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Tyler Stewart caught the new Bussey Brake record largemouth, this 12.74-pound giant, on March 14.

# STEWART 'BUGS' BUSSEY BRAKE RECORD LARGEMOUTH INTO BITING

**T** By Kinny Haddox

Tyler Stewart of West Monroe matches wits with largemouth bass all over the country as a touring pro, but his first two trips to the "new" Bussey Brake in Morehouse Parish weren't memorable.

"I didn't even get bit," he said.

On Sunday, March 14, that changed — by about 12.74 pounds, to be exact.

Stewart was fishing the shallows, looking for spawning bass when he felt a mushy feeling on his black/blue Googan Bandito Bug, so he did what all experienced bass anglers do: he set the hook. Nothing happened. Nothing moved. Then, a tug.

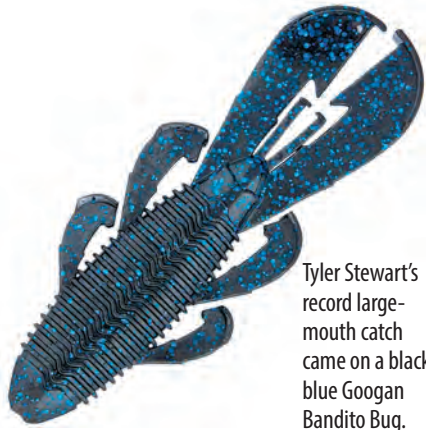
Stewart had hooked into a 12.74-pound largemouth that is the biggest ever officially weighed and reported on the 2,200-acre

lake north of Bastrop. It was also his personal-best biggest bass.

"I flipped the Bandito Bug up in a bush, and when I picked it up, it was just kind of spongy, mushy," he said. "When I set the hook, I didn't even turn her. Then, there was a slight tug. Then a real pull. I knew it was a good one. I had to pull it up over another bush, and when it rolled, my fishing partner, Matthew Colvin, saw it. I reeled a couple of times and told him to get the net. I didn't have to; he was already standing there with it in his hand, because he saw the fish swirl and knew it was a giant right after I hooked it. It was pretty exciting."

## A SPECIAL CATCH

Stewart was fishing in about 2 or 3 feet of water, and there wasn't anything special about the bush he cast into. He said he



Tyler Stewart's record large-mouth catch came on a black/blue Googan Bandito Bug.

was just flipping bushes and dropped it in the right spot.

"I never tell my buddies to get the net, because even though I get excited about catching a big one, we have a lot of 8- and 9-pounders around here, and I usually land big ones by hand," he said. "But this one was special. You could tell. It put up quite the fight. In fact, I don't think I would have ever gotten her in the boat if I wasn't fishing with a strong rod and good braid line."

Tyler was fishing a 7-foot-6 heavy action Favorite rod with 65-pound Seaguar Smackdown braid on the reel.

"Bussey has a good, growing population of really high-quality fish," Stewart said. "It's insane the quality of the fish, and it is important that everybody take care of this lake. There aren't fish everywhere, because the lake was drawn down, so protecting what's there is a big deal. Practicing catch-and-release on the bass will help it continue to grow and get better. We've seen lakes that were on fire, and people kept big bass. It hurts the lake. You want fish genetics like this in your lake, because not all bass can get like this. It's a treasure and it needs protecting."

## CATCH AND RELEASE

Stewart went way out of his way to do his part. He had to put the fish in his livewell, load up his boat and drive to Sterlington to get it weighed on a certified set of scales. As soon as that was taken care of, he put her back in the livewell and drove her back to Bussey.

"We took her right back to the bush where she was laying when I caught her. She was still in great shape and swam right back down into the bush," he said.

The limit on Bussey Brake is five bass per day. Anglers may keep one bass more than 16 inches long; otherwise, the maximum length is 16 inches. ■

# ULM DUO CAPTURES B.A.S.S. STATE TITLE

**W** By Kinny Haddox  
hile baseball, softball, track and field and football dominate college sports discussions and newspaper headlines this spring, there's another group of college athletes out claiming championships.

On March 14, 36 teams representing nine Louisiana colleges and universities dueled it out with rods and reels in the B.A.S.S. Nation Louisiana College Championship on Caney Lake in Jackson Parish.

In the end, it was Louisiana-Monroe's Jacob Andrews and Connor Nimrod who had it in the bag, or should we say "two bags."

As the two came to the weigh in, they started a buzz when they asked for two weigh-in bags, and when asked why they needed two, Andrews said, "Because our fish won't all fit into one."

He was correct. Andrews and Nimrod brought in a 5-fish limit — four fish in one bag and one in the other. The total weight was 29.88 pounds. That second bag held the big fish of the day, an 11-pounder.

"We started off fishing grass, and Connor even caught one on the first cast of the day. We had a limit of 3-pounders pretty quickly, but we couldn't get a big bite," Andrews said. "We had marked some fish on the beds the day before, and the sun was out, so we tried them. We did that the rest of the day."

That included catching the 11-pound whopper.

"We saw it on the bed, but it moved off," Andrews said. "We went on down the bank for about 10 minutes and came back to her. She was locked on that bed. We threw up in there and she bit right away, but she broke off. It sounds like a fish story, but we missed that fish four times. Finally, Connor hooked it on a spinning rod with a 3-inch Mega Bass Spark Shad swimbait. He fought that fish for 7 to 8 minutes, and we couldn't use a landing net. I was shaking the whole time. I knew it would come down to me lipping that huge bass. I got a good hold on her, and then I acted like I dropped her. Connor almost passed out. But then we got her in the boat and whooped and hollered. It was pretty exciting. And we knew it was 'game over' for the tournament. We didn't think anybody would beat us then."

ULM teammates Wesley Banks and Luke O'Neal were second with 21.60 pounds, and LSU's Taylor Knowles and Hunter Walker brought in 19.88, including a 9.27-pound kicker, for third place. Louisiana Tech's Landon Meyer and Cooper Arthur were fourth with 18.99.

Teams from Louisiana-Lafayette, McNeese, Northwestern State, Southeastern Louisiana, LSU-Shreveport and Nicholls State also competed.

The win qualified Nimrod and Andrews for the B.A.S.S. Nation National Championships in June at a lake to be determined. ■

Jacob Andrews, left, and Connor Nimrod show off their outstanding catch, including the big bass of the event, a Caney Lake 11-pounder.



# ROSIERE WINS 'MARATHON' WITH TWO GIANT SWORDFISH

**L** By Kinny Haddox  
ondon Rosiere has gone through some pretty rough "seas" in her life, but she's on a steady course now, and her strength shows, both mentally and physically.

It never showed more than on a Feb. 25 fishing trip out of Venice west of the "Canyon" when she landed two whopper swordfish just minutes apart. The first was a 130-pounder, which would have made anyone's day. In fact, Capt. Justin Fayard was ready to wrap up the trip when they finished landing the first fish.

But Rosiere said, "No, we are going to get bit again by another good one."

She was right. Within minutes, line was screaming off the Shimano Tiagra 80 reel and bending the Poseidon rod double. Two hours later, a 274.8-pounder was on the deck as well. The monster bit on fresh squid.

"Oh, wow, what an amazing day," she said.

## TWO BIG BATTLES

Even more amazing? Rosiere never turned the rod over to anyone else, and Fayard and Rosiere, at 5-foot-2, 107 pounds, got the two fish on board all by themselves. Both fish put up epic struggles, but Rosiere is about to run her 20th marathon and wasn't about to "hit a wall" getting her first two swordfish into the boat. And Fayard was all in when it came to getting the fish aboard his 39-foot SeaVee, TBT (The Blind Tiger).

"When we put out the bait to go after swordfish, I just knew we were going to get bit," Rosiere said. "After about 20 minutes, the smaller one hit. We got it to the boat pretty quickly, and when we hoisted it over the railing, it just went crazy."

"I didn't even gaff it," said Fayard. "I saw it coming up purple, and that means they are turbo-charged when they are lit up like that. I didn't want to have to fight it on a gaff. They come out of that cold water and are hard to handle when they look like that. When he was going wild in the boat, I honestly thought it was going to hurt me before we could get it under control."



London Rosiere caught this massive, 274.8-pound swordfish out of Venice.

## HAULING THE BIG FISH IN

The second and bigger swordfish offered an even bigger challenge — and it came quickly.

"We didn't have the bait back down in the water 3 minutes when that big one hit," Rosiere said. "I got the fish up in about 45 minutes, but when it got to the boat, it turned and went straight down. It took me another hour-and-a-half. It was all I could do, but I kept the rod. I kept thinking about running marathons and how the pain is temporary. It was just mind over matter."

And she had a lot of "matter" on her hook. When they finally got the big fish back up, they got three gaffs in it and then tried to pull it in through the tuna door on the transom.

It wouldn't fit.

Fayard got a rope around the bill and tied it off to a cleat. They pulled and maneuvered and finally got it in the boat.

"We don't normally catch fish that big with just two people on board, and I've never tried to get one in the boat with no other help, but we did it," he said. "I have to tell you, she was pretty impressive fighting those fish. She caught both of them entirely by herself."

## CAMP SOULGROW

Rosiere grew up fishing with her mother and brother. They lived in New Orleans when Katrina hit; Rosiere was on a weekend trip to New York. Their home was destroyed, she had no where to go, so she stayed in New York, where she eventually started the non-profit Camp SoulGrow, which offers no-fee workshops for kids to try everything from fishing to cooking to dancing by partnering with businesses for sponsorship and support.

Then, more tragedy struck. Rosiere lost her mother and her brother, and she decided to move back to New Orleans, bringing Camp SoulGrow with her. After going on a fishing trip with a sponsor, she had an opportunity to work part-time as a deck hand. She's done it every since and has also passed her Captain's School Course for a Captain's License.

"I think one of my best traits is my positivity," she said. "And positivity helps you catch fish." ■

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# COLD WEATHER LIGHTS FIRE UNDER LUNKER IVAN LAKE LARGEMOUTHS

**H** By Kinny Haddox  
unter Cavalier of Minden was rushing around after work on the afternoon of Feb. 12. At his girlfriend's request, he was trying to catch a mess of crappie for supper at Ivan Lake in Webster Parish. He launched and found a big pile of shad on his depth finder and grabbed up his crappie jig pole.

He caught a couple, but he kept seeing big largemouth flash across the screen, taking advantage of the balled-up shad. He reached in his rod box, grabbed a rod and reel, tossed out a Yumbrella Alabama Rig and boom, a few casts later, an 11.9-pound largemouth bass latched on.

"I had missed a couple of hits when that one latched on to it," he said. "I knew it was a good fish, but it took a few minutes to get it to show itself. When it did, I was so excited, I fell to my knees and just kept reeling. It was one of the most aggressive fighting fish I've ever hooked. I finally got it up by the boat and was able to grab hold of it. Naturally, I had left my landing net at home, but I got it in."

## WEIGHING THE WHOPPER BASS

Cavalier put the big fish in his livewell and started fishing again. He landed another big fish, but it wasn't half the size of the first big bass. After that, he couldn't think about fishing. Wanting to know how much the big one weighed kept gnawing at him.

He had a new set of digital scales, but he hadn't put batteries in them. After a few minutes thinking more about the one in the livewell than the ones he was trying to catch, he cranked up and headed back to the launch, where he had batteries in his truck.

"I kept thinking, man, that fish has to be over 10 pounds," he said. "I got the batteries in and weighed it. The scale said 8.8 pounds. I was pretty disappointed and I put the fish back in the livewell. I then weighed the smaller fish, and it weighed 5.8 pounds. Then it hit me. I had kept my hand on the big one when I weighed it the first time because I thought the fish was going to fall off the scale. It didn't weigh true."

Cavalier got the big fish back out of his livewell, put it back on the scale, and it lit up 11.9 pounds. He weighed it again to double check, then took pictures and a short video and released the lunker back into the lake along with "the little one" as well.

Hunter Cavalier shows his two big bass from Feb. 12, an 11.9-pound whopper and 'the little one,' a 5.8-pounder. He released both.



## SMALL LAKE PRODUCES AGAIN

Cavalier actually called Bass Pro Shop in Bossier to see if they wanted him to bring the fish to their tank, but with the bad weather setting in, they had sent most people home, and it just didn't work out.

"It was pretty awesome," he said. "I even went back and caught a few more crappie so we could have fresh fish for supper. My girlfriend said if I was going fishing in that weather, I'd better bring home something for supper. I did. It was a win-win situation."

Cavalier went back the next day and caught several solid fish, the largest being 7.15 pounds. Apparently, the fish were very aggressive right on the front end of the super-cold front.

"This is a small lake, and I hate to call a lot of attention to it, but I just hope if others catch big fish there, they will take pictures and put them back," he said. "We've got plenty of fish to catch and eat without taking out those big largemouths," said Cavalier, 30.

Ivan Lake covers 520 acres and is in the LDWF's Bodcau Wildlife Management Area. The lake was drained in 2004 because of hydrilla infestation and refilled and restocked in 2012. ■



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# FEBRUARY BOWS OUT; TOLEDO BEND SPITS OUT TWO LUNKERS

LAST THREE DAYS OF MONTH BIG FOR DOUBLE-DIGIT BASS



Chris Ebel of Many hooked this 12.38-pound largemouth the afternoon of Feb. 26.

**M** By Dan Kibler  
arch arrived on a Monday at midnight, but big bass showed up in fishermen's livewells on Toledo Bend Reservoir a little bit earlier, as two local anglers hit the jackpot over the last three days of February.

Chris Ebel of Many, La., boated a 12.38-pound largemouth the afternoon of Feb. 26, and Jason Courville of Hemphill, Texas, a Toledo Bend guide, caught an 11.51-pound bass the morning of Feb. 28.

Ebel's bass, caught in Negreet Creek, came from relatively shallow water, 5 feet, and was caught on a crankbait. Courville's fish, caught in Mill Creek, hadn't made the big move shallow and was caught in 23 feet of water on a Carolina-rigged, soft-plastic bait.

## GOOD CONDITIONS

Ebel had been watching the weather, and when the afternoon of Feb. 26 promised to be more like spring than winter, he slipped out.

"I looked at the weather, and it had been so cold, I thought, all it's gonna take is for the water temperature to go up 4 or 5 degrees, and the fish will start moving up," he said.

Ebel, 61, went to an area where a ditch wound through a series of spawning flats and picked one particular "hairpin turn" in the channel.

"This is a place where I've caught some

good fish. I'd caught some nice fish in there the past three weeks," he said. "If you find them when they come up, staging, you can catch them. When it gets cold, they fall back in the ditches and channels. Those big fish will get right up on the 'shoulders' of the outside bends. The shoulders are about 6 feet deep, and the water drops into 8 or 10 feet in the channel of the ditch. There are some stumps on the shoulders."

Ebel fished one side of the bend and caught one fish, then moved to the other side, and within a handful of casts, he caught a 5-pounder. Fishing a 7-foot-6, medium-action All Star rod and Lew's reel spooled with 10-pound Seaguar Invixz fluorocarbon, he noticed the line had gotten frayed during the fight and quickly retied.

## BASS WRANGLING

About 10 casts later, he was slowly retrieving a small, shad-pattern Lucky Craft crankbait with a stop-and-go cadence. After one pause, when he resumed reeling, the fish was there.

"When they're real aggressive, you may see them knock slack in the line, but with the cold weather lately, they aren't. You pull on the bait, and they're just there," he said. "So I set the hook, knowing I could break that 10-pound line if I set it too hard. She started away like a freight train. After a few seconds, I got her turned a

little. If the water had been 5 degrees warmer, she would have been able to clean my clock. I've caught enough big fish with the water between 60 and 70 degrees, and they're strong.

"The first time she came up, I thought she weighed 8 or 9. The next time, she was half-again closer to the boat, and when she came up, I thought, 'That's a real big one.' I don't know why I didn't get shook up."

Ebel didn't have his landing net with him, so he was faced with grabbing a 25½-inch long bass with a 20-inch girth next to the boat. That didn't prove to be a big problem.

"There was enough room in that mouth, that even with the crankbait in there, both trebles buried, that I got my hand in and lipped her."

Ebel fished a little while longer, then cranked his outboard and headed for home. He caught the fish around 3:30, and by 4:30, he was on the way to Toledo Town & Tackle to weigh the fish on certified scales and enter it in the Toledo Bend Lake Association's Lunker Bass Program.

## COURVILLE'S FIGHT

Courville's big fish was his eighth he's entered in the program, but his biggest so far at 11.51 pounds. He caught it the morning of Feb. 28 while on a guide trip.

Courville, 52, operates Jason Courville's South Toledo Bend Guide Service; he had

Jason Courville of Hemphill, Tex., caught this 11.51-pound bass the morning of Feb. 28.



barely started fishing with his party, a couple from Mississippi, when the big fish hit in Mill Creek.

"I went to my first spot, a deep area on a creek swing," he said. "I sat on the shallow part and got locked in and rigged everybody's pole and told them where to cast. They were throwing a 1-ounce Carolina rig into 23 to 25 feet of water."

Courville got his K&S Custom rod and Lew's reel spooled with 30-pound braid and a 17-pound leader of Berkley fluorocarbon rigged with a Zoom Fluke in the popular tilapia magic color and made a couple of casts when the fish got his attention.

"I had just turned my head to talk to the client, when all of the sudden, I felt a long, hard pull," he said. "When I set the hook, it was like setting it into a log, but it started moving. I said, 'I've got a big fish.' It was a struggle. I knew I had to get him off the bottom, which was a difficult task.

"Usually, when you hook a bass, it will come to the top right away, but this fish didn't want to rise. I could feel it digging, shaking its head, but I felt some rolls, too. I thought it was a big catfish. I kept tension on him — the drag locked down — it was a tug of war. To me, it was just a big, old catfish. But halfway to the boat, a big bass exploded to the top. She was so big she couldn't come all the way out. I told the man to get the net; he put it in the water, and I led the fish into it. He got it perfect."

## GETTING THE LUNKER WEIGHED

When he put the fish, 24 inches long and 21 inches in girth, in his livewell, it turned belly up, having come from deep water.

"Instead of fizzing it, which was the last thing I wanted to do, I took some fin weights and put them on it, but it didn't do any good. Then, I opened another pack. I wound up with six weights on it before it swam upright. I didn't want to take away from my clients, but I knew I had to get it to certified scales as soon as I could.

"I called some friends, told 'em my situation, and they met me at the nearest ramp. One of my partners got in my boat and took my clients while I went to the scales. I took the fish to Fins & Feathers; it was a quick trip. I got her weighed and did the paperwork, and I was back with my clients."

Courville's big fish was his personal best by 10 ounces. It came from 51.7-degree water.

"If it wasn't for the harsh freeze we went through a week-and-a-half ago, a lot of fish would have moved up by now; they'd be staging in 15 to 18 feet of water. A lot of fish have pushed back into deeper water." ■

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# BIG BASS TRIFECTA ON TOLEDO BEND

**T** By Kinny Haddox  
hree casts. Three fish of a lifetime. Three new entries in the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program in slightly more than 24 hours. It's big-bass time on Toledo Bend.

There are lots of examples of why people say, "Good things come in threes," but if you're a bass fisherman, you'd have to add this to your list. On March 5 and 6, three lunkers were taken by three fishermen on Toledo Bend, ranking as the 10th, 11th and 12th bass entered in the lake's lunker bass program this season.

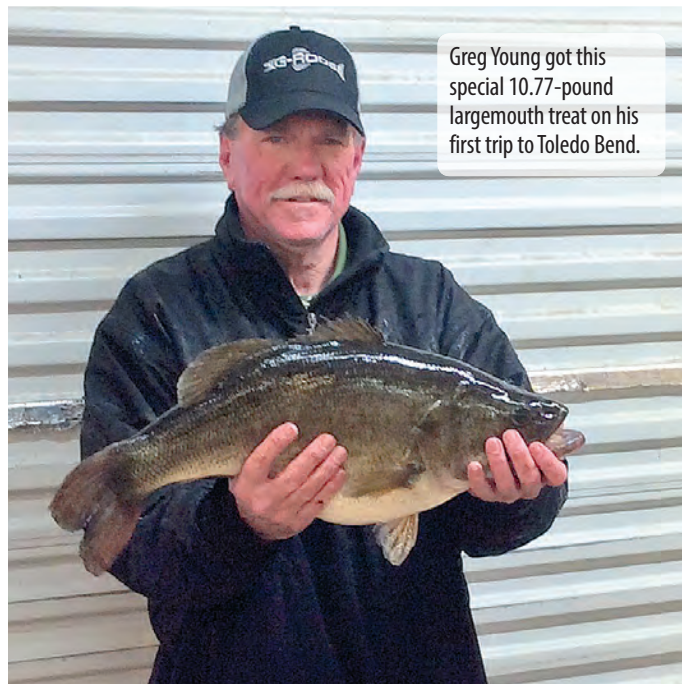
Greg Young from Weatherford, Texas, started things off with a 10.77-pound whopper on March 5. Ville Platte's Dane Berzas caught a 10.11-pound fish on March 6, and Todd Jackson from Shreveport landed a 10.81-pound bass that day to make the list.

Anglers who enter the registry and release their fish alive are presented with replicas of their catches, so the fish get to live to fight another day and the anglers get a life-like reminder of their trophy catch.

## FIRST TRIP, BIGGEST BASS

For Young, it was his first trip ever to fish for bass on Toledo Bend, and his 10.77-pound whopper was a personal-best catch. He felt like it could have weighed more, but he was fishing in a tournament and had to keep the big fish alive from 8 a.m. when he caught it until the weigh-in at 4:30 p.m.

"We were worried about keeping it alive and in good shape to



Greg Young got this special 10.77-pound largemouth treat on his first trip to Toledo Bend.

Dane Berzas of Ville Platte caught this 10.11-pound bass on March 6.



weigh and release, but it worked out great," he said. "It weighed a little bit more on my scales right after I caught him. It ended up being a great morning. We had five fish that weighed 27.85 pounds."

