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18
GREAT PUBLIC OFFERINGS

65
WHAT'S ON THE MENU?



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Is there a trophy buck in your future? There could be, if you know where soft mast ranks on a deer's menu, and where Louisiana's top public deer-hunting lands are. Photo by Matt Hansen.

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PRESIDENT: Lisa Lottinger Cuccia

PUBLISHER: Jonathan Menard

MANAGING EDITORS: Alicia LaFont, Dan Kibler

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR: Jeff Caldwell

ASSISTANT PRODUCTION MANAGER: Desiree P. Lewis

ART DIRECTOR: Kevin Orgeron

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS: Jeff Cashio, Alissa Zeringue

ADVERTISING SALES: Mark Hilzim (National Sales), Asa Faulkner, Mark Boyd, Burton Angelle, Peter Church and Bret Holten

CONTROLLER: Juanita Guidry

LEGAL ADVISOR: Dean Church

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Patrick Bonin, Brian Cope, Darren Digby, John Flores, Bill Garbo, Kinny Haddox, Capt. Steve Himel, Chris Holmes, Keith LaCaze, Dora Lambert, John E. Manion IV, Will Martin, Joel Masson, Todd Masson, Jon Miller, David Moreland, Sammy Romano, Don Shoopman and Rusty Tardo

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES:
advertising@LouisianaSportsman.com
985.758.7217

CIRCULATION INQUIRIES:
985.758.7217

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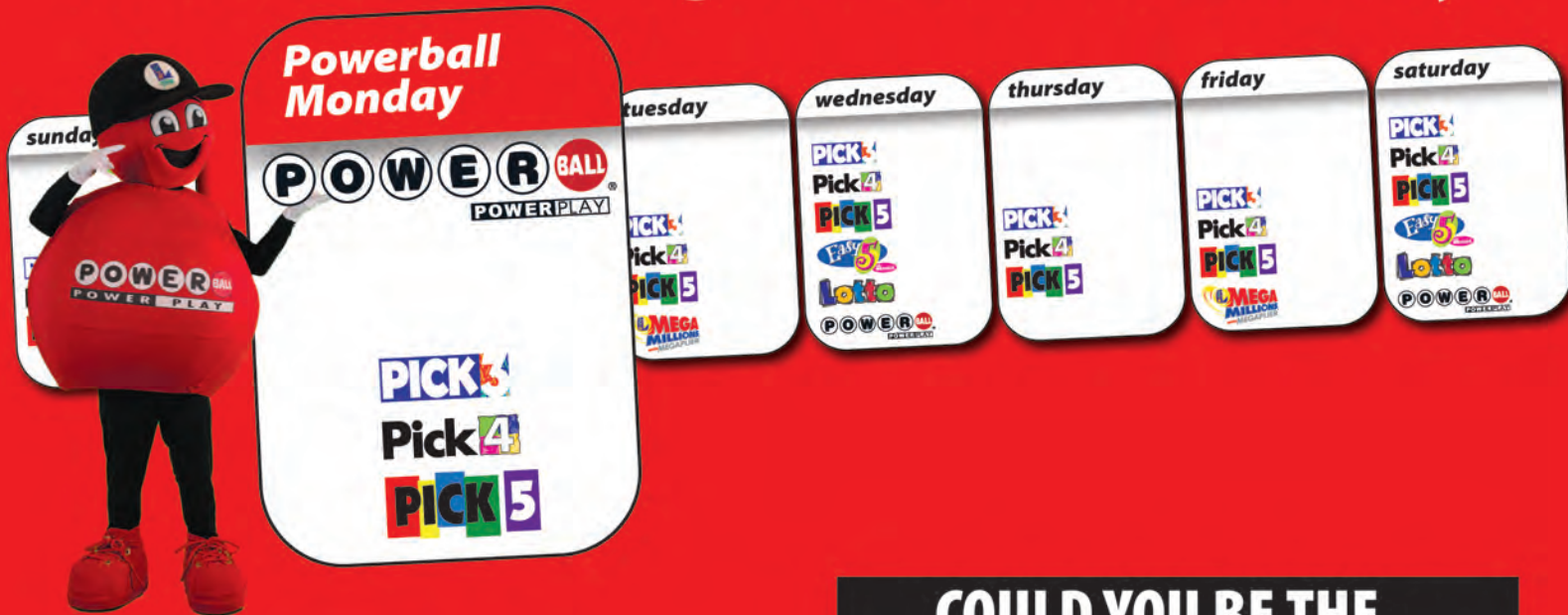
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Photos courtesy Andrew Godley

CYPREMORT POINT BOAT CREW RACKS UP WINS IN FISHING RODEO

Outdoor UPDATE

By Will Martin

Andrew Godley of Youngsville and his crew won "best boat" at St. Thomas More Catholic High School's annual fishing rodeo Aug. 6-7 out of Cypremort Point, sweeping the top three spots in the grouper category, taking two of the three top spots in the mahi-mahi and adding a winning amberjack.

Rivers Andre, the son of Chris Andre, who captained the vessel, and his cousin, Izaac Andre, also won mahi-mahi and tuna categories in the youth division.

On Aug. 6, the crew set out on the *Thank You, Sugar*, a 31-foot Cape Horn cruiser, for a 125-mile trip to the continental shelf, where they planned to fish floating platforms and natural formations.

"(We'd) also heard about a drill-ship out there that people were catching some tuna on," Godley said. "So we decided to try to hit all of the categories and (fish) overnight for tuna. The first fish we brought in was an 89-pound amberjack that we caught on live hardtail.

A TROPICAL BUFFET

"(Further south), there are banks of coral living on salt domes and various natural bottom formations that hold interesting tropical fish," Godley said. "They're basically at the same latitude as Tampa."

The fishermen hit the remote, coral banks and some pipeline crossings in the area.

"We caught four marbled grouper using electric (reels), two of (which) were over 25 pounds, and (we) would have been top-5 Louisiana fish if we'd been using hand-cranked reels," Godley said.

In addition to the grouper, they also caught some porgies before continuing south to target yellowfin tuna.

As the sun fell to the west, they hit multiple spots, catching eight yellowfins, some of them on topwater poppers in schools of flying fish.

"The flying fish were hitting the boat and flying over the bow," Godley said, explaining that crew members had to duck between casts to avoid the flying fish.

"When you hook up … on spinning tackle, it's amazing. I've never heard a (reel) scream as hard as when tuna would make a run; it sounded like it was going to explode."

Most of the tuna weighed from 45 to 50 pounds.

"The nice thing is that a fight (with a 45-pound fish) is not as long as it is with a 180-pound fish," Godley said. "They put up a good fight, but it is short-lived; you can get them in the boat in a few minutes and then keep on fishing."

After dark, they caught a few mahi-mahi, including a 19-pounder. Rivers and Izaac Andre also caught some blackfin tuna speed-jigging.

A RARE CATCH

On the way back to port, Godley caught an 80.3-pound black grouper on a large chunk of cut squid.

"I wanted to catch another marbled grouper for the Louisiana (record-books)," Godley said, "so I grabbed a big, hand-crank rig that I'd set up for amberjack the day before. (It was a) Shimano Tiagra 50 sporting a 150-pound-test leader and the biggest hook on the boat. (It was) much bigger than what we would normally use… but it was handy."



Yellowfin tuna hit topwater poppers for Andrew Godley's crewmates on an early August trip.



Andrew Godley's huge black grouper appears to be the second-largest ever caught in Louisiana waters.

Just after Godley hooked the fish, a barracuda tangled the fishermen's lines. He was surprised that the fish was still on after the tangles were cleared.

"But I could tell that it was a really big fish," Godley said. "When I managed to get it about halfway, it started digging hard back down to the bottom, taking all the line."

Godley thought it was an amberjack because of the way the fish dove back down; once off the bottom, grouper bloat and float.

"When we got it close to the boat, we saw a big, brown fish under the water," Godley said, "but then it started floating, and we could see a lot of bubbles.

"We realized it was a gigantic grouper. We got the gaffs in it and looked at each other. We were confused about what kind of grouper it was; we'd never seen one that looked like it before."

Then it clicked.

"It's a black grouper!" Godley said.

"Everybody yelled and screamed," he said. "When we got it in the boat, we realized that we'd caught a pretty rare fish."

Godley said only three black grouper have been registered in Louisiana's fishing record book, the biggest at 105 pounds and the next two around 50 pounds. Godley's fish comes in at No. 2.

"Since we had no room left in the (ice) box, we headed back to Cypremort Point, cruising at 45 mph on calm seas," Godley said. "It ended up being a trip of a lifetime with a couple of amazing fish." ▪



Berkley's new Powerbait Gilly won ICAST Best of Show, the first time the award has gone to a fishing bait.

BERKLEY GILLY STEALS SHOW AT ICAST

Photos by Kinny Haddox

By Kinny Haddox

The Orlando Exhibition Hall, at 7 million square feet, was full of fishing baits, gear and accessories at ICAST, like a Disney World for fishermen.

Nearly 1,000 manufacturers and businesses displayed everything you could think of at the International Convention of Allied Sportfishing Trades annual show, July 21-23. Picking favorites is almost impossible, but here are a few things that hooked one's attention:

Berkley's PowerBait Gilly. This amazingly lifelike bass fishing lure was voted 2021 Best In Show. The soft-plastic lure, shaped like a bluegill and infused with PowerBait flavor, could pass for a live, swimming bream, or it can be retrieved to perfectly mimic a wounded baitfish. It's the first bait to ever win Best of Show, a pretty big accomplishment. Gillys will be available this month in six standard and six HD colors in three sizes (90mm, 110mm and 130mm), selling for $6.49 to $7.49.

ABU Garcia Ambassadeur Pro Rocket 100th Anniversary Reel. This iconic reel brings back memories. The silver Ambassadeur 5000 was many bass anglers' first open, baitcasting reel. The reel continues the 100-year-old tradition of success. It's not flashy nor made of space-age components, but it's a positive move back to the future and sure to be a hit with fishermen and collectors.



Buzbe's soft-sided tackle boxes were a hit at ICAST. They'll be available to the public this fall.

Buzbe Soft Sides. Buzbe, based in Prairieville, created a buzz with a soft-sided tackle storage line, so new that only prototypes were available at ICAST. Plastic windows on the boxes are a clear plus to add to their modular tackle-management line. They'll be available in late fall.

B'n'M Poles 75 series. Another celebration of longevity: 75 years for the old Broom & Mop Company. This new rod-and-reel combo with diamond shapes and gold colors is almost too good-looking to fish with. It's light and powerful, and the extended grip that allows comfort for a long day of single-poling shows why B'n'M continues to be the No. 1 crappie pole maker in the world. The balance and feel of the gear is thump on.

Bobby Garland Itty Bit Slab Hunt'r. Go small or go home seems to be a crappie lure theme, and this 1¼-inch plastic recommended for 1/64- and 1/32-ounce jig heads in all the popular Garland colors will slay some slabs.

Emma Bean's Pesky Bug Spray and Itch Reliever. This is an all-natural product that repels everything from no-see-ums to mosquitoes, ticks and flies — and an itch reliever for spots that you might miss and get bit. It really works. And what outdoors lover doesn't need that?

H&H Tipster. Lowly catfish don't get much respect at this high-brow show, but Baton Rouge-based H&H is offering a new, floating catfishing system that is so well-designed, easy and economical, why would anybody want to make homemade rigs any more?

Crappie Tamer. This year's new innovation in Road Runner-type lures has a ringed body with a flaired tail to double the vibration and create more sound. The TTI Blakemore lure runs smooth in the water, too.

Mossy Oak Wellness Fuel. The heat of

summer was a great time to release hydration power-stick packs. Great tasting, easy to pack and ready to mix in a bottle of water in sugar-free Energy, Focus, Immune and Recovery blends.

Crappie Magnet Loc n' Knoc. ICAST featured crappie baits galore, but it was this little chunk of lead that caught me eye. It slips on your line like a slip cork, twists to lock into place and slides down your line to knock a hung-up jig off a stump and save you $3 every time. Nice.

Honey Hole. Angling apparel is a hot, new part of the outdoor market. None is more attractive, durable or "in" than the Honey Hole line, another Louisiana company from West Monroe. There's a fishing cap for every day of the year if you want.

Catch Some Relief (CSR) cream. A small application of this gave my achy knees relief in less than 10 minutes. Cannabinoid-based cream is controversial, but CBD comes from hemp, not marijuana. If you are an achy outdoorsman, it does help a lot of people. I'm not sure it will relieve the stress of not catching fish, however. ▪

More details on all these products are available from their manufacturers online.



The Tipster is one of H&H's new products that is sure to catch fish and the eye of catfish anglers.

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Lake D'Arbonne boat ramps are always busy when the fish are biting. **INSET:** D'Arbonne is a stumpy lake, and properly maintained boat lanes are a must for safe boating.

D'ARBONNE LAUNCH FEES APPROVED

By Kinny Haddox

For decades, the fishing at Lake D'Arbonne in Union Parish has been better than most of the facilities, but that is changing, and the Bayou D'Arbonne Lake Watershed District is trying to do its part. The Lake Commission, as it is informally called, has approved a boat-launching fee structure that will be implemented early this fall, as soon as elements are in place.

Money raised by launch fees will initially be used for improvements to boat ramps and parking lots and to replace numerous channel markers that have been destroyed during weather events and floods over the past several years, Commission members said.

The launch fee will apply to all persons launching a boat or other watercraft at a ramp owned by the Commission. Persons launching a boat will pay a daily launch fee at the ramp or obtain and display a valid annual launch permit. The daily launch fee of $5 is to be put in payment boxes at the ramp. An annual permit can be purchased for $50, $25 for veterans and seniors. Lakeside property owners who pay a lake franchise fee on their utility bills may pick up a launch permit at no cost at the local chamber of commerce.

WHY A LAUNCH FEE?

Lake D'Arbonne has become a regional and national draw in recent years, primarily because of excellent crappie fishing. Three major national crappie tournament trails have held events at D'Arbonne, and two of them, Crappie Masters and the American Crappie Trail, will be holding their next national championships on the lake.



The Lake Commission receives limited funding, which restricts the ability of the Commission to maintain and improve D'Arbonne Lake and its facilities.

The Commission considered additional sources of revenue to enhance funding for the lake's benefit and concluded that the implementation of a launch fee similar to those collected at many other area lakes would be beneficial for such purpose.

The District's Board of Commissioners adopted the ordinance at its July meeting. While there was some controversy over the measure on social-media sites, no one from a packed house at the meeting spoke against the fees publicly.

When permits are printed, collection boxes completed and final details worked out, the Commission will announce a start day for the fee system. ▪

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KILL SWITCHES NOW REQUIRED FOR SOME BOATS

By Brian Cope

Boaters should be aware of a new federal law concerning the use of kill switches, also known as engine cut off switches (ECOS). The law requires that operators wear their kill switches when at planing speed while operating boats less than 26 feet long.

The law that was passed by the U.S. Congress as part of Section 8316 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2021.

Kill switches are typically made up of lanyards that boat operators clip onto their life jackets, around their wrists, or to their clothing. The lanyard has a clip connected to the vessel's cut-off switch. If the operator is thrown overboard, the clip disconnects, shutting off the engine. Wireless cut-off switches are also available. These allow boat operators to move about the boat while in motion but kill the engine if a certain distance is exceeded.

Kill switches are not required at idle or when not on plane

The U.S. Coast Guard is enforcing the law nationwide. Local game wardens and other law enforcement agencies also have the authority to enforce the law.

According to the USCG, boaters are not required to use a kill switch or ECOS if:

- The operator is in an enclosed helm;
- The boat is off plane and not exceeding hull speed;
- During docking maneuvers or while at idle;
- The vessel does not have a kill switch and is not required to have one;
- The boat generates less than 115 pounds of static thrust (approximately full throttle of a 3HP outboard);
- The boat is at least 26 feet long;

You can visit the U.S. Coast Guard's website (www.uscg.mil) to learn more about the new law. ▪

INDIAN CREEK DRAWDOWN SET FOR SEPTEMBER

From News Reports

After a recommendation by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), the Rapides Parish Police Jury has scheduled a drawdown on Indian Creek Lake near Woodworth for aquatic-vegetation control, reduction of organic material and fish-habitat improvement. The drawdown is designed to reduce the amount of hydrilla in the lake.

The water-control structure is scheduled to be opened on Sept. 13, and the lake level should fall at a rate of 2 to 4 inches per day. The water level will be lowered to 8 feet below normal pool stage. The Indian Creek Lake control gates are scheduled for closure on Jan. 10, 2022, to allow the lake to refill.

During the drawdown, an estimated 1,500 to 1,600 acres of water will remain in open areas. Boaters may still access the lake from the boat ramp at the Indian Creek Recreational Area. Caution is advised during launching and when on the water, as numerous boating hazards will be present.

This action is a necessary component of LDWF's integrated management plan to control overabundant aquatic vegetation growth and to improve access for recreational activities. An annual cycle of high and low water fluctuation can provide beneficial effects similar to a natural overflow lake system. ▪




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GREAT PUBLIC OFFERINGS

By Don Shoopman



BIOLOGISTS POINT DEER HUNTERS TO A DOUBLE-HANDFUL OF TOP WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS FOR GREAT ACTION THIS SEASON.

Watching the world wake up, knowing you prepared and planned as much as possible and scouted diligently, is part of the reward on a deer hunt.

A bowhunter watching varying shades of grays change to all colors of the rainbow in the predawn magnifies all that 10 times. Hunting on any of the thousands of acres of public land across Louisiana makes the experience special, more meaningful.

The state's Wildlife Management Areas boast deer hunting opportunities with bow and arrow or firearms, including primitive weapons. Bowhunting's appeal is infectious.

A growing number of bowhunters is sharing the challenges of hunting on WMAs, according to biologists Wendell Smith of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. They see it every season.

Smith, manager of the Lake Charles Region, said in mid-July, "They're already getting excited about bowhunting and scouting. They love it, and they're hard-core,"

As many as 400 bowhunters converge on Clear Creek WMA the first weekend they get a chance to hunt each season, Smith said. Many are from southwest Louisiana; they know each other and share information on social media: Facebook-Clear Creek WMA Hunters.

Biologist Mitch McGee, who manages the Monroe Region, has seen similar kinship among bowhunters in his region. Interest remains high.

"I would say it hasn't decreased any. There's a big community of strictly bowhunters," McGee said.

Louisiana WMAs to put on a bowhunting "to-do" list include Tunica Hills WMA in the Hammond Region; Thistlethwaite WMA in the Lafayette Region; Clear Creek WMA in the Lake Charles Region; Soda Lake WMA in the Minden Area; Big Lake WMA in the Monroe Region, and Atchafalaya Delta WMA in the Coastal Lafayette Region.

Here's a look at the upcoming deer season on WMAs around Louisiana.

HAMMOND REGION >

HAMMOND REGION

TOP WMA DEER HARVEST NUMBERS

Maurepas Swamp WMA: 145 deer reported (87 bucks, 58 does)
Pearl River WMA: 56 deer reported (40 bucks, 16 does)
Tunica Hills WMA: 44 deer reported (29 bucks, 15 does)

As hunters prepare for the season on Maurepas Swamp WMA, LDWF biologists advise that a levee system is being built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Biologist Jillian Day emphasized that construction is ongoing, and safety precautions must be practiced by all hunters who use the WMA.

"There are going to be workers out pretty much across the southern boundary of the property from just east of Highway 51 to I-55 and I-10, and Hope Canal on the west," said biologist Brad Breland.

Maurepas Swamp WMA and Pearl River WMA have the best potential for deer hunters. At 112,615 acres, Maurepas Swamp is more than three times the size of 35,619-acre Pearl River, generally regarded as the region's other top destination for deer hunters.

Day and Breland agree while Maurepas Swamp WMA is immense, and most of it is difficult to access, which means deer receive less pressure than smaller, more accessible WMAs.

With plenty of roads and trails in the northern section, Pearl River is one of the most accessible WMAs in the region. It gets more pressure because of its proximity to New Orleans, but still not a "tremendous amount," Breland said.

"Tunica Hills is going to be the main draw for bowhunters. Most of the season is going to be bow. Historically, it's been our bow area," Day said.

Overall habitat conditions in the region were favorable, they reported. Fawns were just hitting the ground in early July, and they are hoping there won't be a major flooding event.

Pearl River's peak rut is from mid-December to early January, while Maurepas Swamp's peak breeding season is generally the first two weeks of January, the biologists said.

LAFAYETTE REGION

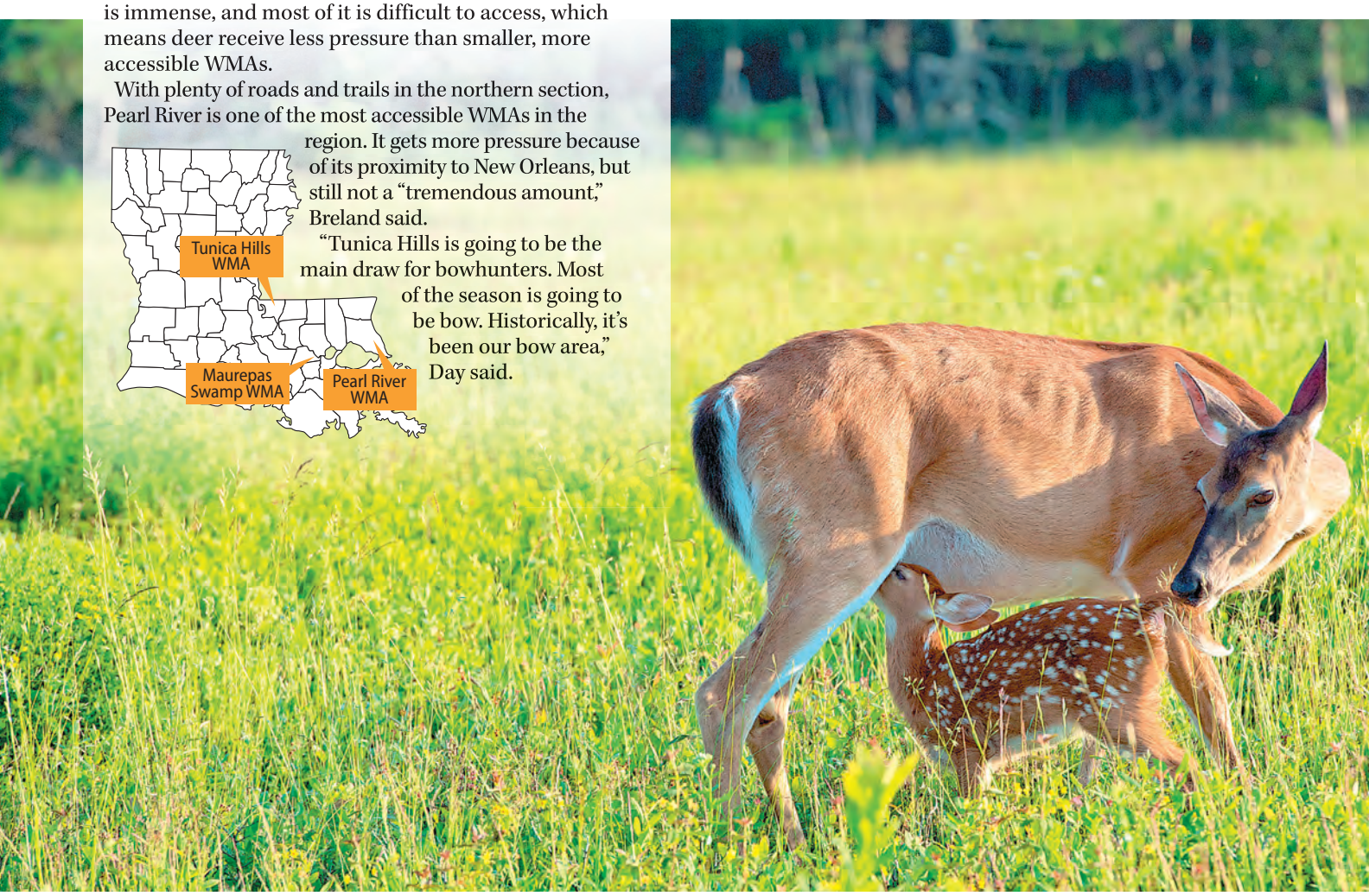
TOP WMA DEER HARVEST NUMBERS

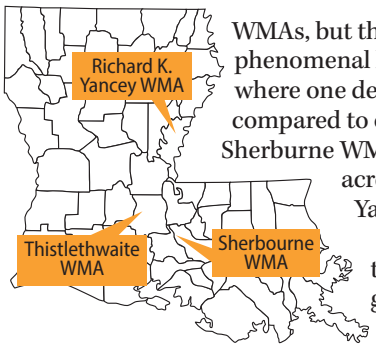
Sherburne WMA: 385 deer reported (195 bucks, 163 does; one deer per 122 acres)
Thistlethwaite WMA: Total – 196 deer reported (112 bucks, 84 does, one deer per 57 acres)

Thistlethwaite WMA has so many resident deer that more hunting opportunities have been added to the 2021-22 season.

