life. I’ve never caught one over 5 pounds. All of a sudden, in one month I start catching big ones,” Weber said, noting that in early March, he reeled in a 5½-pounder in Sandy Cove.

Meche and his young son, Travis Jr., were out on May 2 with his father, Neal. His offering of a 3/8-ounce, crawfish-colored Strike King jig was rewarded with the bite of a lifetime, an 8.82-pounder.

“I ain’t ever caught a big one like that. Hell, no. My little boy thought it was a big goo,” Meche said. ■



Joseph Martin of Baton Rouge caught this 8.17-pound bass on Feb. 17 from the Texaco Field.



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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TRICK WORM WILL FOOL TOLEDO BEND BASS

Four 'wild' colors will do the trick when bass head shallow, thinking about the spawn

I'm kind of going to open a can of worms while sharing an old, proven tactic that catches bass in February at Toledo Bend.

Actually, trick worms in four wild colors could put more bass in the boat. They're a game-changer at a time when the back ends of creeks get a little cloudier and bass are moving up out of creek channels and ditches.

Most importantly, it's prespawn, and fish are looking for a few meals before the spawn gets hot and heavy. A Texas- or Neko-rigged weightless trick worm in merthiolate, bubble gum, white and sherbet can't be beat.

Some of today's bass anglers don't know this tactic, and some old-school guys may have forgotten about it. Plenty of others, however, like myself, remember and still tap the bass with them.

I'll fish a trick worm most of the time with an 18-inch leader tied to 12- to 15-pound fluorocarbon or 20-pound braid. And I have a specific spinning rod that I always use, and most of the time, I'm not disappointed. It's a lot of fun, too. When they smack it, they choke it. They eat it.

That tactic should be effective this month. However, Toledo Bend needs some more water, based on past experiences. Higher water means there's more cover to fish, particularly bushes and such that get flooded. If it's even a normal late winter-early spring, that rise will happen.

The tactics we used to catch fish in late December and early January — jigging spoons, drop-shots and Carolina-rigged soft plastics in 20-foot depths — will fade for the most part during the prespawn and spawn when the water temperature gets consistently into the high 50s and low 60s.

Higher water, higher water temperatures and discolored water

are a good combination, as many bass leave deep water via creek channels and drains and move shallower during February. The transition calls for horizontal baits to cover as much water as possible. It's time to put the trolling motor down and go to catch numbers and quality. Chunk and wind.

Aside from the trick worm, my top five baits, starting with my favorite, are: suspending jerkbaits, such as gold/orange Rogues; crawfish-colored Rat-L-Traps, including Rayburn red; golden bream bladed jigs, such as Delta Lures Thunder Jigs; red-hued square-bill crank baits, and Neko-rigged soft plastics. Those are the five baits I will have tied on. That's the drill.

Sure, it's winter — as we know it down here. But get three or four days of warm weather, and don't be surprised in the afternoons to find a real sow on or near a bed, particularly the last week or two of February. For sure, bass activity increases, and we should start seeing males and females on or cruising the shoreline.

Target the edges of flats and near creek channels and drains. Bass will stay close until the biological switch turns to spawn.

Keep a crappie-fishing rig handy this month while bass fishing. They share the same water as bass. After some slab slobberknocks a spinnerbait or something similar and you come up empty-handed, put a Blakemore Roadrunner on it and have some fun. ■



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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INDIAN CREEK BASS ENTER PRESPAWN IN FEBRUARY

When water temperature hits mid-50s, bass start to put on their feed bags

Fisherman Andre Oliver of Eunice knows where he'll spend a lot of time targeting bass in February.

Oliver trailers his boat to Indian Creek Reservoir, a few miles southeast of Woodworth in Rapides Parish. He has been visiting the 2,250-acre lake since he started bass fishing 15 years ago; his first trip was the day after Christmas.

When the prespawn gets going, the bass fishing can be good to great, he has learned. Past February outings have netted him plenty of 4- and 5-pound bass, as well as a healthy number of 6-pounders to keep him coming back for more.

"The only other lakes that I have fished that would be just as good at this time would be Toledo Bend or Kincaid," he said. "In February they start moving up on the grass, moving from the creek channels to the flats and on the secondary points."

The transition coincides with longer days and warmer water, he said. The sooner the water warms, so it is consistently in the

Andre Oliver of Eunice gets his hands on bass like this one consistently during February at Indian Creek.



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mid-50s, the sooner the prespawn bite should be on. A few 70-degree days help.

"Get those 70-degree days and a little bit of cloud cover, and you can smoke 'em," Oliver said, adding the most ideal times are during the warm spells or three days after a cold front.

Much of the time, all he needs to tattoo the lake's bass is either a Luck-E-Strike Rick Clunn STX jerkbait or a Rayburn red Rat-L-Trap. With the jerkbait, which works 4 to 8 feet deep, he prefers the golden shiner color when it's cloudy or shad (silver/black) color when it's sunny.

Of course, Oliver has some choice backup baits, such as a green pumpkin/purple or smokin' shad Zydeco Shad. He also relies on a Carolina-rigged finesse worm or Zydeco Shad, or a ½-ounce watermelon/candy Funkbuster football jig with a blue crab Crackin' Craw.

Indian Creek's water clarity most of the time is 2 to 4 feet. The key during pre-spawn is to fish grassy flats.

"In February, the best grass comes up from the bottom 2 feet. You don't want it too high, and very little won't do you any good," Oliver said.

The jerkbait bite usually happens in early February, followed by the Rat-L-Trap bite. Rip that lipless crankbait through the grass and hang on for the hit, he said.

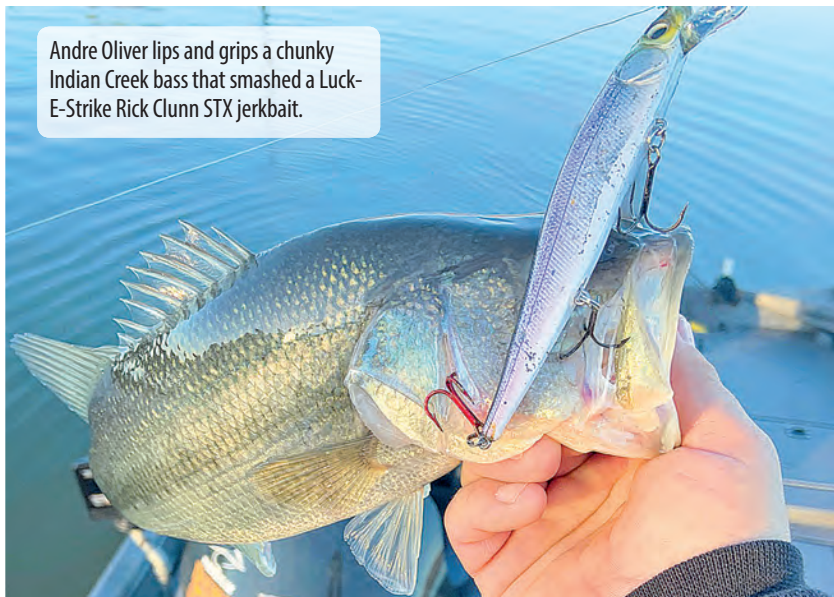
"When they're on, between those two baits, you don't have to throw anything else," he said. "It's fun, too. You can catch some really solid fish."