Young caught the fish making long casts when he saw fish boil up chasing shad. His partner, Randy Allen, actually cast in the spot first and didn't get a hit, so Young threw in right behind him, and the big fish hit. It immediately started taking line, and Allen told Young to take it slow and easy. The advice paid off, and he landed the lunker. He caught the fish in an area with 4 to 7 feet of water on a Z-Man Chatterbait in the Hite hot craw color.

## BAIT NEVER HIT THE BOTTOM

Berzas's 10.11-pound fish was also the biggest fish of his life. He said he's hooked some that big, but something always went wrong. This time it didn't.

"I made a long cast with a Carolina rig, and normally, you feel the weight touch the bottom and the line kind of goes slack," he said. "The bait hadn't even hit the bottom, and I felt a little tick. The line hadn't gone slack, and I knew it must be a fish. I set the hook, and the bait didn't move. I figured the fish had me wrapped up."

In just a few seconds, he knew he was wrapped up, but not in a limb — with a big fish.

"It started swimming, and I knew it was a good one," he said. "About halfway in, (it) swirled, and I kept thinking it was going to try and jump. It was just like a dead weight. When we got the fish in the net, it took me a couple of minutes to tell my partner I was sorry, but we had to go weigh in that fish. I couldn't wait."

## BRUSH HAWG FOR THE WIN

They made it to the dock, got the fish on the scales, which first showed 9.90 pounds, then bounced up to 11, then settled and locked on 10.11. Berzas' heart skipped a beat when he first thought he missed a double-digit bass by the smallest of margins, but he made the 10-pound club. He then took it back down to the lake for a successful release.

Berzas caught the lunker in about 12 feet of water on a hump

Todd Jackson landed this 10.81 lunker in two feet of water on a Rat-L-Trap to qualify for the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program.



Jackson was fishing a tournament when he caught his lunker. He had been fishing an area that a friend had recommended. They were finished fishing the spot and about to crank up and leave, but he decided to try a little area not far ahead of them. He rounded a little point and cast a ½-ounce chrome Rat-L-Trap near the bank in 2 feet of water.

"I don't know for sure, but I think that fish was on a bed," he said. "She nailed it, and when she came out of the water, I thought it was a 6- or 7-pounder. Then, she got in the grass, and it was just like dragging the fish in after that. We netted it, and when we pulled all the grass off it, we were like 'Wow!' because it was obviously a 10-pounder."

Jackson tested his theory that the fish was on the bed, because he cast back in the spot before he left and caught a smaller, male bass. He entered the bigger fish in the lunker program; it was kept in a live tank overnight and released the next day.

## LUNKER BASS PROGRAM

The Toledo Bend Lake Association awarded 39 lunker bass replicas to anglers at Cypress Bend Resort on July 25, 2020. Dinah Medine, coordinator of the TBLA Lunker Bass Program, and Ricky Yeldell, TBLA's president, presented the replicas to the deserving anglers.

The largest bass caught so far the 2020-21 season is a 12.41-pounder caught by Brandon Rennkleiv of Reeves, La. ■

You can learn more about the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program at [toledobendlakeassociation.com/lunker-bass-program.html](http://toledobendlakeassociation.com/lunker-bass-program.html)

with scattered grass. He was using a watermelon red Baby Brush Hawg with the tail dipped in chartreuse. He said he had a Brush Hawg tied on, and it looked redder than normal, so he took it off and put on a new one. The big fish was caught on the very first cast with the new lure.

## NOT FAR FROM HOME

Jackson is a regular on Toledo Bend, which is just south of his hometown, and he's been fortunate to catch several bass more than 10 pounds. But, he says, "catching one like that would never get old."



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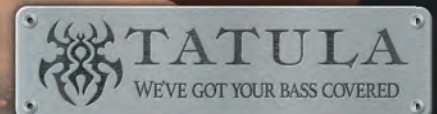
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Galvin Shelton of Pineville caught an 11.3-pound Toledo Bend bass on March 13 during a Bass Busterz Bass Club tournament.



## PINEVILLE MAN BOATS TOLEDO BEND BUNKER

**G** By Dan Kibler  
 Galvin Shelton of Pineville had hardly gotten his casting hand warmed up on Saturday, March 13, when he found himself in the battle of a lifetime with a huge Toledo Bend bass.

Fishing in a Bass Busterz Bass Club tournament with partner Casey Clark of Pineville, it took Shelton 10 casts to hook up and boat a 11.3-pound, 25½-inch long largemouth in the San Patricio area.

"It was just after 7 in the morning; we got a little bit of a late start," said Shelton, 27. "It was probably my 10th cast, early on. I threw on a laydown, and she picked it up and ran off with it."

### THE BIG CATCH

Shelton was fishing a jig hand-tied by his step-father, William Spurgeon, black/blue with a craw trailer, on a Gloomis GLX rod and Quantum Smoke reel spooled with 25-pound Seaguar fluorocarbon.

"The laydown was pretty much laying down vertically to the boat, and I threw in there and ran it down the left side. I

was letting it drag across the bottom and picking it up here and there," Shelton said. "When I got to the first little root or something, I pulled it over and let it sit. As soon as I moved it, she hit it; she just picked it up like she was moving it. She was in about 3 feet of water. Maybe she was on the bed; I don't know.

"I set the hook, and I looked at Casey and told him this would probably be a good one. Then, she started taking drag, and I told Casey he might want to get the net. She came to the surface, and after I saw how big she was, I held off a little and just let her wear herself out. Casey got the net ready and I led her into it. It was a perfect performance by the net man.

"After we got it in the boat, we put her in the livewell and realized she was too big for the livewell. This was my first big fish at Toledo Bend, so we sat down and just about went into panic mode."

### A WINNING FISH

Shelton weighed the bass on a set of scales Clark had; it went to 12 pounds.

"I couldn't believe it: I saw we needed to get a second opinion. I wanted to make sure before we cranked up and headed to Tackle Town to weigh it. We called some other guys in the club, and one of them, Chris Emerson, had a digital scale. We got 11.3 on his scale, and we stuck her in his livewell for the day. He has a nice Skeeter; the livewell was plenty big."

When weigh-in time arrived, Shelton retrieved his big bass from Emerson's livewell, and he and Clark weighed in with a winning 5-bass limit at 24.12 pounds. Shelton had the biggest individual catch, four fish that weighed 21.58, and of course, he won for big fish. He got certification and entered the fish in the Toledo Bend Lake Association's Lunker Bass program. The fish was released back into the lake.

"We had made a couple of calls to guys in the club to see what to do," Shelton said. "When we got to the weigh-in, a few guys knew I had a big one." ■

# BIG FISH ANCHORS A BIG-BASS DAY

## LAKE CHARLES NATIVE BOATS 10.61-POUNDER AT TOLEDO BEND

**B**y Dan Kibler  
Bart Blakelock hit the bass-fishing jackpot. He and his fishing partner, Joe Norris, got on a big bunch of huge fish on the northern end of Toledo Bend Reservoir on March 12.

"It was a pretty special day. We were just up there playing, in an area where we won a Texas Team Tournament in 2015," said Blakelock, a native of Lake Charles now living in Flatonia, Texas. "Our five best weighed 37.61. We had six over 6 pounds, seven over 5 pounds and nine over 4 pounds."

Oh yes, one of those big fish was a 10.61-pound brute that Blakelock caught on a small crankbait.

"We caught these fish coming in," Blakelock said. "They hadn't moved up yet; they were staging. They were out in front of a main-lake drain that was 4 to 6 feet deep. We were fishing in the center of the drain, around timber and small patches of grass."

Blakelock caught his big fish around 11:30 a.m., one cast after boating a 4½-pounder.

"I took that one off and reminded myself, there could be a big one left in there," he said. "I cast to the same area, jerked my little crankbait down three times — like you'd fish a jerkbait. When I turned the handle again, she smashed it."

"She came up and jumped after I'd cranked the reel four or five times, then she went back down, and I was able to keep her down until I got her in."

Blakelock was fishing a chartreuse/shad Strike King 2.5 crankbait on an Impulse rod and Lew's reel spooled with 17-pound fluorocarbon.

"The 4½-pounder and the big one were both shallow, a foot-and-a-half or 2 feet; they were the only two we caught super shallow," he said.

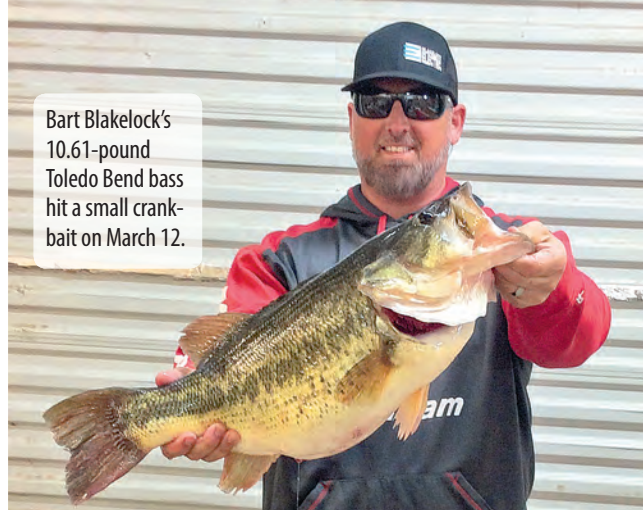
Blakelock and Norris, who is from Shreveport, eventually took the big fish to Toledo Town and Tackle, where they got it officially weighed, certified and entered into the Toledo Bend Lake Association's lunker program, where the fish was tagged and released, with Blakelock put on a list to receive a replica mount of the bass.

"This is my second replica mount," said Blakelock, who has a 10.44-pound fish in the TBLA's lunker program ranks. "It's my fifth fish over 10 pounds from Toledo

Bend — my biggest is a 13 from Falcon — but I didn't bring the others in to weigh because they were caught during the summer, and I didn't want to chance it. This one, being in March, I didn't think I'd have any trouble with her. And as soon as they weighed her they got her in the water where they hold him and tag him."

The big-bass luck that Blakelock and Norris had on Toledo Bend carried over to the next day, when they won a Bass Champs tournament on nearby Lake Rayburn, their catch anchored by a 10.39-pound fish that Norris put in the boat. ■

Bart Blakelock's 10.61-pound Toledo Bend bass hit a small crankbait on March 12.



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# BIG LAKE, SABINE SPARED SEVERE FISH KILLS

**It** By Capt. Adam Jaynes  
appears we have dodged a bullet in our little corner of the world, around Sabine Lake and Lake Calcasieu, when it came to winter storm Uri. Fisheries in Texas suffered big fish kills, but the only fish kill witnessed and reported in this area was in the Keith Lake chain, west of the ship channel from Sabine Lake.

Redfish and black drum were the species noticed, and about two or three dozen were seen, a far cry from the devastating impact the storm had along the coast of south Texas.

Fisheries with the shallowest bay systems were affected the most. Thousands of speckled trout, along with redfish, snook, black drum, sheepshead and baitfish perished after frigid temperatures covered Texas in late February. As a result, guides and recreational anglers are pledging to conserve the fish, notably speckled trout. Pledges have varied from releasing all trout longer than 20 inches to using barbless hooks only to catch-and-release on all speckled trout until the summer of 2022 — or some combination thereof.

## MORE BAD NEWS

The Coastal Conservation Association has also taken action and removed the speckled trout, flounder, sheepshead and gafftop divisions entirely from the 2021 STAR tournament. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is still collecting data to determine whether any regulation changes should result from the fish kill. The fishing community as a whole does not always agree when it comes to the management of the fishery, but I believe we can all agree that the south Texas coastal fishery is hurting and is going to need more than just thoughts and prayers.

Louisiana waters were spared from a severe fish kill based primarily on a couple of factors. First, two to three days before the freezing weather arrived, temperatures had already dropped into the 40s, and that had fish on the move to warmer water before the sharp drop of the mercury. Second, both Sabine Lake and Lake Calcasieu are much deeper systems compared to say,



Shorelines were lined with dead speckled trout in south Texas. This picture was taken by Capt. Danny Neu just north of Arroyo.

Laguna Madre. Trout have abundant access to deeper water in the rivers, canals, bayous, ship channels or other man-made locations such as terminals.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Hopefully, we will be done with the named storms for a good, long while around here. As far as fishing goes, we are right on track. One of my favorite things about the spring bite has got to be fishing slicks. They are a result of fish feeding on oily baitfish. The oil from the baitfish rises to the surface, and a sheen appears on the water. The scent is unmistakable; to many it is a very sweet, sugary smell similar to watermelon or fresh cut grass. Casting topwaters at slicks and watching trout explode is well worth the price of admission. I recommend either a pink and gold or clown Super Spook.

In closing, remember we are all stewards of a precious resource. Enjoy it responsibly. ■

*Capt. Adam Jaynes can be reached at [justfishsabine.com](http://justfishsabine.com).*



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John Voorhies took this 10-point buck, which scored 191.73, while hunting Spring Bayou WMA.

# BUDDIES HELP HUNTER TAG PUBLIC LAND BUCK

**N** By Will Martin  
New Year's Eve, 8:30 a.m.  
A storm of messages batters a cell tower near Marksville.

John Voorhies, a 46-year-old driver for UPS Freight, receives a text: "Is it the big one?"

"Maybe," his fingers tap the screen of his phone.

Turns out it was a really big one. The 10-point buck went on to score 191.73.

About 2 miles from Marksville, Spring Bayou WMA sprawls over 12,506 acres of Red River bottomland. The land is low, wet and thick with vegetation; it's swamp-buck country, where the risks



are high, but the payoffs can be huge.

"I'd planned on hunting in a different area," Voorhies said.

Picture pig sign: torn ground, uprooted plants and wallows. The woods are crowded with palmettos and hedge-like plants, probably swamp privet. There's also willow and buttonbush where you would expect it, and overcup oak and bitter pecan in well-drained areas.

## BUDDIES INSISTENT

But Voorhies' hunting buddies convinced him to give the spot a try.

"They showed me trail-cam footage of a large buck," he said. "They even told me what tree to climb."

It has been 15 years since Voorhies harvested a deer.

"I'm a single dad, and don't get many opportunities to hunt," he said.

But his children are older now, and Voorhies is happy to be back in the woods. He has harvested his fair share of deer.

"But I have never seen anything this big in the woods," he said.

Voorhies watches shades of brown and green materialize from the gray woods. It is daylight, but barely. As the world brightens, the intricate patterns woven by the limbs of the thicket as they fold in on one another are discernible. His vision grows sharper. It is a magical time to be in the woods.

Voorhies texts his group of friends about a small deer, probably a doe, that he spotted earlier. But he receives some unwelcome

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news: talk of other hunters close by, the flash of orange near your stand, the white beam of a head lamp bobbing in a nearby tree. These are the frustrations hunters face on public land.

He starts to tuck his phone into his bag but stops. There is a doe walking in the thicket.

"It's time to slow down," he thinks. It's a buck-only hunt, but deer can appear like ghosts out of nowhere, and disappear like ghosts, too. "Better take it easy."

"I was about to text the group about the doe," Voorhies said. "I just so happened to look over my shoulder, and there he was."

"Of course, when I saw him, I got the shakes. I just kept telling myself, 'Don't mess up. Don't mess up. Don't mess up.'"

## A TROPHY BUCK

It's a 25 to 30-yard shot. Voorhies shoulders his bolt-action .30-06. He discovers immediately that his scope's magnification is cranked up to 9, but there is no time to fix it. He waits for a clean shot, frozen in the tree.

He focuses on a gap in the thicket. "Almost. Wait. He's reached the gap." Voorhies fires, and the buck falls down into his tracks from a clean, neck-shot.

"Big buck down," he texts.

"How big is he?" comes the reply.

Big.

A beautiful 10-pointer, the buck had main beams longer than 26 inches and tines as long as 9½ inches.

Voorhies plans to hang a picture of his friends beside the deer after it's mounted.

"When you have friends who have been hunting an area for over 20 years, and they tell you to hunt a specific tree, get your butt up that tree," he said.

Wise words, indeed. ■

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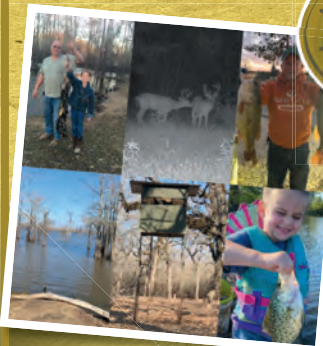
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# WIGGINS RELIVES MAGIC MOMENT LANDING RECORD BASS

CANEY LAKE LUNKER IS LOUISIANA'S BEST

**I**t By Glynn Harris  
was a cold, 27-degree morning, Feb. 12, 1994, when 40-year-old Greg Wiggins and fishing partner Mark Smith launched Wiggins' boat into the chilly waters of Caney Lake. The duo had to have been thinking about the trophy bass that Caney had been producing, including a monster 15.54-pounder caught a year earlier by Tommy Foster.

We visited with Wiggins and asked him to relive and share the special moments that took place just before noon that morning.

"I liked to fish a jig, and Mark wanted me to show him how the jig worked and how to fish it," Wiggins said. "We went to a spot I thought might be good and fished there for several hours without getting a bump. We took a break, went to get us a bite to eat and returned to try again.

"Soon after we got back on the lake, Mark hooked and landed a nice 4-pounder. We weighed it (and) made a few more casts when Mark tied into a really big bass, one that weighed over 8 pounds. We took it to what was then Brown's Landing, weighed it and headed back to the lake."

## THE BIG FISH

Wiggins was still sitting in the driver's seat when Smith made a cast, and the



**ABOVE:** Greg Wiggins on the day he caught the state record 15.97-pound bass at Caney Lake.  
**RIGHT:** Greg Wiggins and the mount of his state record bass.



fight was on. A huge bass had taken Smith's jig, but before Wiggins could net it, the fish broke off; Smith had neglected to retie his jig after landing the 8-pounder.

"I made a cast and turned around to help Mark find the bait he was looking for in a tackle box," Wiggins said. "When I looked back I saw my line wobble. I set the hook and assumed I was hooked on a stump, but then the fish started moving."

Wiggins was afraid the fish would turn and go into the stump field where Smith had hooked his big fish. Fortunately, the fish Wiggins had hooked headed for deep water.

"The fish was stripping my drag, and I got on the trolling motor and followed her out into the deeper water," he said. "She finally came to the top and appeared tired and worn out, so I started reeling hard and brought her to the side of the boat. Thankfully, Mark was able to get her in the net and in the boat on the first try."

Wiggins was shaking so badly and was so rattled he stuffed the bass into the smaller of the two livewells with plans to head for Brown's to weigh it. He was so nervous he had to ask Smith to start the engine.

"When we got to Brown's, I tried to lift her out of the small livewell, knocking off several scales before being successful. We weighed her on Brown's official scales at

15.97 pounds. I really believe if I hadn't knocked those scales loose, she might have made 16 pounds," he joked.

Wiggins turned the bass over to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, which confirmed the fish was a Florida-strain bass. Interestingly, samples taken from two other Caney bass weighing more than 15 pounds, and both were native largemouths.

## BACK TO FISHING

Wiggins, 67, is back enjoying bass fishing with his son-in-law. He had quit for several years, switching to crappie fishing, but his son-in-law talked him into turning back to bass.

Today, Wiggins enjoys retirement from his work in maintenance at a plant in Winfield and spends his spare time fishing with his son-in-law. There's a good chance, though, that when he leaves home to head for the lake, he pauses to glance at the mount of his state record bass hanging on the wall, one that has maintained the top spot for 27 years. ■

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# SWAMP PEOPLE'S NEWEST CAST MEMBER GREW UP HUNTING

**P** By Monique Roth  
ickle Wheat may be new to viewers of *Swamp People*, the History Channel's series, but she's definitely not new to the art of alligator hunting.

Wheat, 25, is a new addition for the 12th season of the show, which focuses on a set of alligator hunters whose French-Canadian ancestors settled in Louisiana's Atchafalaya Basin in the 18th century.

Her family has a long history of hunting alligators, and she's one of just a handful of women who have been featured on the show.

Wheat and her brother, James, were raised in Poydras by their parents, Eddie and Missie Wheat. Her great-grandfather was one of the original alligator hunters in the St. Bernard Parish area,



and she's been accompanying her dad on hunting trips since she was young.

"Growing up around Plaquemines Parish, everyone hunts and fishes down there," Wheat said. "Most of my hunting growing up was with my dad and my brother... We were the three amigos. Alligator hunting was always kind of a part of growing up. I think when you're around it your whole childhood, you're just used to it. I was bred into this lifestyle. My dad's grandpa was well known for hunting and trapping alligators. I came from a long line."

Pickle's real name is Cheyenne Nicole Wheat. She laughs when she describes how she got her nickname.

"My nickname came from my daddy," she said. "My middle name is Nicole, and when you say 'Cheyenne Nicole' enough, it starts to sound like 'shiny pickle.' I got obsessed with pickles from a young age."

So obsessed, she said, that she used to eat them in large quantities and even got sick once.

"There were pickles all over the Save A Center meat aisle," she said.

## BECOMING A CAST MEMBER

Wheat's family ties with Ronnie Adams and Troy Landry, two Swamp People cast members, were her connection to getting on the show.

"Mr. Troy is like my second dad... We're very close. The show was looking for new cast members, and they came and fell in love with me and the family," she said.

The show's current season, which began airing earlier this year,

was filmed in August 2020.

"The camera adds a different element to everything that you do, but it was fun, and I picked up on it really quick," Wheat said. "In high school, I did a lot of live theatre, so I think that took a lot of my nerves away."

Wheat said filming the show was a blast.

"We had more fun than what was allowed," she said.

Over the course of filming, Wheat picked up on some alligator hunting tips.

"What I learned is what Mr. Troy teaches," she said. "I find the alligators enjoy the rotten chicken a lot more than fresh, and I like to hang bait on top of water in a more natural way."

## EATING ALLIGATOR MEAT

As far as eating the alligators she hunts, Wheat has made strides in that area as well.