"It has a high-density herd. There are a lot of deer in there right now. That's why we increased the season, to try to take more deer out of there," said biologist Tony Vidrine, Lafayette Region manager, who is quick to point out the area isn't overpopulated.

Total harvest numbers don't make those of some larger





WMAs, but the deer-per-acre harvest was phenomenal last season on Thistlewaite, where one deer per 57 acres was killed compared to one deer per 122 acres on Sherburne WMA and one deer per 314 acres on sprawling Richard K. Yancey WMA.

Thistlethwaite's herd thrives on many natural groceries. Logging practices past and present, plus two hurricanes, have created excellent habitat, Vidrine said. Above-average rainfall has generated a lush understory, and mast production was moderate to high the past few years.

"We are expecting another excellent harvest on this WMA," Vidrine said. "Thistlethwaite is a popular area for bowhunting. A lot of bowhunters for some reason like to bowhunt that area."

Browse availability on Sherburne has been enhanced by logging by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Vidrine said, noting LDWF has scheduled more logging. Two 2020 hurricanes improved habitat conditions, the acorn production has been high for a few years, and the area wasn't impacted by flooding.

Sherburne's deer herd isn't high-density, he said, but moderate.

"They've got a lot of land to cover. The deer herd's doing well in there," Vidrine said.

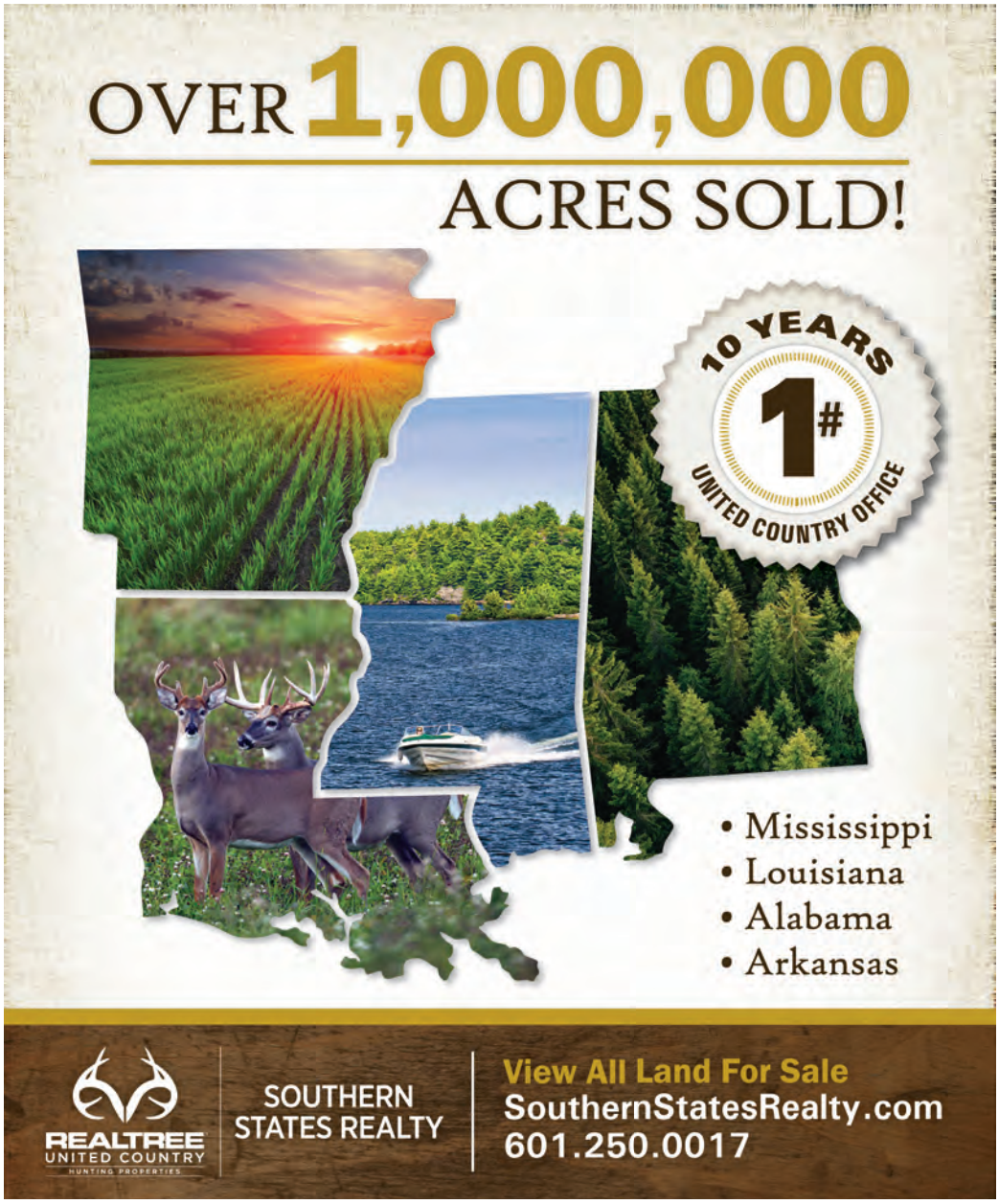
Thistlethwaite WMA's rut peaks over three weeks beginning the week before Christmas.

Also, hunters killed more than 300 hogs on Thistlethwaite and more than 600 on Sherburne last season, Vidrine said.

LAKE CHARLES REGION >

A lack of major flood events across Louisiana will increase fawning success on most state WMAs.







Olivia Abrahams, 15, harvested this 8-point, 210-pound buck at the Buckhorn WMA youth lottery hunt on Jan. 2.

LAKE CHARLES REGION

TOP WMA DEER HARVEST NUMBERS

Clear Creek WMA: 298 deer reported (192 bucks, 106 does, one deer per 176 acres, one deer per 15 hunter efforts)

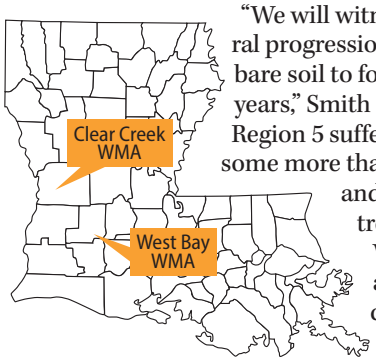
West Bay WMA: 250 deer reported (148 bucks, 102 does, one deer per 237 acres, one deer per 16 hunter efforts)

Deer prove time and time again they can adapt to natural disasters that devastate their habitat.

Wendell Smith, biologist manager in the Lake Charles Region, is confident they'll rebound after the area was smashed by two hurricanes in a two-month span in 2020. Is he concerned about the region's deer and rabbits?

"Oh, no ... deer, they thrive on disasters like this. Mama deer are real healthy because there's a lot of food, so they give birth to many healthy fawns," Smith said.

Hurricanes, he said, open the forest canopy by toppling trees, allowing sunlight to reach the ground and jump-starting super growth of early successional plants that benefit deer, rabbits, quail, turkeys and songbirds. He cited Hurricane Rita in 2005 as a prime example.



"We will witness, once again, the natural progression of wildlife habitat from bare soil to forest species within a few years," Smith said. "All (WMAs) within Region 5 suffered hurricane damage, some more than others. Hurricanes Laura and Delta caused extensive tree destruction on West Bay WMA, Sabine Island WMA and Fort Polk WMA, and caused moderate damage to Clear Creek WMA and Peason Ridge WMA. For this reason, we surmised the mast crops were mostly destroyed or heavily damaged on these WMAs."

Also, Smith reported, bottomland hardwood sections on Fort Polk WMA and Vernon WMA were blown over, further reducing mast crop production. Thousands of acres of mature, longleaf pines were downed by winds in excess of 120 mph, he explained.

That Clear Creek WMA, an ultra-popular bowhunting area, was spared major damage was welcome news to hundreds of bowhunters who frequent it every season.

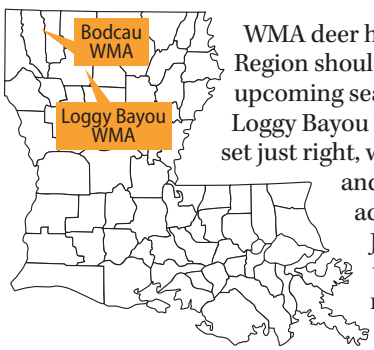
"There's a large contingent of bowhunters who fill the campground up opening weekend," he said.

MINDEN REGION

TOP WMA DEER HARVEST NUMBERS

Loggy Bayou WMA: 114 deer reported (60 bucks, 54 does, one deer per 58 acres)

Bodcau WMA: 195 deer reported (100 bucks, 95 does, one deer per 173 acres)



WMA deer hunters in the Minden Region should be optimistic about the upcoming season on Bodcau WMA and Loggy Bayou WMA. The table is being set just right, with consistent rainfall and fairly mild temperatures, according to biologist Jeff Johnson. Browse conditions were optimal, he said, which means antler growth, body weight and fawn survival should be above average.

"Man, we're still getting rain. It's an abnormally wet year," he said.

The weather was rough in August 2020 after Hurricane Laura made landfall in southwest Louisiana, but there was little damage to Bodcau and Loggy Bayou, Johnson said.

"A few trees blew down on Bodcau, but it was nothing comparable to thunderstorm-related, straight-line wind damage we received on Bodcau in the summer of 2019. All that previous damage on Bodcau made access more challenging on a good bit of the WMA, but it also put sunlight on the ground. That has now turned into increased food and cover for deer."

For bowhunters, Loggy Bayou might be a little better choice than Bodcau, he said.

The Minden Region has two archery-only public areas — Bayou Pierre WMA and Soda Lake WMA. The former is more accessible, and the latter has a few more deer but requires a lot of hiking, Johnson said. The bottom line is, bowhunters favor those WMAs because they don't have to compete against gun hunters.

Loggy Bayou WMA's deer herd has more density, which appeals to many bowhunters, but there is less deer hunting pressure on Soda Lake and Bayou Pierre.

MONROE REGION >

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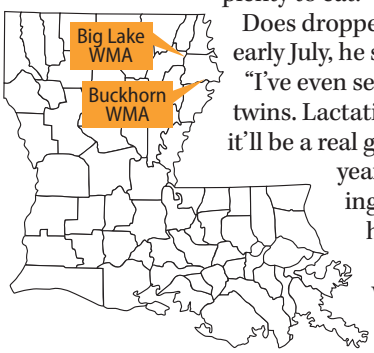
MONROE REGION

TOP WMA DEER HARVEST NUMBERS

Big Lake WMA: 289 deer reported (176 bucks, 113 does)
Buckhorn WMA: 235 deer reported (145 bucks, 90 does)

Mitch McGee, LDWF's Monroe Region biologist supervisor, knows a good thing when he sees it — like the outlook for deer hunting across his region.

"I think we're setting up pretty good now," he said. "We didn't have any major floods this spring. Conditions out there are favorable. It's good to be a deer in the woods right now. There's plenty to eat."



Does dropped fawns at a steady pace in early July, he said.

"I've even seen triplets and a lot of twins. Lactation rates were good. I think it'll be a real good fawning crop this year," he said. "We're even seeing poults. I think the turkey hatch will be fair."

McGee has a good idea where much of the deer hunting action will be in 2021-22.

"Big Lake and Buckhorn WMAs have the most promise for the upcoming season," he said. "Last year's mast crop was favorable across the region, and this fall appears to be setting up for a good red oak crop, as last year's mast survey showed numerous young red acorns formed. Hopefully, we can continue getting summer rains to maintain quality browse."

McGee pointed out recent timber harvests on both WMAs have improved deer browse significantly. He said several high-scoring bucks have been harvested the past several years.

"I expect to see several this upcoming season," he said.

Last year's harvest numbers reflect the confidence he has in those two WMAs.

McGee has said in the past, Buckhorn WMA has been "underutilized" by deer hunters. The WMA's rich soil produces high-grade browse, he said. It's harder to hunt because of the thick, palmetto understory, and that same cover gives deer convenient escape routes.

A bowhunter's best chance should be at Big Lake WMA; its southeastern border touches Tensas National Wildlife Refuge.

"That gives guys a chance to hunt near a refuge," McGee said.

McGee also advised deer hunters against overlooking Bayou Macon WMA, which gave up 147 deer, including 101 bucks, last season.

PINEVILLE REGION >

Deer hunting on WMAs in the Monroe area could be great this fall thanks to a mast crop that's likely to be a good one.



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2012-2020 BEST BROKERAGES



Hunters who get well off access roads and scout can get a good jump on the season by finding sign like these buck rubs.

PINEVILLE REGION

TOP WMA DEER HARVEST NUMBERS

Dewey W. Wills WMA: 417 deer reported (238 bucks, 179 does, one deer per 131 acres)

Camp Beauregard WMA: 91 deer reported (68 bucks, 23 does, one deer per 137 acres)

Healthy herds on Pineville Region WMAs indicate deer-hunting success should be fair to good in 2021-22. No one knows better than biologist Cliff Dailey, whose glowing optimism centers on Dewey W. Wills WMA, where 417 deer — 238 of them bucks — were harvested in 2020-21.

"Browse conditions are good in the area," Dailey said. "Thankfully, deep, backwater flooding hasn't occurred this year, allowing deer to conserve nutritional resources instead of migrating to higher ground.

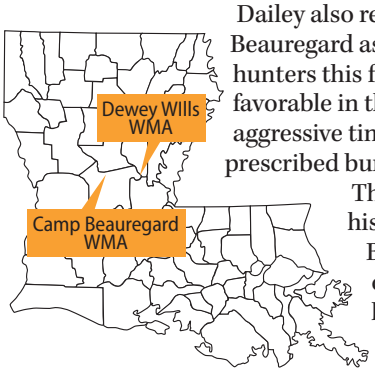
"Harvest numbers the past five years have been higher than average, with lactation rates of adult does being 70%-plus, which is excellent. These factors indicate that herd health and population is optimal for the area."

Dailey said Dewey W. Wills's mast crop the past two falls was above average, which provided the necessary nutrition for deer to get through winter healthy enough to carry fawns until birth in early summer.

"Hunters should have a good opportunity to harvest a deer this season," he said.

If deer hunters put in the time with preseason scouting, their chance of killing a quality buck rises considerably, he said.

Peak rut on Dewey W. Wills is the first week of January.



Dailey also recommends Camp Beauregard as a top destination for deer hunters this fall. Browse conditions are favorable in that area as the result of aggressive timber-harvest rotation and prescribed burns.

There's another reason for his positive vibe about Camp Beauregard, where a mix of upland pine areas and lower creek bottom hardwood areas appeals to deer.

"The majority of this WMA is on higher elevation, thus protected from backwater flooding that this area has received several years in a row," he said. "I recommend this WMA for hunters who like a mixture of pine and hardwood habitat."

Peak rut for Camp Beauregard WMA is late November.

COASTAL LAFAYETTE REGION

TOP WMA DEER HARVEST NUMBERS

Atchafalaya Delta WMA: 47 deer reported (30 bucks, 16 does, 1 unknown, one deer per 320 acres)

Salvador/Timken WMA: 23 deer reported (one deer per 1,390 acres deer habitat)

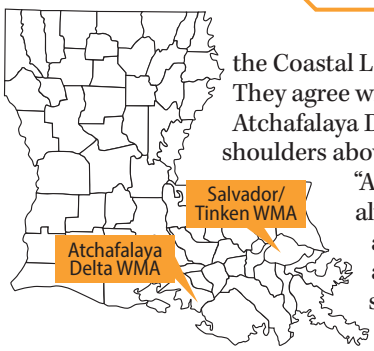
Atchafalaya Delta WMA, long a leading destination for rewarding deer hunts, remains the most-popular public land for deer in the Coastal Lafayette Region, which includes Salvador/Timken WMA and Pass-A-Loutre WMA.

The archery-only area — with the exception of youth lottery hunts — in St. Mary Parish gave up 47 deer last season after hunters harvested 57 deer in 2019-20. Among those deer killed in 2020-21 were two 10-point bucks.

Biologists Lance Campbell and Vaughan McDonald oversee



Brecken Figueiredo, 11, harvested this 8-point, 180-pound buck on Dewey Wills WMA on Dec. 13, 2020.



the Coastal Lafayette Region for LDWF. They agree with many deer hunters that Atchafalaya Delta WMA stands head and shoulders above other WMAs.

"Atchafalaya Delta will most always be the premier coastal area, due to its numerous acres of higher-elevation spoil islands at the main delta, which serve as great. semi-upland deer habitat," Campbell said.

However, changing conditions there indicate potential trouble for the future of deer hunting on the WMA. Campbell noted that the deer harvest has "trended down."

While browse availability has increased across the entire area, most of it is herbaceous, with no change in utilization compared to previous browse surveys, McDonald said. Increased browse availability but unchanged utilization and a low amount of woody plants indicates decreased deer densities.

Neighboring properties with similar marsh habitats also show a decline in deer densities, he reported, probably because of consecutive years of high water in the marshes. Other issues contributing to lower deer densities on Atchafalaya Delta WMA include the lack of optimal cover, habitat deterioration and tropical storm/hurricane-related impacts.

At Salvador/Timken WMA, 23 deer were harvested in 2020-21. The area is nearly all fresh marsh with higher spoil banks along canals across the WMA. Browse availability is mostly herbaceous with the exception of some woody browse species along the spoil banks. ▪

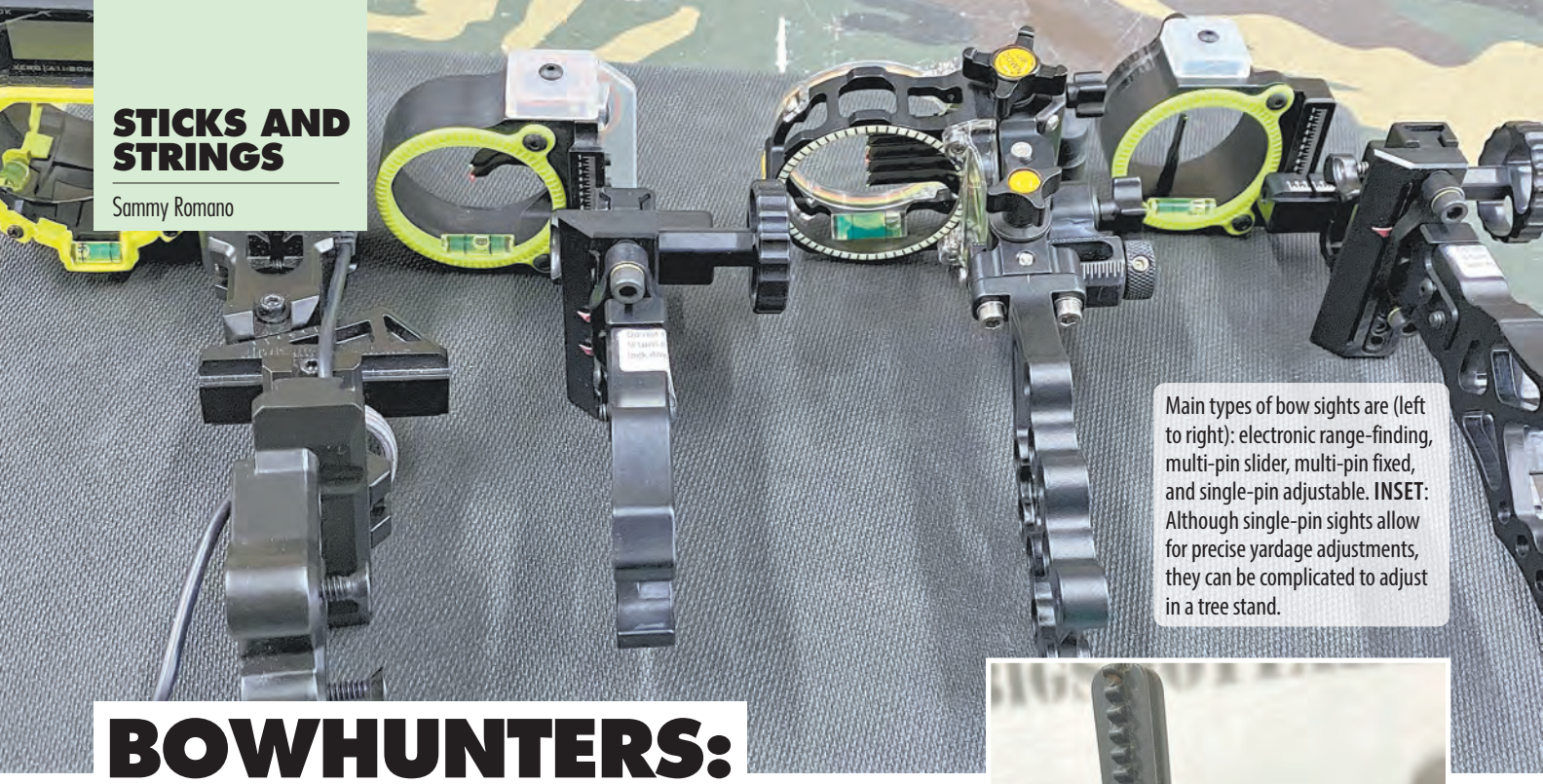


Don Shoopman *moved to the Sportsman's Paradise in 1976, and he and his wife June live in New Iberia. They have two grown sons.*

STICKS & STRINGS >



Sammy Romano



Main types of bow sights are (left to right): electronic range-finding, multi-pin slider, multi-pin fixed, and single-pin adjustable. **INSET**: Although single-pin sights allow for precise yardage adjustments, they can be complicated to adjust in a tree stand.

BOWHUNTERS: SET YOUR SIGHTS

DECIDE WHICH SIGHT SUITS YOUR HUNTING SITUATION AND BUDGET, BUY IT AND LEARN EXACTLY HOW IT WORKS TO ENSURE YOUR SUCCESS

Modern compound bows are outfitted with many accessories, each serving to increase performance and/or accuracy, but the accessory that is most-individualized and most-frequently changed is the sight.

Bow sights are available in a mind-blowing array of designs. Although most work well, the design of many new sights is specialized. To get the most out of their sight, each archer should find the model that best suits their individual needs and hunting style.

In order to move forward, it is often helpful to glance back into history. The first bow sight was likely a matchstick or something similar taped to the handle of a recurve bow. Although crude and difficult to adjust, it served its purpose as an aiming reference point, allowing the archer to aim with more consistency.

Although sights have come a long way, with machined aluminum brackets, fiber-optic pins, battery powered lights, and even rangefinders built in, for the most part, they serve the same function.