Fishing pressure is usually pretty low in February. Beginning in March, he said, fishing for bass on their beds can be awesome.

Some historically red-hot areas include The Hatchery, a creek that ends near the Booker Fowler Fish Hatchery, the Twin Boat Lanes areas under the two bridges, and main-lake points south of the dam, he said.

Oliver cautioned boaters that there is standing timber on the extreme upper and lower ends, and they must use the boat lanes to navigate safely. Otherwise, the lake is open for the most part, he said. ■

— Don Shoopman



Andre Oliver lips and grips a chunky Indian Creek bass that smashed a Luck-E-Strike Rick Clunn STX jerkbait.

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BASS ANGLER SPOTLIGHT: JORDAN SYLVESTER

By Don Shoopman

Imagine competing in a national competition at age 15 — and doing it again two years later on an even bigger stage. Jordan Sylvester of Baton Rouge has those events on his resume, plus a state championship, before he graduates from high school. His path to success doesn't require football pads, a baseball bat, goalie gloves or a bowling ball, but it does demand good knots, deft casts, hair-trigger reactions and the patience of Job.

The 18-year-old son of Jimmy and Amy Sylvester, Jordan Sylvester fishes on the Louisiana High School B.A.S.S. Nation circuit, which includes more than 100 schools. He has a passion for bass fishing that began as a young boy, fishing with his father.

Sylvester was hoisting bragging-size bass at age 6. He qualified for the Junior Bassmaster National Championship in June 2017, where he and Jacob Tullier finished third at Carroll County Thousand Acre Recreation Lake in Tennessee, and he punched his ticket with teammate Connor Taylor to the 2019 Fishing High School Championship held in August at Kentucky Lake in Tennessee.

"At the end of the eighth grade, that was the first time I qualified to go to nationals," he said. "I've been around it as long as I can remember. My dad fished tournaments."

Jimmy Sylvester has been "captain" for junior and high school contests from Stephenville to Toledo Bend. He took his son and Tullier, a sophomore at Central High School, and Taylor, who has graduated from Catholic High School-Baton Rouge to national tournaments in his Bass Cat Eyra.



Jordan Sylvester was 6 when he held this bass following a benefit tournament out of the St. James Boat Club in Prairieville.

"It's different," he said. "It took a while to get used to it."

Jimmy Sylvester said Jordan, who is also a deer hunter, started getting in the boat with him at age 4, and he put down a spin-cast outfit in favor of a baitcaster at age 7. He would wake up earlier and stand by his father's bed to get going in the pre-dawn darkness.

He hasn't changed.

This is the first in a new series highlighting a college or high school bass angler.



Jordan Sylvester, a Catholic High-Baton Rouge senior, plans to attend the University of Louisiana-Lafayette.

"He has my wife's personality: very passionate and tender-hearted. When it comes to the outdoors, he reminds me exactly of myself. As a father, there's no better feeling than having an 18-year-old who wants you to get up at 4 on a Saturday morning to go fish a tournament with him," he said.

Jordan Sylvester got hooked on the youth bass fishing circuit at a young age. What really got him interested, he said, was the Southwest Junior Bassmasters program, where he fished two years before reaching high school.

His potential was evident early. Sylvester and Tullier won the Louisiana Junior Bassmasters title in April 2017 out of Doiron's Landing with 9.91 pounds.

"That day actually was really tough," Sylvester said. "I think we caught (fewer than) 10 fish that day. We had a tough time (getting) our limit. I was pretty shocked, to be honest. I didn't think we had enough to win."

They qualified for nationals by catching five keepers on junebug-colored soft plastics on "shaky heads" near the mouth of Doiron's Canal.

Two months later, they were in Tennessee for the national tournament for juniors (ages 7-13) from 28 states and Canada. Sylvester and Tullier were in second place after the first day.

"We had a really good day with 15 pounds," he said. "On Day 2 we had a small limit."



Jordan Sylvester (right) and McVay Stockwell hoist a five-bass limit weighing 14.3 pounds in September 2020. Sylvester, a Catholic High-Baton Rouge senior, and Stockwell finished third to qualify for the 2021 Louisiana High School Bass Nation Championship.

is a college education after graduating with the CHS-BR Class of 2021. He plans to attend the University of Louisiana-Lafayette, which has a solid college bass-fishing team.

"That's what I've heard, good things. I'd definitely love to be a part of it," said Sylvester, who plans to pursue a degree in industrial technology.

He'll never forget his junior and high school competition.

"I'd definitely encourage all kids to participate in it," he said. "It's really an experience. It really is cool for high schoolers and teenagers to be in a tournament set up like an Elite level."

His father tipped his cap to Gene Hoover, who retired last year as former Louisiana B.A.S.S. Nation Youth directors and Tommy Abbott, who replaced Hoover, as well as Jim and Cindy Breaux.

"I would really like to give a huge thanks to Gene Hoover and, of course, Tommy Abbott, and all the volunteers who give up their time and talent for these kids," he said. ■

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They slipped to third place with 21 pounds, 5 ounces.

"It was really exciting, really thrilling and nerve-wracking to have that much at stake," Sylvester said.

In 2019, Sylvester and Taylor were first in the East Division and fourth in the West Division to qualify for the three-day high school championship at Kentucky Lake. They weren't the only team to struggle (one keeper for 2 pounds, 9 ounces), as 129 teams failed to weigh a fish the first day and 97 teams scratched the next day. Nevertheless, it was a great experience.

"It really was," Sylvester said. "It was an awesome opportunity. We went up there a whole week before and were able to scout four or five days."

Sylvester is a senior at Catholic High School-Baton Rouge. He fishes as a member of the East Baton Rouge Bassmasters.

The next time Sylvester is scheduled to compete is in an East Qualifier on Feb. 13 out of Bayou Segnette State Park in Westwego. Depending on COVID pandemic concerns, that tournament might be up in the air.

Sylvester said he may want to try his hand at professional bass fishing.

"It's not necessarily the only thing I want to do," he said. "(But) given the opportunity, yes, I'd like to do it."