"I never liked it, but it's because we've been cooking it wrong," she said. "Mr. Troy and his whole family eat a lot of alligator, and they taught me that there's different parts of the meat you cook with different dishes."

Cheek meat, for example, is better for frying and quick meals, while the tail and legs should be used more for stews and sauce piquantes that will cook for a longer time.

And while Wheat hasn't heard anything yet about future seasons of the show, she said she's open to appearing on the series again if the opportunity presents itself.

Swamp People airs on Thursdays at 9 p.m. ■



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Photos courtesy Kates Digital Marketing, LLC

# REVAMPED MARINA HAS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

**L**ouis Faust walked around the marina he would ultimately buy and revamp, always with the same thought. “Man, what the heck?” Faust said. “There’s so much potential around here... It could be so much more.” Faust has put those thoughts into action in recent months. He bought The Dock Marina and renamed it The Pointe Marina and Grill of Slidell, La., with a lot of investment capital going toward revitalizing the marina and its surroundings. Among the improvements is a brand-new bait and tackle shop

for fishermen, new gas pumps, fishing docks and boat launch, a widened boat deck, redone landscaping and about 8 acres of overgrown grass and 30 dumpsters of debris gone. The volleyball court is being redone, and a soccer field is being built; Faust has no plans to make this “only” a fishing marina, but a recreational area for all of Slidell.

“We want to be more than that, for sure,” Faust said. “The idea is to draw other people, more families, out to see what we have to offer. Every component back there is going to feed off of one another. So this is really working out as a place for families where each person has something to do.”

Faust is looking to have the facility organically grow within itself, catering to the needs and the requests of the surrounding neighborhoods.

A father or mother who isn’t interested in taking a boat out, for example, can still use the marina to get a little work done on it. Their son or daughter, meanwhile, may want to play a little soccer, but if not, they could elect to go kayaking, play volleyball or just walk the farmer’s market. On certain holidays such as Halloween, there will be a pumpkin patch that the families can visit by boat with their kids and get their pumpkins, plus Christmas trees as Christmas approaches.

## FILLING A COMMUNITY VOID

There will be a lot of things to do, and, particularly for young people, that fills a need in the Slidell community, Faust believes.



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A wider boat deck and a covered, fish-cleaning area are part of the upgrades at The Pointe Marina and Grill of Slidell, La.

"Everyone has long said the same thing... There's nothing for kids to do here. There's such a lack of it that it's unbelievable," Faust said. "I've always been eyeing up this property, and it kind of fell in my lap, and everyone says at the same time that there's nothing to do out here. So let's do something about that, I figure."

The marina will also be friendly for birthday parties and other outdoor events, with a roofed area offsetting the risk of bad weather spoiling the day's fun.

The most important thing, Faust said, was to listen to the community, not just during the clean-up process, but to be a work in progress throughout the year.

## TAKING CARE OF ANGLERS

Meanwhile, The Blue Crab Restaurant will be opening its doors this spring as part of the Pointe experience. Fishing rodeos and poker runs are being scheduled, and Faust has put considerable effort into making the details count; while drawing people outside of the fishing community is a target, he also wants to take extra good care of his anglers and boaters as well.

"We have an electric pressure washer so they can rinse their boat off, free of charge," Faust said. "It's having things like that, we hope, that sets us apart from the others. We're going to really be an all-in-one recreational spot."

On top of that, it will be a safe place for a good time as well. Part of the investment has been installing top-notch security cameras around the marina and lighting to help ensure visitors know that they and their items in their vehicles will be secure.

"There used to be a lot of riff-raff going on out here to all hours, and we're putting an end to that," he said. "This is a place for families to come and have good clean fun now, in place of those bad elements." ■

*The Pointe Marina is located at 118 Harbor View Ct., Slidell, La., 70458.*

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# A BRIDGE TOO FAR? **NO WAY!**

■ By Keith Lusher Jr.

**TROLLING PONTCHARTRAIN'S 'TRESTLES' CAN SHAKE UP SOME SPECKLED TROUT IN APRIL. THIS MANDEVILLE ANGLER HAS INCORPORATED TACTICS LEARNED IN MINNESOTA AND PERFECTED OFFSHORE IN THE GULF TO TAKING DOWN SPRING SPECKS.**

# Here in south Louisiana, fishermen have just about figured out every way there is to **CATCH A SPECKLED TROUT.**

From jiggging the bottom to using a double rig under a popping cork, most have been taught from a young age the go-to methods of catching specks.

Andy Jones of Mandeville moved to Louisiana in 2002, so he had some catching up to do as far as targeting Lake Pontchartrain for speckled trout.

“It was like drinking from a fire hose,” he said. Jig the Causeway. Use Deadly Dudleys. Fish under the birds. Do the Pontchartrain Pop. Yeah I had a lot to learn in the speckled trout world.”

Jones soon got the hang of it, and then something jogged his memory back to a something he did when he was younger.

“One day, I was out there jigging the Causeway with plastics, and I saw Capt. Eric Dumas idle past, dragging baits behind his boat. He was catching trout — more trout than I was catching anyway,” he said.

It didn’t take him long to realize he could catch trout doing something he’d been doing for decades elsewhere.

Trolling has been in Jones’ blood since he was a youngster, when he would visit his grandparents’ cabin on Minnesota’s Dagget Lake.

“I was 7 years old, and I remember seeing this old man paddle his canoe out and drag his line behind him,” he said. “I asked my friend, ‘Can we do that?’ and he said, ‘Sure.’ So we paddled our rowboat out there and started catching northern pike by just dragging lures out the back of the boat.”

As he grew up, Jones continued trolling. While stationed in Pensacola, Fla., with the U.S. Coast Guard, he trolled deeper Gulf waters for other species.

Now, he trolls the Lake Pontchartrain bridges and has merged the art of trolling with inshore saltwater fishing.

Jones has been fishing the 5-mile train bridge that connects Lake Pontchartrain’s north and south shorelines. Known locally as “The Trestles,” Jones said that April “is all about the quality over quantity. By far, I find that my biggest specks come when I am trolling this bridge in the spring.”

## WATER TEMPERATURE >

Big speckled trout and Lake Pontchartrain’s ‘Trestles’ go together, especially in the spring season.



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## WATER TEMPERATURE

April is one of the best months to troll the Trestles because of the return of southeast winds that help push saltwater into the lake. The combination of saltwater with cooler water temperatures is the perfect recipe for actively feeding trout. Jones recommends trolling the bridge when the water warms.

“When those water temps get into the 60s, it’s game on!” he said.

The benefit to dragging baits is that you can cover a lot of water rather than trying different spots jiggling.

“These fish are still spread out, with the lack of bait grouping them up along the bridge, so by trolling, I can cover a lot of water and mark where they are,” Jones said.

After marking the locations, he doubles back and drags through the same spots and can usually put together a nice box by repeating this process.

## SPEED

Maintaining the proper speed is crucial to picking up fish when trolling the Trestles. Jones said he sticks with two speeds when fishing the bridge.

“When the water temperature is 68 to 71 degrees, I’ll be going 2 to 2.3 mph,” he said. “When it’s 60 to 67 degrees, I’ll slow down to 1.5 mph because those fish are slower with the colder temperatures.”

As far as tides, he recommends trolling the upcurrent side of the bridge. This allows the baits to be pushed closer to the pilings.

“I like to try and get those lures as close to the concrete pilings as possible, and using the current to do this works perfectly,” he said.



Being able to cover a lot of water and determine where trout are concentrated is one big plug for trolling. LEFT: Troll upcurrent of the Trestles and allow the moving water to keep your baits as close to the bridge as possible.

## SETUP

.....  
 A Rat-L-Trap with a tiny B2 Squid trailing along on a dropper is a great combination for trout trolling.  
 .....

Jones uses four rods when trolling. On his boat's T-top are two rod holders that point outward; two 7-foot rods go there, mated with spinning reels spooled with 30-pound braid with 17-pound monofilament leader tied to a lipped MirrOlure. Figuring how much line to let out is simple.

"I'll start letting the line out, and once I feel the bait bump the bottom, I give it a few cranks to get it off of the bottom," he said.

Along the bridge, speckled trout can be suspended at different depths, so Jones has one lure a little closer to the boat than the other.

"After I see what depth they are, I'll start dragging both baits at that level," he said.

The other two rods are 4-foot, heavy duty trolling rods with reels spooled with

18-pound leadcore line. He ties on an 18-inch leader of 17-pound monofilament and a 3/4-ounce Rat-L-Trap.

"That's your shock absorber," Jones said. "There's no give when using lead line, so adding some mono allows that hook to set in their mouths instead of ripping it out."

Some of Jones' favorite colors are blue and chrome, electric chicken and pink. To the Rat-L-Trap, he adds an 18-inch monofilament trailer tied to a B2 Squid. He ties the trailer to the front treble hook.

"I find that the lure has better action when the trailer is tied to the front set of hooks rather than the back set because it allows the body to swim back and forth," he said.

While April is one of the better months to troll, Jones said he's not limited to the calendar page; he's had plenty of success during mild winters.

"We've filled a box as early as December, so there's a wide window to get out here and try your hand at trolling for specks," he said. ■



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**Keith Lusher Jr.** owns and operates NorthshoreFishingReport.com. He is the outdoor writer for the Slidell Independent Newspaper and host of the Northshore Fishing Report on WWL Radio. Lusher is a member of the Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association and can be reached at Keith@NorthshoreFishingReport.com.



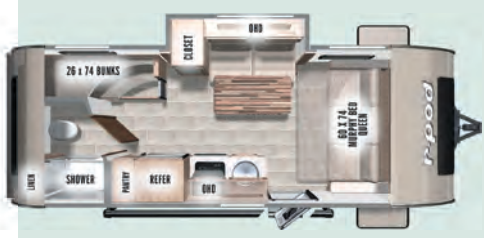
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## APRIL IS A MONTH THAT BEGS TO BE FISHED.

It features balmy temperatures, and the strong, cold fronts of winter are only a memory bobbing in our wakes. But April can also be disappointing for anglers, because our expectations of the perfect fishing month may not match the reality of fishing during a period of transition for speckled trout.

As early as February, female trout begin developing egg sacks, and by April, they are well-developed in many. The presence of eggs and the lengthening daylight hours will cause trout to start their migration from the protection of low-salinity water to water with salinity greater than 17 parts per thousand (ppt). In April, we can find inner marsh spots that are holding good numbers of trout one week suddenly be devoid of trout the next. The sudden change can be disorienting for anglers, but a boon for the fuel docks as anglers crisscross the marsh looking for schools of trout.

Here are some facts about April in southeast Louisiana that can be used as guidance to improve our success catching speckled trout this month.

### SALINITY >

**WHEN APRIL ARRIVES, SPECKLED TROUT ARE IN TRANSITION IN SOUTH LOUISIANA MARSHES, FOLLOWING WATER THAT'S CLEAR, WARMING UP AND HIGH IN SALINITY. HERE'S HOW TO FIND THEM.**

■ By Jon Miller

# SPRING SPECK STRATEGIES

## SALINITY

The salinity of the estuary in April is reduced if excessive freshwater from the Mississippi River and other, smaller rivers is present. This can cause problems for anglers, and they are advised to stay away from the brown, silt-laden river water. This water is wrong for the trout in a number of ways. For one, the influx of dirty water lowers the salinity when trout are looking for higher-salinity water, and it also seems that the fine, suspended silt particles make trout uncomfortable.

In April, trout that wintered on the inside will be spread across a wide salinity gradient, from less than 5 ppt to water with more than 17 ppt. This makes concentrations of trout more difficult to locate. To help learn where to fish along the salinity gradient, I roughly correlate the day of the month to a salinity value. For instance, if it is April 5, then I choose spots around 5 ppt, and on April 20, I am thinking about spots closer to 20 ppt. I use the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation's hydrocoast salinity maps to find the salinity I am looking for; I often measure the salinity when I get to the spot using a conductivity meter or a hydrometer.

There is no hard and fast rule about what water trout will inhabit during April. Remember that trout will be affected by other factors, including water quality and water temperature, so I strongly suggest being flexible in April.

## WARMING WATER

In 2020, the average temperature for the first two weeks of March was 62°F, and the average temperature for the first two weeks of April was 72°F. For a speckled trout, a 10-degree rise in water temperature results in roughly a 150% increase in a trout's metabolism. That increase directly correlates to a 150% increase in the amount of food a trout must eat. The additional food needed explains why we often find trout becoming much more aggressive feeders in April compared to earlier months.

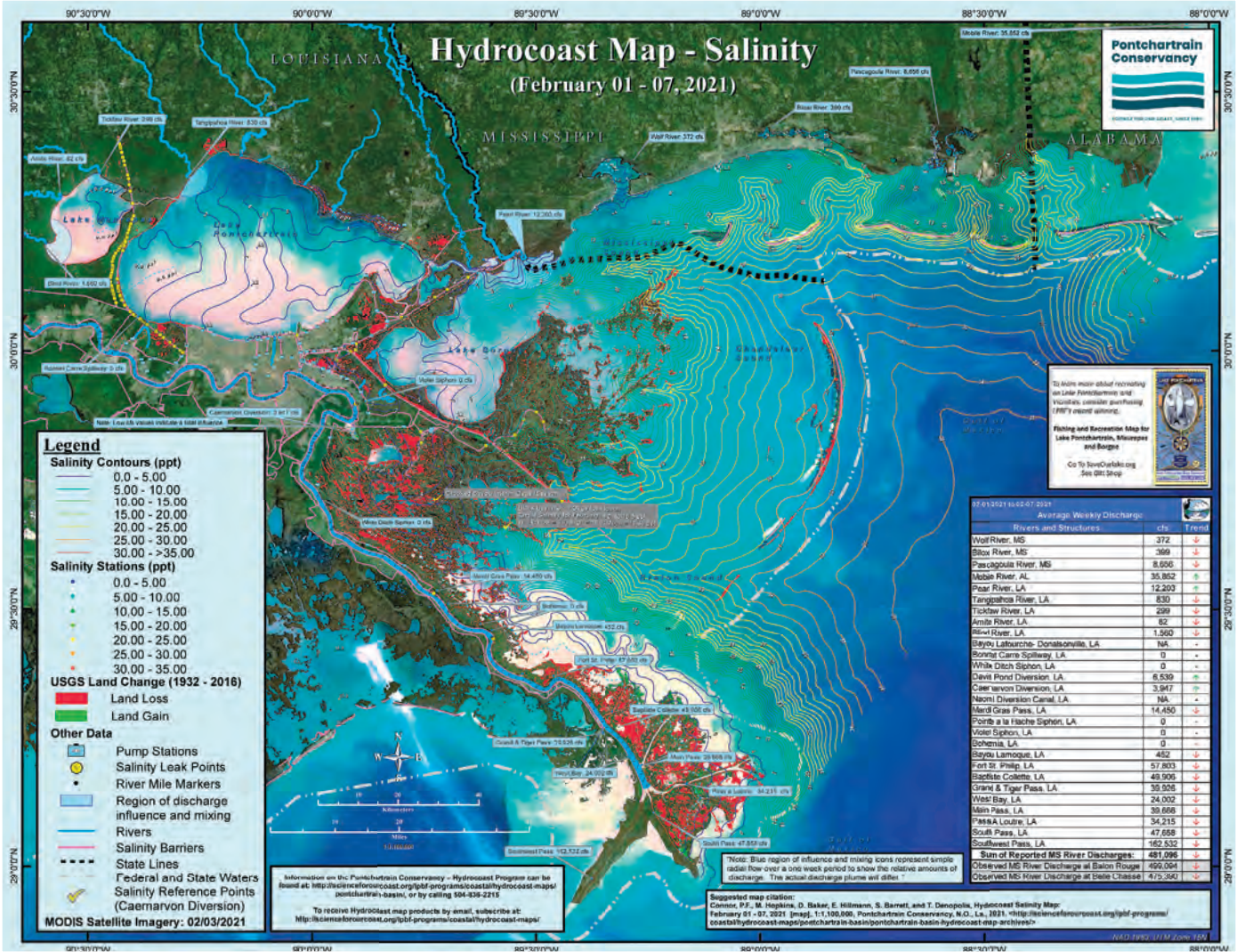
This change in metabolism can result in trout being more attracted

to faster action from lures. For instance, I find that lipped jerkbaits worked aggressively really begin to shine in April. I still put a pause in my more aggressive cadence, however, because in my experience, speckled trout generally hit jerkbaits during a pause.

## CHANGES IN SUNLIGHT

One very noticeable change in April is the increase in sunlight intensity; more precisely, in south Louisiana, we feel the heat. While this causes the water temperature to rise, it also increases the growth rate of biological organisms such as submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) and phytoplankton. Since phytoplankton is the basic food for the entire aquatic ecosystem, the rapidly increasing growth rate of phytoplankton with





Jerkbaits such as this MirrOure are very effective for catching big trout that are on the move in April. ABOVE: Salinity charts like the LPBF Hydrocoast Map can give fishermen a heads-up on where speckled trout are holding as April progresses.

rising water temperature is equivalent to dumping truckloads of food into the water. This extra food fuels the rapid growth of shrimp and baitfish, which in turn lets trout gorge themselves in preparation for spawning.

The growth of the SAV is also important to our estuary's ecosystem, because it provides cover for the growing baitfish, removes sediment particles from the water and draws in predators searching for the baitfish. Since spring is a growth period for aquatic vegetation, early April is a great time to fish areas with abundant SAV, because trout will often be found feeding there.

However, the higher angle of the sun also means that more sunlight is penetrating the water, and this modifies my approach to fishing. For instance, I find that the all-day top-water bite in March begins to move to early morning and late afternoon as April progresses. This is especially true when fishing the rocky shorelines of the MRGO channel.

One concept I use to help adjust to seasonal changes in sunlight is that trout, like most fish, are more vulnerable to predation when clearly visible in the water. Therefore, when sunlight penetrates deeply into low-turbidity water, trout are conditioned to feed deeper in the water column. Therefore, adjusting lures to account for the sun's position and water clarity helps me stay in the feeding zone.

**FRESH BAIT** ➤

These small croakers, partially digested, came from the stomach of a speckled trout, proving that they're important April forage.

## FRESH BAIT

In April, brown shrimp reach a size large enough to be worthwhile as food for trout, and they are leaving the shallow marsh and entering larger bodies of water where they are accessible to schools of trout. Biologists believe that speckled trout will intentionally target shrimp around their spawning periods, because shrimp provides optimal nutrition for egg growth. So all but the largest trout will be feeding heavily on shrimp by the end of April.

I have not found it necessary to exclusively use lures that imitate shrimp when trout are chasing shrimp. It seems like imitating the action of shrimp and secondarily, the color of shrimp, is adequate. Arguably, the best shrimp imitation for April is a popping cork with a jighead and soft-plastic bait. However, if you are targeting larger trout, larger-profile jerkbaits, topwater baits and twitchbaits work exceptionally well in April.

One of the reasons hard baits work well in April is that a number of finfish species are very abundant and rapidly growing. One such fish is the Atlantic croaker, which breeds in the winter on the outside; the larva comes into the marsh to grow. By April, fast-growing croakers are around 3 inches long



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



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Topwater baits produce beautiful speckled trout along the MRGO rocks in April.



*One of the reasons hard baits work well in April is that a number of finfish species are very abundant and rapidly growing.*

and very plentiful on bayou bottoms. Croakers are a favorite, high-protein food for speckled trout, and I find the stomachs of many larger trout caught in April filled with these little croakers.

Equally important as a food source for larger trout in April are immature striped mullet, of the size called "finger mullet." Like croakers, they were spawned on the outside but come to the protection of the marsh for their first few months of life. They are 3 to 4 inches long in April, and schools are seen feeding along the surface in what looks like rafts of fish. These finger mullet are easily imitated by anglers with topwater stickbaits such as Spooks and SheDogs. Since mullet travel along the MRGO rocks feeding on the surface, throwing topwater baits during the early morning hours along the rocks is a recipe for huge explosions as big trout attack the baits. ■

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## MARSH MAN MASSON

Todd Masson



# SPRING FISHING: TIME FOR HARD PLASTICS

## TWITCHBAITS TAKE CENTER STAGE WHEN APRIL ARRIVES AND BIG TROUT ARE ON THE PROWL

I've fished for speckled trout with nearly every style of lure invented. If it looks like a mullet, pogie, glass minnow, cocaho or shrimp, it's probably spent some time tied to the end of my line.

But there's one thing I've always wondered: why do specks hit hard-plastics so much harder than soft-plastics? It's almost universal. If you're working a twitchbait like a MirrOdine, or a jerkbait like a Rapala X-Rap, one moment you'll be minding your business, waiting to make your next twitch, and the next, the rod will nearly be yanked from your unsuspecting hands.

It's always such a thrill that it makes fishing hard-plastics even more desirable, and that's especially true this time of year, when they're so productive.

On spring mornings, when he's out fishing for fun, Capt. Justin Bowles of JB Fishing Charters has a hard time keeping topwater lures locked up in his tackle sleeves, particularly when water temperatures are in the 70s. But when

temperatures are down or the sun is up, he has a tendency to reach for subsurface plugs.

"In spring, fishing grassy, flat areas, I prefer to use non-lipped, hard-plastic twitch baits, like a MirrOdine (or) a MirrOdine XL; those are the two main ones I throw," he said. "I'll also throw the SoftDine, and then if it's more shallow, I'd throw the regular Corky."

### NO. 1 SITUATION

These lures can certainly produce anywhere, from bayous to bays, but there's a specific scenario that makes subsurface twitch baits irresistible to Bowles in the spring. It's one that's prevalent in the eastern Pontchartrain Basin area that Bowles fishes.

"I just look for submerged grass over a 3- to 5-foot flat, and of course, I look for bait in the area and decently clean water," he said.

When he finds that, he breaks out his hard-plastic trout tackle.