To be effective, a bow sight needs only be clearly visible to the archer without obscuring the target, providing an aiming point that is adjustable to cause the arrow to impact the target in the desired spot consistently. All other features are a bonus.

That being said, many factors, including the age of the archer, hunting methods, terrain and species targeted factor into choosing the best sight for a particular situation. An eastern whitetail hunter in a tree stand overlooking a feeder in thick cover has different needs than an antelope hunter on the open prairie out west.

FOUR OPTIONS

When choosing a bow sight, I find it easiest to simplify things by breaking sights down into four categories:

- Multi-pin fixed;
- Single-pin adjustable;
- Multi-pin slider;
- Electronic range-finding.

Multi-pin fixed sights are the simplest, with multiple pins and an immovable bracket. These sights are ideal for hunting dynamic situations such as trails in wooded areas and unfamiliar stands with unknown shot distances. Once the archer reaches full draw, there is no need to let down to adjust the yardage, the bow is simply elevated or lowered to place the corresponding pin on the animal. This reduces movement by the hunter, and leads to less task-loading before and during the shot process.



Sammy Romano

Single-pin adjustable sights feature a single aiming point with an adjustable bracket. They are an excellent choice for hunting in thick cover with limited shot distances, over feeders or bait, and in open fields where game animals are feeding slowly. Single-pin sights offer an uncluttered view, which really helps when aiming, especially for the aging archer who has trouble with multi-pin sights "clustering" — blurring and making it difficult to focus when aiming. The disadvantage of a single pin adjustable sight is that the bow must be let down to



Sammy Romano *is a lifelong hunter who has worked in the archery industry for more than 25 years. His expertise includes compounds and crossbows. He can be reached at samboka31@aol.com.*

adjust for different shot yardages. This can lead to rushed shots and even missed opportunities in dynamic hunting scenarios.

Multi-pin slider sights offer the best of both worlds, offering fixed pins with a less-cluttered view. The archer designates one pin — usually the bottom pin — and the adjustable bracket is used to dial this pin in for longer shots. This way, a 3-pin sight can be used to shoot far beyond 40 yards. These sights are gaining popularity, especially among western hunters who typically face much-longer shots but need fixed pins for surprise, close-range encounters. The disadvantage here is that the archer must have the presence of mind to remember to re-zero the dial. If not, a missed shot at point-blank range is inevitable.

Last are the newest, electronic range-finding sights by Garmin and Burris. They incorporate laser rangefinders and use a ballistic computer to illuminate the correct pin for the shot yardage. Although they are deadly effective, they are very costly, and their legality varies from state to state. I have been shooting a Garmin Xero A-1i for the past several years and love it. It has made hunting fun due to less pre-shot task-loading and anxiety. If these are legal where you hunt and you can justify the high price, I highly recommend them.

Regardless of which sight you choose, learn to shoot comfortably with it. Also, be sure to learn all of its features and how to adjust your sight should the need arise. Familiarity with your setup and learning how to shoot it well are the single most important factors when it comes to being successful in the field. ▪

GRUNTS & GOBBLES >



David Moreland



Excellent habitat conditions due to spring and summer rains have made for desirable antler growth for this buck on the author's piney woods habitat in East Feliciana Parish.

WILL THAT BUCK BE BIGGER?

EVERY SEASON, HUNTERS PASS UP BUCKS IN THE HOPE THEY WILL EVENTUALLY BE TROPHIES, BUT WILL THEY REALLY GROW ANY LARGER? THIS YEAR, MAYBE SO

In the 1960s, deer-hunting opportunities began to expand across southeastern states as deer numbers started to increase after restocking. Herds seemed to explode in the 1970s, and in the 1980s, deer hunting really kicked into high gear.

But in the mid-1980s, many hunters began complaining about the lack of adult bucks with big antlers. Quickly discovered in Louisiana — and in other states — was that most antlered bucks being harvested were only 1½ years old. In fact, on many clubs and private land around the state, the yearling buck harvest amounted to 60% to 90% of the total buck kill. No wonder there were not many adult bucks in the population; their life spans were really short.

That trend was slowly reversed over time with sound management work and today, that yearling buck (1½ years old) harvest has been dramatically reduced. More 3½-year and older bucks are being killed than ever before.

It seems to be quite vogue to come back to camp after the morning hunt and talk about the number of antlered bucks that were passed up. The big-buck mania that has been sweeping the nation for more than 30 years is still going strong.

It is interesting to read in a recent study done in New York that during a 3-year period, only 1% of the 3½-year and older bucks tagged scored 160 or better. That's the minimum score for the Boone & Crockett Club's Recognition Program; a deer scoring 160 is a true trophy. Almost 70% of the bucks 3½ and older scored 120 or less. Now, a 120-inch deer is nice, but once you drop below 120, the buck drops from trophy class to quality class.

AGE, NOT ANTLERS

Most hunters judge a buck's age based on antler size, and this is a major mistake. Nutrition is the key to growing trophy class bucks, and the fact is, the nutritional plane in most of Louisiana's habitat types is low. Dominant piney woods do not grow big bucks. In fact, a 130-class B&C buck is a top-end buck for this habitat type, and that is still a far cry from trophy classification.

At seminars and talks, I will frequently hold up a rack from an adult buck (3½ or older) and ask, would you shoot this buck. Very few hands are raised, despite the rack being from a 5½-year-old buck. Hunters need to be looking more at the body features and stop focusing on antlers.

A small-bodied, adult buck will still have body features just like a larger-bodied adult, but the rack will be smaller. Consequently, many bucks on clubs and private lands are dying from old age, disease or natural mortality rather than hunter mortality. There is a lot of competition for does among adult bucks, and this stress and fighting results in skull injuries that account for in a high percentage of buck mortality. Some studies on land managed for trophy bucks have found higher natural mortality than hunter mortality.

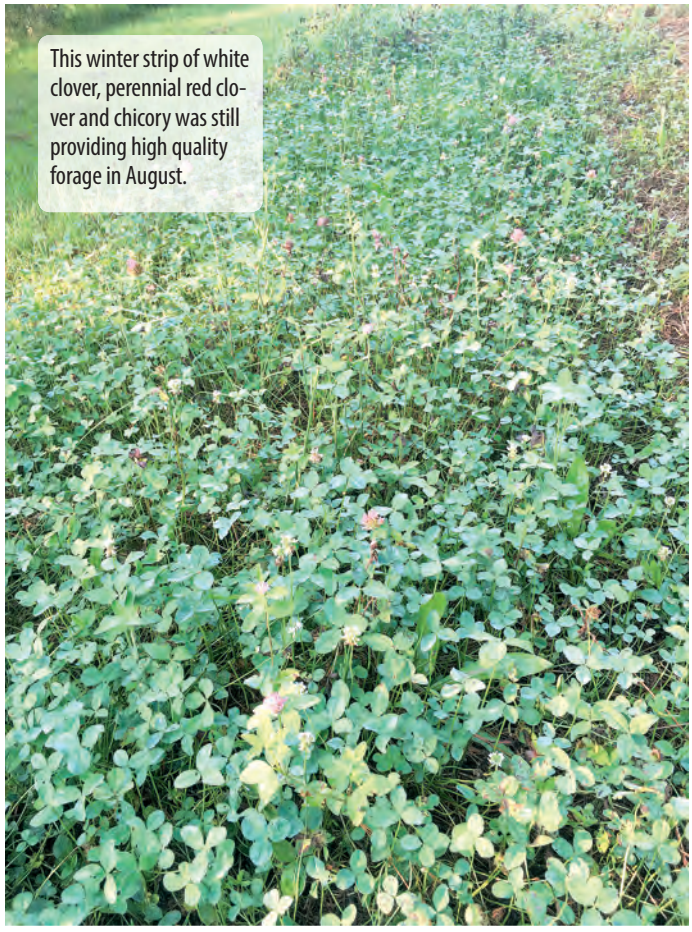
So with that in mind, is it sound management to pass up a 110-inch 4½-year-old with the idea that it will be bigger next season? It depends on the management work that has been done to increase the nutritional quality of your habitat. If you are doing the work, you



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 and at Amazon.com.*

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This winter strip of white clover, perennial red clover and chicory was still providing high quality forage in August.

could expect to perhaps see a 25% increase in B&C score, which would equate to a score of around 138, still short of trophy status. Of course, you're rolling the dice that the buck survives and lives another year.

The reality is that in most habitats across Louisiana, I doubt one would see that percent of increase in antler growth. A 10% increase is probably more realistic, and that would equate to a score of 121. My feelings about that 110-inch, 4½-year-old is to shoot it and enjoy the harvest; meat for the freezer and a quality, adult buck.

KNOW YOUR HERD

Understanding age and growth is essential for any deer-management program, especially one that puts restrictions on what bucks may be harvested. The only way to understand and determine what is going on is to collect age and body data. Over a period of several years, growth and development trends should become clear and provide the land manager with a good assessment of the program and what the habitat will produce. This will give the manager an understanding of the habitat and the nutrition that the habitat is providing and what could be done to improve it.

IMPROVE HABITAT >





Perennial red clover is still growing because of the abundant rainfall this year.

IMPROVE HABITAT

Timber cuts, prescribed burning, mowing and fallow plowing, along with forage plantings, will improve habitat quality along with increasing nutrition. Many have opted to just feed corn, but this will fall short in meeting the physical needs of deer.

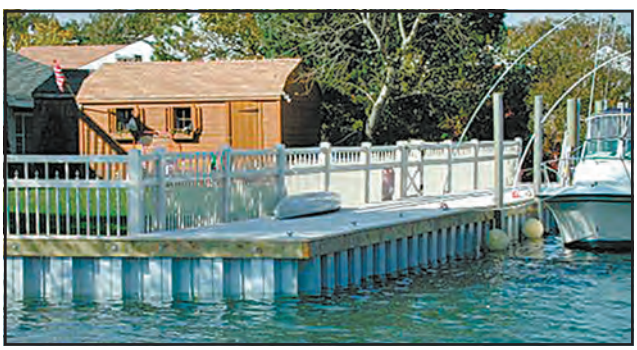
This year has been an exceptional one for rainfall, and the native habitat has been maintained in excellent condition. I am still seeing excellent growth in winter food plots of clover and chicory, as well as the new growth of woody and herbaceous vegetation on native habitat sites. Normally, as the heat increases and the rainfall declines, the quality of the native vegetation will decline, but this has not been the case this year.

There is new growth on blackberry everywhere and new growth in the clover strips. This new plant growth is providing the nutrition deer need during a generally stressful period. The adult buck photos I have gotten to date are verifying exceptional antler growth on adult bucks not harvested last season. I suspect this will be the case around Louisiana, and it would not surprise me for this to be a bumper year for both quality and trophy bucks.

If you passed up some adult bucks last season, you may be pleasantly rewarded this season with a bigger buck. There also appears to be a developing acorn crop, so you might want to keep this in mind as the price of corn rises at the feed store. ▪

DEER STAND TO-DOS >

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Whether it's archery, firearms or both, now is the right time to get those deer stands in tip-top shape for the upcoming whitetail season. **INSET:** A stand that goes unkept from year to year will soon become unhuntable and dangerous to climb into.

TAKE A STAND

CHECKING OUT, CLEANING OUT, FIXING DEER STANDS IS A MUST ON PRESEASON HUNT CLUB TO-DO LISTS

By Andy Douglas

As September rolls around, sportsmens' attention turns to deer camps and fall hunting seasons. Hunt clubs and individuals work hard preparing. Spraying, clipping and disking food plots are done, along with road work and getting deer stands in good order. Most stands and hunting blinds have been left in place for nearly a year and need a little TLC. Here are a few things to think about when getting deer stands ready and in tip-top shape for hunting.

DON'T DO IT ALONE

Take a hunting partner with you, regardless of what type of stand you are checking. Accidents happen quickly and unexpectedly. You've heard the horror stories — don't let that person be you. Whether you are working on ladder stands, lock-ons, tripods or box blinds, bring someone with you. If you are climbing, use a safety harness.

STRAP IT DOWN

All ladder stands left in place from year to year should be checked thoroughly before hunting. If there are ratchet straps present, check them for any rotting or tearing and for good tension. If the stand has chains and binders, inspect them for rust or broken links.

Check the tension on any device securing a stand to a tree. Be aware — a club member or landowner may have loosened the tension after the previous deer hunting season to prevent tree damage or prevent the chains from growing into the tree.

SECURE THE ANCHOR

Any tripod deer stand, factory made box blind or homemade box stand should be anchored securely. Check the anchoring device and make sure there's good tension on cable straps, or chains.

If homemade box stands do not have legs cemented in the ground, they should have some type of anchor. This will prevent hunters from showing up after storms or high winds to find a nice stand laying on the ground — it happens.



Photos by Andy Douglas

CLEAN THEM OUT

Box blinds are very popular and can be store-bought or custom built to suit each hunter. They can be enclosed with windows or be built as open as individuals like.

Check box stands carefully, whether they are set on the ground or elevated;



Take the time when you are doing all your hunting club honey-dos and check all your deer stands.

they can become inhabited by undesirables. Rats, mice, spiders, wasps, hornets, ants and any other insects imaginable can stake claim to a hunter's favorite stand and call it their home.

Early September is the best time to check these stands. If you find a serious problem like an owl inhabitation, you will have time for a remedy that could take several days and trips to the stand. Hopefully, the worst you will find is straw or rubbish brought in by a rodent, or maybe a wasp nest or two. Nonetheless, check your stands; you don't want a surprise on the year's first hunt.

A HELPFUL BOX STAND TIP

If wasps, insects and vermin are not your thing — try a medicated cow tag. Go to the local feed store where you buy food-plot mixes and ask for insecticide cattle ear tags. Take one to your stand and toss it in or hang it about a foot from the ceiling, if possible. This will run out most all types of wasps and insects. Come back in a week or two, and you will be set.

Take the time when you are doing all your hunting club honey-dos and check all your deer stands. For the least impact on your deer hunting, use these tips and have stand maintenance done well ahead of opening day. ▪

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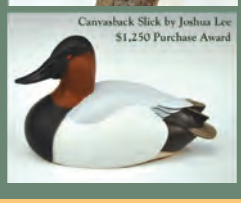


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GO SOFT (MAST)

DEER WILL PUT SOFT MAST ON THEIR MENU EARLY IN THE FALL WHEN THE FRUIT BEGINS TO RIPEN. HUNTERS NEED TO BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE IT, PAY ATTENTION TO IT AND SET UP CLOSE BY.

By Pete Rogers

Rick Small



September brings mixed emotions for deer hunters. We long to get afield, but at times, the sweltering heat makes it difficult to bear. For those of us who do not have large agriculture fields to hunt, we should be focused on one thing and one thing only: soft mast, the key to early season success.

That was the case for me once as I sat along the edge of a fallow field. Some earlier scouting had shown me loaded persimmon trees along one of the edges. Knowing that persimmons are a favorite wildlife food in September, I set up an ambush point. Just after daylight, a mature buck that had been feeding on the persimmons was making his way back to his bed. He didn't make it.

What really is soft mast, and how do you know what the best soft mast is for deer? How many different kinds of soft mast are there that deer key in on, and how can you manipulate them for your benefit?

Mast is a term used to describe a type of food or fruit that trees and bushes produce. Fruit trees produce soft mast, while oak trees, hickory, beech and others produce hard mast. Soft mast typically involves foods such as berries, plums, pears, persimmon, muscadines, scuppernongs, crabapples, apples, poke berries and others. Knowing how to identify these soft-mast species can help you maximize your early season success.

Let's look at some of these major foods individually and learn how you can identify them and use this deer candy to put a big buck on your wall.

AMERICAN PERSIMMON >

AMERICAN PERSIMMON

American persimmon, *Diospryos virginiana,* is without question the favorite soft mast to find in the deer woods. When ripe, it produces a light-orange fruit about the size of a golf ball. This delicious fruit will attract every animal in the forest when it is falling: fox, coyote, squirrels, rabbits and, of course, deer. But locating persimmon trees is not the only thing you have to worry about. Persimmon trees are dioecious trees, which means that the trees are separated into male and female. Only the female tree produces fruit. There is no way to tell the males from the females except during the flowering and fruit-bearing season.

The field with the persimmons I mentioned earlier had far more male than female trees. Scouting in the summer when fruit is growing is the best method of determining if a persimmon tree bears fruit or not. I can assure you one thing: every animal in the forest knows where the female persimmon trees are, and they will flock to them in September. If you don't learn anything else, learn to identify persimmons and hunt them.

If you are preparing a food plot for deer, always throw in several female and male persimmon trees to help you along. You have to have both for the female to produce fruit.



Persimmons are unmatched as a favorite food of deer and almost every other wild animal. Whitetails will flock to a tree filled with the fruit. **BELOW:** The scuppernong grape is another favorite food for deer in the fall.

GRAPES

Muscadines and scuppernongs are a variety of muscadine grapes that share the same biological name, *Vitis rotundifolia*. These two are next on the important list of soft mast to hunt. These wild grapes, as some call them, are plentiful, and wildlife will voraciously feed on them. Muscadines are dark, while scuppernongs are pale in color. Both are incredibly tasty, and when I find them, I gorge myself on them.

Healthy vines will climb to the furthest reaches of trees and can be difficult to spot since their leaves are usually well up in the trees' canopies. Locating the vines is one thing. Setting up at the one the deer will visit is another. With so many vines in the forest, it can be difficult to isolate which ones the deer will be attracted to, but knowing where they are can be the difference.

Growing up very few homesteads in my home county were missing a muscadine arbor. Growing this favorite fruit was not only commonplace, but it also seemed to be a requirement. This tasty fruit was famous for making excellent jelly and preserves. Muscadine and scuppernongs are



Muscadine grapes thrive in most areas of the Southeast; the fruit usually matures in September.



also fine table fare for any industrious teenager looking for a snack.

Both muscadines and scuppernongs are able to thrive in deciduous and pine forests of the South, from the high mountains to the maritime forest. Florentine explorer Giovanni de Verrazzano documented the abundance of scuppernongs while exploring the North Carolina coast in 1524.

Typically maturing from Labor Day to mid-September, the muscadine grape is a favorite of hunters and animals. Though these grapes tend to grow best in fertile, sandy loam and alluvial soils, they also grow wild in well-drained bottomlands and are not subject to extended drought or waterlogging. Both muscadines and scuppernongs are readily available afield.

One of the great things about muscadines and scuppernongs is their resistance to pests and diseases. This makes them a plant to consider when manipulating your land for better deer forage. With fruit being formed in just 3 to 5 years and lasting for decades, muscadines and scuppernongs are a delicious option for early season hunters.



Pete Rogers *of Taylors, S.C., who works for USDA Wildlife Services, has been an outdoors writer and photographer for more than a decade. He has a real passion for trapping and enjoys sharing these experiences with his wife and five children.*

CRABAPPLE >

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CRABAPPLE

Crabapples will typically mature in late September and early October and become a popular feeding site for deer. **BELOW:** The seed pods on honey locust trees can reach 10 to 12 inches long and 2 to 4 inches in diameter. Deer like them after they have dried and hardened.



Southern Crabapple *(Malus angustifolia)* is a shrub tree that will reach heights of 20 to 30 feet in some areas. It loves pine forests but can be found in mixed forests. It prefers edges where sunlight is not hindered. Crabapples produce crops in 3 to 4 years and reach full abundance in 6 to 7 years. This, too, is a great crop for soft-mast manipulation. The fruit is palatable to deer, and it will attract them, typically from late September to early October. I have seen deer feeding on crabapples as late as the end of October, but this is not common.

HONEY LOCUST

Honey locust *(Gleditsia triacanthos)*, not to be confused with its cousin, black locust, is another favorite food source for white-tailed deer. Easily identifiable, the trunk will have large thorns, some reaching three to four inches long. The large seed pods resemble green bean pods but are 15 times larger. Measuring around 10 to 12 inches longer and 2 to 4 inches across, these large seed pods are a delicacy for wildlife and when producing, can be a ticket for killing big bucks.

In some cases, honey locust is considered an invasive species and has been known to spread rapidly. It is still a desirable food source for wildlife in general and deer in particular. Where it is found growing wild, the honey locust tree is one of the favorites. Similar to the persimmon, the honey locust is a tree that every animal in the woods knows where to find. If you are able to locate one, set a stand immediately and get ready. Even though the pods will begin dropping in September, deer tend to focus on them after they have dried and hardened. If you are looking to plant honey locust, be certain that no livestock can access the plant. It can be toxic to humans and livestock.

Soft mast is a personal favorite for early season success. Locating these delicacies will put game in your sights and trophies on your wall. ▪



DON'T WANT TO BUG YOU, BUT....

AVOIDING STINGING, BITING INSECTS IS ALL PART OF TAKING TO THE WOODS WHEN HUNTING SEASON ARRIVES. HERE ARE PROFILES OF THE 'DEMON-POSSESSED CREATURES' AWAITING YOUR ARRIVAL.

By Phillip Gentry

The promise of the coming fall is heralded by slightly cooler evenings, the choral sounds of summer frogs giving way to crickets, the rise of a mountain trout to the season's final mayfly hatch, and those tell-tale markings and scraping of whitetail bucks setting the stage.

Unfortunately, this same time period also means it's feasting time for some of the most demon-possessed creatures on the face of the earth. Be it stinging, biting, buzzing or otherwise intending to inflict pain, several species of insects are just waiting to ruin your day.

Fortunately, we have a mixture of modern chemistry, forgotten remedies and sage advice that may not completely exorcise these demons of the insect world, but will help keep them at bay or minimize the damage done.

TICKS >

Phillip Gentry

TICKS

Ticks may not be a big issue on the water, but the woods are full of them in late summer and early fall. Ticks bite people and animals to feed and may stay attached for as long as 10 days if not removed, before falling off the host.

In many cases, tick bites are harmless and leave little sign other than slight redness on the skin. Other times, ticks can cause allergic reactions or transmit disease to the host ranging from Lyme disease to Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

The best tick prevention is to wear long shirt sleeves and pants in the woods and spray with an insect repellent containing at least 20% DEET. Showering after possible exposure and self-examination are also recommended, as ticks will often crawl over the host looking for a moist area before attaching themselves.

MOSQUITOS

Possibly the most widespread and hated pest in the outdoor world is the mosquito. Like ticks, mosquitos bite to draw blood to feed. Only female mosquitos bite, and the nutrients gained from blood help make eggs for reproduction.

Mosquito saliva contains an anticoagulant that keeps blood from clotting so the insect can feed. The anticoagulant is what causes the itching sensation and at times, small red whelps on the skin or other allergic reactions.

Taking antihistamines or applying heat, aloe, basil oil or honey topically to the bite can reduce inflammation and relieve symptoms.



Mosquitos are public enemy No. 1. Females need blood to assist with egg production. **BACKGROUND:** Ticks burrow into the skin of the host and may feed for up to 10 days before falling off.

Mosquito spray, typically composed of DEET, can ward off mosquitos, and wearing long-sleeve clothing the insects can't penetrate is not a bad idea.

In recent years, newly developed devices that emit the oils or aromas of plants such as citronella and chrysanthemum, which naturally repel mosquitoes, can be worn on the body or placed in an area to ward off mosquitos.

BLACK FLIES >

ALLERGIC REACTIONS TO INSECT BITES

Most insect bites pose little danger other than the initial bite and lingering itch. In some cases, allergic reactions, particularly to insect stings, can cause severe illness or even death.

After being bitten/stung by an insect, pay close attention for signs of an allergic reaction which includes swelling, redness or rash, itching and numbness or tingling.

Severe reactions, those requiring medical attention, may include fever, difficulty breathing, nausea or vomiting, rapid pulse, swelling of the lips or throat, or loss of consciousness. ▪



Courtesy thermacell.com

Devices like the Thermacell emit engineered plant-based scents that naturally repel insects.