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The HDR jake comes in a size slightly smaller than a wild turkey, to make sure it's not big enough to intimidate a gobbler that walks in for a closer look. It's in a half-strut pose, and it comes with two, interchangeable head/neck units, one in an aggressive posture and one more submissive.

The jake and hen decoys come with a synthetic, lifelike paint scheme, including detailed feathers and lifelike legs, and a

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■ By Kinny Haddox

SHELL BEACH GUIDE SAYS A GOOD FISHING CLINIC, INVOLVING PLENTY OF REDS AND SPECKS, CAN CURE ANYTHING THAT'S AILING YOU IN FEBRUARY.

TIME FOR SOME OUTPATIENT THERAPY



One of the toughest years in memory is behind us. Most of the Christmas decorations are down, and the stress of the holiday season has been boxed up and put away.

But it still feels like we need a little boost.

It sure would be nice to get away from it all for a while.

There's no question:

IT'S TIME FOR A LITTLE THERAPY.

And there's nobody better to call than Dr. Eric — sorry, that's Capt. Eric. A day at Eric Olsen's Louisiana coastal fishing clinic should be just what the doctor ordered.

Olsen operates Saltwater Therapy Charters out of Shell Beach, southeast of New Orleans. You can go with him or just follow his plan to have your own version of saltwater therapy this month. It's bound to make you feel and eat better.

"With the hard times we had in 2020, it's time to get back on the water more and enjoy catching some fish," Olsen said. "COVID did lead to a drop-off in business last year, but we still had a lot of families who came and fished together. We make sure the boats are clean and bleached down, the rods are cleaned, and we practice social distancing. We'll continue that as long as we need to, but it's actually a good thing to come fishing and enjoy the good, fresh air and the amazing fishery resources we have in southeast Louisiana."

Olsen administers two basic types of therapy this month: chasing speckled trout and bull redfish. Both offer exceptional therapeutic and dietary benefits. Both fish fight well and eat even better.

“*It's actually a good thing to come fishing and enjoy the good, fresh air and the amazing fishery resources we have in southeast Louisiana.*

"When that north, winter wind blows, it makes fishing in the marsh tough if you don't know where you are going, because it gets a lot shallower than normal, but the fishing is fabulous," he said. "We will start off with some fresh shrimp ... and we will look for the deeper holes and deeper bayous. With the tide changes more profound, it's important to key on that deeper water."



This is the kind of speckled trout that gets the blood pumping, even for experienced anglers like guide Eric Olsen.



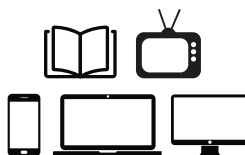


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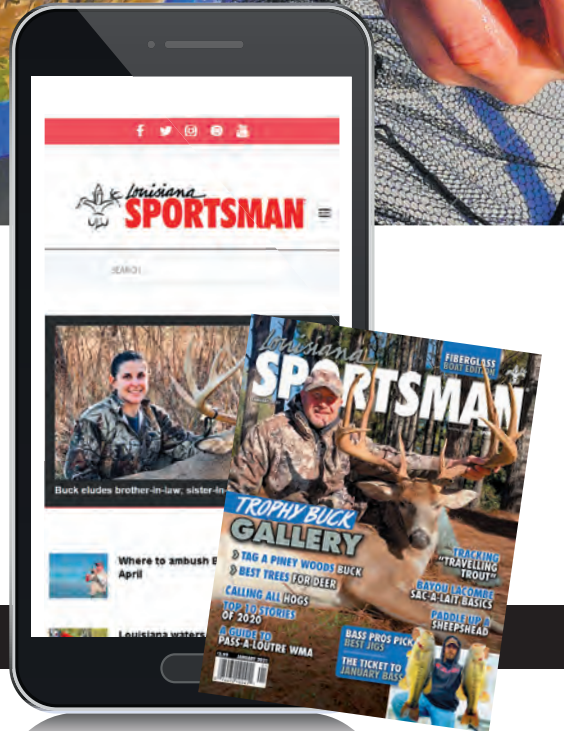


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Olsen said knowing when the tide is going to be moving is one of the keys to February fishing success.

“You definitely want to be fishing when the tide is moving; either rising or falling is okay,” he said. “The fish position differently, but they’ll still be there. You can catch fish on a slack tide, but it’s a whole lot tougher.”

Olsen likes to fish shrimp under a popping cork. If trout or reds are really stacked up or in a feeding frenzy, he’ll switch to plastics that match the size and color of the shrimp. It’s easier to fish artificials in that situation, but fish love the live bait, said Olsen, who likes to use a No. 1/0 Kahle hook for specks and a No. 3/0 for larger redfish. He prefers black, stainless steel hooks because they are harder for the fish to see, and they don’t rust. He uses several types of popping corks and said they just need to be easy to see. His favorites are the hot pink, but he doesn’t think it makes a big difference.

“Fish don’t eat the corks, they eat the bait,” he said.

Harry Mohre and Alan Novotny are regular Shell Beach therapy seekers and this ice chest shows why. **INSET:** Lots of lures and baits will draw strikes from reds and specks, but guide Eric Olsen’s favorites are, hands down, live shrimp.



The size of shrimp varies from time to time, based on what marinas have for sale, but Olsen said the good thing about that is whatever size they are catching is probably what the fish are seeing at that time, so it's a natural offering. Trout will usually feed up, but the reds will usually run closer to the bottom this time of year, he said.

Olsen said the best thing a fisherman can do is to be persistent and focus on proven, fish-catching areas.

"When it comes to red-fish, it's points, pockets or windward banks," he said. "That's where they will be. And when you catch them in one of those areas, look for more that match where you are catching that day. They'll probably be there, too."

Watching birds also pays off. Birds chase the schools of shrimp and baitfish, and this time of year, it's usually trout or specks chasing the bait. In the summer, birds often lead fishermen to huge bunches of hardhead catfish.

Olsen recommends taking it easy on that trolling motor and anchor lock this time of year. Fish can be tearing it up, but too much noise or vibration will scatter them quickly. ■

Contact Capt. Eric Olsen <https://saltwatertherapycharters.com/> or call 504-715-3006.



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

PADDLES 'N PUDDLES >

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PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

Chris Holmes



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

BE AWARE, ALWAYS

PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO
CONDITIONS, EFFECTS





February can be frustrating. Deep, winter doldrums have set in. A bad day of fishing is never bad, but fishing in miserable conditions can sure seem like it. If you're not insanely mad at the fish, waiting until conditions improve can spell success and a more enjoyable experience. The best advice is to pick your days.

February can be marked by a lot of cold, low and dirty water. Stiff, cold winds can be nearly unbearable when you're exposed to them in a kayak. However, taking time to learn an area and the different conditions it presents can produce some great cold water fishing.