"I normally fish them on a light-powered rod with 20- to 30-pound braid (and) 12- to 15-pound fluorocarbon leader," he said. "I cast it out, let it sink and then twitch it with long pauses in between. If I start picking up grass or hitting bottom, I'll speed it up.

"I do two twitches and then a pause — a pretty long pause if it's not too windy and making you drift too fast. The slower that you can fish those baits, the better, especially if you want big fish."

Also, stealth is CRITICAL when fishing this technique. Speckled trout in the spring are much less likely to stick around if they know you're there. The fish that were so oblivious to crowd noise in the winter simply won't abide it



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

in the spring.

"If you're fishing over a flat, you want to be drifting," Bowles said. "If the wind's blowing you too fast, I'd use a drift sock to slow myself down. Otherwise, I'd Power-Pole down and fan-cast the area, and then drift a little further and Power-Pole down again."

"If you're trying to work the trolling motor and are fighting the wind or the current, all you're doing is making noise, and you're pushing those big fish farther and farther away from you. At that point, you're just chasing your tail."

That's especially true if you're looking for fish to take pictures of and post on social media. Every speckled trout angler has caught school trout on hard-plastic baits, but those who fish them regularly aren't necessarily interested in numbers.

"You're not really fishing for limits of fish but fishing for quality fish, so you want to just keep covering water," Bowles said. "It's usually not like you pick up 10 to 20 fish in one stop fishing these lures."

In recent weeks, Bowles has caught specks up to 23 inches on hard-plastic baits. That size should increase this month. ■

## PADDLES 'N PUDDLES >



Capt. Justin Bowles fishes hard-plastic lures over grass flats for large speckled trout.

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## PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

Chris Holmes



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

# YAK TROLLING: GIVE IT A TRY

PEDAL-POWER, TROLLING MOTORS MAKE THIS TECHNIQUE A WINNER IN KAYAKS



Trolling with a kayak is a great way to fool speckled trout in the spring.

**T**rolling is a traditional way of catching fish in many parts of the country; however, the technique sees limited action in much of Louisiana. At certain times, anglers in powerboats troll around the bridge pilings in Lake Pontchartrain, seeking big speckled trout. That's about the only time you see any significant number of inshore anglers using this technique. It takes some practice but can be highly effective.

Kayak trolling while paddling can be done, but it can be strenuous and hard to coordinate. But nearly every major manufacturer offers at least one model of pedal-powered kayak. Pedaling makes trolling nearly effortless and frees your hands for holding the rod or getting to one in a rod holder without the delay of stopping and laying down your paddle.

In addition to pedal kayaks, there is an increasing trend for adding electric trolling motors to kayaks. They are designed for quiet propulsion and are great for trolling in a kayak.

Spring is an excellent time to try your hand at trolling. Fish are more spread out, and trolling allows you to cover a lot of water and have at least one bait in the water the whole time.

However, it should not be undertaken haphaz-

ardly. If you're trolling a large lagoon or lake, it's best to cover the area in a grid pattern to avoid repeating passes over unproductive water or worse yet, missing spots where fish are holding. Additionally, by traveling in a set pattern, you can also easily make repeat passes over locations where you have success.

Fish move back and forth between deeper and shallower areas in spring as the conditions dictate. This can even occur over the course of a single day. If you're not finding them shallow, move to a deeper canal or bayou to see if they're holding there. Adjust your lines, lures and speed accordingly to have the baits running deeper.

A depth finder with a GPS route tracker is a great accessory for seeing your travel routes. Set a path, and you can simply follow the lines laid down with each pass.

Pay attention the whole time and make mental notes of what's working. Speed, depth, right side, left side and how far back the lures are running are all parts of successful trolling. Having two lines out not only doubles the chance of a hookup, it allows the use of different lures and techniques to work out what works best. Keep one rod in a secure rod holder and the other in your hand. Holding the rod allows you to twitch, pull, pop or impart other action into the lure that may be the key to triggering strikes.

**HOW MANY IS TOO MANY? >**



## PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

continued

### HOW MANY IS TOO MANY?

If two lines are good, wouldn't three or four be even better? Not in a kayak. You should resist the temptation to put out additional lines. Owing to the confined space, lines run too close to each other, and tangles are a near certainty — not to mention the mess that can come from a hooked fish crossing all of the lines. Consistency is key. Once you figure out what is working best, get baits on both rods performing the same way, and the success rate generally increases.

For artificial lures, a wide variety lends themselves to success-

ful trolling. A jighead/plastic tail combination is one of the simplest and easiest to master. Try getting the lure to bounce along the bottom by adjusting by the weight of the jig and letting more or less line let out behind the kayak. If you have an area with a lot of grass, a weedless jighead keeps from constantly getting the lure fouled with grass. Never continue to fish the lure fouled with even a speck of grass; it is a waste of time. Fish almost never strike a lure with any amount of grass attached.

Shallow-diving or suspending hard baits are also highly effective. They have action and vibration while trolling, and the treble hooks basically set themselves due to the forward motion of the

kayak. If the rod is in your hand, there is always the natural reaction to set the hook. When trolling, however, get in the habit of simply sweeping the rod forward rather than a snappy hookset. If the rod is in a holder, rather than grabbing for it, an easy technique is to give a quick pedal or two; the motion of the kayak will help set the hook.

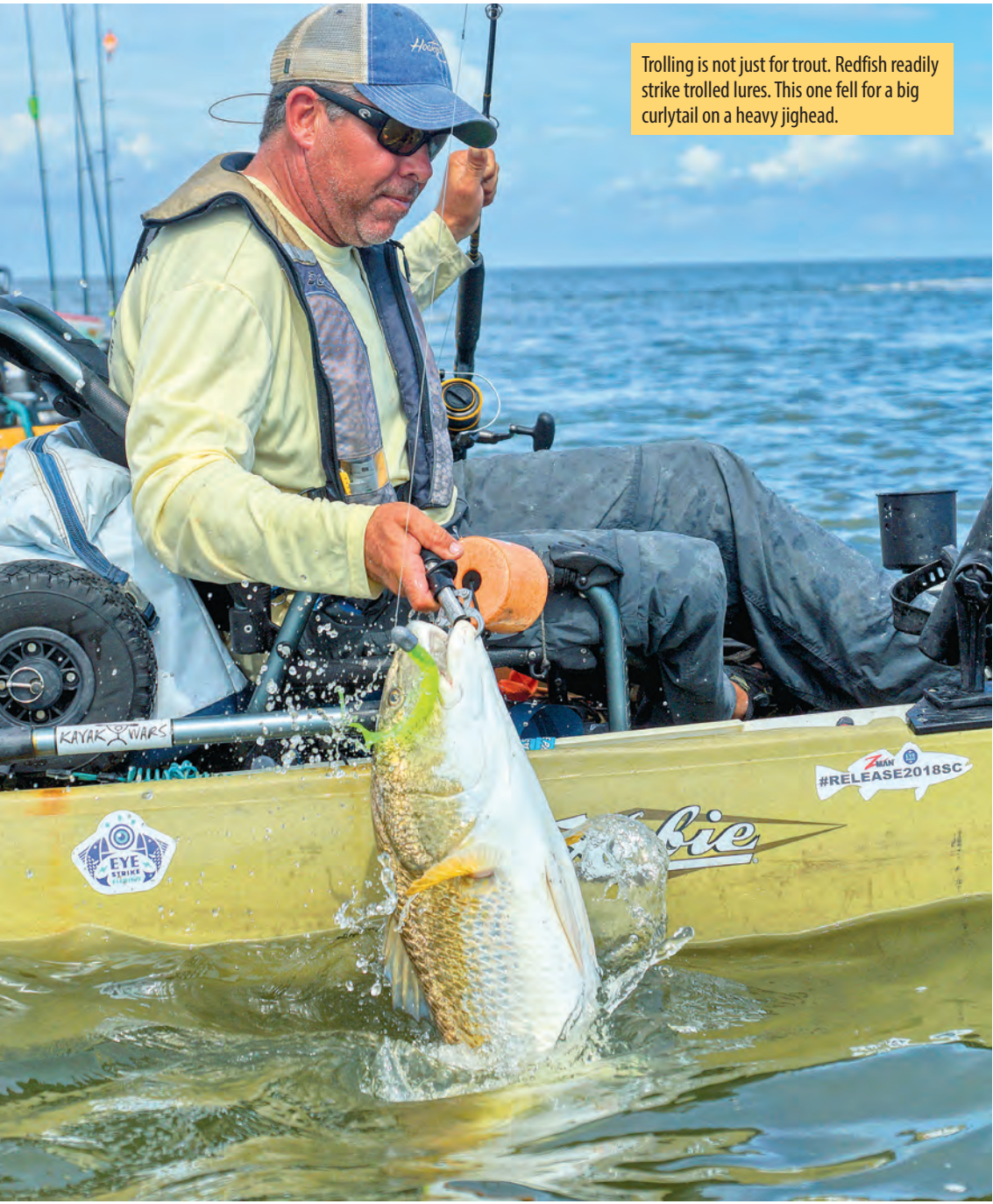
Spoons, spinnerbaits and crankbaits — lipped and lipless — are all effective when trolled.

### DON'T FORGET LIVE BAIT

An often overlooked, but extremely effective method is to troll a live minnow.

Cocahoe minnows are extremely hardy and stay alive well when trolled at a kayak's slow speeds. A small No. 1 or No. 2 live-bait hook works well and allows the minnow to move naturally while being pulled. Thread the hook through the front of both eye sockets, through the nostrils or through the lips from the bottom up. Place a small lead split-shot about a foot up the line to keep the minnow from dragging on the surface.

Get in the kayak and start trolling. It is fairly easy to learn and can be highly productive. ■



Trolling is not just for trout. Redfish readily strike trolled lures. This one fell for a big curlytail on a heavy jighead.

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# FISH DULARGE'S LAKES FOR SPECKS

Read wind direction, bird activity, and work for that cooler full of trout

**S**ome months require great skill and precision to catch fish. It takes years of experience and knowledge. Fortunately, according to guide Travis Miller of Dularge, April isn't one of them.

"April is pretty straight-forward," Miller said. "It's pretty much an easy month in terms of not having to know a bunch, because the trout are typically in all of the lakes. You don't have to run up in the marsh and know everything in the marsh."

That's not to say April doesn't have any challenges.

"The toughest thing about April is the wind," he said. "You'll get a lot of hard southeast flow. Try to pay attention to the wind direction a couple of days before your trip, because if it's doing the washer machine at 25 mph, you don't want to go."

However, the wind can actually work to your advantage if it is out of a consistent direction.

"If it's straight out of the east or southeast, all you do is target the east or southeast sides of all the lakes," Miller said.

When he's in the lakes, Miller stays on his trolling motor most of the time.

"I drift as much as possible," he said. "You hit a fish, you put the Power Pole down, and you might pick up 10 or 12 fish, and then you move again."

In early April, Miller fishes a tight-lined, green hornet-colored Matrix Shad, but his main bait is a shrimp creole Matrix Shad 2 feet beneath an oval cork.

One thing that can make it easier to locate the fish is diving seagulls.



Capt. Travis Miller puts clients on speckled trout in Dularge's lakes this month, like this one that bit a shrimp creole-colored Matrix Shad.

Photo courtesy Capt. Travis Miller

"Last year, we had some shrimp come in, so we were able to fish quite a few birds," he said. "The birds stick in Lake Mechant and Sister Lake."

Miller said that trout under the birds can be small, but if you fish enough flocks of birds throughout the day, you'll catch keepers. He also said that spending more time on a bunch of birds can yield bigger fish.

"Often, what I find is you'll catch the real small fish right off the bat, and then it's almost like the bigger fish stay a little bit longer," he said. "A lot of times you can sit without a bird for like 15 or 20 minutes and catch fish."

There is an art to approaching a flock of birds, and how Miller does that depends on how the birds are acting that particular day.

"There are times where as soon as you pull up, the birds are gone, and when I find that, I fish them very aggressively," Miller said. "I jump right in them, I try to catch 2 to 5 fish right off the bat, and then it's off to the next flock."

Winds with an easterly component are very common in April, but when the direction turns 180 degrees, Miller certainly doesn't mind.

"Sometimes, you get these routines of everybody pounding the east side of these lakes because of the wind, and when you finally get a west wind, there is very little pressure on the west side, you get to flip the lake and a lot of times you do a lot better that way," he said. ■

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# TWICE AS NICE: TANDEM RIG TIPS

## GUIDE USES CLIP-ON CORK TO KEEP BOTH LURES IN STRIKE ZONE LONGER

**W** By Patrick Bonin

hen using a tandem rig — two jigheads or soft-plastic lures attached to the same fishing line — anglers need to keep in mind what that presentation looks like to the fish they are targeting.

Capt. Ted DeAgano III of Scales-N-Tales Charters out of Hopedale always rigs up with a lighter jighead and smaller bait in front, and a slightly larger, heavier bait behind to simulate a life-and-death baitfish chase.

“Speckled trout and redfish are aggressive predator fish, so if they see another baitfish chasing something else, they’re going to go on the instant attack because they just can’t resist it,” he said. “I normally put a Matrix Shad or a Bull Minnow or something of that nature chasing a Sparkle Beetle or even a Vudu shrimp in the front.

“You want it a little lighter so it’s hanging higher, and the other bait appears that it’s coming from underneath to grab the smaller bait — just like the speckled trout or redfish would be doing on the attack.”

DeAgano’s lead bait is about 6 inches higher in the water column than his second lure. A steady retrieve is also key to a

successful tandem rig presentation, he said.

“It’s not a bounce bait,” DeAgano said. “You’re imitating fish on the attack, and fish on the attack don’t sit there and bounce up and down.”

DeAgano even breaks out a 2-inch, clip-on sac-a-lait cork just above his tandem rig to help keep both lures in the strike zone longer.

“Your inexperienced fishermen will drop the bait all the way to the bottom and get snagged up,” he said. “You want to keep your bait up a little bit, and the cork actually helps it float.

“If you keep it up, you’ll be in the strike zone a lot longer instead of dropping down below all your speckled trout.”

DeAgano typically uses a 40-pound mono leader for his tandem-rig setup.

“I prefer monofilament over fluorocarbon because it’s got a different float,” DeAgano said. “It sinks faster, and it drifts differently from fluorocarbon. Fluoro is light and will hang a lot higher and not sink as fast.” ■

*Editor’s Note: You can contact Capt. Ted DeAgano III with Scales-N-Tales Charters out of Hopedale at 504-858-9306.*



**INGREDIENTS:**

**4 speckled trout** fillets (datfish, redfish, drum, or any white, flaky fish will work)

**1 tsp** salt

**1 tsp** pepper

**¼ cup** flour

**½ cup** whole pecans

**½ cup** Panko bread crumbs

**2 tbsp** grated parmesan cheese

**1 Egg**

**4 tbsp** butter

**Praline Sauce:**

**½ cup** dark brown sugar

**½ lemon**, juiced

**1 tbsp** bourbon

**2 tbsp** heavy cream

**⅓ cup** chopped pecans

**1 pinch** kosher salt

# TROUT PRALINE

**T** By Nathan L. Judice  
his isn't another fried fish recipe. This is a sweet and savory dish that is sure to knock your socks off. Now, don't get me wrong; I love a pile of fried fish, but this dish will have you licking your plate for every bit of the praline sauce.

**PREPARATION:** Serves 2

Rinse and dry the fish fillets. Season them with salt and pepper. Lightly dust with flour.

Place the pecans into a food processor and pulse until the pecans are approximately the same consistency as the bread crumbs. In a shallow dish, mix the processed pecans, bread-crumbs, and the parmesan cheese to make the "Pecan Coating." Beat the egg, dip the fish fillets in the egg, then in the pecan coating, ensuring that all parts of the fish fillets are coated.

Heat a cast-iron pan or fry pan to medium-high heat and toss in the butter. When the butter melts and starts to bubble/brown, place the fish in the pan and cook 2 to 3 minutes on each side or until golden brown.

While the fish is cooking, make the praline sauce by mixing the dark brown sugar, juice from half a lemon, and bourbon in a sauce pan and bringing it to a simmer over medium heat. When the praline sauce reduces to a syrupy consistency (after approximately 5 minutes), stir in the cream, chopped pecans and pinch of salt then turn the heat off.

Plate the fish and top with the warm praline sauce and enjoy. Serve the fish with a side of pecan dirty rice and whatever vegetables you have on hand. ■

*You'll find more great dishes from Nathan L. Judice, aka the Recreational Chef, on Instagram at [instagram.com/recreationalchef/](https://www.instagram.com/recreationalchef/)*

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**LIVE BAIT IS WHERE IT'S AT FOR MOST SHEEPSHEAD ANGLERS, BUT THERE ARE A COUPLE OF FAKE BAITS THAT WILL PUT THESE TOOTHY CRITTERS IN THE COOLER.**

# **ARTIFICIAL WAYS TO HERD SHEEPSHEAD**

■ By Phillip Gentry

**For every fish that swims in the ocean, there's an artificial bait designed to catch it. For redfish, trout and even flounder, that's a no-brainer. The market has tons of lure varieties for inshore fishing —**

**UNTIL IT COMES TO SHEEPSHEAD.**

If the local bait shop is out of fiddler crabs, a few anglers may opt for live shrimp, and a few old salts may grab a shovel and go knock some barnacles off a dock or dig up some sandfleas. But if bait is unavailable, most anglers target something else, because there just aren't any artificial baits designed to target sheepshead.

One of the biggest reasons for this is that sheepshead are picky eaters. True, they eat crabs, barnacles and a variety of small crustaceans, but how do you make a replica of a hardshell bait that doesn't move much, if at all?

Enter Justin Carter, a kayak fishing guide who traded in his paddleboat for a powerboat in recent years, but not before his international kayaking adventures introduced him to an Australian bait called the "Cranka Crab."

Later, Carter was approached by a Eye Strike Fishing, a tackle company based in North Charleston, S.C., to test a prototype bait that integrates live bait into a jighead specifically designed for sheepshead, the "Jail Bait" rig.

## CRANKA CRAB

Made in Australia, the Cranka Crab is made from durable plastic with articulating arms that are replaceable. The bait is designed for the arms to float up in a realistic, defensive posture when the bait lands on the bottom.

"The original Cranka Crab has treble hooks in the arms," Carter said. "That's great hook placement, because the first thing a sheepshead does is grab a crab by the claw to disarm it. So on the first touch, it's got the hook in its mouth."

Carter said he contacted company director Steven Steer to ask about stronger hooks. This led to a different bait that had stronger, single hooks in the claws.

"If a redfish grabs the bait, or a good-sized sheepshead, it was breaking the treble hooks," Carter said. "The new, single hook is both sharp and strong and will hold much bigger fish than the original would."

Carter said one thing he has noticed about the Cranka Crab is that color makes a big difference to sheepshead. The bait is offered in eight different col-

Artificial baits for sheepshead focus on hooking the fish in the lips, thereby defeating the fish's massive incisors.



Photo courtesy Justin Carter



Courtesy crankalures.com

||||| The Cranka Crab closely mimics the size, action and appearance of a small crab. **RIGHT:** Eye Strike Fishing's Jail Bait Rig is a jighead specially designed, when matched with a live fiddler crab, to catch sheepshead.

most likely a fiddler crab, but other baits can be used. A small rubber band is strung through the hook's eye and looped over the twin hooks to hold the bait in place.

"David Fladd and I spent some time testing the prototype of the rig," Carter said. "I thought it works best around inshore waters where the depths are shallow. The rig really doesn't weigh enough to get a good feel of what's happening in deeper water at the nearshore reefs."

Carter applauds the rig for the increase in hookups compared to a single bait hook, citing a much higher bite-to-hookup ration. He also said the shine from the brightly colored eye molded into the bottom of the bait definitely gets a fish's attention.



**HOW TO FISH >**

Courtesy eyestrikefishing.com

ors, but Carter said chinaback fiddler and muddy fiddler have been his two most-productive colors.

"Sheepshead are sight-feeders, and many times, while sight-fishing for them in clear water, you can see the fish swim up and look at the bait," he said. "The actions on the baits are all the same, but if it's not a natural color they're used to seeing, they tend to shy off from it."

## JAIL BAIT RIG

The Jail Bait Rig is a hybrid artificial bait that works as a jighead to present live baits like fiddler crabs and shrimp to sheepshead. The bait is produced by Eye Strike Fishing and marketed and distributed in conjunction with Z-Man, another South Carolina manufacturer.

The Jail Bait Rig has two hooks instead of just one, and the weighted "eye" provides a platform to settle the bait,

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## HOW TO FISH

Both baits fish similarly, according to Carter. The first thing to try is searching around docks and pilings where sheepshead typically congregate. Drop the bait straight down on a tight line around pilings and slightly lift and shake it to mimic a crab popping up and settling back to the bottom. If casting the bait, work it like a Carolina rig with a drag-and-bump retrieve, occasionally lifting the rod tip and shaking it.

Carter's favorite tactic is sight-fishing. He fishes the lures on clear, high water when sheepshead are up on the top of structure hunting crabs and shrimp. When he sees a fish, he casts

the bait 10 feet past the fish's location and lets the bait swing or slowly work back toward the fish.

Another productive trick is again a high-water situation when sheepshead invade grass flats to eat periwinkles. He rigs a bait under a small cork with a 6- to 8-inch leader and drifts it over the grass so it mimics a crab slowly swimming along the surface. The cork suspends the bait without it hanging up too much.

## THE LAND DOWN UNDER?

Carter once guided out of a kayak while competed in tournaments around the country; he performed quite well and won more than his share. In 2013, he was invited to join the USA team in the world championships in Australia.

'I didn't quite know what to expect fishing on the Bemm River in Australia,' he said. "The targeted fish was what the

≡ Sheepshead can be sight-fished when waters are high  
≡ and clear enough to see the fish hunting for food.



Phillip Gentry

Australians call a bream, a fish that's similar to a sheepshead. I spent countless hours researching the area and the fish and figured I'd just do the best I could."