More than 250 species of black flies exist in North America, including this deer fly. **BELOW:** Most insect sprays contain an oily base with concentrations of DEET, an insect repellent developed at the end of World War II.

BLACK FLIES

North America is home to more than 250 species of flies, including sand gnats, also referred to as no-see-ums. Black flies wear you out slowly as they find seams in your clothing and bite, resulting in a lingering, relentless itch. Flies bite and feed for the same reasons as mosquitos, to produce eggs. Rather than suck blood, flies and gnats have a scissor-like mouth appendage that bites through skin and injects a coagulant.

Several species of biting flies swarm in areas of high moisture content, like marshes and swamps, and are most active early and late in the day.

In North America, black flies do not spread disease, but their bites can cause swelling, bleeding, pain and itching.

The best defense is light-colored clothing with tight fittings around the neck, wrists and ankles. Insect repellents have been proven effective, however, with varying results. Most sprays that leave an oily residue seem to work better, presumably because the oil makes it difficult for the smaller flies to land and bite, which is why natural oils — even without harsh chemicals — are believed to be effective.

CHIGGERS

The larval stage of the otherwise inert insects known as harvest mites or red bugs may possibly be the greatest villain in the insect world, although, like ticks, chiggers are actually arachnids, closer related to spiders and not insects at all.

Contrary to popular belief, chiggers do not crawl into your skin, although it may feel like it. After hatching from eggs, chiggers group low to the ground waiting for passersby. At less than



Phillip Gentry

.33 of a millimeter in size, chiggers are hard to see with the naked eye.

After crawling to a suitable area, usually at a restriction such as a sock line or belt line, chiggers attach to the skin, make an opening with tiny sharp claws and spit saliva into the holes. The saliva rots human flesh, and the ungodly creatures drink your liquified flesh, often for a couple of days, before they fall off. After feeding, chiggers move on to the next stage of life.

Prevention for chiggers is sometimes difficult, because they are nearly invisible. Tucking pant legs into calf-high boots is an old standby, as the creatures usually live within a foot of the ground.

Along with long pants and high boots, spraying your pant legs with high concentrations of DEET is effective. Another preventative measure is to dust your socks and pants legs with food-grade diatomaceous earth, a naturally occurring, soft, siliceous sedimentary rock that has been crumbled into a fine white to off-white powder. When chiggers, ticks, ants or any bug with an exoskeleton is exposed to diatomaceous earth, the fine powder gets under the skeleton, absorbs moisture, and mummifies the creature, providing a fitting end for them.

Treatment of chigger bites with clear nail polish is an old wives' tale. In some cases, the nitrocellulose used in nail polish may help dry the skin and offer some coincidental itch relief, but anti-itch creams, calamine lotion or hydrocortisone is the best solution applied topically. For serious reactions, antihistamine pills, steroid shots, or even antibiotics may be in order.

FIRE ANTS >



FIRE ANTS

The best prevention for fire ants is awareness. While the odd, roaming fire ant may be in a tree or high in vegetation, most fire ant bites and stings are caused by stepping into or on fire ant mounds. Be aware of your surroundings before sitting down or placing any bare skin on the ground. Attacks often occur when cultivating the ground, when ants swarm the equipment, which is then handled by the victim.

Fire ants both bite and sting as a group response to protect their mounds. Worker ants will find an area to bite with their mandible jaws, then twist their abdomen up to sting the victim in a rotating circular pattern, stinging very similar to the way bees sting.

Treatment for fire ant bites and stings include cold compresses and applications of hydrocortisone or other anti-itch creams and or taking antihistamines.

UNINTENTIONAL PESTS

Additional threats to outdoorsmen include wasps, bees, hornets, spiders and scorpions. Unintentional pests rarely go looking for victims but may bite or sting if encountered.

Like fire ants, the best prevention for being stung or bitten is awareness. Wasps, hornets and yellow jackets may nest in trees or vacant structures such as deer stands or duck blinds and attack if threatened.

Spiders and scorpions typically reside in arid, dark locations and may also bite if disturbed.

Treatments for severe stings/bites from unintentional pests may be more acute than typical bug bites. Along with topical treatments and internal medications such as antihistamines, special attention should be given to make sure a severe allergic reaction does not occur. ▪



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







SEPTEMBER SEASON OFFERS WATERFOWL HUNTERS A CHANCE TO WARM UP ON SPEEDY BIRDS THAT ARRIVE EARLY IN MIGRATION. HERE'S HOW LOUISIANA PROS SET UP FOR SUCCESS.

IT'S TEAL TIME!

By John Flores



JOHN SAUCIER, who owns Sportsman's Charters in Gueydan, had to leave the duck blind early to settle-up with some clients from Georgia who were hunting teal the last weekend of the early September 2020 season.

The early teal season is culturally popular in the southwestern part of Louisiana and is usually a tune-up for things to come when bigger ducks arrive in November.

We continued to bang away in his absence, eventually getting our 4-man limits of six birds each by mid-morning, amazing for Day 14 of the 16-day season, but typical of what Saucier's customers had experienced for much of the season. In fact, it had been nothing short of spectacular.

At Saucier's lodge, where we gathered after the hunt to eat a late breakfast, was a large dry erase board he utilized to keep track of blind assignments each morning. Updated with our total was also a number hard to grasp: 2,357 teal bagged.

Clearly delighted, Saucier said, "It's been the best season we've ever had since I've been running the lodge. The most teal I've ever heard of taken before this was something around 1,800, and we still have two days to hunt."

Just days before the season opener, biologists with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries conducted their September aerial survey, which estimated that 202,000 teal were in southwest Louisiana, 16,000 in southeastern Louisiana, and 18,000 on Catahoula Lake — a total of 236,000.

Those were twice the numbers counted in the 2019 survey and four times the 59,000 estimate for 2018. More important, it was 55% higher than the most-recent 5-year average and slightly higher than the long-term average of 227,000.

One thing the aerial survey report pointed out was that marsh habitats had been greatly impacted by hurricane Laura. High water, blocked drainages and vegetation damage from storm surge and salinity were all sighted. As a result, few blue-winged teal were found in the marsh. Instead, large numbers were counted in rice fields around the region.

Just down the road from Sportsman's Charter, Schuler Dartez, a biologist for the White Lake Conservation Area, also reported a good teal season.

Dartez said, "Overall, it was a very good season, with tons of birds from start to finish."

Of the nine hunts held on White Lake Conservation Area in 2020, 409 teal were harvested, an average of 4.8 ducks per hunter. Of those, only three were green-winged teal.

In the Southeast, harvest numbers, though much lower, still showed hunters were able to put a few teal in their game bags. On opening day, the hunter participation and harvest summary showed Coastal Wildlife Management Area hunters harvested 2.3 teal per hunter per trip. Atchafalaya Delta WMA hunters averaged 2.7 teal each.



Brush up your blind with vegetation that's native to the area; it makes a big difference in fooling teal. **BELOW:** A spread of about a dozen or two teal decoys in shallow water, plus a few spinning-wing decoys, is the ticket to a good September teal hunt.





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Other good reports from the east came out of Pointe-la-Hache and Myrtle Grove, where Larry Reynolds, LDWF's waterfowl program manager, said they had excellent hunting all season.

Gueydan, Lake Arthur, Thornwell, Jennings and Welch — even during some of the leanest years — have historically been good for teal. However, these areas continue to change agriculturally, with sugar cane encroaching in a region once dominated by rice. Another change is an increasing number of crawfish ponds. Good for resting areas, they have limited nutrition as a stopover location for blue-wings heading to Central and South America.

For the second-straight year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's annual survey of duck numbers was canceled due to COVID-19. Before the 2020 September teal season, the only state on the Central and Mississippi Flyways that had conducted an aerial survey was North Dakota. It showed plenty of water in ponds and a large breeding population of blue-winged teal. The report was pretty much the only source that prognosticators, hungry for what was happening on the breeding grounds, could reliably hang their hats on.

This year, North Dakota is just the opposite. In the epicenter of the duck factory's prairie pothole region, reports showed one of the driest early summers on record and a decrease in duck numbers compared to 2020.

Saucier' guides utilize the same traditional rice field setup most hunters do in southwest Louisiana for teal. Along a levee, they'll brush up a comfortable blind that blends in with the existing foliage. His guides will make early morning scouting excursions before and during the season, looking for and patterning teal movements, learning what fields they're using.

Quite often, the hunting is better in the afternoon, Saucier said, and as a result, he'll adjust and take advantage of the birds' changing pattern.

Several dozen decoys are typically put out, along with a few spinning-wing teal decoys for added effect. Throughout the hunt, Saucier and his guides will read what's going on. If teal are acting finicky and won't decoy, he'll adjust by pulling the spinning-wing decoys.



Teal will readily decoy in areas with good food and habitat, as long as hunters don't make mistakes.



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IT'S not uncommon for September teal hunts in this region to be finished by sunrise. On a hunt with Saucier the last weekend of the 2020 season, teal didn't pile in like they did on opening weekend. Nonetheless, the pace was a whole lot more fun; we were able to work singles, pairs and smaller bunches, giving us some steady, extended action going into mid-morning, while still allowing us to get our limits.

With waterfowl hunting being what it is in Louisiana the past several years, where blue-winged teal aerial estimates have been up and down, sometimes it's better to engage an outfitter. The agricultural areas around Cameron, Jefferson Davis, and Vermilion parishes are great places to start when looking for a place to make a hunt or two.

The 2021 early teal season opens Sept. 11 and runs through Sept. 26. A big thing about the early season is it is a harbinger to the regular waterfowl season in November. Big numbers of teal with good shoots and easy limits in September always get duck hunters excited about what's to come.

In the coming weeks, hopefully, social media and online websites will be loaded with excitement and photos of blue-winged teal. ▪

For information about Sportsman's Charters in Gueydan, can contact John Saucier at 337-912-5966.



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



COASTAL PUBLIC AREAS FOR DIY GUYS

If you prefer to hunt without a guide or outfitter, plenty of public land is available across Louisiana where success can be achieved if you're willing to put in the work. Promising coastal WMAs include:

- White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area – lottery only;
- Atchafalaya Delta WMA;
- Pointe-Aux-Chenes WMA;
- Salvador WMA;
- Pass-A-Loutre WMA ▪



Dress appropriately for September teal hunts; camo is essential, but so is bug spray and plenty of cold drinks. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Limits of teal were common during the early September season in 2020, especially in southwestern Louisiana.



THINGS TO BE SURE TO BRING

During Louisiana's September teal season, it's still very warm, by mid-day often downright hot. Additionally, the mosquitos can be horrible. Here are a few things you should be sure to bring on your rice field teal hunt.

- Mosquito repellent;
- Bottled water;
- Rain gear or poncho;
- Hunting license with state waterfowl endorsement and HIP survey;
- WMA permit if hunting on public lands;
- Federal duck stamp, signed on the back;
- Plenty of non-toxic shot —Nos. 4 and 6 work best;
- An ice chest to keep your birds cool on the way home. ▪

PADDLES 'N PUDDLES >





Pirogues have long been used to hunt ducks in the Louisiana marsh. In the old days, we didn't call it cast-and-blast, but we made the most out of our duck-hunting trips by bringing along some fishing gear. When the birds quit flying or we had our limits — yes, that actually used to happen regularly — we'd pick up our decoys and then shift the pirogue into fishing mode.

Today's modern fishing kayaks offer the same stealth and low-water capabilities as a pirogue but add much more stability, weight capacity and comfort. Camouflage kayaks are available and ready to serve double duty as fishing and hunting vessels. Brightly covered 'yaks can easily be hidden using natural vegetation, camouflage cloth and/or a commercially available camouflage cover. Of course, kayakers are notorious for DIY projects, and many have designed improvised kayak blinds to hide from the ducks. Check out YouTube for many examples.

Beginning in September, the weather starts to moderate, with weak cool fronts becoming stronger and more frequent. Opportunities for cast-and-blast sessions begin Sept. 11 as teal season opens through Sept. 26. Take advantage of these days to maximize your time afield and collect some great groceries. Regular duck season begins in November and runs intermittently into January. This offers plenty of time to plan for a mixed trip.

Most duck-hunting opportunities are on privately owned land, leases or publicly accessible management areas. Of course, we are all too familiar with the increased claiming of many tidal waters as being private property. Do a little research and make sure of the status of where you plan to hunt or fish to avoid any confrontations.

If you don't have access to a private hunting area, the best bet is to find one of the many Wildlife Management Areas or federal wildlife refuges that allow both activities. Most public-hunting areas do not allow permanent blinds, and hunting locations are first-come, first-served. Make sure to check the regulations thoroughly as these areas often have special season dates and other use restrictions.

A reduction in what you normally take along on a single-pursuit outing is necessary. Plan your trip to bring the least gear necessary for both activities. Your 'yak gets pretty crowded if you bring a full load of your usual items.

For hunting, get a quality, waterproof, floating gun case for protection of your firearm when the day turns to fishing. Bring just a few decoys; do without the robo-duck for a day and leave other items home that are not absolutely necessary.

Also, there is no need for several tackle boxes. A handful of your favorite lures stuffed into one small box should be sufficient. Also, lose the full quiver of rods and reels and bring just one quality combo. While I generally don't use 2-piece rods, they work well in these situations and can easily be stowed inside most kayak hulls while hunting.

Duck hunting requires camouflage clothing, but there is no reason why you can't wear the same clothes for fishing. Bring only what you absolutely need to ensure a productive trip.

>

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.*

KAYAK CAST AND BLAST

PADDLE UP SOME DUCKS AND FISH ON THE SAME TRIPS AS SEPTEMBER ARRIVES

There is a bright, red kayak under that camouflage cover and combined with some natural vegetation, it serves as a comfortable lay-out hunting blind that easily reverts to a fishing kayak for cast-and-blast trip.

PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

continued



These bass saved the day on a cast-and-blast outing when the ducks didn't cooperate. They were caught in the same pond where the author set up for ducks.

In general, the best duck hunting comes as the day breaks and into the early morning hours. However, as the weather cools, fishing heats up as the sun gets higher and the water temperature rises a few degrees. This symbiotic relationship between hunting and fishing works well and allows sportsmen to participate during prime time for both activities on a single trip.

The good news is that ducks and fish are generally in the same areas. Be it redfish and bass in the marsh or bass in the freshwater areas further north, there's usually something to fish for unless you are hunting agricultural ponds.

If hunting the marsh, look for fish in ponds with multiple entrances/exits. While hunting, keep an eye on the sky, but make regular checks to see what is going on in the waters around you. In these shallow areas, fish often give off signs of their presence, especially redfish. Visible fins, wakes, fleeing bait and wind and current lines all point to areas to search for fish.

We have often encountered redfish in our decoys and have even made a few successful casts from the blind on slow duck days. When moving around, those permanent duck blinds that make hiding places for hunters also serve as ambush spots for fish. Never pass up casting at a duck blind. If it is in open water, cast around all sides.

Give a combined kayak fishing and duck hunting trip a try. It opens up new opportunities to maximize your time in the field and is quite literally a blast. ▪

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YAMAHA



SEPTEMBER'S TROUT TRAP

By Will Martin

SLIDELL GUIDE HAS A STRATEGY TO INTERCEPT SPECKS' TRANSITION THIS MONTH BY USING TRAVEL ROUTES, BAITFISH HABITS AGAINST THEM.

A SPECKLED TROUT'S BEHAVIOR

is governed by its instincts and other variables beyond its control. Topography, seasonal changes in water salinity and the life cycles of food sources are important considerations for the angler. A grasp of these conditional factors is fundamental to success in any type of fishing, but if you aspire to catch speckled trout consistently year-round, applying knowledge in these areas is critical.

Adam Shields of Slidell, who owns Black Dog Charters and Black Dog Lodge on Lake Catherine, has a winning strategy for catching trout in September — primarily on Lake Pontchartrain, Lake Borgne and in the Biloxi Marsh — that uses these environmental forces against the fish.

Although Shields built his reputation as a serious angler in redfish tournaments — he fished competitively for more than seven years on several tournament circuits — he focuses on putting clients on speckled trout.

SEPTEMBER SLAUGHTER

"I get excited around September because it's a key time of transition for trout," Shields said, explaining that lower, post-spawn salinity requirements and higher salinity in the estuaries due to low river flow encourage trout to be more adventurous. Plus, juvenile white shrimp leave the marshes and venture into open water to mature and eventually spawn themselves.

"The shrimp are on their way out," Shields said, "and the trout are moving in; it's like they are on a collision course. You can catch 'em two at a time once you find them."





Shrimp are a trout's favorite food in the fall as they migrate out of marshes toward open water. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Look for spots where a deeper creek or bayou enters into a shallow marsh; a falling tide will set up a current that sucks bait out.

TIDAL HIGHWAYS, TOPOGRAPHY

"Tidal highways are the place to be in September," Shields said. "I do a lot of moving around, fishing areas where there's moving water, especially on falling tides.

"I'll even adjust a trip to specifically hit a falling tide. In situations where the tide is not falling until afternoon, I'll run later to make sure that I hit it."

Missing the tide often means missing the bite. Catch the tide to catch more fish.

Shields targets transition zones where deep bayous empty into shallow bays.

"It may be a relatively narrow bayou, maybe only a couple of boat-lengths wide, but it could be 20 feet deep," Shields said.

Focus there.

"Look for where the bayou opens into a big bay, where the depth transitions from the deep water of the bayou to the shallow water of the bay, say, from a depth of 20 feet to a depth of 4 to 6 feet."

Hit these areas during outgoing tides.

"When the water is falling, when it's ripping out of the marsh, it tumbles the (shrimp) on the bottom, and they pile up on the slope of the bayou as it opens to the bay," Shields said, explaining that trout will congregate to feed where the tide concentrates the bait.

"You'll find the trout at the edge of the bay just before the drop," Shields said. "The water is not ripping as hard there, so the trout don't have to fight the current as much."

It's an easy meal. It's a trout trap. As Stephen King wrote in *The Gunslinger*, "The trap had a ghastly perfection."

Work your way up the slope to find the fish.

"If the depth of the bayou goes from, say, 30 feet up to 4 to 8 feet," Shield said, "I'll start at about the 20-foot mark with live shrimp on a drop-shot rig and work from there, up the slope, to the shallower water, eventually tight-lining live shrimp on a double rig under a cork as I near the shelf at 4 to 8 feet."

CATCHING THE TIDE >

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CATCHING THE TIDE

"I always look at the tide charts," Shields said, "but it's equally important to look at what the weather is doing on the days leading up to the trip, because wind can have a big effect on the tide. A strong east wind, for example, will hold the water up, counteracting the predicted fall."

Likewise, a strong west wind can strengthen an outgoing tide.

"It also helps to go back and look at trends in actual water data," Shields said. "The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is a great resource for information about water levels."

The variance between tide predictions on a given day and the actual measurements recorded by USGS reveals the wind's power to affect tides. Studying the data will help make your personal predictions more accurate, and help you catch the tide.



REDFISH

Shields' strategy for catching redfish in September mirrors his trout strategy, but it is applied one step up the water system. "Look for a little pond system inside the marsh that necks down to a single outlet," Shields said. "Start there, and work the bayou a couple of hundred yards on each side, looking for points and small cuts and drains."

During an outgoing tide, he said, "Bait rolls out of the marsh, and the redfish wait (at these outlets) ready to eat."

Similarly, shrimp will clump along submerged portions of points, attracting redfish.



Adam Shields said that tripletail are hanging around transition zones in September, around stuff floating near the surface. **OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP:** Shields pays close attention to tide charts and wind direction to measure how and when the current will offer the best fishing. **OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM:** Look for concentrations of redfish around pinch points in the marsh.



BONUS: TRIPLETAIL

"Since September is still pretty hot, a few tripletails are still hanging around from the summer," Shields said. "I'll look for them until the first cold snap, generally between Lake Borgne and the Mississippi Sound."

Focus on crab-trap lines, buoys and floating debris to find tripletails.

"When I see one, I'll either free-line a live shrimp to him or cast a live shrimp under a cork in front of the fish, and work it back to him," he said. ▪



Will Martin *is an adventure writer based in New Orleans, LA. He pens fiction and nonfiction stories at willmartin.info, and is a staff writer at Louisiana Sportsman. He can be reached at willm@lasmag.com.*



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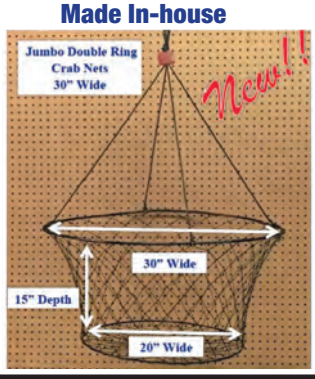
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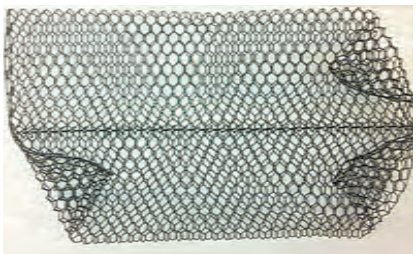
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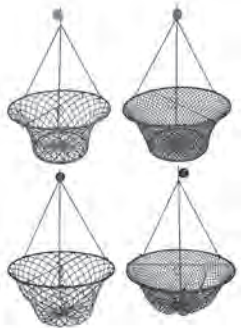
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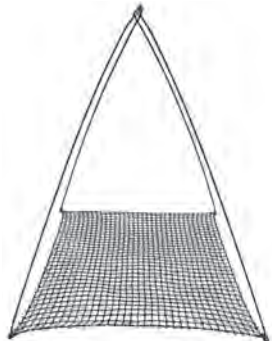
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WHAT'S ON THE menu?

AVAILABILITY OF BAIT CAUSES SEASONAL CHANGES IN SPECKLED TROUT BEHAVIOR, DIETS. UNDERSTAND THAT, AND YOUR FISHING SUCCESS SHOULD IMPROVE.

By Jon Miller

Adult speckled trout experience massive changes annually, driven both by reproductive mechanisms and environmental conditions. To help them adjust, speckled trout need to switch their primary food sources seasonally.

There are times when speckled trout will strike at something that falls in front of them, but whether you fish live or artificial baits, understanding a trout's normal feeding preferences can help you be more successful. They eat many types of fish and crustaceans, including crabs, which I find strange given a trout's soft mouth, but four are primary food species.

MULLET >

MULLET

The striped mullet is one of Louisiana's more commonly seen fish in both saltwater and freshwater. Adult mullet move offshore to spawn in late fall and winter, and juvenile fish begin coming inshore when they are around 1 to 1½ inches long. They can grow up to 20 inches and are popular table fare in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. They are fast swimmers that like to keep moving and are often observed traveling by air.

Because they spawn in the winter, there is a season when the size of the mullet is preferred as food by speckled trout. Trout 3 years or older will certainly eat a 7-inch or larger mullet, but in my experience, our Louisiana trout prefer young-of-the-season sized mullet, which anglers call "finger mullet." Finger mullet are generally in the 3- to 5-inch range in late winter and spring, making them a perfect appetizer for the coming shrimp a la carte.

Mullet school for protection and often eat algae and plant matter near the surface. This behavior makes schools of finger mullet a temptation for hungry trout, which will cruise under a school, looking for mullet that gets detached from their mates.