The fishing may be slower, but it can be predictable. If it swims in the marsh, it will be affected by water temperatures. Although not completely identical, most fish react the same ways to cold-water conditions. The bite will be subtle and slower. They concentrate in deeper water and disperse and move shallower if it warms a bit. If you know where to look, you will find them.

Many of south Louisiana's marsh areas have access to a mix of shallow lakes, bays and ponds, all interconnected with deep, natural bayous, canals and pipelines. Often, dead-end canals also dot an area. The easy access to varying water depths and food sources keep the fish biting somewhere in the general area throughout the winter.

Even a slight, 2- to 4-degree change in water temperature can move the fish and turn on or off their feeding activities. If you are not having success, don't leave an area too soon. Although it may appear that there are no fish around, you just might not be in the correct location or using the correct technique. Not catching in the middle of a canal? Try closer to the bank or on a nearby flat. It can be as simple as the fish having moved in accordance with a slight change in conditions. Kayaks aid in this endeavor as they limit the ability to pick up and move far away as you can in a powerboat. Thoroughly fish an area before giving up.

Fishing differing habitats in the same area often leads to success. Learning where the fish are in specific conditions is the key to successful winter fishing. Knowing where they will likely be and how they act under specific weather conditions is the key to successful winter trips. Interpret and adapt to what you are seeing and you will find the fish.

Some trips often provide information that can be stored for future trips. On days after strong cold fronts, when you encounter extremely low water, make note of ditches, drains and certainly any exposed structure such as shells or oyster reefs. You will see the shells along the shallow areas spreading out to deeper waters. Shells are a great key to successful winter fishing. Not only do they radiate heat from the sun, they also filter the water making those areas warmer and clearer. When the water is higher on a subsequent trip, you know right where to cast. Low water also reveals bottom contours and any remaining grass beds.



When the water is cold and low, post-up where you can fish the outside turn of a bayou. The tide scours the bottom here and the water is deeper and concentrates the fish.

PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

continued

When the water is extremely low, fish have nowhere to go except into the deeper areas. If fishing canals or bayous, know outside turns offer deeper water, and vice versa for the inside turns. If they are holding deep, set up on the flat and work your lures up from the depths until you locate where they are holding. The recurring key is to fish areas that have a mix of deep and shallow water.

Keep in mind that deep is a relative term. Five feet is not generally considered deep water; however, in a particular area, it may be the deepest water available. Winter fish stage where they have immediate access to both deep and shallow water. They move back and forth with changes in the tide and water temperature. Consistency comes from fishing areas that offer this variety of depths.

Be ready to change up

Varying techniques is also a good strategy. You may catch fish earlier in the day drifting a canal or bayou, but later in the day, as it warms a bit, try switching to a cork. Live shrimp are generally difficult to come by in February, but cocahoe minnows are great for winter fishing, and don't overlook dead shrimp. Keep lures on hand that can be worked at a variety of speeds and depths. Once you establish what they want and how they want it, you can catch fish after fish, repeating the same pattern.

While trout or reds may be stacked up in the middle of a bayou, often they are cookie cutter-size, with many having to be measured to confirm minimum size. However, larger fish are usually first to move to the shallower water. As the water temperature warms a bit, these bigger fish head to the flats.

In addition to a popping cork, don't overlook tossing a topwater plug at these larger fish. This is especially effective a couple days after the weather has stabilized and warmed up. While generally thought of as a spring and summer bait, you will be pleasantly surprised at the results of working a topwater plug.

No matter the chosen bait or technique, the winter fishing axiom of slow and slower applies. The fish are lethargic and moving slower. Fast movements pull the bait away before they may be able to react. Read the signs, feel for subtle bites and set the hook whenever something feels different at the end of your line.

There will not be as many good fishing days available in February, but contrary to popular belief, they could be some of the best of the year. Bundle up, pick your days, and read the signs. ■

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT >

If you're cold, they're cold. Adapt to changing conditions and fish accordingly. Look for deeper water and fish slowly. If the temperature rises, follow the fish as they move to nearby shallower areas.



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SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope

Capt. Ronnie Daniels with a red caught while fishing the Biloxi Marsh.



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: REDFISH

Brian Cope

THE RED DRUM IS FOUND ALMOST EVERYWHERE AND REVERED IN MOST PLACES

Red drum (*Sciaenops ocellatus*), commonly referred to as redfish, are one of the most-popular species of saltwater fish

throughout the southeast. Their range extends from Maine all the way down the east coast and across the Gulf of Mexico.

Redfish are strong fighters when hooked, and anglers catch them in a variety of ways. Live and cut shrimp and baitfish options are popular. Artificial lures like soft-plastic shrimp, grubs and swimbaits are good choices. Redfish will even bite topwater lures on occasion. And crabs — either live or cut up — entice numerous bites. Spoons and spinners are great options as well.

Redfish have elongated bodies with coppery red overtones on their otherwise silver bodies with white bellies. Depending on water quality, redfish can appear bright orange or almost white with slight tints of red. They almost always have a characteristic black spot on their tails. Some have more than one spot, and some even have spots along the

sides of their bodies as well. On very rare occasions, a redfish will have no spots.

VERY ADAPTABLE

These are schooling fish, and during winter, redfish up to between three and five years old gang up in very tight schools in inshore waters, while older redfish — often referred to as bull redfish — head offshore to deeper waters. From spring through fall, the bulls come back inshore, and the tight schools of younger fish become much more loosely concentrated.

While naturally a saltwater species, redfish tolerate brackish water very well and can even live in freshwater as long as certain other water-quality conditions are met. Redfish have been successfully stocked in freshwater lakes in Texas, and other states have taken steps to do the same. They are among the most adaptable saltwater gamefish, tolerating extreme weather and water conditions.

Across their range, redfish are known by several different names: red drum, channel bass, spot-tail bass, spot-tails, reds

and redfish. Along the Gulf Coast, some anglers call them poisson rouge. Small ones are often called puppy drum or rat reds, and very large ones are known as bull redfish, bull drum or old drum.

BIG SPAWNERS

Most female redfish reach sexual maturity by the age of six, but some reach that stage in three years. Males usually mature at around two years. After reaching sexual maturity, redfish spawn for the rest of their lives, usually beginning in the summer and lasting through fall.

During a spawning season, a single female redfish can produce as many as 40 million eggs. Their spawning period is about half that of spotted seatrout,



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

but they outproduce that species by a long shot.

The "drum" part of the red drum name comes from the fish's ability to make a drumming sound by manipulating their air bladder, a common way of calling to other redfish during the spawn.

Redfish have a distinct enough look that they are rarely mistaken for other species. However, when very small, they are sometimes misidentified as whiting, aka kingfish or sea mullet, which do not have spots but resemble small reds.