The effort paid off. Carter, fishing off a hunch he had about where Aussie fish would be spawning during a seasonal cold front, led the pack after Day 1 and ended up finishing seventh in the 3-day event — the leading American finisher behind six Australians in a field of more than 250. It was the bait that beat him that really got his attention after the dust settled.

"All six of the Aussie guys were using a Cranka lure; that's where I first saw the bait," he said. "It was a tiny bait, but an almost perfect replica of a fiddler crab or small sand crab."

With visions of redfish and sheepshead going nuts over a bait they'd never seen before, Carter got several and took them home. The verdict? The baits worked exactly as predicted.

"The only problem was the hook issue," he said. As it turns out, the folks at Cranka had several requests from customers for some stronger components for landing American saltwater fish. Now, with single hooks and even replacement parts for the arms and body as the fish wear the bait out, you can replace the worn parts and keep on fishing." ■



Phillip Gentry of Waterloo, S.C., is host of "The Outdoor Show," a weekly radio podcast that can be seen at [www.pgandboatgirl.com](http://www.pgandboatgirl.com).

## LURE REVIEW >



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## LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

A purple/chartreuse Wedgetail made by Egret Baits hands out of the mouth of a redfish that gobbled it up along the Gulf Coast.



Photo by Chris Berzas

# EGRET BAIT'S' WEDGETAIL

BUILT-IN ACTION HAS MADE THIS SOFT-PLASTIC BAIT AN INSHORE FAVORITE

**F**ishability. Catchability. Likeability. Egret Baits has several artificial lures that fill the bill. One of the oldest proven models is a soft plastic — unlike the company's widely known thermoplastic baits — that triggers fish to attack, to bite.

It's the Wedgetail, which impersonates the mullet, a delicacy for saltwater fish.

Ken Chaumont, the CEO at Egret, has overseen its rise through the years as a go-to bait across the Gulf Coast. It's one of his favorites.

"I use it. I was a fan all along," said Chaumont, 66. "It's a different bait than a boot tail. I think they do better than a boot tail in sandy or brackish water. Fish key on vibrating patterns.

"The vibration is especially effective in off-colored water and cold water. Off-colored water is a great place to throw the Wedgetail."

It's the thump of the specially designed tail that puts the bait over the hump. That's right. The patented shape of the tail says it all about its performance. Chaumont inherited the tail's patented

design — by Bob King — when he and his business partner purchased Stanley Jigs and formed Egret Baits in 2004.

"It was one of the properties when we bought the company," he said. "We had a licensing agreement with him. We're the only company that has a patent, the only company that has that shape tail."

Egret Baits introduced the Wedgetail in the mid-2010s.

## EASY TO WORK

"It's been around a long time," Chaumont said, proudly. "One of the key features is you don't have to be a genius to work it. The tail has so much resistance in the water, all you have to do is reel it. A lot of guides have told me it's a good bait for kids. The tail does all the work."

For that and other reasons, it has a strong following among saltwater fishermen in Texas and Louisiana who target speckled trout, redfish and flounder. Its popularity spreads beyond that region to Mississippi and Florida.

"We sell most of the Wedgetails

between Corpus Christi and Biloxi; that's the core of the market," he said, including the hotbed around the Venice area. Saltwater fishermen in the Florida Panhandle also covet the Wedgetail.

Egret Baits recommends two sizes — two sizes only — of jigheads for the Wedgetail. For 2- to 5-foot depths, Chaumont said use a 1/8-ounce model, and for 5- to 8-foot depths, use a 1/4-ounce model.

Also, if you're fishing a Wedgetail under a popping cork, as so many anglers do, "We definitely recommend a 1/8-ounce. (That's) the way to go," he said, noting that size jighead allows the soft plastic to fall more slowly between pops of a cork.

It's easy for Chaumont to pinpoint the Wedgetail's most popular colors.

The No. 1 color across Louisiana's coast is purple/chartreuse, which Egret



**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.



Photo courtesy egretbaits.com

Baits call the “LSU color.” There are blue flakes in the purple. Opening night and Cajun pepper/chartreuse are the next two favorites, the latter especially popular along the Texas and Louisiana coasts. Pearl/chartreuse and glow/chartreuse are others high on the color chart. The No. 1 color for redfish is black/chartreuse.

“That’s definitely the atomic bomb for redfish. Those are good ones,” he said. “We don’t do a lot of colors in this bait because you only need 10 or 12 colors to go catch fish across the country with a Wedgetail.”

Monofilament, fluorocarbon and braid work equally well with a Wedgetail.

“The majority of the people I talk with, what I call ‘everyday fishermen’ — guys that are the salt of the earth for our company — (they) primarily use mono,” he said.

Braid has its role with Wedgetails. That’s when the angler feels the bait’s action the most.

“If you put the Wedgetail on braided line, you’ll think you’re throwing a Rat-L-Trap,” he said. “We do have (redfish anglers) use braid because they want to get the fish out of the grass in the marsh. The flounder guys use a lot of braid because they can feel that real, real soft bite.”

When Chaumont and so many others are fishing open water, they throw the Wedgetail on fluorocarbon and rarely, if ever, heavier than 12-pound test. ■



Egret Baits’ Wedgetails catch plenty of redfish and flounder, as well as speckled trout, from Corpus Christi, Tex., to Florida’s Panhandle.

Photo by Chris Berzas

For more information about the Wedgetail and other Egret Baits products, visit [www.egretbaits.com](http://www.egretbaits.com) or call 318-256-6904.

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# UGLY WATER FISH

Pointe a la Hache is still rolling along, yielding nice specks, reds, bass

**F** By Rusty Tardo  
 olks have been trying to blow taps over the Pointe a la Hache area for years, ever since the Mardi Gras Cut breached a nearby levee and began inundating the area with cold, muddy Mississippi River water.

The continual flow of river water through that breach has had a devastating effect on the whole fishery, destroying miles of productive oyster reefs and displacing everything else, from shrimp to crabs to all the various fish that require salty water to survive. It's a tale of woe familiar for everyone who fished the area.

Today, the oyster boats, shrimp boats and crab boats are gone, and the anglers who remain content themselves with chasing redfish and bass or running a little ways to find speckled trout.

Chris Danos operates Screaming Reels Fishing Charters out of Beshel's Marina in Pointe a la Hache, and he isn't ready to blow taps just yet. He's confident enough to spring for a new 24-foot bay boat for his charters. He said things have been tough enough, especially after a colder-than-expected winter and some of the lowest tides he's seen in years.

"We were finally getting the tides we needed to get the water up, and the weather conditions vastly improved, and then all the rains and melting snow in the midwest has the river up again, and we're dealing with ugly water as a result," said Danos (504-606-6223). "The good news is, by the first week in April, the river is predicted to be back to about 6 feet, and I expect to see trout all over American Bay, Bay Gardene, Grand Point Bay — that whole area."

Danos was on a consistent bite of nice-sized specks around Iron Banks just before the big freeze in late February, and now that conditions have dramatically improved, that action should be

Capt. Chris Danos holding redfish caught in Pointe a la Hache on dead shrimp under a cork.



good again. But he cautions anglers unfamiliar with Iron Banks to be aware of numerous subsurface hazards there that have wrecked many a lower unit.

## BASS, SPECKS SPAWNING

"This is spawning time for specks and bass, so they'll be hungry," Danos said. "I expect the trout to show up in good numbers and sizes this month in Lake Robin, Lake Campo, Bay Lafourche and Oak River Bay. Generally, I'll fish live shrimp or soft-plastic baits under a 99-cent, clip-on cork, so I can easily adjust my depth to locate the fish."

"This time of year, the water temperatures are lower, so it's important to vary the depth of your cork. If everyone is 2½ feet under a cork, you'll miss fish hanging at the 4- or 5-foot depths in the ugly water. My motto: try a foot deeper."

"Live shrimp is always good insurance, but I'll still throw some plastic as well. I like the Salt Water Assassins in the green moon color, and Matrix in Lemonhead or ahrimp creole, or the Vudu or H2O shrimp in the glow color."

And the simple cast-and-retrieve method with swimbaits still produces, he said.

As for tactics, Danos will fish reefs, points, cuts, mouths of bayous, around marsh islands or anywhere he sees bait activity or good current flows.

"Naturally, I'll look for clean water, but the fish will bite in ugly water if the tide is moving," he said. "Sometimes, the better water is under the ugly water, closer to the bottom. You won't catch trout in pure freshwater, but I've been catching some nice trout in water that looks too ugly to fish. And if you poke up into some of the canals where there's grass, fish along those grasslines for reds and bass. I fish the same area with the same baits and catch reds, drum, bass, trout, croakers big enough to scale and fry whole, and even some flounder." ■

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# BREAKING THE CODE AT BUSSEY BRAKE

■ By Kinny Haddox



## Jake Ormond of Sterlington fishes all over the country as a touring bass pro. Breaking the “code” of the lakes he fishes is part of his daily work schedule, but he said there’s something unique about figuring out the “new” BUSSEY BRAKE RESERVOIR.

“When you go to most lakes, you know something about where people catch fish and how,” Ormond said, “and you are familiar with the structure. But Bussey is a totally different lake than it was ... before. It requires a totally new approach.”

The 2,200-acre, man-made reservoir in Morehouse Parish was drained, boat channels constructed and other improvements made after International Paper donated it to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. After being closed for 8 years, it reopened in July, 2020.

“Before, the water was muddy and there was no structure except the stumps and the two windbreaks with small cypress trees. There was no grass or vegetation,” Ormond said. “The lake was almost empty so long it has grown up in bushes and small trees everywhere. And there is vegetation everywhere. It’s great for the fish, but tough for the fishermen.”

### GREAT REWARDS

However, breaking the Bussey Brake code has great rewards. As anglers figure things out, results have been amazing. In the

first weeks after the lake was re-opened, two anglers weighed in bass weighing better than 10 pounds. This past winter, when crappie started moving out from under acres of lily pads and the leaves fell off thousands of young cypress trees, anglers started to find out what size fish lived there. In the same week, anglers caught black and white crappie that both broke into the state’s Top 10 fishing record standings.

“There are already some community holes developing for bass at Bussey,” Ormond said. “Most of these are along the windbreaks and the weedlines along the boat runs. These are good places to fish. But as the fish finish the spawn and move this spring, they’ll be really keying on the grass and bushes around the deeper sloughs. The best spots are where you can find holes in the middle of the grass or irregular edges to the grass.”

Ormond has already developed a list of favorite lures for Bussey. “All around, it’s just hard to beat that chrome and blue back Rat-L-Trap or something in a shad color like the Summer Shad,” said Ormond, who suggested other lures, including mixed-color spinnerbaits and buzzbaits — he makes his own JO



**BOTTOM:** When the crappie bunch up in the brush and trees at Bussey Brake, sometimes, so do the fishermen. **INSET:** Jimmy Ormond, father of bass pro Jake Ormond, got in on the largemouth action; this fish hit a square-billed crankbait.

custom lures — Grande Megatail and Zoom Speed worms in purple or junebug colors, crankbaits like the Lewis MR6 and SB57 in shad colors and frogs like the Booyah Popping Pad Crasher in black and blue.

His approach? Keep your eye out for baitfish and start looking. You want to keep your lure in contact with that grass but not bog down in it. And avoid the temptation to just go where everybody else is.

“One thing you have to remember is that at least 30% of Bussey is not fishable right now because the willow trees and bushes are grown up so thick. You can flip the edges, but you really can’t get back up in there. The bass have some great places to hide, for sure.”

**CRAPPIE ARE BACK >**



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Jimmy Watt said cracking the crappie code for slabs weighing 2 pounds or better starts with finding the shad

## CRAPPIE ARE BACK

Crappie were one of the top targets in the old Bussey Brake, but this past fall, they were hard to catch. They still aren't everywhere, but when fishermen find them, they are finding a good mix of small to medium fish up to some monster slabs that have obviously been in the lake a long time.

Jimmy Watt of Bastrop is one of the area's top crappie anglers; he tied the hand-made jigs that caught both of the winter's huge crappie. Here's how he suggests you fish the "new" Bussey.

"Like I always say, find the shad and find the fish," Watt said. "That's the reason they were catching so many fish up front this winter, because the shad were bunched up near the deep holes. Now, they've started moving out into the brush again, and by this time of year, the spawn is over. The fish will stay up in that brush and around the old stump fields, but they will be more scattered."

Watt said, unfortunately, there are no real easy ways to find fish except putting your bait in the water and go fishing.

"I would ride around and use my electronics to look for different depths and fish the edges," he said. "And be mindful, those fish are going to be up in that brush and willow trees. It's not easy fishing, but that's probably good for the lake right now.

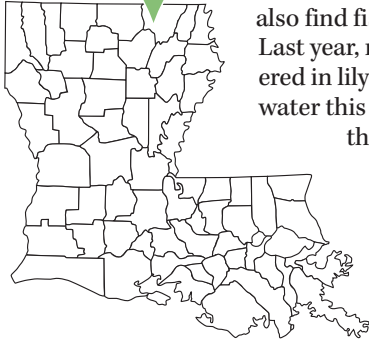
"I'd watch for birds, too. They'll be feeding wherever the shad are.

Fishermen familiar with the lake can also find fish up on the stump flats. Last year, most of the flats were covered in lily pads, but with the deeper water this year, those pads won't be as thick."

The water color changes quickly in Bussey Brake. Early in the year, it's a bit off-color, but in the warmer months, it's clearing up to a nice blue color, so the choice



Bussey Brake Reservoir



of lure colors is sometimes important sometimes. While some anglers like to fish shiners, Watt is simply a jig fisherman.

"What's a shiner?" he asked, joking. "No, seriously, I like to fish a silver jig with a plain leadhead that imitates a small shiner. I also think the best colors at Bussey, especially this time of year, will be natural light or dark colors. A good jig color for me is also the solid chartreuse. It's especially good when you have stained water."

With the fish up in the bushes, Watt said jigs also give you an advantage in not getting hung up as much as live bait. He advises anglers to learn to raise and lower their bait into the water by holding line in their free hands, placing the jig over the spot you want to fish and then lowering it. That keeps slack at the end of your rod at a minimum.

## BANKS AREN'T 'MONEY' >



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

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## BANKS AREN'T 'MONEY'

Watt agrees with Ormond about the banks at Bussey. They look great and offer some great cover for fish because the trees and bushes are grown out 10 to 15 feet from the banks, but you can't even reach the rock-lined levees, except in a few spots.

"That's a great spot for crappie earlier in the year during the spawn, but I don't think they'll hang around there this time of year anyway," he said. "They will move on out into the lake."

Anglers are also already catching some really big bluegill and good channel catfish. The bream are also mostly up in the bushes but are

also found scattered in beds around the grass. The edges of the structure around the levee is a good spot to try. The same can be said for catfish. The big fishing pier at the main boat dock, close to the paved boat ramp, is a good spot to fish. The fishing pier on the south end, along with a primitive launch area for kayak fisherman, is in prime bream and bass fishing territory without having to travel far.

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Breaking the code at Bussey Brake

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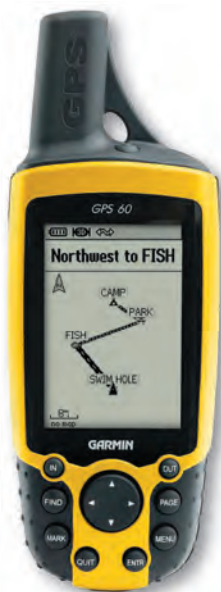
Special regulations have been put in place to protect the young and expanding fishery, and hopefully TO ensure a quality fishing experience for all anglers. Bass are managed with a 5-fish daily creel limit and 16-inch maximum size and a 1-fish exception (one fish bigger than 16 inches can be kept). Anglers are allowed 25 crappie per day with a 10-inch minimum size, and bream have a 50-fish daily creel limit with no size restrictions. State regulations are in effect for all other species.

All fishing gear other than rod-and-reel or cane/fiber-glass pole are prohibited. A valid state hunting/fishing license or Wild Louisiana Stamp is required to use WMAs. Anyone younger than 16 or older than 60 is exempt from this requirement. To purchase a license or stamp, visit [www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/wmarefugeconservation-area-licenses-and-permits](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/wmarefugeconservation-area-licenses-and-permits).

Additionally, a daily, free, self-clearing permit is required for all activities on WMAs. The check-in portion must be completed before each day's activity. The check-out portion must be carried by each person while on the WMA and must be completed upon exiting the WMA. ■

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# FEBRUARY FREEZE PROBABLY DELAYED SPAWNING ACTION AT TOLEDO BEND

**T** By John Dean

he big shiver will be far behind us, in the rear-view mirror of time, when you get a chance to read this. We'll all be a lot warmer, and Toledo Bend's bass will be acting more like it's March than April.

Why?

I believe the late-February deep freeze that socked us in and around Toledo Bend — deeply impacting Louisiana and Texas — is pushing everything back as far as spawning action. That storm was one for the books, no doubt. And, bass behavior in April could be more like March.

What happened? The third week of February, for three consecutive days, the air temperature never rose above 32 degrees, with ice, sleet and snow. Those record-breaking frigid days definitely affected the life cycle of the lake's bass.

Barring another wild weather scenario, April should be more consistent, prime time for those who love to target the lake this time of year. We know there is a greater chance to get our hands on a double-digit bass.

For starters, we need water temperatures much higher than 55 degrees to get the girls locked down on their beds. When the spawners start the bedding process, they're locked down, which is a time for soft plastics on Carolina rigs and drop shots — two of my favorite tactics now. They'll be locked in my hand.

Hopefully, April will be milder and closer to normal weather, which means water in the main part of the lake could be just as warm as water in creeks and coves. That's where I need to be. I'll target bass "outside," because typically, this is a dominant time for those two tactics, with wacky rigged soft plastics and trick worms closely following. I'll offer a watermelon/red, green/pumpkin red or black soft plastic.

On my Carolina rig, I use 40-pound Power Pro braid and tie it to a 2½- to 3-foot leader of 15-pound fluorocarbon under a ½- or ¾-ounce weight.

When I'm drop-shotting a soft plastic, I fish with a ⅛- or ⅜-ounce bell sinker on 20-pound braid with a fluorocarbon leader of no more than 2½ feet. Because I often go to a 5-inch Zoom finesse worm, I'll use a 2/0 hook and nothing larger.

Of course, bass can be caught chunking moving baits such as Rat-L-Traps and bladed jigs like the Delta Lures Thunder Jig. But 90% of the time, I'll fish with soft plastics, because I want one of those 10-pound-class bass out there.

Water temperature and water level will critical. Looking at the lake as February gave way to March, the lake level won't be close

Nick Terry has a grip on a 4-plus-pound bass he caught in April on a Carolina-rigged Fluke in 3 to 5 feet of water, fishing with guide John Dean, who says April is his favorite month to catch bass on a Carolina-rigged soft plastic.



to full pool by April — barring some huge rain event. If the lake doesn't rise about 3 feet to full pool of 172.0, that will rule out fishing the bushes.

How high or low the lake is in April determines where the bass set up. Because the northern end of the lake — say from San Miguel Creek to San Patricio Bayou and Solon's — usually fires first as far as the spawn, that region should offer fair to good action on shallow flats and drains in April.

With the glaring lack of underwater vegetation, bass will have to settle on wood in stump fields and deadfalls on and along drains on shallow flats, points and ridges that act like highways to and from spawning area. If bass anglers want to probe the inside areas, warmer water generally can be found in the back of creeks, where the baitfish go.

The north shoreline of creeks should offer the warmest water because those cold north winds don't hit them like they do the south end.

April should offer a good chance to catch a bragging-size largemouth. ■

*For a guide trip on Toledo Bend, John Dean can be reached at 936-404-2688.*

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Keith Lusher Jr.

## COVER WATER FOR POST-SPAWN BASS ON THE NORTHSHORE

**W**hen it comes to spring bass fishing, there are three stages bass go through in order to complete the spawning cycle.

- Prespawn bass can be found in areas that allow them to move into the shallows at the moment when the water temperature is desirable; this is known as staging.

- Next comes what may be everyone's favorite stage, the spawn. It's a time where big bass that normally make a living avoiding anglers hiding out in deep haunts and strategic areas to feed are forced into the shallows. In fact, the spawn may be the easiest time to pattern bass because of the guarantee that every male and female will make their way into the shallows sometime in February or March.

- And then there's the next stage: the post-spawn. It has often reduced fishermen to scratching their heads and slamming down their hats trying to figure out a pattern.

Patrick Engerran has been fishing the Northshore for more than a decade; he loves fishing the rivers and the bayous in February and March for bass, but when it comes to post-spawn, well....

"There's a reason it's called the post-spawn funk. This month, you're better off working on your golf game," he said.

Engerran is big into the tournament scene on the Northshore, so he doesn't have the option to skip April, when bass are typically done with the reproduction cycle and in a post-spawn mood.

"April is my least-favorite month to fish, because it's so hard to pattern these bass on the Northshore," he said. "They could be already back in their deep spots; they could be just coming off the bed, or they could be eating only one meal a day because they're recovering from the spawn."

Without a doubt, April is when bass are scattered the most, but Engerran's tournament schedule forces him to figure them out. The most-important thing, he said, is to cover water.

A spinnerbait can be the ticket for postspawn bass on the Northshore this month.



"It's so hard to find a pattern with these fish in April, so what I'll do is have numerous poles ready rigged with different lures and a fully charged trolling motor, because I'm about to cover some serious water," he said.

Edgerran uses four main baits when fishing for post-spawn bass: a spinnerbait, a Chatterbait and either a weedless swimbait for marshy areas close to the lake or a square-billed crankbait for the wooded sections further upriver. It's tough to fish a crankbait in the southern sections of the tributaries because of the amount of eel grass and vegetation.

"You never know what they're going to want on any given day, so you need to put different things in front of them to better your chances of enticing a strike," he said.

Edgerran recommends switching baits often.

"You may cover a stretch of water throwing a spinnerbait, and for one reason or another, that's not what that bass want, so be sure to be throwing something else if you fish that same stretch on the way back to the launch," he said.