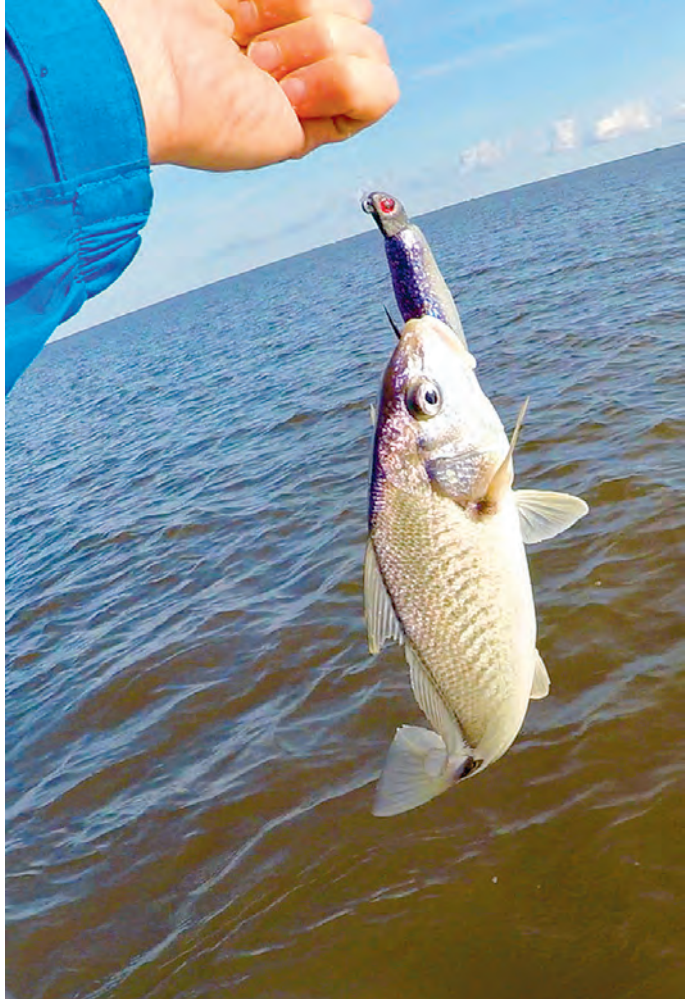
You may have noticed that our most-productive time to fish topwater stick baits is winter and spring, and a walk-the-dog presentation is a spitting image of a finger mullet moving near the surface. When winter arrives, look for schools of finger mullet and throw any of the stickbaits such as Matrix Mullets, SheDogs and Spooks near those schools. Topwater baits also work very well in spring when worked along rocky shorelines, such as the rocks along the MRGO channel.

CROAKERS

Atlantic croakers are in the same family as speckled trout, but family relations do not save them in the uber-competitive marine environment. Some trophy trout anglers are convinced that gator trout actually hate the very existence of croakers. Live croakers as bait are reported to guarantee an attack by any large trout in the vicinity. Why not? Croakers are dangerous predators themselves, and maybe gator trout remember being terrorized by croakers when they were mere fry.

Croakers live at the bottom of the water column, where they use structure to avoid becoming meals for a speckled trout. I have caught many croakers while jigging the bottom, put them on a hook and thrown them back out free-lined. The hook and line apparently inhibit their survival tactics, because within a few minutes, the croakers were viciously attacked and eaten by speckled trout.





Catch a croaker on a jighead or bait and put him back out on a hook, free-lined for speckled trout. It's a near guaranteed bite, if you're in the right spot. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Schools of mullet are easy to see, cruising at or just below the surface in inshore waters for much of the year.

Adult croakers in Louisiana travel to the sounds and barrier islands to spawn in winter. Like trout, they are broadcast spawners; eggs and sperm are emitted into the water column where they mix to achieve fertilization. The fry grow quickly, and by spring, they are 2 to 3 inches long. A 16-inch trout will readily attack and eat a 6-inch croaker, but it is the 3-inch croakers that are commonly sold as bait along the coast, primarily in late spring and early summer. This size of croaker is the young of the season and are caught for bait when they follow bayous up into the marsh.

It is these bayous infested with baby croakers where I go in the spring to bump swimbaits along the bottom in search of quality sized speckled trout.

SHRIMP >



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



SHRIMP

There is no inshore experience quite as visceral as fishing under seagulls diving on shrimp. It is visually chaotic, an audible cacophony, and with a fishing pole, I get to feel the energy with which speckled trout attack the shrimp. Without shrimp, our Mississippi River estuary would not be as exciting, nor be the ecological marine paradise we enjoy.

We think of shrimp as small creatures, but they are small only because most shrimp have their growth stopped in the belly of a fish, fowl or mammal before they reach their first birthdays. Fortunately, our Gulf shrimp reach reproductive maturity around 6 months of age, and a shrimp can lay up to one million eggs in a single session. The eggs take only 2 weeks to hatch, so once the spawn begins, shrimp dump a huge amount of life into the coastal waters.

Shrimp is the primary food source of speckled trout up to the age of 3 or 4. Biologists believe shrimp provide a nutritional balance advantageous to reproduction among speckled trout. Given a shrimp's nutritional value and the abundance of larger shrimp in summer, it seems like no coincidence that speckled trout reproduce in the summer.

Two types of shrimp inhabit Louisiana waters; their growing seasons are slightly offset. Brown shrimp become bait-sized in the spring and migrate out to the Gulf in the early summer to reproduce. White shrimp reach that size in early summer and move out during summer and into fall. These overlapping seasons produce the long stretch of meal-sized shrimp that specks depend on for maximum reproduction.

If you fish artificial baits, this means that if you are looking to catch high numbers of trout, adjust your presentation in summer to match the visual and audible characteristics of shrimp. In practice, this means popping shrimp-colored jigs off the bottom in deep water near structure. If in shallow water, attach a popping cork above the shrimp-colored jig.

A popping cork most closely matches the movement and sound of shrimp. Shrimp will dart to avoid predators, a motion that a popping cork imparts to the bait. Snapping and clicking are sounds that shrimp make, which biologists believe is a form of communication and possibly a method to intimidate predators. A good popping cork will make clicking sounds, plus throw in a splash that a trout may interpret as the sound of his schoolmate grabbing a meal.

If you're not targeting speckled trout with live or artificial shrimp during the summer, you're missing out on great fishing.

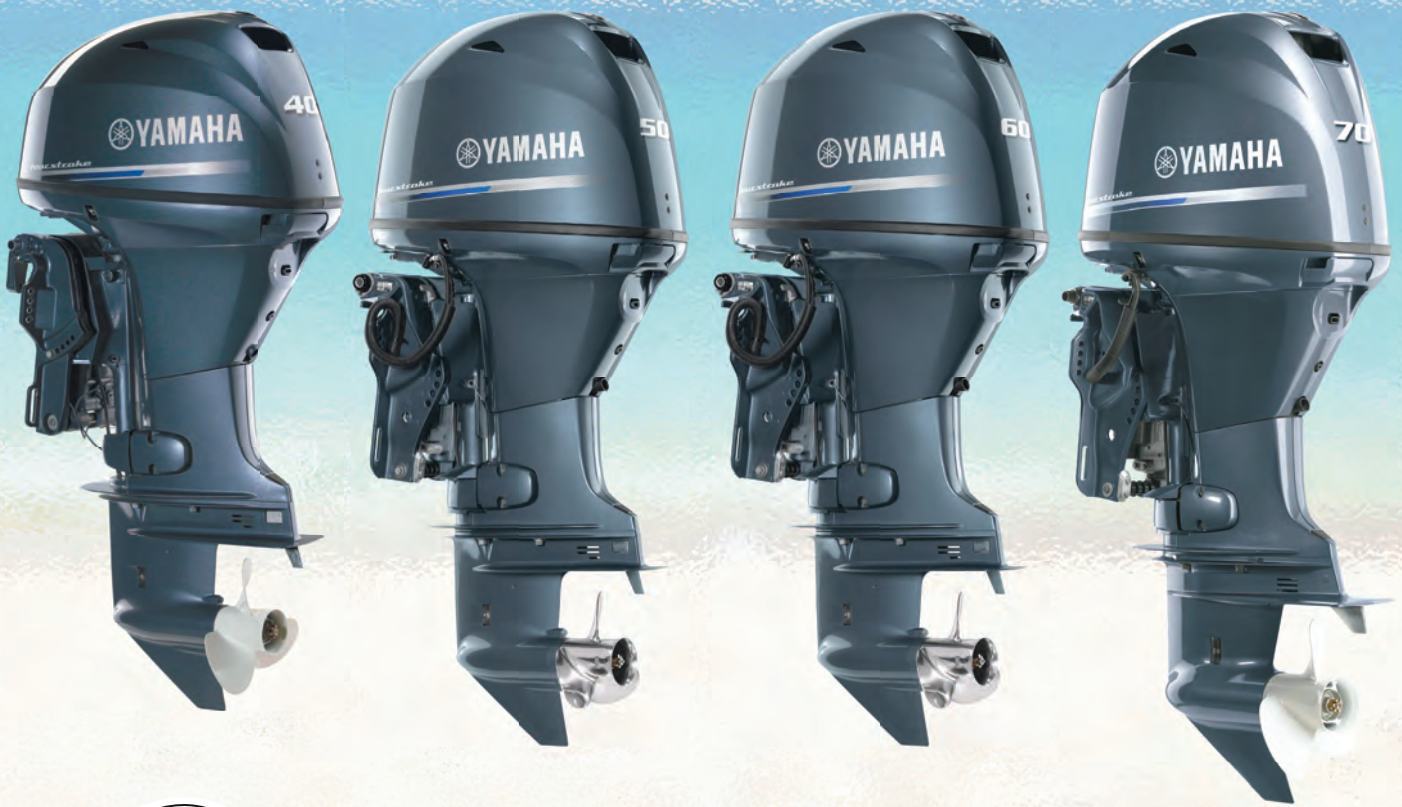
POGIES >



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POGIES (MENHADEN)

Menhaden, aka pogies, are the most-abundant baitfish in Louisiana waters during summer. They are so abundant that a large commercial fishery is focused on their harvest. The menhaden harvests in Louisiana are reported to generate more than $90 million per year. They are valuable commercially for their oil but are not consumed by humans.

A large pogey in Louisiana is 8 inches long, but they can reach 12 inches. They are filter feeders and consume mostly zooplankton and phytoplankton. They are also a schooling species that relies on this behavior as protection from predators, and they will often form huge schools in open water. Schooling may work well as protection from speckled trout, but it makes their vast schools easy prey



A MirrOlure MirrOdine imitates a menhaden (pogey) about as well as any other artificial bait. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Live menhaden are easily caught in cast nets for trout bait, but they are often difficult to keep alive in a baitwell.

for humans who use spotter planes and nets to sweep them up.

Live pogies are responsible for luring many sizable trout onto anglers' hooks in Louisiana, so we know that they are readily eaten by speckled trout, and given their high oil content, they are a quick means for trout to pack on calories during the spawning season. They are less hardy when kept as live bait, compared to croakers, and are not usually sold in bait shops. However, many Louisiana anglers throw cast nets to collect a day's worth of pogies and usually fish them free-lined instead of under corks.

A few favorite hard baits are surprisingly accurate facsimiles of the pogey profile, and these baits are big producers of speckled trout. The lure that fits the profile and action perfectly is the MirrOlure MirrOdine. It has a very convincing, lifelike action when retrieved and can also be effectively worked in a twitch-pause cadence. ▪

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Even in September, Justin Bowles targets speckled trout, but he knows limits are the exception rather than the norm.

SPECKLED TROUT ARE HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

Photos by Todd Masson

DON'T GO LOOKING FOR SEPTEMBER SCHOOLS; SCATTERED FISH ARE GOING TO BE YOUR PRIMARY TARGETS

If you asked the average angler whether he'd like to fish a region where the fish are absolutely everywhere, he'd enthusiastically nod his head, reach for his pole and ask you to point him in the right direction.

But actually, as with most things in life, the average angler should be careful of what he wishes for. When fish are scattered all over the place, they're actually much tougher to target and catch, and there are two reasons why.

The first is that we anglers spend most of our outings not looking for fish, but looking for **SCHOOLS** of fish. We want to make multiple casts to the same structure or feature and have each of those efforts result in a bite. Ninety percent of the water might be empty of our target that day, but when we find the 10% that's holding a school, we feel we've accomplished our goal.

The other reason is that schooled fish tend to be much easier to get to bite. Everything we present to a fish is unnatural, whether it's a hunk of plastic designed to look like a baitfish or a live shrimp impaled on a hook under a length of monofilament. A fish that's solo might be suspicious of such an offering, but one that's surrounded by his buddies has to make a quick decision or risk missing out on an easy meal. In that split second, his yawning belly usually overtakes his cautious brain.

CROWD FRENZY

Also, once that fish takes the bait and gets hooked, he acts like he just inserted a habanero suppository. He swims rapidly back and forth, and then, as if he acquired superpowers, he leaves the water and flies through the air. That activity excites the rest of the school and gets fish hunting for anything that moves. With so many targets in a frenzy, bites come on every cast until the school is depleted or moves out of the area.

Days are coming when the specks we love to target along our coast will again be schooled up, but none of them are in September. In fact, this month is often thought of among anglers as the toughest of the year.

That's because fish are scattered everywhere, and that makes them difficult to catch in significant numbers. Some speckled trout are still in outside waters



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



Joel Masson used a Carolina-rigged Matrix Shad to draw a strike from this speckled trout.

spawning, while others are making the trek back inside to feast on fall white shrimp.

Cast anywhere, and you're liable to catch one, but you probably won't catch a hundred. As a result, smart September anglers manage their expectations about how many fish they'll catch in an outing. Ten per angler is an accomplishment, and most days produce fewer than that.

Additionally, those wise fishermen never hit the water with anything less than fully charged, deep-cycle batteries, since they know they'll have to spend all day covering water. This isn't a month to drop anchor.

Productive baits depend on angler confidence levels, but when I'm searching for fish, a TKO Shrimp under a VersaMaxx Knocker is almost always at the end of my line. The combo is especially effective this month since white shrimp are getting to be a size that speckled trout key on.

So, yeah, specks are everywhere this month, but that'll make us all pine for the days when they're not. ▪

DULARGE BULL REDS >



DULARGE'S DEPTHS HOME TO BULL REDS IN SEPTEMBER

Deeper holes, channels hold redfish during annual stop before heading offshore

By Rusty Tardo

Bill Lake, who recently celebrated his 30th year as a full-time fishing guide, said he will focus all his efforts this month targeting redfish in deeper holes and channels around Dularge.

"We see this cycle repeat itself every year," said Lake, who runs Bayou Guide Service. "The water temperatures and the weather are hot as blazes, and the trout bite slows down both due to the heat and that inner instinct that sends them into transition mode. We just switch gears and go after the reds that start showing up in big sizes and big numbers in mid-August; they'll hang here usually until mid-October, then they head back offshore until the same time next year."

Lake (985-637-3712) said the best places to try are any of the deeper holes and channels that are 15 to 30 feet deep.

"I like to fish Bayou Raccourci between Raccourci Bay and Lake Mechant, at any of the turns in the bayou and at the old structures," he said. "We catch a lot of big, bull reds in there, from 5 to 20 pounds and more, fishing either cracked crab or live minnows on a sliding sinker rig, with a ¾- or 1-ounce sinker, a No. 4 or No. 5 Kahle hook and an 18- to 24-inch leader. We also catch big blue catfish and black drum, in all sizes.

"We catch a lot of slot-sized reds in Bayou DeCade and at the mouth of Voss Canal and the mouth of Jug Lake, and in Buckskin Bayou off Blue Hammock Bayou. (They're) all fished the same way: deeper water, cracked crab or live minnows on the bottom."

According to Lake, wind speed and direction aren't much of a factor when fishing these waters, but tide certainly is.

"I definitely want to fish an incoming tide," he said. "I actually consider it the single most-important factor. I will do my best to arrange a trip to catch that incoming tide, which I find more productive in this kind of fishing. We catch on falling tides too, we just find the rising tide produces best. So, I prefer a rising tide with a range of .5 or .6 of a foot, up to a 1-foot range. Anything over a foot makes the current too strong."



Capt. Bill Lake caught this bull red in Bayou Raccourci with a cracked crab on a Carolina rig.

Lake will use his fish finder to look for the fish on the bottom, then spot-locks right on top of them with his trolling motor. He considers the spot-lock feature essential equipment on any boat nowadays. Then, he just drops the bait straight down off the side of the boat, no casting necessary.

"Anybody, even a first time fisherman can catch fish in Dularge this month this way, and big fish," he said, "easily." ▪

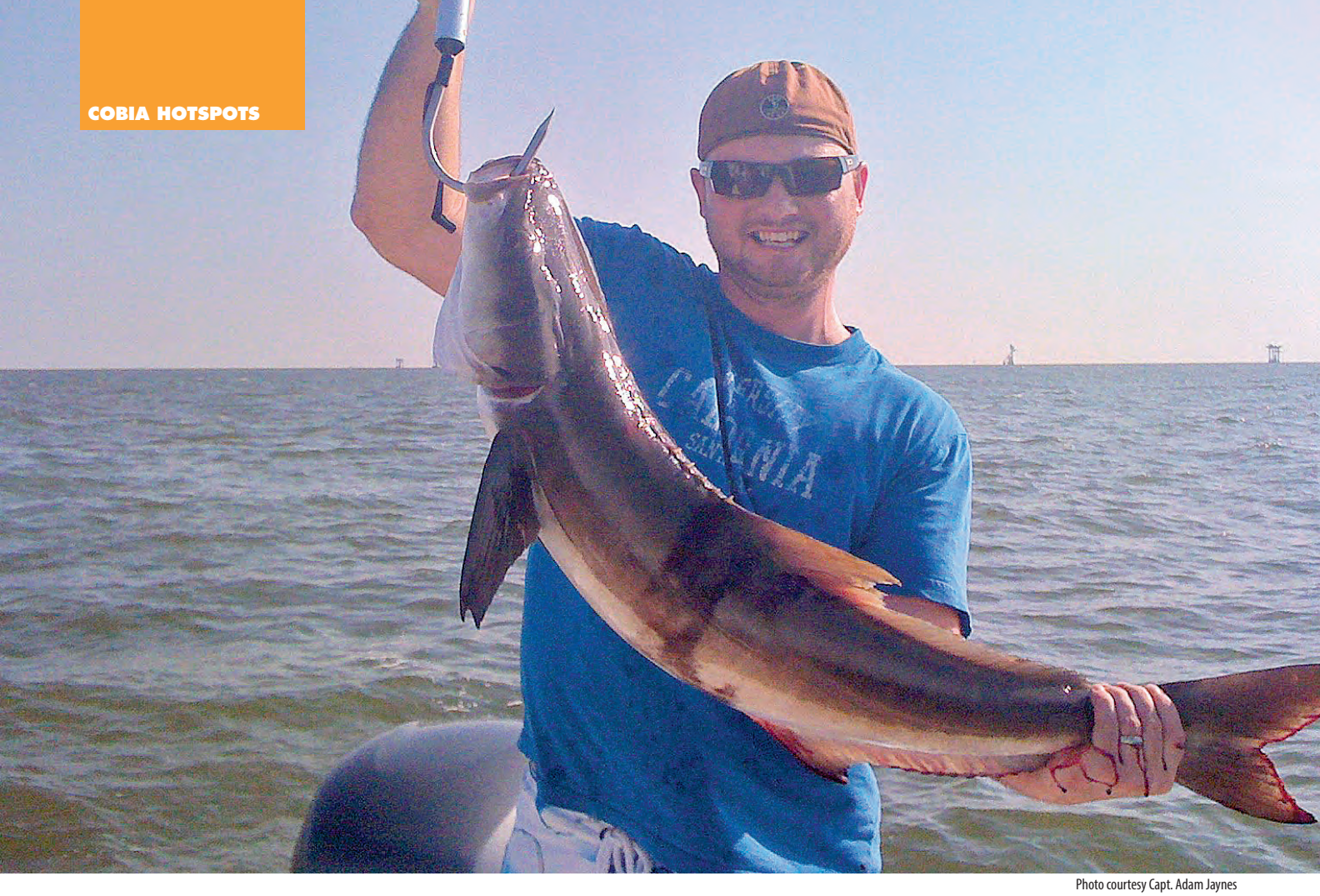


Photo courtesy Capt. Adam Jaynes

Joshua Sexton showing off a nice ling he landed not too far off of Constance Beach.

SIGHT-FISHING FOR TASTY LING

Don't leave any structure unturned in search of curious cobia

By Adam Jaynes

It is no secret that I am a sight-fishing addict. The passion of seeing my prey before pitching a lure or bait to it is one that has only gotten stronger as I have gotten older.

As we begin to enter into the fall in late September, naturally, there will begin to be a decrease in the number of anglers on the water as they start to prepare their duck blinds and get things in order on their deer leases. However, fishing opportunities inshore and nearshore abound.

One of my all time favorite species to sight-cast to is the cobia, aka ling. From a sportsman's perspective, they are a very worthy adversary due to their size and fighting capabilities. On trout-fishing setups, they provide a real challenge as they strip drag and threaten to cut your line on the structures that we usually find them investigating. They also make excellent table fare, an added bonus to how much fun they are to catch.

We search all standing and floating structures near shore for ling, similar to fishing for tripletail. I have had much more success locating and catching them off working rigs than those sitting idle and out of commission. Buoys that have a bell are typically more productive than those that do not; ling like both structure and some sort of noise or commotion. When pulling up to a rig or other structure, I will slowly idle around it multiple times, making sure to have an angler with a rod ready to pitch if any fish are spotted. Many times, the ling will swim out from the structure to investigate the boat. Fortunately for us in southwest Louisiana and southeast Texas, there are still many rigs and gas wells to fish, although many have been removed.

If using artificial, I like to rig up either a 6- or 8-inch chartreuse Gulp! saltwater grub on a ¾-ounce jighead. Live blue crab, shrimp, croaker and piggy perch are also great choices. Dead cigar minnows or pogies work as well. My grandfather's favorite way to catch ling was to use live, hardhead catfish. He would take catfish, about 8 to 12 inches long, and clip their fins before rigging them to use for bait.

When sight-casting, try to avoid bring the lure or bait from directly behind the fish, as more often than not, this will spook them instead of attracting them. It is best if you can bring the bait from in front or from the side of the ling; avoid landing the bait to close to the fish, which will help prevent from spooking them. If they go down deeper, out of sight, spraying the water with your wash-down hose may help to peak their curiosity and bring them back up near the surface for another opportunity. ▪

Capt. Adam Jaynes can be reached at (409) 988-3901 or justfishsabine.com.

KING MACKEREL SPOTLIGHT >

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope



Big king mackerel are often referred to as "smokers" for their ability to "smoke" line off a reel.

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: KING MACKEREL

SPEEDY, SHARP-TOOTHED BRAWLER IS A FAVORITE OF MANY ANGLERS ALONG THE GULF, ATLANTIC COASTS

King mackerel *(Scomberomorus cavalla)* have long, slender bodies. They are usually gray on the back with silvery sides. Their stomachs are often silver to white. When small, they tend to have spots similar to Spanish mackerel, but the spots disappear as the fish grows. They have sharply dipped lateral lines, and their dorsal fins are gray in color.

They are a fast-growing species and can reach lengths of almost 6 feet and weights of almost 100 pounds. King mackerel can live for about 20 years, but most die before they are half that age. Females grow larger than males and can reproduce at age 2, when they lay between 50,000 and several million eggs in the open ocean. The eggs are then fertilized by males.

Spawning takes place along the outer continental shelf, mostly between May and October. Two distinct stocks of king mackerel exist: the Atlantic stock and the Gulf of Mexico stock. These two stocks are biologically identical, but they rarely intermingle. Infrequently, they mix briefly off Florida's southern coast in what is known as the Winter Mixing Zone, where waters from the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico meet.

MOVERS, RESIDENTS

Although they are known as migratory fish, some small populations travel very little, sticking to smaller areas throughout the species' range, which runs from New England to Mexico to Brazil. These fish become known as resident fish. One of the larger populations of resident king mackerel lives off the Louisiana coast. Biologists aren't sure why some of these fish become resident fish, but they believe some resident fish become migratory and vice versa.