LONG-LIVED

These fish can live very long lives. A redfish in Texas was known to be 37 years old, and in recent years, an angler in the Carolinas caught a redfish that had been tagged 21 years earlier.

The Louisiana state-record redfish weighed 61 pounds. David Weber caught the fish in June 1992. Mississippi's state record weighed 52 pounds, 2 ounces, and was caught by Antonio Rubio on May 26, 2016.

The world record redfish, caught in the surf at Avon on North

Laura Burch, 14, caught a nice 28-pound redfish out of Dulac.



Carolina's Outer Banks, weighed 94 pounds, 2 ounces, and was caught by David Deuel in November 1984.

It is no longer possible to break the state record for redfish in most states because these fish are managed with slot limits. The maximum sizes anglers are allowed to keep are too small to challenge for a state or world record. ■

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Start at Lake Five, Kenner angler says, and figure out where reds are, what they want

Robert Lazarine of Kenner is an avid fishermen, and for years, his favorite haunt has been the waters around Myrtle Grove. His most-recent trip produced more than 75 legal-sized redfish — he and his crew only kept the legal limits. That’s a memorable day on the water by anybody’s standard.

“I really like fishing the Myrtle Grove area,” Lazarine said. “I fish it all year-round, so I’m familiar with it, and while I do fish other areas, it’s my main go-to launch site.”

Lazarine said his routine is pretty much the same, summer and winter.

“I start by heading straight to Lake Five,” Lazarine said. “Some people start close to the launch and work their way out; I start out at my farthest point and work my way in. I concentrate on the shorelines along ledges and at any drains from the marsh. I fish live shrimp under a cork, and I fish plastics, both tight-lined, jugged off the bottom and also under a cork.”

“Me and my son, Chris, usually fish together, and we fish different ways to figure out what the fish are biting on, and what pattern are they in. He’ll start out fishing live bait under a cork; maybe I’ll throw plastics tight-lined. If nothing bites, we’ll fish deeper or shallower, and we’ll use the same technique at points, cuts, drains and shorelines until we find them. Then, once we establish what pattern they’re in, we follow it throughout the day, because it will usually hold true even if we move to another lake.”

Lazarine generally gives Lake Five a couple of hours every morning to produce before trying elsewhere.

“I also fish Round Lake pretty much the same way, focusing mostly on drains from the ponds, cuts, points and along shorelines,” he said. “I don’t usually fish or drift in the middle of the lakes, although some people do, unless I see birds diving out there.”

Robert Lazarine holding two redfish caught in Wilkinson Bayou on live shrimp.





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On the colder days, after the north winds have blown the water out of the ponds, Lazarine will focus on deep canals and passes where reds hunker down and congregate in the deeper water.

"Then we fish live shrimp, dead shrimp or Matrix Shads in the shrimp creole color, off the bottom or under corks along the ledges," he said. "And as most anglers familiar with the area know, on those low-water, winter days you generally don't have to run farther than Wilkinson Bayou right outside the marina to find reds." ■

— Rusty Tardo

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Jim Arnold showing off a solid trout on one of those great bites we had during pre-front conditions.

PICK YOUR DAYS TO FISH IN FEBRUARY

Calcasieu Lake specks more likely to bite on pre-front days, after warm spells

Hunting season has come to an end, and more folks will be hitting the water in search of speckled trout, redfish and flounder this month.

Hopefully, you have not been letting your boat gas sit idle these past few months. If you have, you've missed out on some pretty good fishing. Spending a little extra time going through your tackle and gear, as well as giving your boat and motor a good once-over, may save you a decent bit of frustration before getting on the water.

I am by no means a mechanic, but I would recommend going through and checking your fuel, oil, bearings and all of your grease fittings, as well as your batteries, if your boat has been sitting. Make sure all of your safety equipment is where it needs to be and in working condition.

Check your reels for lubrication, and your line may need to be changed. I like to go through all of my lures with treble hooks, changing any that are rusted. Personally, I am a fan of the VMC saltwater treble hooks. Try to match them as close as possible in size to the hooks that came on the lure; a variation in hook size may alter the way the lure works. Sometimes, as with the Corky

Fat Boy, I purposely increase the size of the treble hook to add additional weight to increase the sink rate. Hopefully, your first bird nest won't be too severe after you wipe the dust off.

I will never forget the time I had a customer on board worried about that first bird's nest after not using a reel for a while. He mentioned his concern several times before letting her rip. First cast, right out of the gate, no bird's nest, but his \$380 Shimano Core baitcasting reel fell right off of his rod, over the side of the boat and straight to the bottom! Fortunately we were fishing a flat in waist-deep water, so the reel was easily recovered, but we all had a great laugh at his expense.

There are only so many fisherman-friendly days in February on Calcasieu Lake, so do your best to not let them be negatively affected by equipment issues. Losing the speckled trout of a lifetime to a rusty hook or a line failure would not be the best way to start 2021. February may be one of, if not the most difficult month to catch speckled trout. We still have banner days; however, the extreme fluctuations in barometric pressure, temperature, wind direction and speed, water clarity and water levels do affect the bite quite a bit. If you want to be kind to yourself, fish

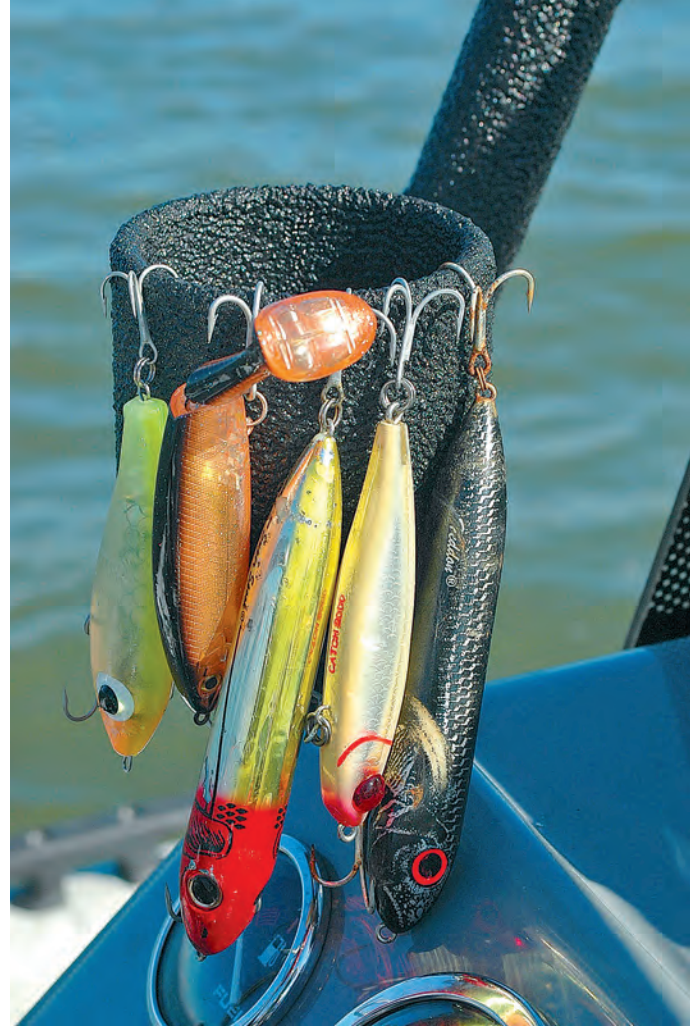
Topwaters for speckled trout really come into play once the surface water temperature reaches 60 degrees; lower than 60, and the bites will typically be very few and far between.

the pre-front conditions. The warmer weather and lower barometric pressure can send speckled trout into a feeding frenzy before the bottom drops out again.