As far as colors go, Edgerran recommends trying to incorporate red any way you can into your baits.

"All of the rivers and bayou here on the Northshore have crawfish coming out of the swamps, so it won't be unusual for them to be feeding on crawfish in April," he said.

Although April can be tough fishing, Edgerran gives some assurance that bass can be caught during the post-spawn.

"The fish are there so they have to eat eventually," he joked. ■

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# FEMALE DUO ENJOYING TIME IN MALE-DOMINATED SPORT

AFTER 2 YEARS ON HIGH-SCHOOL CIRCUIT, LOUVIERE, GUIDRY ARE ON THEIR WAY TO STATE TOURNAMENT

**T** By Don Shoopman

Two junior-varsity basketball teammates from Teurlings Catholic High School, both starters, are reeling in points in another sport that's on the rise in the Sportsman's Paradise.

They already have qualified for this year's Louisiana High School B.A.S.S. Nation State Championship and have two more years to make more of an impact in a male-dominated sport. Yes, two TCHS Fishing Team members are 16-year-old girls, Sadie Guidry of Scott and Lily Girouard of Broussard.

The team — “captained” by Lily's father, Jeremy Girouard — is hooked on tournament fishing. The G&G duo puts bass on the digital scale more often than not.

“We've done pretty good,” Girouard said, matter-of-factly.

Their highest finish was seventh on Nov. 7 at a Western Division qualifying tournament at Toledo Bend. Sophomores, the two caught about 30 bass and culled to a 5-bass limit weighing 10.29 pounds, punching their ticket to the state championship on May 8-9 out of Doiron's Landing in Stephenville.

“I remember we went on a long ride. We were fishing shallow,



Lily Girouard, left, and Sadie Guidry, girl partners on the Teurlings Catholic High School Fishing Team, hold bass they caught in November 2020 as sophomores in the Louisiana High School B.A.S.S. Nation Western Qualifier at Toledo Bend. They finished seventh and qualified for the state tournament in May.



Lily Girouard and Sadie Guidry were freshmen when they fished their first Louisiana High School B.A.S.S. Nation tournament in October 2019 at Henderson Lake.

up against the bank,” Guidry said, adding they used junebug and watermelon plastic worms.

Lily said they rely mostly on Zoom Speed Worms.

Jeremy Girouard, 48, said he drove the girls far up the wind-whipped lake from San Miguel SRA Park to Martinez Creek. They were in a 17-foot G3 with a 90HP Yamaha, their regular ride.

“They caught a lot of fish. It was a good time,” Jeremy Girouard said.

David Guidry, Sadie's father, credited their advanced skill level after just two years to their captain.

“These girls are a serious threat on the water. A lot of it is, I have to thank Jeremy Girouard,” he said.

“I love it, actually. I'd rather take them than go myself. It's a good time. I love it. I can't wait for the next one,” said Girouard's father, who patiently taught Guidry when to time a hookset on a plastic worm bite.

“We always fish with a worm, a lot of straight-tail worms. It's very slow,” Guidry said.

Occasionally, Lily Girouard said, they throw their second-favorite artificial lure, a topwater popper.

“It's really fun. Me and Lily cut up and joke around, but we're serious at the same time,” she said.

Cut up? Joke around? Many a time, David Guidry passes them and hears music coming from the boat, where the girls might even be dancing.

Guidry, a brunette with long hair, has been bass fishing for 2 years. Girouard, who is blonde, has one more year of bass-fishing experience and has been reeling in sac-a-lait for quite a few years, including during weekly sac-a-lait tournaments with her father out of Cypress Cove Landing on Henderson Lake. The Girouards, who cash in consistently, have won two Angler of the Year titles. She also fishes evening bass tournaments at Henderson Lake with her father in a crawfish skiff rigged for bassing.

"Those are fun. I get so excited. It's fun," Girouard said.

The duo's rookie season came as freshmen in 2019-20. David Guidry, was responsible for pairing the two girls, who had also played basketball together the year before.

"I'm extremely proud. I didn't think she'd actually join the team their freshman year. I knew Lily liked to fish. I said, 'Why don't you team up and give it a try?'" David Guidry said. "They teamed up. It's been an awesome experience. She got into it. I enjoy her time in the tournaments. It's been a good thing. It's been a blessing, for sure."

A handful of girls fish the state's high school circuit.

"Last year was weird. We were the only ones," Lily Girouard said. "I don't think we would have done it if the other didn't, like if we had to fish with a boy partner."

"I think it's going to grow pretty fast. I see more and more freshmen joining the Teurlings team, and I see a bunch more people than last year."

For example, 36 students — 18 teams — are on the TCHS Fishing Team, according to David Guidry.

A Northern Division qualifier was the girls' first scheduled event of 2021, a week ago on Caney Lake. They plan to fish a Western Division qualifier March 27 on Henderson Lake.

Girouard, who works in project management for Accurate Measurement Controls Inc., probably will continue as captain.

"We don't want to mess up a good thing. The girls are kicking butt on this high school thing," David Guidry said. "I don't know if there's been another girl-girl team beat them in a tournament. They were 20th in state last year. Not another girls' team came close. I'm a proud dad."

Sadie Guidry's older brother, Dylan, a senior, fishes with Brayden Melancon on the TCHS fishing team. David Guidry captains that team.

What's in the future? Sadie Guidry wants to fish at least one national tournament.

"I know Jeremy wants to make a national appearance," David Guidry said.

Ditto for Lily Girouard, who's thinking about bass fishing after high school.

"Depending on how good I do, the opportunities," she said, noting she believes girls can be as successful as boys in competitive bass fishing. ■

*To find out more about Louisiana High School B.A.S.S. Nation, go to [louisianahighschoolbassnation.com](http://louisianahighschoolbassnation.com) or the organization's Facebook page.*

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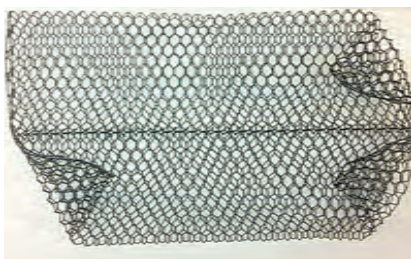
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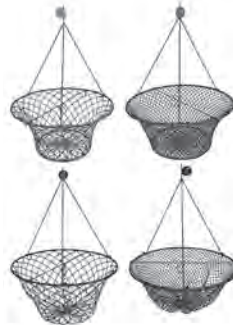
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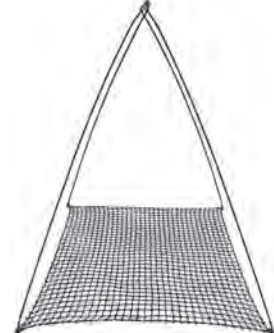
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# FOR APRIL'S CYPRESS LAKE CRAPPIE, FOLLOW 'SASQUATCH'S' ADVICE: RUN THE REEDS

**T** By Kinny Haddox  
 he visible structure on 3,000-acre Cypress Lake near Benton won't give first-time visitors much of a clue about where to fish. But you can look for several things that will clue you as to what type of areas where they might be biting.

April is still a great time to catch spawning crappie on Cypress Lake, and when he gets a chance, Sasquatch will even be there. If you follow his advice, you can catch crappie, too.

Photographic proof: Sasquatch (Wesley Miller) with a couple of the kind of crappie you can catch along the reed lines in Cypress Lake in April.



Sasquatch, in this case, is Wesley Miller of Doyline. He guides on numerous north Louisiana lakes, and one of his favorites this time of year is Cypress. When you see him on the lake, you'll understand his nickname.

"At first glance it, might be a little hard to figure out Cypress Lake; there aren't fish just everywhere, but there's one thing you can depend on for April crappie," he said. "That's the reed lines that you can find almost anywhere around the lake. If you fish up close to those reed lines, you are going to catch crappie, especially white crappie."

To the naked eye, Cypress Lake is a fairly featureless lake. It is 15 to 20 feet at its deepest point and has one creek channel flowing through it. There are flats along the creek channels and very little sign of standing timber, except for stumps along the channel. That's why the reeds are good spots and easy for anyone to find.

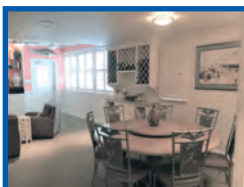
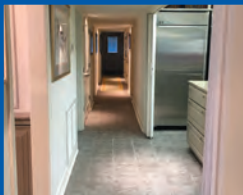
"I like to fish the pockets in the reeds because that's where they go to spawn," Miller said. "I like to fish a shiner or jig up under a cork about a foot deep. Get as close to the reeds as you can. You can find those without electronics, and they are easy

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Some of Wesley Miller's favorite hair jig colors for Cypress Lake.

to catch. In fact, you can fish pretty fast. If your cork hits the water and it doesn't keep going, you can pick it back up and try another spot."

Crappie here run around a pound to pound-and-a-half on average, but there are some real slabs, too. They also hold around the boat docks and piers and off the reds near deeper water. Miller locates them on his depth finder and fishes vertically for them.

His favorite lures are his own, hand-tied hair jigs and Bobby Garland plastics. He fishes several colors of hair jigs and loves green and chartreuse. At the top of the list is also the Bistineau jig, a lure with pink head, purple body and chartreuse skirt. Favorite plastic colors are electric chicken and cajun cricket.

Before you plan a trip to Cypress, know that it is a lake surrounded by residential communities and even though it is open to the public, you must purchase a current boat sticker and follow the lake's rules and regulations. Information about that can be found at: [cypressblackbayou.com](http://cypressblackbayou.com).

For safety reasons, when boating, always go counter-clockwise, meaning keep the shoreline on your right or port side. The lake is very busy with ski boats and other recreational watercraft



when the weather starts to warm, so it's also a good idea to plan fishing trips early in the morning and late in the evening, especially on the weekends. The lake is served by three boat launches: Old Palmetto Rd., Rarks Rd. and 990 Highway 162. ■

To book a guide trip with Wesley Miller, visit his Facebook page: *Big Sasquatch Outdoors* — [www.facebook.com/search/top?q=big%20sasquatch%20outdoors](https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=big%20sasquatch%20outdoors)

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# IT'S GOGGLE-EYE TIME IN BAY WALLACE AREA

## Target cypress knees for spawning fish

**T** By Don Shoopman  
he perfect time to drop goggle-eye after goggle-eye after goggle-eye in the ice chest — and eventually into the frying pan — has arrived in south-central Louisiana.

That is, if the water temperature climbs higher than 70 degrees. Usually, the run starts in April and continues until the water gets too hot, typically around mid-August when those and other fish seek cooler water.

Bill McCarty, a lifelong Morgan City resident and all-around outdoorsman, enjoys setting the hook on those panfish, many of them bigger than his hand. So does his wife, Julie, and their daughter, Jill, and friends who are lucky enough to take him up on a practically guaranteed invite to catch goggle-eye.

It's bream, er, goggle-eye, fishing at its finest. It's pure delight. "It's a good family trip. It's a good action trip," McCarty said.

One of his favorite places to tap the goggle-eye is Bay Wallace along the Intracoastal Waterway a few miles east of Amelia. It's actually a fairly long bayou lined with cypress trees.

Those cypress trees and cypress knees in 2½- to 3-foot depths harbor goggle-eye, bull bream and sac-a-lait. Now more than ever is the time to pull in dozens of goggle-eye as they move up to spawn.



Ian Carmichael, an All-State center on the Morgan City High School football team, smiles after catching a big goggle-eye while fishing with Bill McCarty of Morgan City in the Bay Wallace area.

McCarty advised anglers to go in and travel up the bayou until the water clears, then fish either shoreline.

"It doesn't matter. I find either side good," he said.

McCarty will move down the bank using his trolling motor, dropping a crawfish-colored hair jig tipped with a Crappie Nibble in and around the cypress trees and cypress knees in the preferred depth.

"A lot of guys use jigs (tipped) with a piece of worm," he said.

If sac-a-lait are prevalent and hungry, as they often are, he'll pull out one of his bassing rods and feed them a small, watermelon/red or green pumpkin Zoom Ultra Vibe Speed Craw, Texas-rigged under a light worm weight. That's a goggle-eye favorite.

McCarty, an accomplished bass angler, fishes a hair jig on his favorite sac-a-lait poles, a 5- or 5½-foot Zebco Delta spincast combo. He uses 6-pound monofilament and a small cork above the jig. Another favorite of his is a crawfish-colored Beetle Spin.

If Bay Wallace's goggle-eye aren't biting, McCarty points panfishermen east to Bluebird Canal, dead-ends along Bayou Coppersaw and the Bayou Black area.

"If the water's too high (in Bay Wallace)," he said, head for those areas,

Many dead-end canals in those marshy areas, he said, are undercut, so you can cast or drop a hair jig or tube jig right along the shoreline and still be in the desired depth to target goggle-eye. That isn't always the case along the shallower shorelines of Bay Wallace. That's why the cypress tree/cypress knees pattern away from the bank can be lights out on goggle-eye. ■

Goggle-eye like this can fill an ice chest during April while fishing Bay Wallace, dead-ends along Bayou Coppersaw, Bluebird Canal and the Bayou Black area.

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## SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope

The redear sunfish, aka shellcracker, is identified most easily by the colorful edge around its earflap. It can range from yellow to orange to red.



# SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: SHELLCRACKER

THIS PANFISH CAN BE CAUGHT ALMOST ANYWHERE IN THE SOUTH, BY ALMOST ANYBODY

Brian Cope

**R**edear sunfish, *Lepomis microlophus*, commonly referred to as shellcrackers, are a species of panfish. They have the typical panfish body: the body is longer than it is tall, and it is relatively thin. Holding your hand with the thumb facing up and pinkie finger facing down offers a glimpse at the overall shape of a shellcracker.

These fish vary widely in color based on the waters in which they live, but shellcrackers usually have a good bit of yellow on their sides, with darker backs.

The name redear sunfish comes from the red ring that outlines the fish's black ear flap, aka operculum; sometimes it's bright yellow or orange. Its more recognizable name, shellcracker, comes

from the fish's habit of eating snails and mussels, cracking their shells with a set of teeth located in the throat.

Aside from snail and mussels, shellcrackers also eat worms, insects, small crawdads and tiny insect larvae. They mainly feed along the bottom and are often found by anglers in the same areas as bluegill and other panfish, but deeper in the water column.

Another common nickname for this fish also comes from its feeding habits. Known by some anglers as "stumpknocker," this fish is known for ramming into submerged stumps and vegetation to knock potential food free. They are also known as chinquapin and yellow bream.

## COMMUNITY BEDS

Shellcrackers begin spawning in the late spring or early summer, once the water temperature reaches 70 degrees. They spawn in circular nests, known as beds, that can be as shallow as 6 inches and as deep as 10 feet. These fish usually build beds in huge groups that can number anywhere from a few dozen to more than



**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.

a hundred. Their beds are sometimes located directly beside or even intermingled with bluegill beds and the beds of other panfish.

Shellcrackers can be found in many different water types throughout the United States. They are common in ponds, lakes, swamps, streams and small rivers. They prefer calmer areas and are easily found in swift rivers by finding areas with current breaks.

While many anglers catch shellcrackers only in shallow water, these fish spend much of their lives in very deep water, moving shallow only when it's time to spawn.

### TOUGH TO ID

Anglers sometimes misidentify shellcrackers with a number of other panfish, including bluegills, redbreasts, green sunfish and pumpkinseeds. Pumpkinseeds are the most similar to shellcrackers, and it's not uncommon for the two species to spawn together, creating hybrid offspring. Just look for that colorful border on the ear flap.

The Louisiana state record shellcracker weighed 2.87 pounds and was caught from Caney Lake by Jerry Smelly in August 1998. Mississippi's state record, a 3.33-pound fish, came from Tippah County Lake in November 1991. It was caught by James Martin. The world record, a 5-pound, 12-ounce shellcracker, was caught by Hector Brito in February 2014 from Lake Havasu, Ariz. ■

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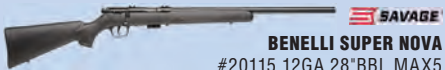
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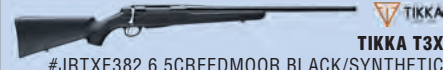
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## HUNTER OF THE MONTH

### Gavin Trosclair

Gavin Trosclair, 10, is a fifth-grader at St. Joseph Elementary School in Thibodaux. He really likes being a part of nature and learning about different animals and how they live. When his family asked him why he enjoys hunting, they were somewhat surprised by one of his answers. He said he's learned a lot about hunting skills and how you don't always get what you want. But he enjoys the challenge.

"I like hunting because when you do kill something you can usually eat what you kill and even share the meat with others," he said.

Trosclair loves spending time with his friends and family at their hunting lease, and he recently shot a 130-pound doe. Trosclair posed for a picture with his doe with his dad, Todd "TJ" Trosclair.

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## ANGLER OF THE MONTH

### Kevin McClary

Kevin McClary has been fishing Louisiana waters his entire life. He grew up fishing with his dad in Lake Pontchartrain when inshore saltwater fishing was at its peak.

“Thirty-years later and I’m still venturing off along either bank fishing, or I’m in my new Crescent Kayak deep into the marshes of southeast Louisiana in search of all the great fish this estuary has to offer,” he said.

McClary mostly fishes southeast Louisiana, from the Biloxi Marsh south to Chauvin and Pointe aux Chenes.



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■ By Kinny Haddox

**SUNRISE, SUNSET OR SOLUNAR? DON'T RESTRICT YOUR FISHING TO A FEW HOURS A DAY. GET ON THE WATER WHENEVER YOU CAN, BUT PAY ATTENTION TO THE HINTS MOTHER NATURE PROVIDES.**

# **STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT**

# There's a simple answer to the question, "When is the best time to go fishing?"

The answer:

**"ANYTIME YOU GET A CHANCE."**

While that is definitely true, there are times when you can improve your odds of finding fish in the mood to bite. Sunrise and sunset have traditionally been two of those; there's something about that first and last hours of daylight that rings the dinner bell for fish.

And then, there are the Solunar Tables.

There are several versions that can provide a baseline tool to determine when fish may generally feed more intensely or for longer periods. These tables are based on moon phases — major periods are when the moon is straight overhead and minor periods are when the moon is directly underfoot. And that backs up the sunrise and sunset theory. When the sun rises or sets at the same time the moon is directly overhead, those are the best times to fish, based on the signs Mother Nature gives us.

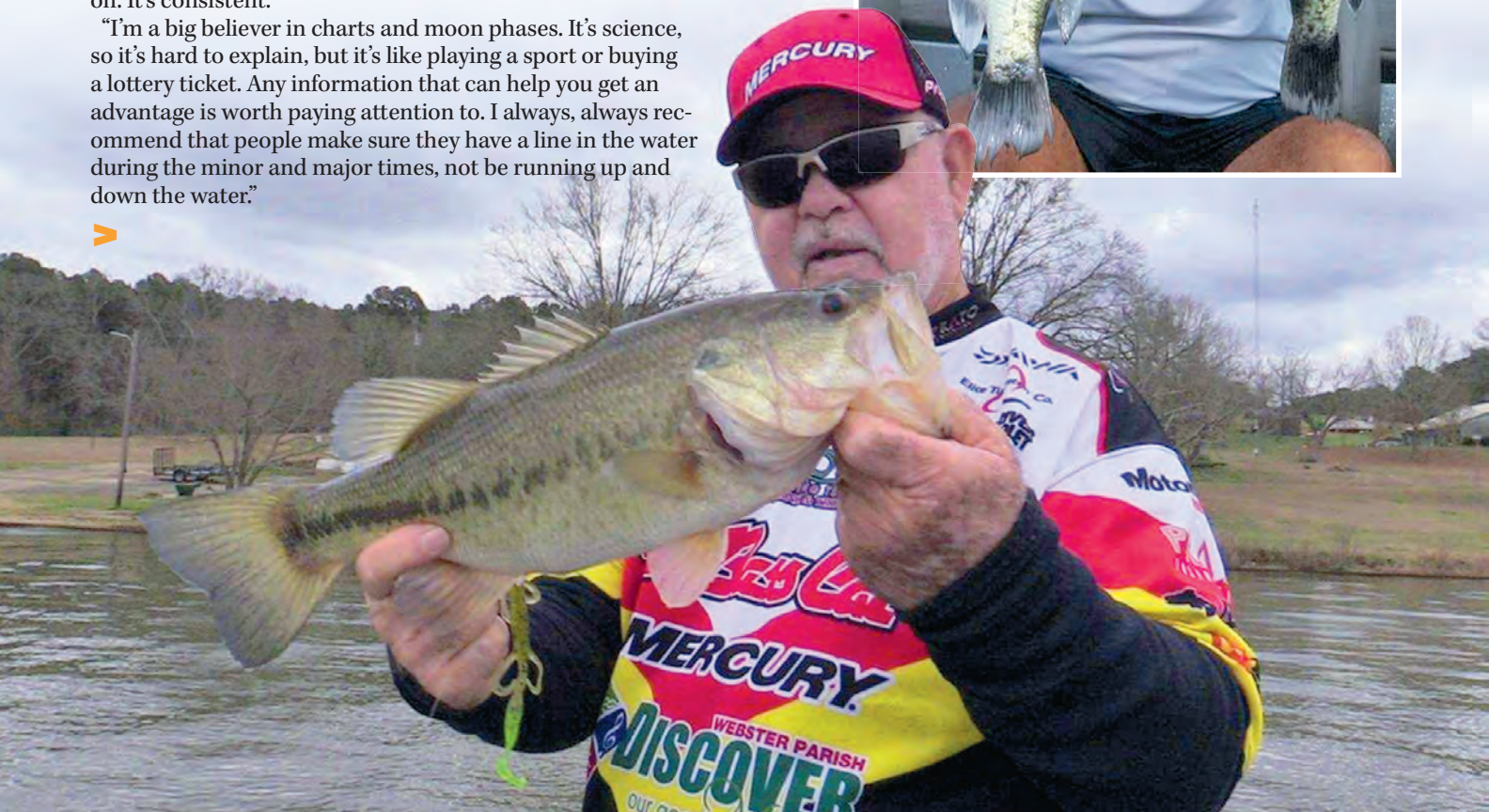
And fishermen who spend the most time on the water are often the ones who pay the most attention to the tables.