King mackerel aren't too picky with their diets. They prefer shrimp, squid and other fish. When young, they are preyed upon by larger fish. As they grow, they get closer to the top of the food chain, but they are still vulnerable to sharks, large tuna and even bottlenose dolphins.

SMOKER TIME

Nicknames for king mackerel include kingfish and kings. Larger ones are known to anglers as "smokers" — due to their ability to peel line from a fishing reel, making the reel "smoke."

Kings are sometimes misidentified as wahoo, and, especially when young, Spanish mackerel.

These fish are prized among anglers who fish from Gulf piers. They fish for them with a double-rod setup using live bait, usually bluefish or blue runners. Boat anglers also love catching king mackerel, and usually do it by trolling with a spread of rigs.

Louisiana's state-record king mackerel weighed 82 pounds and was caught by W.D. Lamb in December 1980. Mississippi's state record, a 74-pound, 1-ounce king, was caught on Nov. 20, 2009, by Barrett McMullan. Steve Graulau caught the world-record king mackerel, a 93-pounder, off the coast of San Juan, Puerto Rico, on April 18, 1999. ▪

SPORTSMAN OF THE MONTH >



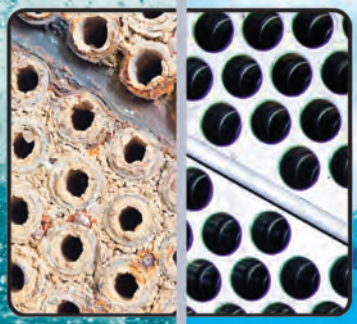
Brian Cope *of Borden, S.C., is a retired Air Force combat communications technician. He has a B.A. in English Literature from the University of South Carolina and has been writing about the outdoors since 2006. He's spent half his life hunting and fishing. The rest, he said, has been wasted.*

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HUNTER OF THE MONTH

John Duplantis

John Duplantis, 5, and his father, Scott, bagged this green-winged teal on opening day of the 2020 duck season. It wasn't the greatest hunt, numbers-wise, but John and his father created memories that will last a lifetime.

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OF THE MONTH

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Through our subsidiary, The Louisiana Land and Exploration Company LLC (LL&E), ConocoPhillips has collaborated with public and nonprofit entities on projects designed to protect and restore Louisiana's coast. Recently, ConocoPhillips and Ducks Unlimited began construction on Phase II of the Island Road marsh terracing project, which will help provide shoreline protection by slowing wave activity in open water to combat coastal erosion.

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ANGLER OF THE MONTH

Abbie Bayham

Abbie Bayham, of Team Grosse Tete South, looks forward to awesome offshore action every year. She hooked her first red snapper of 2021 on a trip out of Cocodrie.





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MATTED VEGETATION IS A COMMON, LATE-SUMMER VISITOR TO MANY BODIES OF WATER IN LOUISIANA. IT'S ALSO A PLACE WHERE PLENTY OF BIG BASS LIVE. HERE'S HOW TO GET THROUGH THE GRASS TO THE FISH.

By John N. Felsher

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

Looking more solid than watery, a thick mat of nearly impenetrable grass, lily pads or other vegetation dominated the surface of this marshy lagoon. We could barely tell where the dense, floating mats ended and what passed for a shoreline began.

Across the grass tops, a small, snake-like creature skittered over the surface. Moments later, the water erupted as if someone touched off an underwater charge. Engulfing the morsel — plus a load of floating grass — the pot-bellied green leviathan launched itself into the air as it crunched down on a fake salamander carrying a steel hook rather than the succulent meal it expected.

Vegetation gives bass everything they need: protective cover, added oxygen and a place where they can effectively ambush prey. To escape the broiling, late-summer sun, bass find cooling refuge under matted grass, lily pads, water hyacinths and other floating vegetation. Frequently, the biggest largemouths prowl the thickest weeds. In some especially robust areas, bass might grow old and fat without ever seeing a lure. Surrounded by the walls of their vegetative fortresses, monster bucketmouths might lose a bit of their wariness.

Abundant vegetation dominates many waters across Louisiana, particularly in the southern marsh country. Growing since early spring — perhaps longer after a mild winter — massive vegetative mats reach their densest growth by late summer before cool weather hits in the fall. By September, mats could choke off vast expanses of many waterways.

Copious mats can intimidate some anglers, but that's where lunkers lurk. Anglers might pick around the edges with crankbaits, swim jigs, spinnerbaits or Texas-rigged worms, but to yank Mrs. Mossbacks from her vegetative lair, either go over the tops of mats or punch through them.

DOING THE SURFACE DANCE >

DOING THE SURFACE DANCE

Nothing dances over such entangling salad quite as impressively as a buzz frog. Frogs combine attributes of thrilling topwater action, the fish-finding abilities of buzzbaits and the weedless enticement of Texas-rigged soft plastics. Churning over aquatic foliage, they create lifelike silhouettes that bass would expect to hunt in such habitat.

"Throwing a frog is a tremendous way to fish grass," said Shaw Grigsby, a professional bass angler from Gainesville, Fla. "A buzz frog is one of the few lures that anglers can use in really thick, matted vegetation all-year long. It's a very simple bait to use, but it's a bait that can produce big fish. I can't tell how many big bass I've caught on buzz frogs, including some weighing more than 9 pounds. Bass come out from under the lily pads or grass beds to eat it. When a big bass explodes on a frog, there's nothing more exciting."

Rigged weightless with a 3/0 to 5/0 wide-gap hook inserted into the body or with upturned hooks, soft-plastic frogs can go virtually anywhere with relative ease, tempting hungry bass waiting under weedy canopies. When fishing such entangling cover, use braided line, perhaps 65- to 80-pound test. Anglers need backbone to horse in a lunker largemouth plus a wad of accumulated vegetation when fishing thick mats.

"When I'm fishing a buzz frog, I use a screw-lock hook to screw the hook into the bait to hold it securely," Grigsby said. "I fish it on braided line. Braid not only helps with the hookset, but it actually helps cut through the vegetation and lily pads so we can land the fish."

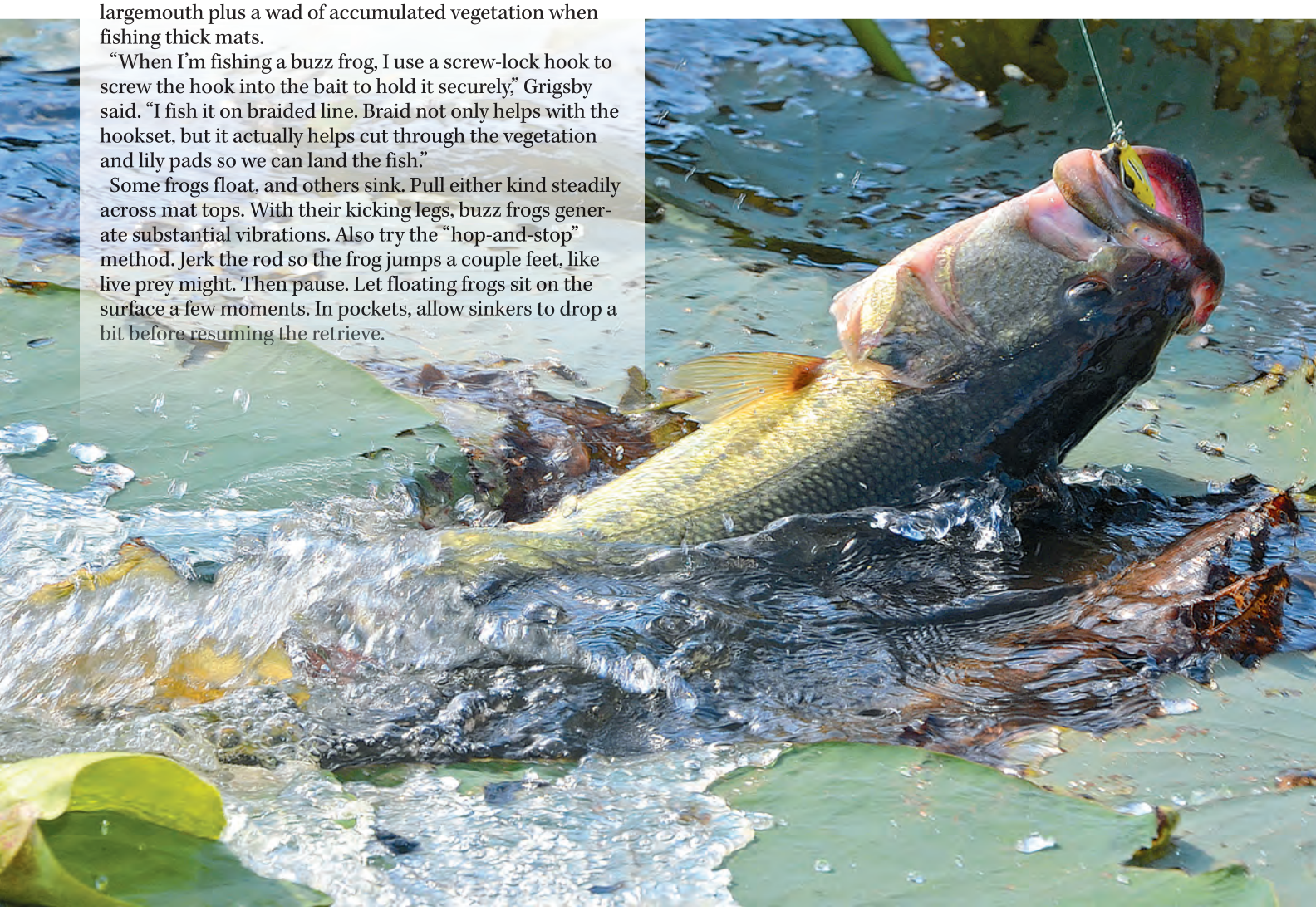
Some frogs float, and others sink. Pull either kind steadily across mat tops. With their kicking legs, buzz frogs generate substantial vibrations. Also try the "hop-and-stop" method. Jerk the rod so the frog jumps a couple feet, like live prey might. Then pause. Let floating frogs sit on the surface a few moments. In pockets, allow sinkers to drop a bit before resuming the retrieve.

"A buzz frog is like a buzzbait that anyone can throw in the thickest vegetation where a regular buzzbait would hang up on every cast," Grigsby said. "It comes through cover easily. The legs on a buzz frog sputter like a buzzbait. Anytime it hits a pocket of clear water, it makes quite a commotion. My favorite way is to throw it out weightless and just reel it across the lily pads or grass. Even on a steady retrieve, I twitch it a bit just to give it a little different sound."

When a big bass detonates on a frog, resist the temptation to set the hook too quickly. Lower the rod and pause for a moment to feel for the fish on the line. If a bass blows up, but misses the frog, stop reeling. Let the frog sink or twitch it in place a few seconds as if it's wounded. Bass often return to finish off crippled prey.

"The hardest thing about fishing frogs is not reacting to a strike immediately," said Terry Segraves, another bass pro from Florida. "Give the fish a split-second to get the bait in its mouth before setting the hook."

Buzz frogs create significant surface commotion, but sometimes, bass want something more subtle. On calm mornings, throw a weightless, soft-plastic salamander, jerkbait, Fluke or similar creature. Some very light baits might require extra



Patches of lily pads can either completely cover the surface or be broken up into smaller sections; fish both types.



casting heft, especially on windy days, so attach a split-shot to the line. Use just enough weight to permit good casting. Insert the hook into the plastic, just like a frog. Some baits come with belly slots into which you can insert hooks and hide the points.

"In thick, matted grass, nothing works better than a weightless, soft-plastic jerkbait," Segraves said. "I use it weedless with a 4/0 or 5/0 hook. I work it over the grass tops just like a topwater bait. It's unbelievable some of the explosions we see. Bass just come after them right up through the grass. That's pretty exciting."

Work slithering soft plastics much slower than buzz frogs. Using the reel only to take up slack line, move the bait in short spurts with the rod so it flits from clump to clump. In open pockets, let the bait sink like a wacky worm. Bass habitually slurp subtle offerings as they sink.

BREAKING THROUGH >

Heavy tackle and heavy line are necessary to give you a chance of horsing a big bass back through heavy cover — matted grass or pads.



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BREAKING THROUGH

A lot of bites come when a surface lure like a frog breaks into open water, away from matted grass. **BELOW:** Often, a bass bite through matted surface grass will result in having to retrieve a wad of grass as heavy as or heavier than the fish.

Matted grass looks imposingly solid on the surface, and the canopy blocks sunlight, cooling the water and killing any submerged vegetation beneath it. Regularly, bass hang just under the mats in the shade. With a long rod, swing Texas-rigged tubes, worms or weedless jigs toward tiny, open pockets. Chunky tubes resemble squid and create bigger silhouettes than worms, but easily slip through the densest cover. A skilled angler can stop the bait in the air at the last second so it enters the tiniest pocket with pinpoint accuracy and hardly a ripple. Let the bait descend naturally. After it hits bottom, jig it up a couple times. If nothing strikes, flip the bait into another nearby opening.

"I try to make the tube enter the water as lightly as possible to avoid spooking bass," said Dean Rojas, a veteran bass pro from Arizona. "Tungsten is a heavier material than lead, so it provides better penetration in a smaller package. Point the rod tip toward cover as the tube goes out. As it lands, pick up the rod tip to make a soft entry. I let a tube fall to the bottom and hop it once or twice. A tube looks like a dying shad as it falls, but resembles a crawfish when it hits bottom. Most often, fish hit on the fall or the second bounce."



When subtlety doesn't work, try something more dynamic. Cast a 1- to 3-ounce jighead into the air so it crashes down like a meteor smashing through the roof. This sudden invasion of its lair can provoke vicious reaction strikes from bass.

"I fish the grassy edges to catch the aggressive bass," said Mike Wurm, a professional bass angler from Arkansas. "Then, I break through the grass with a heavy jig and fish right in the middle of it to get down to them. It's difficult to get a heavy jig through the grass, but that's where fish live."



John N. Felsher *is a professional freelance writer and photographer with more than 1,700 articles in more than 117 magazines to his credit. He worked as the outdoors editor for several Louisiana newspapers and currently co-hosts a weekly outdoors radio show on WNSP 105.5 FM in Mobile, Ala. You can contact him at JohnNFelsher.com.*



Frog baits are among the most-productive with which you can target bass under a vegetative canopy.

OTHER OPTIONS

Other baits can also work around grass beds. Dropping wacky worms next to grassy edges can entice strikes. Spinnerbaits and buzzbaits can go over or through patchy grass and open seams. Not entirely weedless, willow-leaf blades cut through grass better than other shapes. Hardly used any longer, weedless spoons sweetened with frog-like trailers can still incite brutal strikes. Pull a spoon over grass tops like a frog or wobble it enticingly parallel to the edges. In openings, let the spoon sink so it flutters down like a dying shad.

"Canopy cover" can also take other forms, such as trees overhanging a bayou, bridges, moored boats, docks, platforms and anything else that shades the water. During late summer's swelter, anything that cools water might attract bass. Water just a degree or two cooler could make a huge difference to fish.

In Louisiana, people fish grass all-year long, mainly by necessity, but also because some bass stay in the thickest vegetation their entire lives. An almost solid, grassy blanket could dissuade anglers, but those mats also conceal lunkers that many other anglers won't even attempt to catch. ▪

TOLEDO BEND >





John Dean grips the jaw of a 4-pound bass that hit a bladed jig in Toledo Bend's Blue Lake area. Dean was checking spots to take customers when the bass hit in 5 feet of water on a 95-degree day with the water temperature near 90.

SEPTEMBER BRINGS BREAK FROM HEAT TO TOLEDO BEND; BASS PROSPECTS LOOK EXCELLENT

By John Dean

With more grass, a lake that's fairly full for this time of year and an abundance of baitfish, great days are ahead for bass fishing at Toledo Bend … once the heat wave of summer is turned off. I'm ready to put the dog days of summer in the rear-view mirror.

I'm looking forward to September. It's the beginning of the end of summer — sometime this month, the heat factor will break. I'm not a weatherman, but September always offers the first cool wave. That's the key to jump-starting the bass bite, because the water temperature dips accordingly. We start seeing signs of transition as the water cools to the upper 70s or lower 80s, and the fish react accordingly by feeding, especially

around grass — which, by the way, there is much more of on this great border lake.

The lake has stayed within a foot or two of full pool all summer, and I don't see that changing much, especially after cold fronts arrive, bringing rain along with them.

The shad spawn was great this year. That's one thing we have plenty of: bait — shad and bream. The bass will be where the food is as those groceries move shallower.

Summer patterns will be successful until it cools. That entails topwaters — including plastic frogs — early and late, occasionally around mid-day. Otherwise, get down and dirty to catch bass in the heat with Carolina-rigged soft plastics and drop-shotted soft plastics. I'll have a Neko-rigged soft plastic tied on as well as three rods rigged with a 10½-inch Zoom Ol' Monster worms in plum, junebug/red and redbug, each under a ¼-ounce weight. That big plastic worm works well at night in summer and late summer and as the water temp cools during the day around grass beds in 6- to 8-foot depths.

Topwaters are my favorites once the water starts cooling. I'll downsize to 2½-inch frogs, like the bream- and sexy shad-colored Spro Poppers, and throw smaller Chug Bugs and stickbaits. Other than those topwaters, I'll be throwing Delta Lures Thunder Jigs, Stanley spinnerbaits, Rat-L-Traps and other lures to trigger bites. Golden bream is my favorite color for bladed jigs and spinnerbaits, followed by shad colors, depending on the water color.

September is also a time when soft plastics like Zoom Super Flukes, Neko-rigged Senkos and Carolina-rigged soft plastics and Senkos add to the catch. Black, black/blue and green pumpkin are preferred colors, but it won't be long before watermelon/red comes into play.

Crappie fishing has been fair to good, mostly good, over brush piles planted in 20- to 25-foot depths. However, successful crappie fishermen have to cover a lot of water and hit many brush piles to get a good mess in the ice chest. Usually, five to 10 slabs at the most have been coming from each brush pile on artificial jigs. ▪

For information about John Dean or to book a guided fishing trip with him on Toledo Bend, call 936-404-2688.

With more grass, a lake that's fairly full for this time of year and an abundance of baitfish, great days are ahead for bass fishing at Toledo Bend.

ATCHAFALAYA'S FLAT LAKE >



FLAT LAKE IS FAVORED ATCHAFALAYA SPOT FOR SEPTEMBER BASS

Outside cypress trees become winning trick

By Don Shoopman

A Morgan City angler has a spot, a big spot at that, in the Atchafalaya Basin where he loves to pick off bass in low-light conditions around sunrise, especially, and sunset.

Frank "Boo" Grizzaffi, who recently finished his second and last term as the city's mayor, doesn't have far to go to catch bass in scenic Flat Lake on either white or black/blue buzzbaits with gold blades or green Whopper Ploppers. He's as comfortable on the water as he was at City Hall.

"When the dock is a foot out of water at Russo's (Landing), it's time to get out in the Spillway," Grizzaffi said.

Grizzaffi, who owns Scorpion Subsea, an underwater tooling company, is looking forward to fishing Flat Lake in September, when bass start moving from the inside cypress trees to outside cypress trees.

"Right now, we're basically catching them on grass, grass and lilies on grass, on the edge with a buzzbait. Your boat's in the trees, but you're looking for matted grass," he said.



Frank "Boo" Grizzaffi prepares to release a bass he caught recently in Flat Lake in the Atchafalaya Basin.

Grizzaffi said the sheer size of the large lake, which is 3.6 miles from Morgan City, might intimidate people. To simplify what otherwise could be a long search to find fish, the prime area is generally in the northwest area between Bayou Cane and Bayou Grosbeak, including Bear Bayou.

Flat Lake gives up fish most of the year.

"Year-round, something's going to be happening in Flat Lake. I just chase bass, but you can catch sac-a-lait, chinquapin, goggle-eye and bream," he said.



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Frank "Boo" Grizzaffi finds plenty of bass like this near his hometown of Morgan City. Flat Lake is his prime destination in the Atchafalaya Basin. Cypress trees line the lake.

In September, he'll make sure he's on the water before the sun comes up and fish buzzbaits, Horny Toads and Whopper Ploppers. He likes to fish a ¼-ounce buzzbait much of the time because he can pull it across the grass more easily.

"A lot of people throw bigger, but I like to go over the top of the grass," he said. "I'll throw a Whopper Plopper if the grass isn't too bad. But mostly, I throw a Horny Toad or buzzbait."

Considering that September is a transition month, he'll have a baby bass or parrot-colored Bandit 100 or 200 Series crankbait tied on to cover the outer cypress trees.

Grizzaffi, who started fishing Flat Lake when he was 10, usually launches at Russo's Landing. When the water's high, boats can enter the lake a few minutes away through a cut directly across from the landing. However, there's a sandbar that creates a hazard there when it's low; he advises boaters to travel one cut to the left and enter there.

Boaters also can launch at Doiron's Landing in Stephensville.

When the sun gets high over the horizon, it's time to leave the clear waters of the lake, unless there is stained water to be found.

"You need to move to the main canals. If it's cloudy, sometimes you can get extended time on the lake," he said.

The fishing is generally challenging when the water's dark and clear, he said, noting that perch can be caught all day no matter the conditions.

He suggested trying American Pass, Orange Barrel Canal, Bayou Joe, Bayou Jesse (Big and Little), Bayou Sorrel and others in the area. He said get out of the clear water and look for the "dirty stuff" and fish with Chatterbaits. ▪

BASS CLASS >







LSU-S teammates Blakely Young and Tripp Bowman (right) admire some big bass they caught while "fun" fishing recently at Toledo Bend.

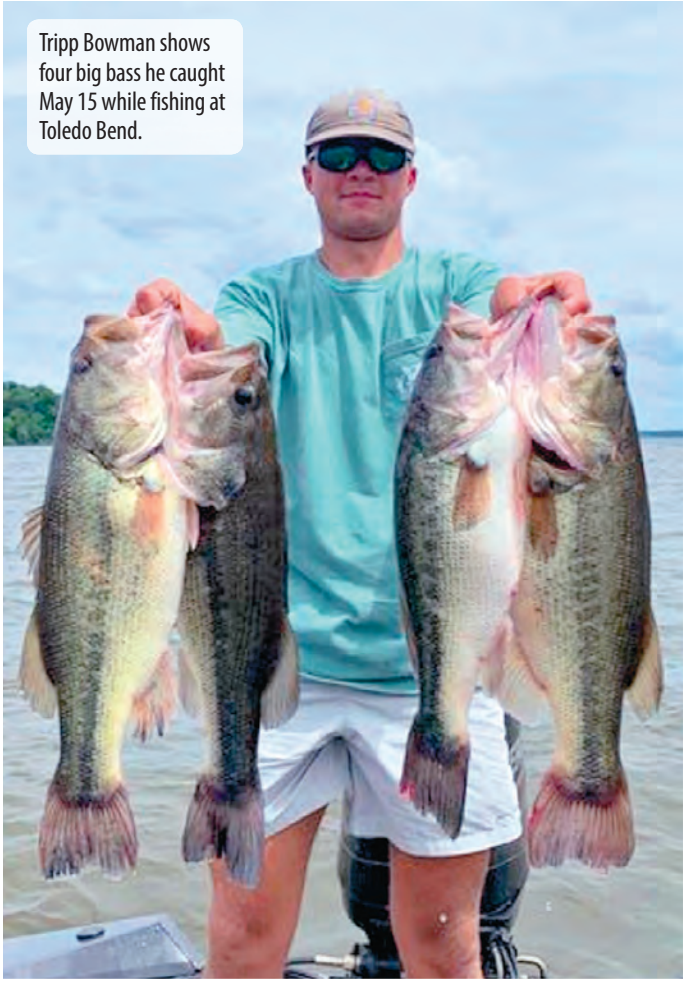
LSU-S DUO NOT 'STUMPED' IN GOOD FINISH AT LAY LAKE

BOWMAN, YOUNG QUALIFY FOR COLLEGE NATIONAL EVENT

By Don Shoopman

Thanks to a single stump in Alabama's Lay Lake, Tripp Bowman and Blakely Young of LSU-Shreveport qualified for the Bassmaster College Series National Championship on New York's St. Lawrence River.