There will be some big sow speckled trout landed this month, so have your camera ready. Joe's and West Cove are where I want to be. Both locations offer the chance to land a monster and plenty of easy wading opportunity with protection from the wind. So many preach to fish even slower even if you think you're fishing slowly enough. At times that may be true, however, keep in mind that you may actually need to speed that retrieve up some if you want to get bit. Change it up, especially with a Corky Fat Boy, until you do get bit and then try to repeat exactly what you just did. Stay safe out there in the cold and catch a big one. ■



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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Black drum are usually caught in deeper water in marshes and other coastal areas. They will readily hit a variety of baits, but crab may be No. 1.



BLACK DRUM

DON'T OVERLOOK THIS INSHORE BATTLER

By Dora Lambert

The black drum, fairly or unfairly referred to as the “Big Ugly,” is an inshore and estuarine fish that doesn’t get the attention it rightly deserves, according to Joshua Bourg, an avid angler from south Louisiana.

“They’re more abundant than bull reds, and black drum will fight just as hard — but in a different way — from the state fish,” he said. “During all my years of targeting them, I’ve noticed that black drum will pull as hard as you pull on them. This

means, if you horse them, then they may end up breaking you off even on heavy duty line. But if you lightly finesse them, you can catch a 40-pounder on line as small as 6-pound monofilament. This makes the black drum the perfect fish to practice technique on.”

Plus, they are fun to target on a family fishing trip and a great fallback when other schooling fish are nowhere to be found, because there’s a proven method to locate them.

WHERE ARE THEY?

The two most-important indicators of where black drum are most likely to be are water depth and tide.

“You’ll want to find deep water, around 10 to 15 feet, in the marshes around larger canals, passes and deep-water docks,” Bourg said. “The black drum will gravitate to shelves

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Black drum can be caught on a variety of sizes of tackle, and they're thought of as a great fish on which to put your tackle through its paces.



around these areas that they can hang off of, or some sort of structure that they can feed on such as oyster reefs. You will also want to look for current lines where the water is moving at different speeds. That's where you will need to cast your line.

"Keep in mind, as long as the tide is moving, the black drum will be feeding in these areas. They are harder to target during a slack tide, so plan your trip out to the marshes around an outgoing or incoming tide."

BEST BAITS, RIGS

Bourg has caught black drum on a lot of different lures and live bait, but he said he's had more luck with blue crab than anything else.

"There's a technique to it," he said. "When you are preparing the crab to go on the hook, remember to remove the pointed ends from each side and crack the shell. Don't completely remove the shell, though, or the smaller fish will pick at your bait until there is no meat left for the black drum."

Bourg said your rig is important. He always tries to go as light as possible.

"They seem to hit the crab more, if the tackle that I am using isn't too noticeable," he said. "I usually use a 5/0 or 6/0 circle hook on a Carolina rig."

"Your weight will depend on the strength of the current running. A heavier weight is better for a stronger current, and a lighter weight is better for a slower current."

PARTING ADVICE

Bourg said sometimes when you hook up with a black drum, they will get hung up on structure, especially if you are fishing around pilings.

"Here's a trick I wish I knew earlier on," he said. "It's important to not pressure the fish. Give the line some slack, wait 2 or 3 seconds, and try pulling again. The black drum will likely come out the structure. I've been able to save many rigs and catch massive fish by doing this." ■

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WHAT FEATURES DO YOU NEED ON YOUR ULTIMATE CATFISH BOAT? HOW YOU OUTFIT AND RIG THE HULL CAN MAKE FISHING A BREEZE OR A BATTLE.

■ By Phillip Gentry



Anglers have been lining the banks of the Mississippi River for eons to *catch catfish.*

As targeting them evolved into a solid pastime, anglers began leaving the shoreline, using dinghies, barges and other more commercial vessels to chase their prey.

Not long ago, someone regarded as exclusively a catfish angler still used the most basic, unsophisticated craft to anchor up and drop lines with pieces of cut bait over the side.

But today, heads are more likely to turn to look at one of today's modern catfishing machines as another run-of-the mill bass boat.

Boats intended to target catfish now come with every amenity, from heated seats to temperature-controlled, oxygenated livewells and every bell and whistle in between. Choosing your catfishing boat is no longer a mundane job.

According to Roy Harkness, a tournament catfish angler from nearby Ripley, Tenn., acquiring a boat is the easy part. The hard part, he said, is figuring out how to rig it exactly the way you want it.

While some anglers may argue the first part of this statement, few can argue with the second part. Rigging a new boat requires time and patience in order to get all of the catfishing components — rod holders, bait tanks, livewells, seating, trolling motor and sonar units — situated on the first try without have to re-drill holes and re-clamp bases on a new boat.

"I don't start drilling holes and permanently attaching things until I've made several dry runs with the boat," Harkness said. "I can run and pick up a new boat the same day, but it takes me weeks — and maybe as many as a dozen trips — before I get everything installed where I want it."

Whether you're outfitting a brand-new boat or just a new-to-you boat, rigging it to provide optimal performance for a tournament or just a day of fun fishing is no easy task.

Harkness has some pointers from his years of experience rigging catfish boats.

ROD HOLDERS >

)} Rod holder placement is a big deal and hinges on what tactic of catfishing you expect to do the most.



Phillip Gentry

ROD HOLDERS

A firm believer and user of Driftmaster rod holders, Harkness said his preference is to clamp some of the rod bases on the rails that go around the rear gunwales of his Sea Ark Dynasty catfish boat as well as to screw some of the rod-holder bases directly to the deck of the boat.

“The first few trips are without any rod holders; I just lay the rods where I want them to go,” he said. “You can do mock-ups sitting on the trailer in the driveway, but until you get out there and fish and see what potentially works, you’ll never really know.”

SONAR PLACEMENT

The No. 1 priority to where Harkness mounts his 12-inch Garmin sonar units is allowing himself line of sight, a safety consideration, especially when running in the dark.