"There's always a first thing in the morning and a last thing in the evening bite," said Adam Jaynes of Just Fish Guide Service, who guides saltwater fishermen in the Calcasieu/Sabine area. "It may be 5 minutes, or it may be an hour. But it will be there unless something weird is going on. It's consistent.

"I'm a big believer in charts and moon phases. It's science, so it's hard to explain, but it's like playing a sport or buying a lottery ticket. Any information that can help you get an advantage is worth paying attention to. I always, always recommend that people make sure they have a line in the water during the minor and major times, not be running up and down the water."



Slab crappie are also affected by Mother Nature as far as when they choose to feed the most on any given day. **BELOW:** Bass like this one Homer Humphreys caught can show up at any time, but early and late are two favorite times for most anglers.



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**T**he effects of solunar forces are more obvious in saltwater situations, where the phases of the moon are tied to the tide.

“I’m not a big fan of generalizations, and these discussions are generalizations, but I do believe in them,” he said. “I go fishing almost every day, and I don’t get to pick and choose when to go. We go at daylight and fish most of the day, so we fish to make them bite anytime we can. If you limited your fishing to just early, late and the major times, you wouldn’t spend much time on the water.”

Jaynes also said the same thing applies, whether you are 100 miles off the coast or up in the marsh.

The same applies in freshwater, according to Homer Humphreys of Minden, a former bass pro who guides on Lake Bistineau, Lake Claiborne and the Red River in northern Louisiana.

“There are times when fishing, in general, is a bit better than others, but there’s an exception on everything. Just like you know to plant potatoes around Valentine’s Day; that may not always end up being right,” he said. “You can catch fish early and late and when the Solunar Tables say most of the time. But that isn’t the only go-to time for sure.”

“You’ve just got to spend time on the water and believe in what you are doing and what you are seeing yourself. You can’t just go an hour in the morning and afternoon, or when the tables say to and catch fish. You’ve got to spend time on the water and be confident you can catch them. Think about bass tournament fishermen. They miss the first hour of the day



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Keeping your bait in the water at the major feeding time period leads to catches like this redfish. **OPPOSITE:** Adam Jaynes believes being in the right spot at the right times of the day is key to landing giant speckled trout like this one.



waiting in line for takeoffs. They don't ever fish late in the day in a tournament. And they catch bags full of bass."

That proves one of the major exceptions Humphreys has found. He said the majority of his big bass have been caught between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. It's the best time, long-term, for production of big fish, he said. Then, when the Solunar Tables, weather, barometric pressure and that time frame all match up, you certainly don't want to miss it. Humphreys said that is true for crappie as well as bass.

"Pay attention when you are fishing," he says. "You will notice at certain times of the day, the squirrels will be running on the tree limbs,

snakes will be slithering across the water, birds will be flying and feeding and the old catfish and stuff will start rolling. Get on your best spot and get your bait in the water then. That's Mother Nature telling you it's on." ■

You can reach Capt. Jaynes at 409-988-3901 or [justfishsabine.com](http://justfishsabine.com) and Homer Humphreys at 318-422-1192.



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

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# FROM THE LAKE TO CLEANING TABLE TO DINNER TABLE

## A GOOD FISH-CLEANING TABLE HELPS PERFECT THE PROCESS

**E** By Kinny Haddox  
 everyone who catches fish and likes to eat them has one thing in common: they need a good spot to clean and properly prepare freshly caught fish. Any fish that you plan on eating should be kept alive or on ice after they are caught. Properly handling fish from the lake to the cleaning table to your dinner table helps you get the most out of your catch.

There are a wide variety of types of places to clean fish, but they also have some common features. You need a smooth, level surface on which to cut the fish. You need a good source of clean water to rinse your fish and a proper place to properly dispose of the carcasses. Other than a good, sharp knife or two, that's all you need. If you use electric knives, a

good ground fault electrical outlet nearby is a must.

When I was growing up, my school-teacher father and I fished multiple times each week. He took an old, rolling barbeque pit frame and made a piece of wood to fit on the top. We rolled it over to the backyard hydrant and had an old washtub into which we threw the remains. They were later buried in a compost pile by the garden and helped grow awesome vegetables.

But fish-cleaning stations have come a long way since then.

"You see people using just about every kind of setup you can imagine to clean fish, from an old 2x12 on the tailgate of a truck to fancy, stainless steel fish-cleaning stations like they have at the state parks

and some marinas," said Josh Maxwell of Arcadia, a member of Team Overalls. "But the more organized you are for cleaning fish, the better. And the way you clean and handle your fish does have an affect on the quality when you cook them."

Maxwell fishes mainly for crappie, but he said the same principles apply no matter what kind of fish you're cleaning.

### A PERFECT TABLE

"I have an old, stainless-steel table that I use, and I like stainless because it cleans up so easily," he said. "It's also good and flat and is easy to maneuver the fish around on. Some of the ones like they have at our state parks and marinas are really nice because they have the tables, plug-ins, water and even collection areas for the fish remains. Some of them even have grinders that make mulch out of the entrails and run them back in the lake."

One thing Maxwell does is use two big, stainless-steel pans with cold water. When he filets a fish, he throws the halves in the first pan. Then, he takes them out, cuts out the rib portion and puts the finished filet in fresh water. Depending on the temperature, he always keeps them cold.

Saltwater fishermen usually have the

A big pile of fresh fish filets is a whole lot easier to manage with an organized approach to fish cleaning. **OPPOSITE:** This plastic folding table is full of slab crappie that will soon be ready for supper after being prepared on this popular type of fish cleaning setup.

same type of setup, but on a larger scales. Some marinas have almost setups almost like butcher shops. Another popular setup for small- to medium-sized fish are portable, fold-up plastic tables. Many anglers who live on the lake also have tables built in to their boat docks with double sinks and city water run out to the cleaning area.

"There's not a right or wrong way to do it," he said. "Just have a good cleaning table area where you can be efficient, and keep it clean. That's the key to making the most of your fish from lake to table ... to table." ■



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# PROPERTY LINE TOMS

**TURKEYS OFTEN HANG OUT IN PLACES YOU DON'T HAVE PERMISSION TO HUNT, BUT THEY'RE CLOSE BY. HERE'S HOW TO DEAL WITH GOBBLERS ON THE NEXT TRACT OF LAND.**

■ By Andy Douglas

# YOU'VE PROBABLY BEEN THERE.

You know where a big tom has been roosting and go after him early, before fly-down time. He gobbles, but he is not exactly where he is supposed to be; he is close to the property line. You go straight to him, and suddenly, there you are, face-to-face with a big **POSTED** sign — and your tom is just across the line.

What do you do? Where should you sit? The answer is not always a simple one when considering what's legal and what's ethical.

## FRINGE TURKEYS

Hens and gobblers are not respecters of property lines. They do, however, love diverse areas, and they spend a lot of their time along the edges of habitat: fields, stands of pines, oak flats, swamps, clear-cuts and pastures. This even includes thickets and cutovers when hens start to look for nesting areas.

It just so happens that in these diverse places, turkey hunters are chasing spring gobblers — the breaks and edges of different habitats, which often occur along a property line. When big pine timber is next to an open pasture, or a big oak flat meets up with a fresh, clean clear-cut, many times, they are often owned by different individuals.

Turkeys spend a lot of time near borders of different terrain. They use edges to navigate and can easily go to different feeding areas or quickly escape predators.

## WHAT'S LEGAL

It is perfectly legal for a property owner, lease-holder or hunter with legal permission to hunt an entire property, even up to the actual property line. You cannot legally cross the line unless there is legal permission or agreements with the adjacent property owner. Nor can game be shot across the line — it would be trespassing to retrieve a gobbler, even if it was only a few feet.

## WHAT'S ETHICAL? >



Because habitat edges often occur along properties lines, and because turkeys frequent edges, you're liable to be faced with this situation.

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## WHAT'S ETHICAL?

It's a loaded question and can be different, as each hunter's ethics may differ. Any way it is looked at, though, turkey hunting right on the property line is not a good idea. Even though it is legal, it can cause conflicts.

"I stay away from the property lines while turkey hunting," said Van Britt, a veteran turkey hunter. "Every time you set up on a gobbler, you have a decision to make; you can set yourself up for success or failure and even for adversity."

Etiquette calls for hunters to respect property lines and have regards for other hunters who hunt properties next to yours. It is manners that leads hunters to back off the property line at least a little more than shotgun range.

If a hunter backs off the line a good distance, there will not be any subsequent accusations or any temptations to take a shot at a tom across that line.

"I don't put myself in the position of having to make that decision," Britt said. "A hundred yards away from property lines is a good rule of thumb."



Hens will often feed along the edges of fields and big timber, common sites of property boundaries, and gobblers will usually not be far behind. **ABOVE:** Hunters should try to stay at least as far away from the edge of a property as the range of their shotgun.

## TACTICS FOR FRINGE GOBBLERS

If you are hunting a place with different types of habitat, it is a good idea to hunt the edges, as long as the property is continuous and you are not hunting along a boundary. Here are a few breaks in turkey habitat to target:

- Big pine timber next to a field or pasture;
- Stream management zones (SMZs);
- Large, open hardwoods joining plantation pines;
- Sandbars on rivers, creeks and streams running through any terrain;
- Logging trails and rights-of-way in big open woods;
- Edges of green fields and food plots;
- Long and high ridges, especially in hardwoods;
- Alongside flooded timber.

The list could go on. The bottom line is, any change in topography can be places spring turkeys will frequent. Sitting on edges with decoys in an open area is very productive.

When it comes to calling, there is no magic call that will bring them in running from a neighboring property. Basic traditional calling and patience is the key to luring them in.

"I don't go out with the intentions of calling a turkey off someone else's place," said Britt.

## CONCLUSION

Not all woods are created equal, so consider the terrain that you are hunting; find the edges, breaks in terrain, and changes in topography — you will encounter more turkeys. Remember that turkeys, like other animals, will use the path of least resistance, whether they are feeding or traveling from one area to another. Use the changes in terrain and hunt the edges, and if the edge you are near is a property line, just back off a little and enjoy the hunt. ■



Andy Douglas is an outdoor writer and photographer from Brookhaven, Miss. Contact him at [andydouglas.outdoors@yahoo.com](mailto:andydouglas.outdoors@yahoo.com)

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A good hatch: hopefully, these young turkeys will survive and continue to grow and increase the number of turkeys in the population.

## WILD TURKEYS: IT'S TOUGH TO ADD BIRDS

HABITAT IMPROVEMENT IS A KEY FACTOR IN EFFORTS TO BUILD A HUNTABLE FLOCK IN YOUR NECK OF THE WOODS



**If** you have never hunted turkeys, let me suggest that you don't start. Turkey hunting can become quite addictive, and once you're hooked, it is difficult to stop.

I grew up in northwest Louisiana in the 1960s, a time when there were no turkeys to hunt. A few attempts had been made to restock Webster Parish with birds, but efforts had not been successful. Consequently, we never hunted turkeys. In fact, I didn't see my first wild turkey until I was in college in 1972.

I went to work for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries in 1976 as a biologist in the Florida parishes and quickly discovered a world that had wild turkeys. I was soon looking forward to spring turkey season. I also became involved with the department's continued restocking efforts and was able to send turkeys to Webster Parish and adjacent Bienville Parish.

Turkey hunting and management work can be quite rewarding, but when the populations crash, it can be quite frustrating. Many of the early restocking efforts failed because of poaching. Locked gates and posted signs helped to make our restocking efforts more successful in many areas.

### HARD TIMES

At one time, the state's Wildlife Management Areas provided good hunting opportunity for hunters. A glance at 2021 tells a somewhat different story. Pearl River WMA was once a premier area for turkey hunting, but this year, it offers only a 2-day, general lottery hunt. This population crashed in the 1990s, and Hurricane Katrina helped seal the deal.

Sherburne WMA was another premier area that greatly contributed to the public-land harvest, but it offers only a 2-day, general lottery hunt and a 3-day hunt open to all hunters. Some of the better WMAs along the Mississippi River drainage have had populations declining due to flooding and timber issues, Sherburne being one of them.

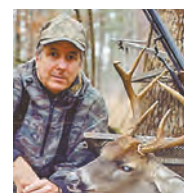
The Kisatchie National Forest in the western part of the state has become an important area for wild turkeys, but guess what? Hurricane Laura hit last August and did extensive damage in southwest and central Louisiana. A U.S. Department of Agriculture newsletter indicated that the storm did \$1.1 billion in damage to Louisiana's timber industry, but the national forest lands, for the most part, are open this year for several

weeks of turkey hunting.

Turkey hunting success depends on having turkeys to hunt. Even in parishes that have wild turkeys, there may be areas that have limited populations. Such is the case in my area of East Feliciana. Before the two major floods in March and August 2016, turkey numbers were good, but after the flooding, birds seemed to have disappeared. My theory is that disease issues arose after the flood, causing the decline. The last turkey I held in my hands was a gobbler I found in 2017 that had died from a virus.

### HATCHING NECESSITY

In order for turkey numbers to increase around Louisiana, we must have a successful nesting season. In his book, *Louisiana Wild Turkeys: History, Science, Management and Hunting*, Jimmy Stafford writes that about 10% to 40% of turkey nests survive, and of those, only about 25% of hatched poults survive to

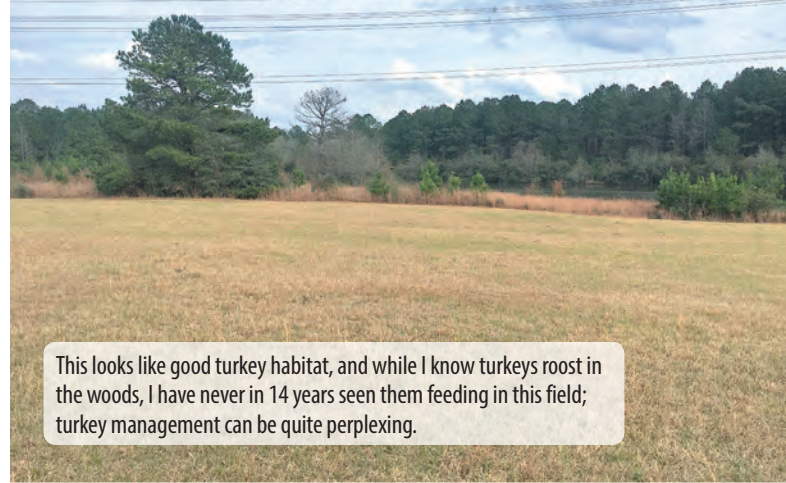


Dave Moreland is the author of the new book *Louisiana Whitetails*, which explains how to grow big deer and where to hunt them. The book is available at [www.SportsmanGear.com](http://www.SportsmanGear.com) and at Amazon.com.

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This looks like good turkey habitat, and while I know turkeys roost in the woods, I have never in 14 years seen them feeding in this field; turkey management can be quite perplexing.

four weeks. It would seem the odds of greatly increasing turkey numbers are not good; because of this, it takes a lot of turkeys to have a lot of turkeys, and when numbers are low, it doesn't seem to happen.

Nesting habitat and brood-rearing habitat are critical. Turkeys nest in areas with cover: briar patches, logging areas with downed timber, tall grass fields, etc. When eggs are laid, numerous predators would like to feast on turkey eggs, raccoons, opossums, snakes and hogs being on the list.

Turkey poults feast on insects when they hatch, and habitat that provides the young birds with insects is critical. Openings are important, but not all openings will provide poults with good numbers of insects. Cover is a must for young birds in order to escape predators. Brood-rearing habitat must also provide birds with seeds from grasses and herbaceous plants.

## HABITAT NEEDS

Vegetation height is important. Openings that are thick with tall grasses may not be suitable for newly born poults, and likewise, openings with sparse vegetation may not provide the older poults with sufficient food. As the seasons change so does the food requirements change for the growing population. Habitat diversity is a must to meet the demand of these birds. This is where habitat management comes into focus.

Habitat-management work for turkeys includes management of food plots, forest openings and timber habitat, the latter through prescribed burning. Burning is somewhat lacking in many parts of Louisiana, and this is where the old bushhog can help, with periodic cuttings, that set back vegetation growth and development.

Food plots that provide seed-producing grasses and clovers are a must. Timber management that will provide both hard mast and soft mast will really benefit turkey numbers.

The only guarantee in turkey management is that if you do nothing, turkey numbers will remain low. But it is also not a guarantee that if you do the work, numbers will respond positively. However, once you hear a tom gobble and have him come strutting in to your set-up, you have to keep doing the work. ■

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# GET 'MO' OUT OF THAT MOJO

**M**ost hunters are tired by the end of Louisiana's 60-day duck season, and they are content to grab up all their gear, clean their guns and store the decoys and other gear in the corner of the garage or storage building.

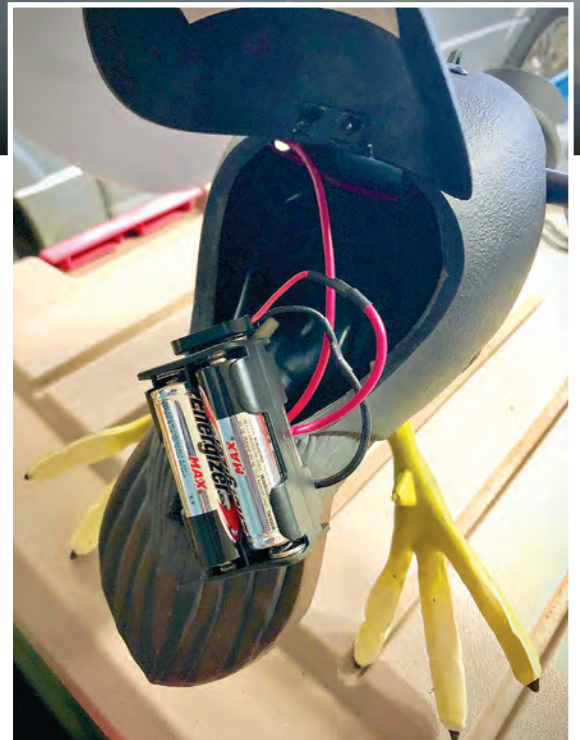
But if you hunt with motorized duck decoys, that's a mistake, but it's not too late to fix. Take a few minutes to perform a little routine maintenance and save lots of dollars and headaches before next season begins. It will help you get "mo" out of your MOJO or other motorized decoys.

"These products operate in an environment that is tough on electrical equipment: very high moisture and greatly varying temperatures," said Terry Denmon,

owner of MOJO Outdoors. "They are routinely operated in adverse outdoor conditions then stored, even if overnight, in a heated environment. That's a formula for corrosion.

"Almost all, if not all, batteries do not maintain life well if stored uncharged, and (they are) worsened by leaving the battery connected to the electrical system, which further depletes the battery and causes corrosion are terminals and similar connections."

And that is just during the season. Putting up motorized wing decoys for the long



offseason just compounds those problems. Think of parking your truck or ATV in the barn at the end of the season and trying to start it 9 months later. Modern batteries do not recover well, if at all, if left fully depleted.

Even if you have already put up your MOJO decoys for the off-season, it's not too late to do a little routine maintenance.

Denmon said that first, fully charge the rechargeable batteries and disconnect them from the decoys' electrical systems. For products with disposable batteries, take them out and dispose of them. If left in place, they cause corrosion at the terminals and connections that may not allow the decoy to work — even with new batteries. If there is any corrosion, clean it up immediately. Spraying the battery connectors with a corrosion resistant or rust preventive spray similar to Dielectric Grease or Corrosion X or similar products will help prevent problems.

"The original chargers for MOJO batteries were not 'smart chargers' and should not charge the battery for over 24 hours," Denmon said. "Those chargers do not monitor the status of the charge and can damage both the battery and the charger. More recent chargers are 'smart' and not as sensitive to this issue, as they will monitor the charge and only add as needed, but still should not be left charging batteries or plugged into the AC electrical system for long periods of time."

Batteries will deplete somewhat even disconnected and on the shelf, and it is good to recharge a few times during the off-season.

It's not just the batteries that need attention. The motors will inherently take on moisture and sometimes fall under-water. While they are not waterproof, this does not cause much harm, if any, but they should be run for at least 15 minutes in a dry environment. A drop or two of a light oil such as 3-in-1 Oil placed where the motor shaft exits the motor housing will help to keep them running sound.

Cleaning the decoys' bodies also helps preserve the natural, attractive finishes. They should be stored in a shaded or dark room where the sun's rays don't contact them, causing the paint surface to fade.

If you have any issues with your MOJO, don't panic. Double check all the electrical connections.

"As a note, most of the decoys that are returned to us that do not run are just electrical connections," Denmon said. "The ones with the AA batteries, most of the time, we just spin the batteries and they run." ■

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## OKUMA ITX CARBON REELS

Carbon fiber is one of the world's strongest, yet lightest concoctions, praised for high tensile strength, temperature tolerance and chemical resistance in a number of industrial uses, along with low weight and low thermal expansion.

Okuma has added carbon fiber to its lineup of spinning reels with the ITX Carbon series, a group of eight reels — four high-speed and four standard-speed retrieves. The reels are lightweight and compact, constructed of rigid, C-40X long-strand carbon fibers, which are 25% stronger than standard graphite reels.

The 1000, 2500, 3000 and 4000 size reels have a multi-disc, carbon-fiber drag system with Okuma's Hydro Block gasket, which keeps water out and your drag running spool. A total of eight ball-bearings keep the reel smooth, along with a machine-cut brass pinion gear. The Quick-Set anti-reverse feature and screw-in handle design are other fisherman-friendly features.