The Stump, as it will be known henceforth, gave up quantity and quality bass during the Bassmaster College Series Wild Card tournament June 23-24 on Lay Lake. Bowman and Young finished fifth in the 103-team field with 11 pounds, 15 ounces the first day and a 16-pound, 9-ounce sack the second day for a 28-pound, 8-ounce total.



Tripp Bowman shows four big bass he caught May 15 while fishing at Toledo Bend.

"Nobody else figured out that fish were on that stump," Bowman said. "For some reason, the fish were stacked up on one stump. The amount of fish on that thing was just ridiculous. We probably caught 20 or 30 (keepers). Every fish we weighed in was off that stump."

Bowman said they would let it rest and target other areas where they had pre-fished successfully but caught smaller bass.

How'd they find The Stump in a 12,000-acre reservoir?

GOLDEN HOTSPOT

Young said they looked around the lake for characteristics similar to Toledo Bend, but many of Lay Lake's creeks lacked channels, he said.

"We went into this creek because it had a little channel through it. We were looking for something like (Toledo Bend's creek channels), and it worked out. We were working along a grassline. Tripp turned around and threw at this stump."

He immediately caught a nice bass.

The Stump, located in 4 feet of water near 6-foot-deep water, proved to be a gold mine. The best thing was they had it to themselves, and they worked it over, drop-shotting 4½-inch Roboworms, jerkbaits and bladed jigs. The worms worked best.

The lofty finish was one of the highlights of the 2020-21 season for Bowman, a rising sophomore from Haughton, near Shreveport, and Young, a rising junior from Carthage, Texas.

Bowman, 19, who worked part-time this summer at Bayou

"Nobody else figured out that fish were on that stump. For some reason, the fish were stacked up on one stump. The amount of fish on that thing was just ridiculous.

Outdoor Powersports in Bossier City, started "serious" bass fishing at 13 with his father, Ben Bowman, and he fished high school tournaments in the eighth grade, although he was ineligible to qualify for nationals.

"I've been fishing tournaments all through high school and now in college," said Bowman, who looks up to bassing legends like pros Kevin VanDam and Jacob Wheeler. They aren't his heroes, per se.

"I guess my main hero is my dad for giving me the passion for the outdoors, getting me into fishing and hunting when I was a little kid," said Bowman, an avid deer hunter who qualified for nationals each year in high school with Matthew Nesbit. As freshmen, fishing for Haughton High School, they won the 2017 FLW High School Fishing Louisiana Open on the Ouachita River. They won another state title as seniors in 2020 at Toledo Bend.

"Me and Matt kind of have everything down; we've been fishing together so long. We've been friends since we were young. We know each other's strengths real good," Bowman said.

"I've always loved fishing tournaments since I started doing it in high school. You're fishing against your buddies but you're still buddies. Traveling to tournaments with all your buddies is fun," he said, adding good-natured trash talking is part of it.

Nesbit was unable to fish the Lay Lake tournament, as was Young's college partner, so Bowman and Young hooked up and showed out.

"We fish together a lot. We aren't partners. We just fish together a lot," Bowman said.

PRO HOPES >







Blakely Young from Carthage, Texas, shows off a 9-pound bass. He started bass fishing with his grandfather, Claude Griffin. They have fished the Oilman's Bass Classics since Young was 10.

PRO HOPES

Bowman's goal is to keep fishing tournaments after college.

"I've always wanted to take it to the next level," he said. "I really want to take it to the next level after college, wherever the chips may fall."

Young enjoyed pairing with Bowman.

"It was great doing well over there. I just did well in the Lake O' the Pines tournament, too," said Young, who also finished fourth with LSU-S teammate Tyler Tamburo of Bossier City on June 11 in a Major League Fishing college event.

Young, 21, is unsure who will be his tournament partner in this, his junior season. He previously did most of his fishing with Jeremy Severick of Shreveport, who has graduated.

Bowman and Young tipped their caps to Charles Thompson III, LSU-S's first-year head coach.

"He's a pretty darned good coach," Young said. "He does a lot for us, makes it a lot easier to get into these tournaments and fishing them. He helps with our sponsors, too. He gives us advice on a lot of different things."

Young got his start on the water with his grandfather, Claude Griffin.

"My paw-paw had me out there in a boat when I was 5 years old. He's the one who got me into fishing," said Young who still fishes with his grandfather — who travels to all his tournaments.

Young began fishing tournaments at age 10 with Griffin, focusing on the annual Oilman's Bass Classics on Toledo Bend, which he considers his home lake.

His favorite artificial lures are Flutterspoons and Strike King 10XDs or 8XDs. Bowman, he said, insisted on getting lessons on using Flutterspoons, and he obliged.

Over the summer, Young does something he loves; he teaches marine electronics classes.

"I fish offshore 90% of the time now, so I know it pretty good. I thought I'd start teaching people," he said.

The most critical thing about learning marine electronics is confidence. He offered some advice.

"They're hard to figure out, but once you get them figured out, it's easy to dial in. You've just got to trust them," he said.

Hopefully, he said, bass fishing is in his post-college future.

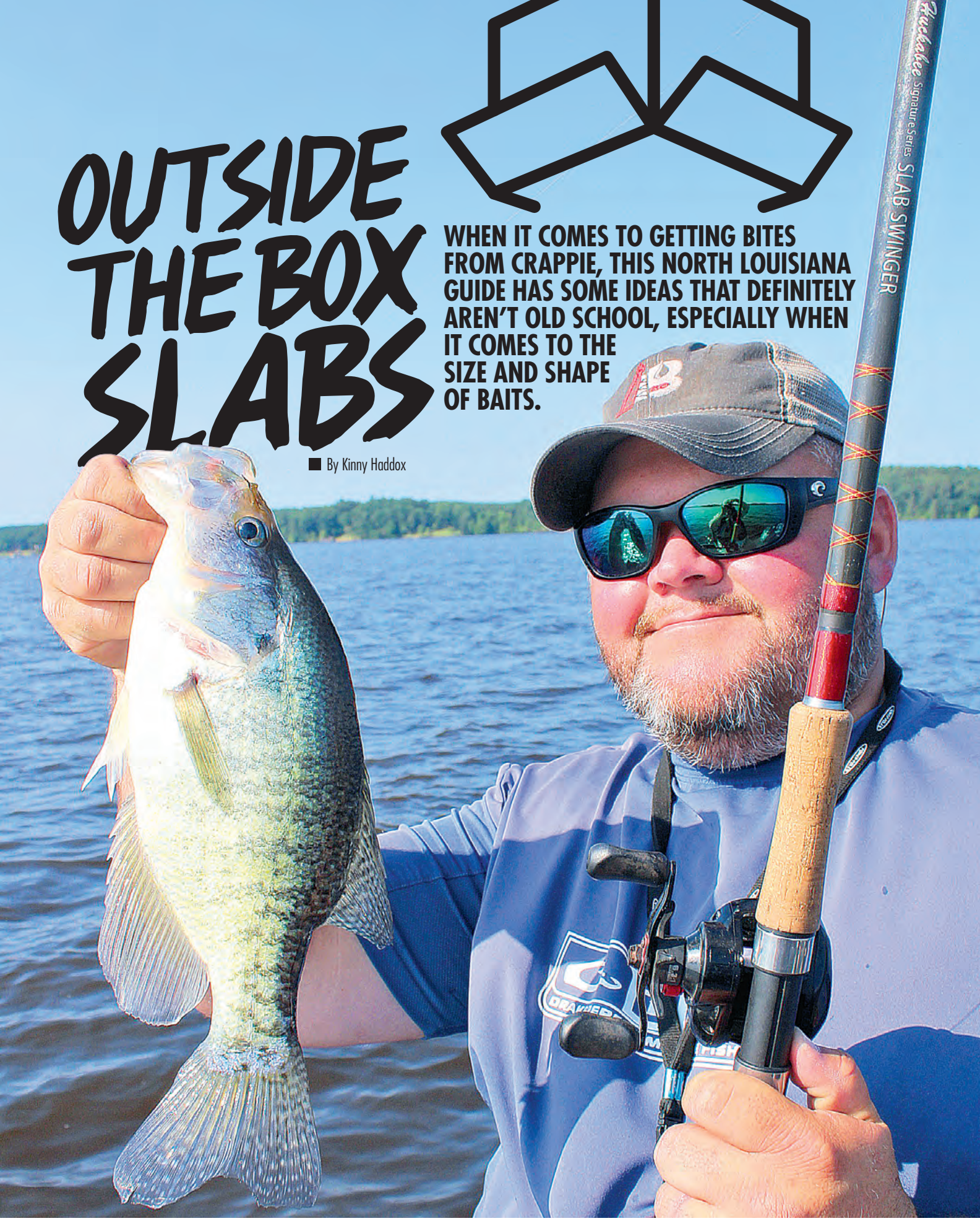
"Man, I'd love to go pro. It's always been a dream of mine. I really like Bassmaster and how it's set up. MLF looks fun, too," he said. ▪



OUTSIDE THE BOX SLABS

WHEN IT COMES TO GETTING BITES FROM CRAPPIE, THIS NORTH LOUISIANA GUIDE HAS SOME IDEAS THAT DEFINITELY AREN'T OLD SCHOOL, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO THE SIZE AND SHAPE OF BAITS.

By Kinny Haddox



EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT THERE IS FISHING, AND THEN, THERE IS CATCHING.

Anybody can fish, but you have to spend some time "hitting the books" to learn how to catch fish, especially when it comes to catching crappie year-round.

Spring isn't the only time to catch crappie. That's one of the first lessons that the new generation of anglers has learned. The old-school approach of hitting the shallows and catching crappie in early spring still works, but there's a growing world of knowledge that is enabling fishermen to be successful in all seasons, and it's based on the advantages of technology.

Josh Starkey of Minden has learned enough lessons to not only catch more fish for fun, but also to successfully compete in tournaments and even guide part-time as owner of JLT Outdoors. Many anglers are happy just fishing for fun and working their way through Crappie 101, but Starkey, 34, said there's a whole other level of education out there for the taking.

"Back in the day, we'd change through a hundred colors, it seemed like, before we thought we figured the bite out," Starkey said. "In all actuality, it's more likely that the fish just became more active. We also used to think that dead-sticking was the way to go. Now, we are fishing bigger and faster baits.

"Recently, I fished a tournament where profile and speed are what helped me end up in the money. Now, I'm stubborn a lot of times, and I will fish a hair jig 99% of the time; it's my go-to bait. I think we all have tendencies like that, but on this day, after a little while of short strikes and downsizing with the same results — fish just following the bait — I made a switch. I went to casting a pink, ¼-ounce Grenada Tackle jighead with a 3-inch finesse minnow by Chasing The Thump, and the bite was on."

There's no doubt in Starkey's mind that the switch made a difference.

Another lesson he and other anglers using modern depth finders, trolling motors and other accessories have learned is that crappie are more apt to bite as a reaction, not just chasing down an easy meal.



Josh Starkey has changed his approach to baits, colors and crappie fishing in general at times other than spring. He's got a handle on the results.



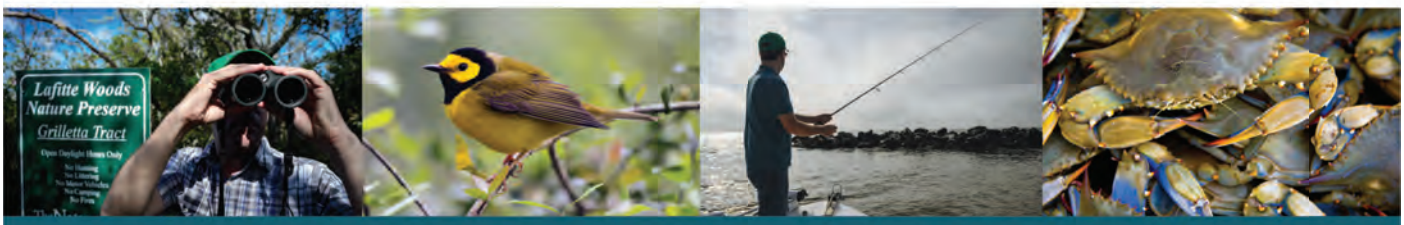
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Changing jig sizes, styles and profiles can often make a big difference in how crappie will react.

"When I'm approaching fish that I see on the electronics, I'm casting or pitching to that fish before I ever drop vertically to them," he said. "Swim your bait directly over the face of the fish. I try to stay 6 inches to a foot above them. If you go too low, you will hit and or spook the fish. Do this just right, and bam! You just got thumped."

To make sure he gets the maximum number of bites, he keeps several rods rigged with baits of different profiles and presentations to find that right combo for a reaction bite.

One thing every fisherman knows is that to find crappie, you have to find baitfish. Locating big balls of shad on your electronics is almost a sure sign that crappie will be nearby. Even if they aren't actively feeding, if you can get a bait down to where they are hanging out, you'll catch a few.

But there's more to it than that. New, sonar-type depth finders are enabling fishermen to find fish in places they didn't expect to. Crappie have a mind of their own, and anglers are finding that some of those out-of-the-box thinking crappie are the biggest ones you can catch.

"If you've ever been running your sonar and saw a fish out in the middle of nowhere, you would think that's not a crappie, or it must be a blip," he said. "Now, we are finding out that a lot of the bigger fish are out in the middle of no man's land. They aren't relating to anything: structure, cover, bait, etc. That arch you are driving over might be that fish of a lifetime. Older electronics, you weren't sure if that was a fish, but now with the HD images these units give us, there's no question.

"With that, we used to think 'Find the bait, find the fish.' Well, that's true to a point. I find now that the majority of the bigger



fish I target aren't near baitfish. I've been proving this on just about every lake I fish. What we are learning is, these fish are everywhere, not just in the old seasonal patterns. Those patterns work and are tried and true, but don't overlook the off-the-book areas. They may just surprise you. Using these high-tech units you can find fish anywhere in just a short period. ▪

For more information or to book a trip with Josh Starkey, visit his JLT Outdoors page on Facebook or call 318-265-3430.



Kinny Haddox *has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 45 years. He publishes a daily website, 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.*



New, high-tech depth finders have enabled fishermen to locate crappie in open water.



Big concentrations of crappie change areas of lakes and depths they're using as fall progresses, following baitfish.

CLIFF'S NOTES FOR FALL, WINTER CRAPPIE



Kinny Haddox

In early fall, crappie fishing can change from day to day. To remain successful, anglers have to be ready to respond. Here are guide Josh Starkey's best tips for taking advantage of the bite in fall and winter.

"As summer comes to an end and the water starts to cool, the shad will pull up in shallower water, and the crappie won't be far behind," he said, describing shallow water as 5 to 10 feet deep, depending on the lake.

"They'll run there for several weeks, but then the shad will start gathering in the secondary creeks, and as the weather cools, they'll head out down those creeks toward the deeper water," he said. "The best ways to find where they are in that process is first, to use your electronics, and second, spend some time fishing. You can locate fish either way. When you find them, stay on them."

But, Starkey added, be prepared to move with them as anything changes.

"Finding the shad doesn't mean you are automatically on the fish," he said. "That confuses some fishermen. The shad may be balled up in an area, but the majority of the crappie may be hanging out 10, 20, even 100 yards away. But when it's time to eat, they'll swim over and start feeding — just like we do when we get hungry. We don't sit in the kitchen all day, but when we are hungry, we know where the food is." ▪

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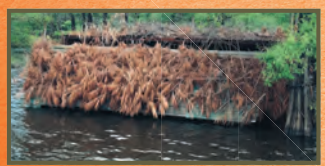




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When the crappie bite isn't on fire, Josh Starkey focuses on the profile of the bait as much as color selection.

Kinny Haddox

'PROFILING' CRAPPIE

Crappie don't have to be politically correct; they just have to eat.

So while some people may frown on "profiling" — targeting or suspecting someone or something on the basis of common observation — crappie could care less. And fishermen who know that put more filets in the freezer.

"We all have our favorite lures and types of lures, and sticking with them when they are working is great," said guide and tournament pro Josh Starkey. "But when the bite slows, I've found that changing the profile of the bait — the size, shape or weight — can generate new bites. Basically, if something changes and the fish seem less aggressive to tiny or real big — just do something to get them going. Sometimes crappie are sticklers for a certain profile bait."

Starkey breaks down his lure selection when he's trying to give fish what they want:

"My go-to crappie bait is a 1/16-ounce Mudhole jig in Ouachita gold (color)," he said. "It's first in the lineup. If fish start short-striking it or won't bite, I will try something bigger, like a Grenada Lake Tackle 1/4-ounce pink leadhead with a big-body, plastic tail. The razor-tail ones give off a lot of vibration and sometimes trigger strikes. If I want it to fall slower, I'll use a 1/16-ounce head."

When fish may not want as much bulk or movement, he tries smaller, straight tails like Chasing the Thump plastics in black and chartreuse or purple shad. If bigger doesn't work, he'll go smaller. Especially in clear water, he loves 1/32- and 1/16-ounce Mudhole hair jigs in white/pink and cotton candy colors. For a little variation, he'll also try one of those in the wedgehead style, which darts and falls erratically.

There's one more "profile" that crappie love, and that's bladed jigs. Several good models are on the market, and the blade gives the bait a little noise and flash that a normal jig doesn't have. His favorites are the Mudhole mardi gras and gray ghost colors.

"We spend a lot of time trying to pick the right color, but more important, you have to find a bait with the right profile to trigger the strike", Starkey said. "The key is to not get hung up on what you want to fish, but to go to what the fish wants to bite." ▪

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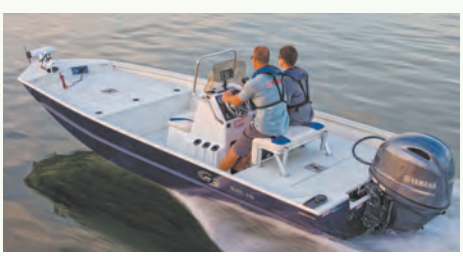
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ATCHAFALAYA BASIN SAC-A-LAIT MOVING PLENTY IN SEPTEMBER

By Will Martin

Shane Stelly, 53, has been fishing the Atchafalaya Basin for sac-a-lait since he was a small boy.

"I'm from Cecilia, and the Basin is my backyard," he said.

Stelly's father taught him to fish at a young age.

"I remember going to school on Monday morning and my desk rocking like I was still on the boat. Even today, (after hours of fishing), I'll blink my eyes, and see my cork going in the water," he said, laughing.

FROM FATHER TO SON

Just as his father taught him to fish during his childhood, Stelly is proud to pass on the tradition to his 10-year-old son, Sean.

"He's been fishing with me since he was 5 years old," Stelly said. "I tell him, 'When you're 15 or 16, kids your age won't know how to do this.'"

This time of year, with water temperatures rising as water levels fall, the crappie are in deeper water.

"In the spring, we fish the cypress trees and the willow trees, and catch them 2 to 3 feet deep, but (now) we're fishing drop-offs, laydowns, brush piles and so forth," said Stelly, who catches plenty of crappie in backwater lakes off the Atchafalaya River, under corks.



Photos courtesy Shane Stelly

Big crappie will be in the swamps off the Atchafalaya River in September if the water is high enough.

"These backwater swamps produce big fish certain times of the year when the river is high enough for them to get in," he said. "In early summer, I use a lot of hair jigs, but in late summer, I start fishing with tube jigs; my favorite colors are black/chartreuse with an orange head on days when the sun's out and blue/white with a pink head (when it's cloudy)."

THINGS TO CONSIDER

One key factor is water quality.

"Water color is very important when fishing in the Basin; you want water that's

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"He's been fishing with me since he was 5 years old. I tell him, 'When you're 15 or 16, kids your age won't know how to do this.'



Sean Stelly, at 8 years old, with a pair of Atchafalaya Basin sac-a-lait.

not muddy, but not black and clear, either," he said. "I like water that's somewhere between a green and a milky, root beer color."

Pay attention to what the baitfish are doing; anything that makes them active is good. Stelly recommends fishing falling water for that reason.

"I (also) like to fish off points with a good wind current, because the wind current makes the baitfish active," he said. "When you've got a lot of active baitfish, you've got a lot of active, feeding fish."

"I like to fish early mornings and late afternoons," Stelly said, but moon phases and other factors inform his decision-making about when to fish.

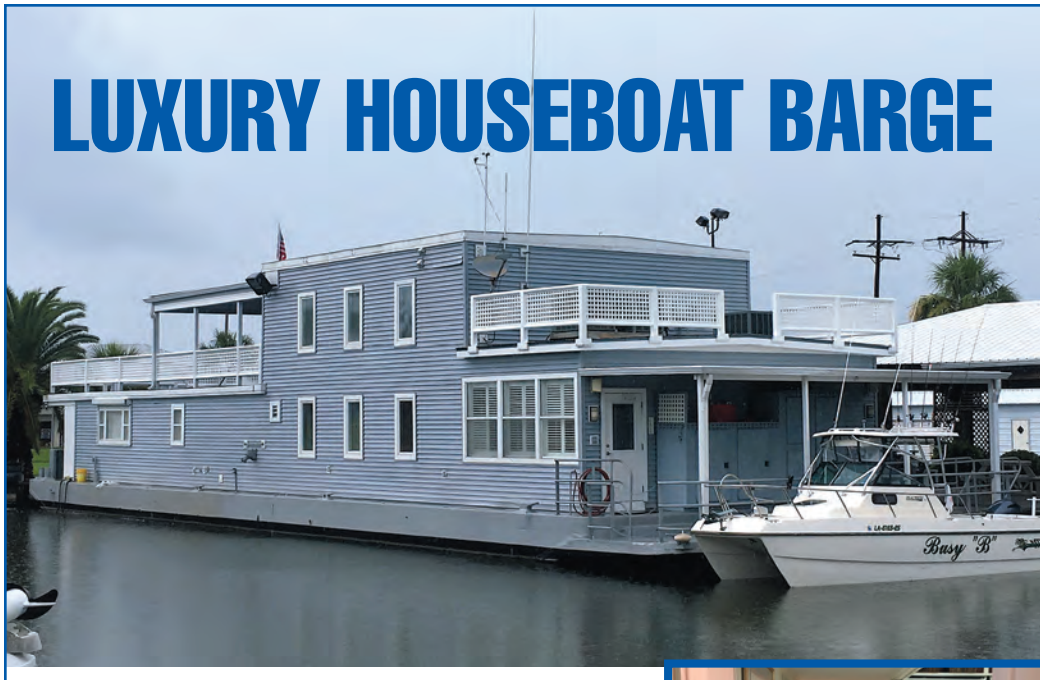
"You've also got to remember that every day is different," he said.

Each day on the water, adapt your methods to the conditions you find.

"People call me and ask where the fish are biting, when I can go to a spot one day and do very well and return to the same spot the next day, and do very poorly," Stelly said. "You must adjust and adapt and not be afraid to try something new; I have tons of jigs and baits that I'm willing to try." ▪

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YUCATAN'S OXBOW FISHING GREAT WITH SEPTEMBER'S FALLING WATER



Ronnie Dotson catches slab white perch, aka crappie, like these on Yucatan Lake in September.

By Kinny Haddox

Timing is everything, so they say. And when it comes to fishing on Yucatan Lake in Tensas Parish, truer words were never spoken.

And the time is right.

Yucatan is an active Mississippi River oxbow lake south of Tallulah and east of Newellton. It covers 2,421 acres at pool stage, but a lot more area when the backwater is slowly falling out of the flooded woods around the lake.