“I use several different RAM mounts to place my units out of my way but still easy to see,” he said. “A good example is my chart plotter. I want it out of my direct line of sight but in my peripheral area so I can glance at it and keep track of where the boat is.”

Like the rod holders, he’s not afraid to connect his sonar units and lay them on the dash in an effort to see what works best before attaching the mounts to the boat.

LIVEWELL

Harkness said his boat has a 100-gallon livewell built into the rear deck, but other boats may not have one or one that size. He suggests keeping the livewell in the back, closer to the motor, so the boat will get on plane more easily.

“Check out the pumps and the wiring and make sure to check it all out before you’re relying on that livewell to keep your fish alive,” he said.

As for bait wells, he rarely has a need for live bait, but he does store his bait cooler on the front deck, strapped down and out of the way.

“I keep the bait up front on the other side of the windshield,” he said. “That keeps the bugs and the smell out of the back where we’re fishing.”



Phillip Gentry is a freelance outdoor writer and photographer who says that if it swims, walks, hops, flies or crawls he’s usually not too far behind.



Harkness said watching his graphs is important to finding the right spot, but not at the expense of being able to steer the boat in adverse conditions.

Phillip Gentry



Roy Harkness

When thinking about the best layout for you, consider the little things, like where to store the net so you can reach it quickly.

TROLLING MOTOR

Harkness' final advice on rigging is to make sure the trolling motor will clear other gear when deployed and stowed. He said he's also learned the hard way to mount the motor so the head is inside the edge of the boat. This prevents the head of the motor from getting damaged if he's trying to dock in or against strong currents.

"I use my trolling motor in a lot of heavy current situations, whether I'm bumping or drifting or just trying to put the boat in position," said Harkness. "You want a reliable model with enough power to move a pretty heavy boat in strong current, but you also need to have it set so you can deploy it and stow it pretty easily when it's time to move." ■

THE PERFECT CATBOAT? >



2021

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

SALTWATER

STATE REGULATIONS (0-10.357 miles^Δ)

FISH Species	Minimum Length	Bag Limit (per person)
Greater Amberjack*~	34" FL	1/day*
Lesser Amberjack, Banded Rudderfish*	14-22" FL	5/day (aggregate)
Yellowfin Tuna	27" CFL	3/day
Bluefin Tuna	73" CFL	1 per vessel per year*
Bigeye Tuna	27" CFL	None
Blue Marlin	99" LJFL	None
White Marlin	66" LJFL	None
Sailfish	63" LJFL	None
Swordfish*	29" CL or 33 lbs. DW	5 per vessel per trip
Cobia (ling or lemon fish)	36" FL	2/day
Drum, Black	16" TL	5/day#
Drum, Red (redfish)	16" TL	5/day#
Flounder, Southern	None	10/day
Grouper* Gag ^Δ & Black ^Δ	24" TL	4/day (aggregate)*
Scamp ^Δ	16" TL	
Nassau & Goliath	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
Yellowfin ^Δ	20" TL	
Red ^Δ	20" TL	2 of 4 grouper total
Atlantic Sharpnose & Bonnethead shark@	None	1/day
Shortfin Mako Shark@	Males 71" FL / Females 83" FL	1/day/vessel/aggregate
Other sharks (except prohibited species)@	54" FL	1/day/vessel/aggregate
King Mackerel*	24" FL	3/day
Spanish Mackerel*	12" FL	15/day
Striped mullet	None	100 pounds/day
Black seabass	None	None
Seatrout, Spotted (Speckled Trout)	12" TL*	25/day*
Red Snapper*	16" TL	2/day*
Other Snapper		5 mutton in 10 snapper aggregate
Mutton Snapper	18" TL	
Cubera, Yellowtail, Gray (mangrove)	12" TL	10 in aggregate*
Queen, Blackfin, Silk, Wenchman	None	
Vermilion Snapper	10" TL	
Schoolmaster, Dog, Mahogany	None	None
Gray Triggerfish*	15" FL	1/day in aggregate
Lane Snapper	8" TL	
Almaco Jack, Goldface Tilefish, & Bluefin Tilefish	None	20/person/day in aggregate*
Blackline Tilefish, Anchor Tilefish	None	
Tripletail	18" TL	5/day
Hogfish	14" FL	5/day

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

FRESHWATER

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

* see exceptions in pamphlet. ** no more than two may exceed 30 inches.
 *** catfish limit is 100 in aggregate; however, 25 fish in aggregate may be undersized.
 # only one fish may exceed 27 inches. @Shark season is closed between April 1 and June 30.
 ^ Closed season for gag grouper Jan. 1 - May 31. Closed season for black, red, yellowfin, yellowmouth & scamp grouper from Feb. 1 - March 31. ~ Greater amberjack season is open May 1-31 and Aug. 1 - Oct. 31. * Closed season on gray triggerfish Jan. 1 - Feb. 28 and June 1 - July 31.



Roy Harkness

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A highly debated topic in catfishing circles is what makes the best catfish boat? But instead of arguing over who, look at the specs and features that are best suited for the task.

Starting at the front, the first decision is Deep-V or open front deck. Both have advantages and disadvantages. The argument is often that most catfishing is done from the rear of the boat, so a stout V-hull becomes a necessity when plying big waters like the Mississippi River on a high-water day. Open front decks allow more walk around room and more gear storage capacity.

Consider such options as hull design, floor plan, motor size and layout before picking out your boat for catfishing.

The next consideration is layout and floor design. Arguments can be made for center consoles, wrap-around windshields, or open design. While center-console models frequently come with T-tops that provide shelter from the sun, heat, wind and rain, others voice support for wrap-around windshields that allow for clear views when underway and support retractable Bimini tops to protect anglers from the elements.

Seating arrangement is another concern with floor plan. Will anglers primarily be fishing standing up or sitting down? What tactics do you plan to use the most? It's tough to stand for hours on end, waiting on a rod fished at anchor to go down.

Bumping anglers don't have much time for sitting and frequently range all over the boat, but primarily on the rear deck.

Because modern catfishing boats tend to run on the rather large, heavy and metal side, you'll want enough motor to push the boat. Four-stroke outboards dominate the catfish market these days. The question is, how big of a 4-stroke outboard do you need? Can you get by with 115 or 150 horsepower or do you have a boat that won't get on plane without a bigger outboard?

Storage is another concern. Most catfishermen don't need much room to store baits, but a considerable amount of space is needed to accommodate rod lockers and huge livewells. ■

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Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK

Mason Millet with a 1½-pound bass he caught while fishing in a pond behind his grandparent's house in Baton Rouge on Oct. 18.