**MSRP: \$119.99. For more info, visit: [okumafishing.com](http://okumafishing.com)**



## NOMAD KILLIN' TIME TURKEY VEST

What do turkey hunters want in a vest? That changes from time to time, as the accessories that hunters carry into the woods change, and NOMAD is keeping up with the times.

The company has debuted its Killin' Time Turkey Vest, just in time for the spring season across the Southeast, and its design and features show that NOMAD is keeping up with the changing needs of turkey hunters.

The vest features a removable, high-density foam seat cushion, horizontal and vertical box call pockets with a pouch for call chalk, an external Thermacell pocket, dual pockets

for water bottles, an adjustable game pouch with pockets for decoy stakes, even a stow-away stow sack for morel mushrooms you might stumble on while slipping into position to take that big gobbler.

The vest, which comes in Mossy Oak Bottomland or Shadow Leaf, has 28 general and specialize pockets, including four mesh pockets for mouth calls, and it has 14 points of adjustment for one-size-fits-all customization.

**MSRP: \$180. For more info, visit: [nomadoutdoor.com](http://nomadoutdoor.com)**

## BUBBA PRO SERIES ELECTRIC FILLET KNIFE

The folks who brought you the Bubba Blade, a top-drawer fillet knife, have gone a step further with an updated, improved version, the PRO Series Electric Fillet Knife.

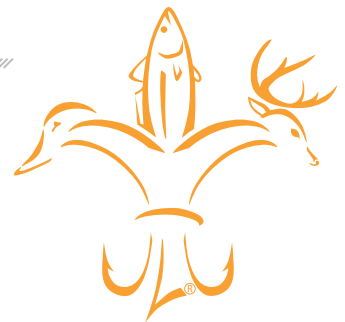
The redesign includes a heavy duty drive system, aluminum alloy housing, superior ergonomics and a brushless motor for longer-lasting power output.

In addition, the carrying case has been upgraded to a hard-sided shell with a textured, non-slip grip.

A secondary replacement battery and a charging cord come with the package.

The PRO Series knife comes in three blade lengths — 7, 8 and 12 inches — and in either FLEX or STIFF styles. Blades are high-carbon stainless steel, coated with titanium-nitride for extreme corrosion resistance.

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



## GAMAKATSU GIKA RIG

Want to combine power fishing and a finesse technique?

Gamakatsu has done just that, with one of its latest terminal tackle offerings, the Gika Rig.

The Gika Rig uses an offset worm hook and an elongated drop-shot weight attached directly to the hook eye by a snap and split ring. The snap allows fishermen to quickly change out the size of the weight, depending on the presentation needed or the depth targeted.

The weight's position allows the worm or other soft-plastic bait to fall more freely and rotate from side to side as it descends. Virtually weedless, it can slip through vegetation and other kinds of cover.



## DUNSTAN CHESTNUT TREES

Want to make the remarkable addition of a natural wildlife food on your hunting property without having to drop the first disc, plow or cultipacker in the soil?

Just dig a hole and let a Dunstan chestnut tree do the rest.

Dunstan chestnuts are a hybrid between a Chinese chestnut variety and a single, American chestnut that survived the deadly blight of the 1930s that destroyed 30 million acres of what was arguably the most-important tree in this nation's first 150 years.

The hybrid chestnut was the brainchild of Dr. Robert Dunstan, a Windsor, N.C., native and graduate of Trinity College,

the predecessor of Duke University.

Chestnuts are high in carbohydrates and proteins and will attract deer, squirrels and other wildlife, and they produce at only 3 to 5 years of age, eventually dropping up to 50 pounds of nuts (20 to 35 per pound) per tree every September and October — not every other year like some oaks.

Best times to plant in the Southeast are spring months.

**MSRP: \$24.95-\$29.95.**

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



## RECTIFIRE SHOTGUN CHOKES FOR TURKEY SEASON

Rectifire Inc. of Brunson, S.C., makes plenty of accessories for serious shooters of rifles and shotguns, and with April approaching, their Cyclone and Diamond shotgun chokes for turkey hunters take center stage.

Made from 17-4 stainless steel with a conical-parallel internal design and finished in natural, black or camo, Rectifire's turkey chokes will fit most any hunter's preferences and favorite weapons. According to Alan Tuten, the company's president, hunters who are targeting gobblers with traditional lead or copper-plated shot in Nos. 4 to 6 should go for a Cyclone Series choke; if you're into the newer TSS loads, the Diamond Series chokes are a better choice.

The Cyclone Series chokes come with helical, slotted ports that will slow the shot wad, allowing better shot patterns and reducing recoil.

Chokes are available in 12- and 20-gauge sizes for most shotgun manufacturer's offerings. Turkey

chokes offer constrictions normally of .0070 or .0075 from the original bore diameter.

**MSRP: \$72-\$103.**

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





# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



**Billy Stokes**

Billy Stokes with the deer he killed in the Delta National Forest in Mississippi.



**Brandt "Trey" Dufrene III**

Brandt "Trey" Dufrene, III, 12, of Metairie shot this 6-point, 120-pound buck, his first, near Amite on Jan. 23, 2021.



**Kayson Felterman**

Kayson Felterman, 4, of Berwick with snapper caught at Eugene Island.



**Hailey Paysse**

Hailey Paysse is pictured here with her first buck, an 8-point, and guide Casey Bridges with Hays Creek Outfitters.



**Trent Holliday**

Trent Holliday killed his first buck, an 8-pointer, on a hunt with his father, William Holliday Jr., and Hays Creek Outfitters out of Hackley.



**Chuk Cole & Jessica Spooner**



**Matt Carroll**

Matt Carroll killed this 220-pound, 9 point buck on Nov. 12, 2019, in Jackson.



**Beau Duplantis**

Beau Duplantis, 6, from Luling, shows off a 30-pound redfish he caught while swimming in the surf in Grand Isle with his dad, Rene' Duplantis.

## GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

Chuk Cole and Jessica Spooner with Jessica's 22.4-pound snapper, caught out of Venice on July 18, 2020.

Send us your photos, and you may appear on the pages of the most widely read outdoor magazine in the Bayou State. Send clean, sharp shots of you with your fish, deer, ducks, rabbits, squirrels, etc. to [images@LouisianaSportsman.com](mailto:images@LouisianaSportsman.com)  
Digital images must be at least 500KB and in jpeg format. Print photos cannot be returned.



**John, Nicole, Bruce, Jake & Steven**

John Morello, his wife Nicole, sons, Bruce, 12, and Jake, 8, and friend Steven Peyronnin with a 202-pound yellowfin caught out of Venice at the Lump with Homeric Charters in March 2020.



**Brody & Chad Lejeune**

Brody Lejeune and his dad, Chad, were fishing around Lake Verret area with their 10' Salters jig poles and stuck it to the sac-a-lait. Brody's biggest of the day was 16½ inches long and weighed 2.95 pounds.



# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK

**Curtis, Adelaide, Candace, Seth, Clay & RiAnn**



Curtis Franklin, Adelaide Franklin, Candace Franklin Barron, Seth Barron, Clay Franklin and RiAnn Taylor had a great family day out of Empire back in July.



**Hudson Fields**

Hudson Fields holds up his first gallinule, which was retrieved by chocolate lab Cali, on a hunting trip in Houma.



**Brady Poche'**

This 8-pound lunker was caught on a Matrix Craw by Brady Poche' in a pond near Lutcher.



**Shannon Olivier**

Shannon Olivier shot a doe with her 7mm-08 on Oct. 17, 2020.



**Sawyer Hays**

Sawyer Hays, 2, snagged his first bass behind his family's house in Baton Rouge. It weighed around 1½ pounds.



**Madison McCord**

Madison McCord shot her first deer, this 110-pound doe, on Nov. 22 at her family's lease north of St. Francisville.



**Ty Joseph Barras**

Ty Joseph Barras, 8, of Lafayette, bagged his first two wood ducks during the first split of the 2020-21 duck season. He was hunting near Evergreen with his father and grandfather.



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# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



**Lexie Grabert**

Lexie Grabert killed her first buck, this 120-pound, 8-pointer, while hunting with her father on their hunting lease.



**Peyton Tunnard**

Peyton Tunnard, 6, was hunting with father, Gabe Tunnard, on Nov. 14 in St. Francisville when she killed her first deer with a 6.5 Grendel.



**Chandler Fitzmorris**

Chandler Fitzmorris took this 11-point buck with a .30-06 on Dec. 27, 2020, in Mount Hermon.



**Payton DeGrafft**

Payton DeGrafft showing some love to the bass he caught in Folsom.



**Sam Cestia**

Sam Cestia, 7, caught a bull red on his own using live shrimp. He was fishing with his father out of Grand Terre Island.



**Colette LeBourgeois**

Colette LeBourgeois had an amazing offshore fishing trip. She said she was happy to put food on her family's table.



**Jordan Jorajuria**

Jordan Jorajuria caught and released this 45-pound, 47-inch black drum in Vermilion Bay on Labor Day 2020.

Blake Schneider and her 2-year-old son, Jentry Schneider, tagged a 160-pound doe in Simmesport.



**Blake & Jentry Schneider**



**Jacob Hall**

Jacob Hall holds a solid Grand Isle trout.

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**FISHING REGULATIONS**



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

**2021**

**SALTWATER**

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

FISH Species	Minimum Length	Bag Limit (per person)
Greater Amberjack*~	34" FL	1/day*
Lesser Amberjack, Banded Rudderfish*	14-22" FL	5/day (aggregate)
Yellowfin Tuna	27" CFL	3/day
Bluefin Tuna	73" CFL	1 per vessel per year*
Bigeye Tuna	27" CFL	None
Blue Marlin	99" LJFL	None
White Marlin	66" LJFL	None
Sailfish	63" LJFL	None
Swordfish*	29" CL or 33 lbs. DW	5 per vessel per trip
Cobia (ling or lemon fish)	36" FL	2/day
Drum, Black	16" TL	5/day#
Drum, Red (redfish)	16" TL	5/day#
Flounder, Southern	None	10/day
Groupers* Gag <sup>Δ</sup> & Black <sup>Δ</sup>	24" TL	4/day (aggregate)*
Scamp <sup>Δ</sup>	16" TL	
Nassau & Goliath	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
Yellowfin <sup>Δ</sup>	20" TL	
Red <sup>Δ</sup>	20" TL	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	10 in aggregate*
Cubera, Yellowtail, Gray (mangrove)	12" TL	
Queen, Blackfin, Silk, Wenchman	None	10" TL
Vermilion Snapper	10" TL	
Schoolmaster, Dog, Mahogany	None	None
Gray Triggerfish*	15" FL	1/day in aggregate
Lane Snapper	8" TL	20/person/day in aggregate*
Almaco Jack, Goldface Tilefish, & Bluefin Tilefish	None	
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.  
<sup>Δ</sup> Closed season for gag grouper Jan. 1 - May 31. Closed season for black, red, yellowfin, yellowmouth & scamp grouper from Feb. 1 - March 31. ~ Greater amberjack season is open May 1-31 and Aug. 1 - Oct. 31. \* Closed season on gray triggerfish Jan. 1 - Feb. 28 and June 1 - July 31.

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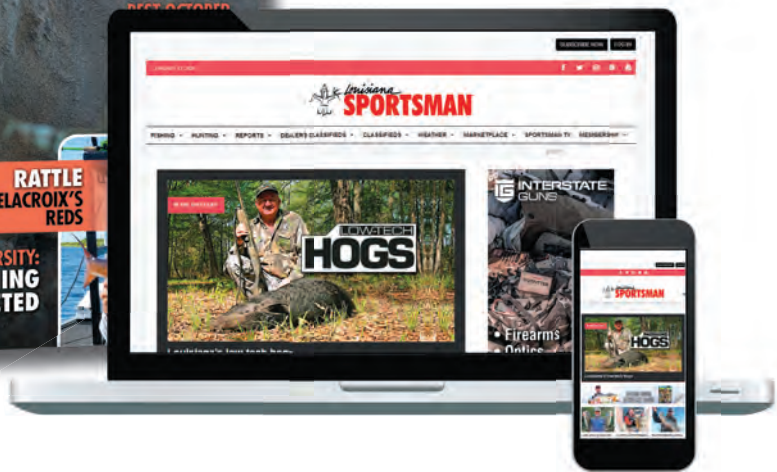
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**Astro Tables** is far more effective than "moon tables," because it takes into account critical solar energies as well as lunar.

The "Best Days" column is based on the ever-changing positions of the sun and the moon, rating each day on a scale of 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more solar/lunar influence that day is experiencing (see "Value" column or corresponding black bars).

The two Primary periods (Moon Overhead and Moon Underfoot) vary in length from one hour to three-and-one-half hours, depending on a number of important lunar cycles, such as how close the moon is to the earth that day and how high its orbit is. The solar symbols alert you to when a Primary period overlaps a major solar period (eg: Dawn, High-Noon, and Dusk). The secondary periods of Moonrise and Moonset last about one hour each... 30 minutes before and after the listed time. (See key at bottom of each month for more detail.)

**Astro Tables** is a quick-reference version of its parent publication, the **PrimeTimes Wall Calendar**, which is recommended for those wishing more complete data on the best days and times to go fishing and hunting for the entire year (see "Available Products" below).

**PrimeTimes** forecasts are based on solar/lunar research at a leading college of astrophysics and our own research pond/wildlife area. Annual data is supplied by the U.S. Naval Observatory. All times are adjusted to the center of your time zone and for Daylight Saving Time.

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2021 APR		BEST DAYS		LUNAR PERIODS					
POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL.	VALUE	TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED				
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT						
Thu 1				30	12:29 AM	4:00 am - 5:06 am	9:44 AM	4:25 pm - 5:31 pm	
Fri 2				32	1:37 AM	5:04 am - 6:00 am	10:32 AM	5:29 pm - 6:25 pm	Low
Sat 3				33					
Sun 4				42	2:39 AM	7:08 am - 7:56 am	12:26 PM	7:33 pm - 8:21 pm	Half
Mon 5				31	3:32 AM	8:03 am - 8:55 am	1:29 PM	8:28 pm - 9:20 pm	
Tue 6				27	4:17 AM	8:51 am - 9:53 am	2:33 PM	9:16 pm - 10:18 pm	
Wed 7				29	4:55 AM	9:34 am - 10:50 am	3:35 PM	9:59 pm - 11:15 pm	
Thu 8				40	5:28 AM	10:12 am - 11:44 am	4:36 PM	10:37 pm - 12:09 am	
Fri 9				52	5:57 AM	10:48 am - 12:36 pm	5:34 PM	11:13 pm - 1:01 am	
Sat 10				63	6:24 AM	11:21 am - 1:27 pm	6:32 PM	11:46 pm - Midnight	
Sun 11				70	6:49 AM	11:52 am - 2:18 pm	7:28 PM	Midnight - 1:52 am	New
Mon 12				62	7:15 AM	12:25 pm - 3:07 pm	8:24 PM	12:17 am - 2:43 am	
Tue 13				54	7:42 AM	12:57 pm - 3:57 pm	9:21 PM	12:50 am - 3:32 am	
Wed 14				47	8:11 AM	1:35 pm - 4:47 pm	10:18 PM	1:22 am - 4:22 am	Apogee
Thu 15				46	8:44 AM	2:13 pm - 5:39 pm	11:15 PM	2:00 am - 5:12 am	
Fri 16				48	9:21 AM	2:58 pm - 6:30 pm		2:38 am - 6:04 am	
Sat 17				50	10:03 AM	3:44 pm - 7:24 pm	12:12 AM	3:23 am - 6:55 am	
Sun 18				51	10:52 AM	4:35 pm - 8:15 pm	1:07 AM	4:09 am - 7:49 am	High
Mon 19				56	11:47 AM	5:30 pm - 9:06 pm	1:58 AM	5:00 am - 8:40 am	
Tue 20				66	12:47 PM	6:27 pm - 9:53 pm	2:45 AM	5:55 am - 9:31 am	Half
Wed 21				55	1:50 PM	7:24 pm - 10:40 pm	3:27 AM	6:52 am - 10:18 am	
Thu 22				48	2:56 PM	8:23 pm - 11:23 pm	4:05 AM	7:49 am - 11:05 am	
Fri 23				57	4:04 PM	9:23 pm - 12:03 am	4:40 AM	8:48 am - 11:48 am	
Sat 24				65	5:13 PM	10:26 pm - 12:42 am	5:12 AM	9:48 am - 12:28 pm	
Sun 25				74	6:24 PM	11:28 pm - Midnight	5:45 AM	10:51 am - 1:07 pm	
Mon 26				79	7:38 PM	Midnight - 1:24 am	6:18 AM	11:53 am - 1:49 pm	Full
Tue 27				66	8:53 PM	12:34 am - 2:06 am	6:54 AM	12:59 pm - 2:31 pm	Perigee
Wed 28				52	10:08 PM	1:41 am - 2:53 am	7:34 AM	2:06 pm - 3:18 pm	
Thu 29				39	11:22 PM	2:48 am - 3:46 am	8:21 AM	3:13 pm - 4:11 pm	
Fri 30				32		3:55 am - 4:43 am	9:14 AM	4:20 pm - 5:08 pm	

25 50 75  
AVERAGE

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ANY LUNAR PERIOD IS ENHANCED WHEN IT OVERLAPS A KEY SOLAR PERIOD. THE BEST OF THESE OVERLAPS ARE DESIGNATED BY THE SUN SYMBOLS:  
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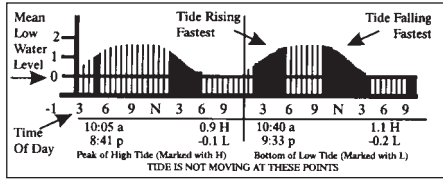
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Fish feed most actively when the tide is moving. Louisiana Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most-active feeding periods each day in the Tide Guide. Just fish those times indicated in black. To find the best time to fish your favorite honeyhole, find the spot under Tide Corrections that is closest to the area, and add or subtract the time from the corresponding daily prediction.

### Tide Corrections

East Point, Grand Isle	HIGH	LOW
Barataria Pass	+1:00	-0:10
Bastian Island	+0:41	+0:12
Bay Gardene	+2:51	+2:44
Bayou BonFouca	+9:59	+10:11
Breton Islands	+0:54	+0:48
Caillou Boca	+0:40	+0:48
Caminada Pass	+0:20	+0:12
Chandeleur Light	+0:37	+0:34
Chef Pass	+5:17	+5:07
Cocodrie	+1:22	+1:33
Comfort Island	+1:34	+0:54
Delacroix Island	+3:42	+3:31
Empire Jetty	-1:03	-1:45
Four Bayou Pass	+2:18	+0:17
Gardner Island	+0:40	+0:47
Grand Pass	+1:48	+1:16
Head of Passes	-0:48	+0:00
Hopedale	+4:17	+4:56
Independence Island	+2:29	+1:59
Jack Bay	+1:59	+1:28
Joseph Bayou	-0:36	-1:37
Lafitte	+1:45	+2:51
Long Point, Lake Borgne	+2:28	+2:11
Manila Village	+2:32	+3:13
Michoud Substation	+5:24	+5:02
New Canal (Bucktown)	+10:34	+10:49
North Pass	-0:31	-0:37
Paris Road Bridge	+5:53	+5:58
Pelican Islands	+2:26	+2:26
Pointe a la Hache	+3:12	+3:01
Port Eads	-0:17	-1:37
Raccoon Point	-0:03	-0:20
Shell Beach	+4:32	+4:25
Ship Shoal Light	-1:54	-1:50
South Pass, Miss. R.	-1:13	-1:20
Southwest Pass, Miss. R.	-0:38	-1:33
Tchefuncte River	+10:23	+11:01
Timbalier Island	+0:19	+0:23
Wine Island	+1:08	+1:02
Calcasieu Pass, Lighthouse Wharf	HIGH	LOW
Cote Blanche Island	+4:33	+3:40
Eugene Island	+1:49	-0:39
Lighthouse Point	+0:58	-0:53
Mermentau River ent.	+0:20	+0:25
Point Au Fer	+1:53	-1:02
Point Chevreul	+3:16	+0:30
Rabbit Island	+2:01	-0:36
Shell Island	+3:08	+0:45
South Point	+1:55	-0:33
Southwest Pass, Vermillion Bay	+1:42	+0:51
Weeks Bay	+3:58	+3:56

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4 LQ	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 NM	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20 FQ	21
22	23	24	25	26 FM	27	28
29	30					

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4 LQ	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 NM	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20 FQ	21
22	23	24	25	26 FM	27	28
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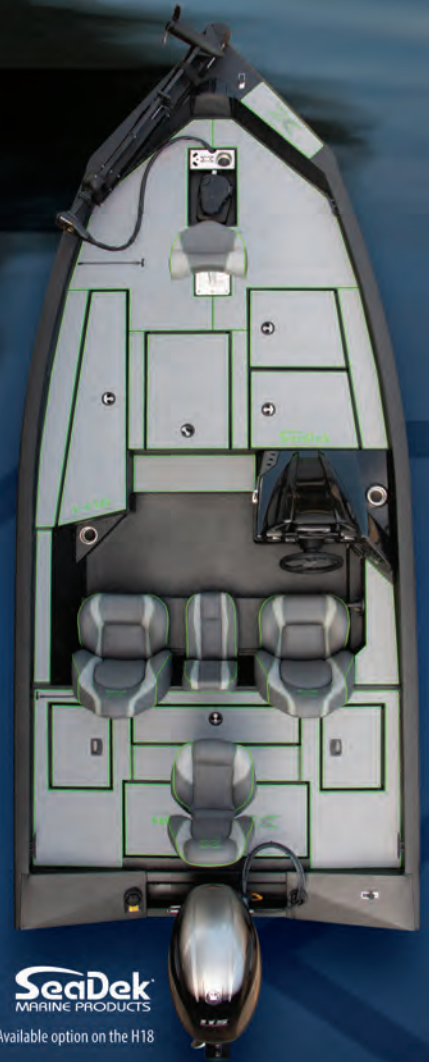
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[grīnd] verb

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