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Mason Millet



Kason, Owen & Gavin

Kason, 6, and Owen Gautreaux, 10, and Gavin Trosclair 10, with the 150-pound boar they caught in a trap at Gavin's family lease near Greensberg on Aug. 16, 2020.



Hudson Gunther

Hudson Gunther of Metairie killed his first buck on Nov. 14, two days before his eighth birthday, in West Feliciana Parish. He used a .223 to take down the 8-point buck weighing 260 pounds. It measured 141 inches.



Alyssa Anderson

Alyssa Anderson and her dad Travis show off her first fish at Bayou Corne.



Victoria Villere

Victoria Villere killed this 10-point buck with a .270 in the Pearl River Swamp in Varnado on Dec. 29, 2020.



Hagan Hay

Hagan Hay killed this 10-point in Athens on Nov. 23 while hunting with his father, Mark Hay.



Annie Jo St. Pierre

Annie Jo St. Pierre, 20, caught her first redfish in more than 10 years in Golden Meadow along the banks near Catfish Lake using a Vudu shrimp in Brendan Adams' boat.



Tyler & Taylon

Tyler and Taylon Polotzola caught enough sac-a-lait and bream for a fish fry while fishing with their pappy on May 1 at Toledo Bend.



Whitney Defelice

Whitney Defelice, 10, started the 2020 Area 7 season off with a bang, literally. She killed her first buck, a nice 10-point.



Keith Boughton

Keith Boughton killed this heavy horned 9-point on a small tract of private land in DeSoto Parish on Nov 1.



Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



Ronnie Thibodeaux

Ronnie Thibodeaux of Lockport caught his limit of nice reds in February around the Sulfur Mine.



Catherine Spivey

Catherine Spivey made her first public-land hunt with her husband in Madison Parish for a primitive hunt on Dec. 5. She killed her biggest buck, which scored 130 inches and weighed 240 pounds.



David Hornosky

David Hornosky hooked this redfish with a very unique color pattern in Venice.



Shane Brownlee

On Oct. 3, Shane Brownlee, 9, caught his first bass, which was 19 inches long, fishing with his grandparents, Guy and Laurie Dazzo of Slidell.



James Spiess

James Spiess with the 13-point he shot with a bow on Nov. 30 in St. Tammany Parish. The 175-pound buck had a 15-inch spread and scored 130.



Gary Louviere

Gary Louviere of Catahoula smiles as he holds the rack of a 15-point buck he shot with a cross-bow on Nov. 3, while deer hunting with 14 other Teche area residents, including three of his five sons, at the Double Deuce Ranch near Powersville, Mo.



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Daphne Simoneaux

Daphne Simoneaux caught this beautiful 5½-pound, 24-inch flounder on Oct. 14 in Big Lake.



Sean Chandler

On Dec. 14, Sean Chandler, 16, shot this nice 8-point, his biggest buck to date, on family property in East Feliciana Parish.

O.D. and son Joseph Brewer, 6, with Joseph's first trout, which was caught in May out of Pointe-aux-Chenes.



Joseph Brewer



Amalie Sumrall

Amalie Sumrall, 12, of New Iberia killed her first deer, this 6-point buck, on Nov. 14 in Hampton, Ark.



Shae Stevens

Shae Stevens with a large catfish caught in the Diversion Canal on Nov. 21.

Parker Fontenot, an LSU student from Baton Rouge, caught this 17-pound bull red with live shrimp while fishing near Whiskey Island out of Dulac.



Parker Fontenot



Jillian, Jolee & Jemma

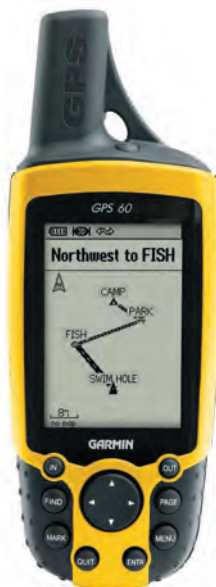
Jillian, Jolee and Jemma Riera with a limit of crabs from Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA.



Hannah Schwegmann

Hannah Schwegmann caught this nice channel catfish, along with several nice perch, on July 19, while spending an afternoon fishing with her family at Fish n Freedom in Shell Beach.

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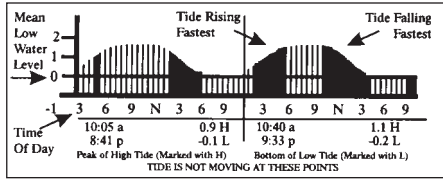
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Tide Corrections

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

Calkasieu 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

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
East Point Grand Isle	1	2	3	4 LQ	5	6	
	7	8	9	10	11 NM	12	13
	14	15	16	17	18	19 FQ	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27 FM
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	7	8	9	10	11 NM	12	13
	14	15	16	17	18	19 FQ	20
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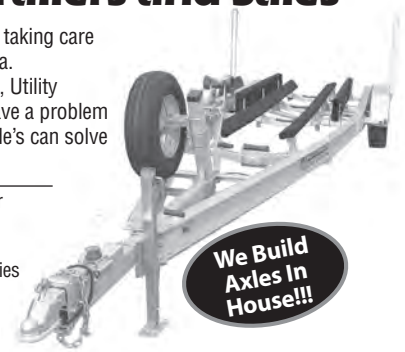
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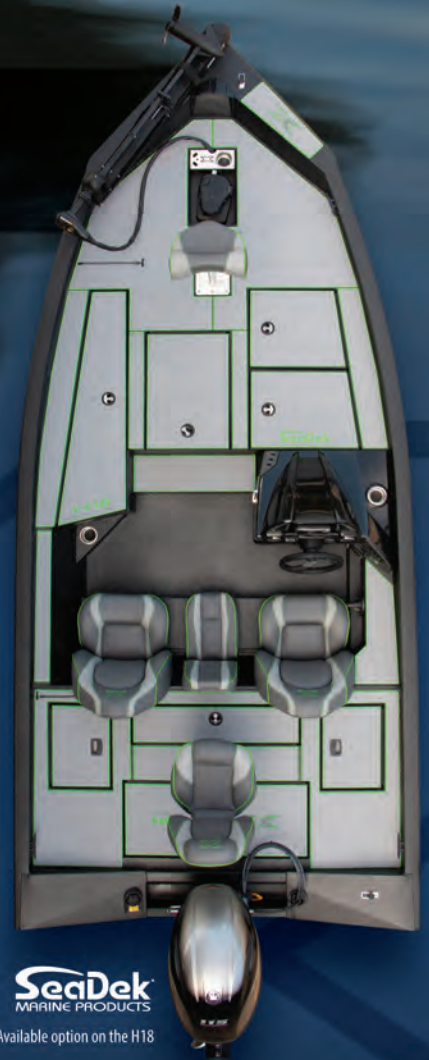
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