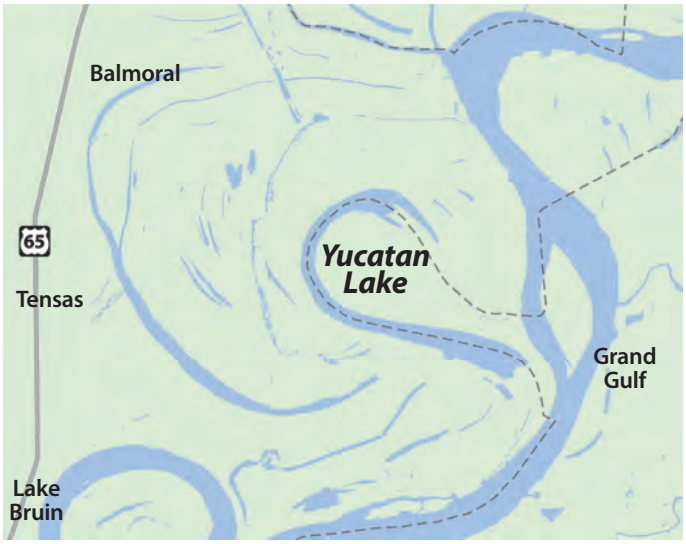
That slow fall began in August. When the river level at nearby Vicksburg hit 19 feet, the fishing was on, and it's getting better every day. The main target here are slab white perch. Everybody else may call them crappie or sac-a-lait, but on Yucatan, they are still white perch, according to Juanita Lachney, who helps manage Yucatan Landing with her husband, Perry. The good fishing will keep going for white perch, bass and bream until the Yucatan reaches the 9-foot level and hits pool stage.

"Oh my goodness, you should see some of the slabs they are already catching right now," she said. "The water is coming out of the woods, and the fishermen are catching big white perch right along the woods line where the water is a little bit cooler."

MOP UP IN THE TREES, BUSHES

The prime spot to fish for white perch, she said, is around ironwood bushes and willow trees. Because the water is on a slow fall, fish will often move a little to find their comfort zone, but once you find them, Lachney said you can "mop up."

"We are seeing some of the biggest ones we've ever seen this year, and they are big healthy fish," she said. "A lot of places, fish aren't that healthy in the late summer, but Yucatan is like no other oxbow."



The best way to catch crappie is to fish with a hair jig; be ready to offer up different colors, because what they bit yesterday, they might not want today, she said. One day, it may be black/chartreuse. The next day, it may be pink with a red head. And if they don't hit jigs, try a live shiner; if you don't get them that way, there's one sure-fire bait for Yucatan success: fish a jig with a shiner attached and "it will get them every time", she said. A good depth to depend on for crappie is about 6 to 7 feet.

Another thing interesting about Yucatan this time of year is that you don't have to get up early to catch fish. The best fishing is often between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. — the hottest time of the day. Lachney said she doesn't know why, but that is how it is.

MOVING WATER HELPS

One thing that makes Yucatan so productive is that the chute to the Mississippi River allows flow to and from the river all the way up into the fall. When the lake does hit pool stage, fishing is still good, but you have to move a little further into the wide oxbow to find fish. And the lake is full of baitfish.

White perch will stack up on old fallen in piers, stump lines and the many tops and fallen trees that go out into the deeper water, Lachney said.

"Those old, wrecked piers that have been there for years; those spots are some of the best fishing holes you will find anywhere," she said. "They are a haven for fish."

Later in September, when fish move out into the tops, fishermen will find them suspended anywhere from 5 to 10 feet deep. With today's modern electronics, it's usually easy to find the tops that are holding lots of fish and see what depth they are without a lot of experimenting.

"I just love this place," Lachney said. "Perry and I just celebrated our 57th wedding anniversary, and we've loved this place our whole lives. It never gets old. In fact, we spent our honeymoon right here."

Lachney doesn't get to fish as much while minding the store, owned by her son, Eugene, who is on active duty with the U.S. Army. But when she does, she knows exactly what to do.

"We love fishing, and we love seeing all these other folks catch fish. ▪

LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman



MISTER TWISTER SASSY STINGUM

LOUISIANA GUIDE SAID THIS SOFT-PLASTIC LURE WILL REALLY PUT THE CRAPPIE IN THE COOLER

Charlie King loves to catch crappie, as well as watch his clients catch crappie.

That love affair extends these days to a Mister Twister soft-plastic bait that hit the water last year with less fanfare than usual because of COVID-19 restrictions and concerns. Nevertheless, King has been smitten with the Sassy Stingum.

King, who operates Charlie King Professional Fishing in northwest Louisiana, is quick to heap accolades on the panfish bait that is growing in popularity in-state and out-of-state.

"Sassy Stingums just came out about a year ago," he said. "They wanted me to try it. It works real well. Funny thing is, (panfish) prefer it over live bait."

It's slaying the crappie now, but the best, perhaps, is just ahead for the Sassy Stingum.

"That's going to be a killer in the winter," he said, noting that he has caught doubles on tandem-rigged Sassy Stingums.

King is looking forward to the winter, because after getting his hands on baits from Mister Twister in January, he had hip-replacement surgery 2 weeks later and barely got to try out the Sassy Stingum in cold weather.

"I'm excited about it. This winter, I (just) got a taste of it before I had surgery," he said.

It was a good taste, as the panfish bit and bit consistently.

This winter, he plans to tie Sassy Stingum on multiple rods in a spider-rig pattern on his favorite north Louisiana lakes, including what he regards as his home lake, Lake Bistineau. Crappie will get a chance to eat Sassy Stingums from around Thanksgiving to the end of January.

King, who focuses his guiding trips on bass in the spring on Lake Bisteneau, Caddo Lake and Red River, returns to crappie fishing early summer through fall at Toledo Bend and Sam Rayburn, fishes the 2¼-inch soft plastic on a plain silver or black ⅛-ounce jighead tied to 10-pound Vicious flourocarbon.

He'll often tip it with a tiny crappie nibble-type bait that add scent and color to the soft plastic or hair jig on the business end of a line. He'll add a minnow or, he said, he'll fish it "naked." The Sassy Stingum produces any way it's fished, he said.

King fishes Sassy Stingums over brush piles of willow and/or sweet gum trees in 20- to 25-foot depths. He plants them regularly so they are as fresh as possible. His favorite colors are grenada gold, Cajun cricket and electric chicken. He's learning about other colors that help fill ice chests with crappie.

"It was red thunder," he said. "A friend of my caught some the other day and they had a box (full) on that color."



Charlie King caught this nice crappie in early August on Toledo Bend, using Mister Twister's Sassy Stingum (above left).

According to a Mister Twister spokesman, red thunder was one of many colors introduced at first. It was discontinued when the color chart was pared but will be reintroduced in the next two months.

The shape and texture of the soft plastic appealed to King from the start. Obviously, a Sassy Stingum's shape and texture appeals to crappie wherever they are targeted by anglers.

A Mister Twister spokesman said the Sassy Stingum has a super-soft formula that maximizes the artificial lure's action in the water. King agrees with that, because the bait's spear-shaped tail twitches and dances at the slightest movement.

"(Mister Twister) had the designer to put a little longer tail," King said. "It's a little-bit longer tail. It also has a little, minute ball on the end of it, a little bump on the tip. I think it adds more thump to it."

He's ready to put it to work, overtime. ▪

For more information on the Mister Twister Sassy Stingum and other Mister Twister products go to www.mistertwister.com.



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.*

BOWFISHING >

GIVE BOWFISHING A SHOT

By Will Martin

Jeremy Cable, 28, of Cocodrie, talks bowfishing with an infectious enthusiasm that will leave you anxious to get on the water, bow in hand. He's genuinely passionate about bowfishing and wants more people to give it a try.

The sport couldn't have asked for a better ambassador.

Cable and his family operate Lite 'm Up Bowfishing, a charter service that specializes in lighted, nighttime fishing excursions in the waters around Cocodrie.

In 2017, Cable killed a 29.55-pound, 41.89-inch bull redfish that was recognized as a state and world record by the Bowfishing Association of America. The record was eventually broken, and he likes to brag that his fish isn't even the top red at his camp; a client on a company excursion killed a bigger one, and now that fish is the fish to beat. Cable couldn't be happier with how things worked out.

ATTRACTIVE AREA

"Louisiana is called the Sportsman's Paradise for a reason," Cable said. "We get all kinds of fish here."

This time of year, redfish are generally the most sought-after species by bowfishermen.

"They're popular because they're a great eating fish and they are so much fun to shoot," he said.

Also, many sportsmen visit Louisiana for a chance to target species that they don't have access to at home. Redfish are big bruisers and a novelty fish for many.

Of course, redfish are just one of Louisiana's attractive options for bowfishermen. There are black drum and sheepshead to skewer as well. Flounder. How about landing a gar longer than a Fiat? If you're in Louisiana, you're in the right spot.

TRY IT OUT

"If you've been thinking of giving bowfishing a try, just get out there and do it," Cable said. "(Many bowfishermen) start by fishing from the bank with an old bow they have lying around.

"They get an old bow and put a reel on it, and from the first time they shoot at a fish, they're hooked. That's just one of the pluses of bowfishing: It doesn't require a lot to get started, especially for a bowhunter.

"It's just a matter of getting out there the



Jeremy Cable (right) and his younger brother, Jesse Cable, of Lite 'm Up Bowfishing hold a big bull red.

first time," Cable said, "and don't be discouraged if you miss."

Whatever you may have heard, nobody is good at bowfishing in the beginning.

"Early on, bowfishing can be a lesson in humility," Cable said. That's another ingredient of the recipe that makes bowfishing so addicting. When you do, finally, nail a big fish, the rush will just be that much better.

PROS' POINTERS

It's not a bad idea to make your first bowfishing trip with a professional. Cable's guide service isn't called "Lite 'm Up Bowfishing" for nothing. Boats carry enough lights to power a Nine Inch Nails concert, an awesome thing to see. Without the glare of the sun on the surface, the depths around the boat reveal their treasures. It's a glimpse at another world not visible under normal circumstances.

"You're out there at night, and you're seeing everything that moves through the water, every fish, crab, shrimp, otter, nutria, turtle," Cable said.

It doesn't hurt that the redfish are illuminated, either.

Another thing that doesn't hurt is your skin from cooking out in the sun all day. Not that Louisiana needs a sunny day to be hot, but as Cable is quick to point out. "It still gets pretty hot at night."

Fishing after sundown also gives people the option of fishing during the workweek, which is convenient for many.

"It's one of those 'fun for the whole family' kind of situations, too," Cable said. "We've had kids as young as 7 years old shoot a fish for the first time.

"We strictly use PSE Discovery 2 bows, which are small, compound bows that we can tune up to fit any adult or tune down to fit the kids," Cable said. "We use AMS retrievers (reels), which is pretty much the standard for down here in Louisiana; it's strictly a bowfishing-type reel or retriever." ▪

> *"(Many bowfishermen) start by fishing from the bank with an old bow they have lying around. They get an old bow and put a reel on it, and from the first time they shoot at a fish, they're hooked. That's just one of the pluses of bowfishing: It doesn't require a lot to get started, especially for a bowhunter.*



RICK TAYLOR'S ASTRO TABLES

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

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

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

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

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

AVAILABLE PRODUCTS:

The 2021 PrimeTimes Wall Calendar. **$13.95** (plus $4 s&h). Know the best days, best times, and their relative strengths for all of 2021 with this information-packed, full-color, 11-inch by 17-inch, graphic peaks-and-valleys forecaster. Includes rise and set times for the sun and moon, space to log your catches, "Timely Tips," plus fish and game symbols showing you each month's don't-miss periods. Also includes exclusive summary charts revealing the best and worst days of 2021, the year's best periods, a look ahead at 2022, and more. Comes with FREE 2021 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for $8.95, plus $3 s&h.

Book: *"How to Know When to Go" by Rick Taylor.* $14.95 (plus $4 s&h). 100 pages, 43 illustrations. A comprehensive look at the main factors influencing fish and game activity periods, plus how to devise an effective when-to-go game plan using any year's PrimeTimes calendars. Individual assessments of bass, panfish, deer, turkey, and more.

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2021 SEP

BEST DAYS (POOR · FAIR · GOOD · EXCL · VALUE)

LUNAR PERIODS

TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED

	BEST DAYS VALUE	MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
Wed 1	49	1:14 AM	6:57 am - 10:37 am	4:21 PM	7:22 pm - 11:02 pm	High
Thu 2	50	2:04 AM	7:49 am - 11:29 am	5:12 PM	8:14 pm - 11:54 pm	
Fri 3	60	3:01 AM	8:44 am - 12:20 pm	5:57 PM	9:09 pm - 12:45 am	
Sat 4	69	4:02 AM	9:41 am - 1:07 pm	6:38 PM	10:06 pm - 1:32 am	
Sun 5	78	5:07 AM	10:39 am - 1:51 pm	**7:14 PM**	11:04 pm - Midnight	
Mon 6	80	**6:12 AM**	11:38 am - 2:30 pm	**7:47 PM**	Midnight - 2:16 am	New
Tue 7	69	**7:19 AM**	12:35 pm - 3:11 pm	8:18 PM	12:03 am - 2:55 am	
Wed 8	56	8:25 AM	1:35 pm - 3:47 pm	8:48 PM	1:00 am - 3:36 am	
Thu 9	44	9:33 AM	2:34 pm - 4:26 pm	9:19 PM	2:00 am - 4:12 am	
Fri 10	37	10:42 AM	3:35 pm - 5:07 pm	9:53 PM	2:59 am - 4:51 am	
Sat 11	34	11:52 AM	4:38 pm - 5:50 pm	10:30 PM	4:00 am - 5:32 am	Perigee
Sun 12	36	**1:03 PM**	5:42 pm - 6:40 pm	11:13 PM	5:03 am - 6:15 am	
Mon 13	44	2:13 PM	6:46 pm - 7:34 pm		6:07 am - 7:05 am	Half
Tue 14	32	3:19 PM	7:47 pm - 8:33 pm	12:04 AM	7:11 am - 7:59 am	Low
Wed 15	27	4:18 PM	8:46 pm - 9:34 pm	1:02 AM	8:12 am - 8:58 am	
Thu 16	27	5:09 PM	9:40 pm - 10:36 pm	2:05 AM	9:11 am - 9:59 am	
Fri 17	38	5:51 PM	10:28 pm - 11:36 pm	3:12 AM	10:05 am - 11:01 am	
Sat 18	48	6:28 PM	11:10 pm - 12:36 am	4:19 AM	10:53 am - 12:01 pm	
Sun 19	59	**6:59 PM**	11:49 pm - Midnight	5:25 AM	11:35 am - 1:01 pm	
Mon 20	64	**7:28 PM**	Midnight - 1:31 am	**6:28 AM**	12:14 pm - 1:56 pm	Full
Tue 21	56	7:54 PM	12:23 am - 2:25 am	**7:28 AM**	12:48 pm - 2:50 pm	
Wed 22	47	8:20 PM	12:58 am - 3:16 am	8:28 AM	1:23 pm - 3:41 pm	Fall
Thu 23	39	8:48 PM	1:29 am - 4:09 am	9:26 AM	1:54 pm - 4:34 pm	
Fri 24	36	9:16 PM	2:04 am - 5:00 am	10:24 AM	2:29 pm - 5:25 pm	
Sat 25	38	9:48 PM	2:39 am - 5:51 am	11:22 AM	3:04 pm - 6:16 pm	
Sun 26	41	10:24 PM	3:18 am - 6:44 am	**12:20 PM**	3:43 pm - 7:09 pm	Apogee
Mon 27	48	11:06 PM	4:00 am - 7:36 am	**1:17 PM**	4:25 pm - 8:01 pm	
Tue 28	60	11:54 PM	4:48 am - 8:28 am	2:12 PM	5:13 pm - 8:53 pm	Half
Wed 29	51		5:38 am - 9:20 am	3:04 PM	6:03 pm - 9:45 pm	High
Thu 30	47	12:47 AM	6:31 am - 10:11 am	3:51 PM	6:56 pm - 10:36 pm	

25 50 75 AVERAGE

For more, visit primetimes2.com

ANY LUNAR PERIOD IS ENHANCED WHEN IT OVERLAPS A KEY SOLAR PERIOD. THE BEST OF THESE OVERLAPS ARE DESIGNATED BY THE SUN SYMBOLS:

= DAWN = HIGH NOON = DUSK

*WHILE THE LESSER **MOONRISE** AND -**SET** OVERLAPS (ABOUT 30 MIN. BEFORE AND AFTER THE LISTED TIME) ARE DESIGNATED BY **BOLD BLACK TYPE**.*



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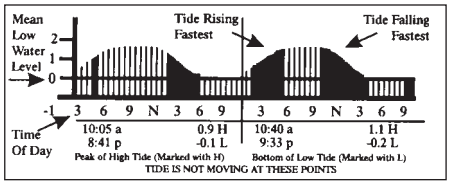
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How to use the SPORTSMAN Tide Guide



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

Tide Corrections

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

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

East Point Grand Isle

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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5 9:27 am 1.5 H, 8:03 pm 0.3 L	**6** NM 10:23 am 1.4 H, 8:30 pm 0.4 L	**7** 11:25 am 1.3 H, 8:45 pm 0.6 L	**8** 12:48 pm 1.1 H, 8:26 pm 0.8 L	**9** 1:12 am 0.9 H, 7:35 am 0.7 L, 3:35 pm 0.9 H, 6:15 pm 0.9 L	**10** 12:45 am 1.1 H, 10:01 am 0.6 L	**11** 1:04 am 1.3 H, 11:54 am 0.4 L
12 1:45 am 1.5 H, 1:25 pm 0.2 L	**13** FQ 2:39 am 1.6 H, 2:43 pm 0.1 L	**14** 3:44 am 1.6 H, 3:55 pm 0.1 L	**15** 4:59 am 1.7 H, 5:00 pm 0.1 L	**16** 6:19 am 1.6 H, 5:59 pm 0.1 L	**17** 7:38 am 1.6 H, 6:51 pm 0.2 L	**18** 8:52 am 1.5 H, 7:35 pm 0.4 L
19 10:01 am 1.4 H, 8:08 pm 0.5 L	**20** FM 11:10 am 1.2 H, 8:22 pm 0.7 L	**21** 12:33 pm 1.1 H, 7:47 pm 0.9 L	**22** 12:14 am 0.9 L, 7:02 am 0.8 L, 11:43 pm 1.1 H	**23** 8:45 am 0.7 L, 11:53 pm 1.2 H	**24** 10:05 am 0.6 L	**25** 12:18 am 1.3 H, 11:16 am 0.5 L
26 12:51 am 1.4 H, 12:26 pm 0.5 L	**27** 1:33 am 1.5 H, 1:34 pm 0.4 L	**28** LQ 2:23 am 1.5 H, 2:40 pm 0.4 L	**29** 3:23 am 1.5 H, 3:39 pm 0.3 L	**30** 4:30 am 1.5 H, 4:30 pm 0.3 L		

Calcasieu Pass Lighthouse Wharf

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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5 3:50 am 2.1 H, 8:40 am 1.6 L, 1:08 pm 2.0 H, 8:43 pm 0.2 L	**6** NM 4:09 am 2.1 H, 9:11 am 1.5 L, 1:59 pm 2.1 H, 9:24 pm 0.3 L	**7** 4:25 am 2.1 H, 9:49 am 1.3 L, 2:52 pm 2.1 H, 10:06 pm 0.5 L	**8** 4:38 am 2.1 H, 10:30 am 1.0 L, 3:55 pm 2.1 H, 10:50 pm 0.8 L	**9** 4:52 am 2.0 H, 11:13 am 0.8 L, 5:09 pm 2.1 H, 11:34 pm 1.1 L	**10** 5:08 am 2.0 H, 11:59 am 0.5 L, 6:32 pm 2.1 H	**11** 12:21 am 1.5 L, 5:26 am 2.0 H, 12:51 pm 0.4 L, 8:46 pm 2.1 H
12 1:21 am 1.8 L, 5:46 am 2.0 H, 1:51 pm 0.2 L, 10:48 pm 2.2 H	**13** FQ 3:37 am 2.0 L, 6:07 am 2.0 L, 2:59 pm 0.1 L	**14** 12:31 am 2.3 H, 4:05 pm 0.1 L	**15** 1:35 am 2.4 H, 5:11 pm 0.1 L	**16** 2:19 am 2.4 H, 7:21 am 1.9 L, 10:05 am 2.1 H, 6:17 pm 0.1 L	**17** 2:57 am 2.3 H, 7:50 am 1.8 L, 11:29 am 2.1 H, 7:16 pm 0.2 L	**18** 3:29 am 2.2 H, 8:20 am 1.7 L, 12:49 pm 2.1 H, 8:08 pm 0.3 L
19 3:53 am 2.1 H, 8:53 am 1.5 L, 1:52 pm 2.2 H, 8:55 pm 0.5 L	**20** FM 4:08 am 2.1 H, 9:27 am 1.3 L, 2:47 pm 2.2 H, 9:39 pm 0.7 L	**21** 4:10 am 2.0 H, 10:01 am 1.1 L, 3:45 pm 2.1 H, 10:20 pm 1.0 L	**22** 4:07 am 2.0 H, 10:35 am 0.9 L, 4:46 pm 2.1 H, 10:57 pm 1.2 L	**23** 4:14 am 2.0 H, 11:08 am 0.7 L, 5:45 pm 2.1 H, 11:30 pm 1.5 L	**24** 4:25 am 1.9 H, 11:42 am 0.6 L, 6:47 pm 2.1 H, 11:59 pm 1.7 L	**25** 4:33 am 1.9 H, 12:19 pm 0.6 L, 8:18 pm 2.0 H
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2021-2022

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

HUNTING SEASONS

SPECIES	SEASON DATES		BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT
	(South Zone)	(North Zone)		
DOVES+	Sept. 4 - 18 Oct. 16 - Nov. 28 Dec. 18 - Jan. 17	Sept. 4 - 26 Oct. 9 - Nov. 14 Dec. 24 - Jan. 22	15	45
WOODCOCK^	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31		3	9
TEAL (blue-winged, green-winged, cinnamon)	Sept. 11 - Sept. 26		6	18
RAILS*				
King & Clapper	Sept. 11 - 26	Nov. 13 - Jan. 5	15	45
Sora & Virginia	Sept. 11 - 26	Nov. 13 - Jan. 5	25	75
GALLINULES*	Sept. 11 - 26	Nov. 13 - Jan. 5	15	45
SNIPE	Nov. 2 - Dec. 5 Dec. 18 - Feb. 28		8	24
QUAIL	Nov. 20 - Feb. 28		10	30
RABBIT	Oct. 2 - Feb. 28		8	24
SQUIRREL	Oct. 2 - Feb. 28 May 7 - 29**		8 3	24 9

*An extended falconry season for ducks, rails and gallinules will take place from Nov. 2 - Jan. 31. ^An extended falconry season for woodcock will be Nov. 2 - Jan. 31. +An extended falconry season for mourning doves will be Sept. 15 - Oct. 1.
**Spring squirrel season is CLOSED on the Kisatchie National Forest, some National Wildlife Refuges, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property and some Wildlife Management Areas. (Check WMA season schedule)

WATERFOWL SEASONS

	EAST ZONE	WEST ZONE
DUCKS*, COOTS & MERGANSERS	Nov. 20 - Dec. 5 Dec. 18 - Jan. 30	Nov. 13 - Dec. 5 Dec. 18 - Jan. 2, Jan. 10-30

The daily bag limit for ducks is 6 and may include no more than 4 mallards (no more than 2 females), 3 wood ducks, 2 canvasbacks, 2 redheads, 1 mottled duck, 1 black duck and 1 pintail. Only 1 scaup may be taken for the first 15 days of the season with 2 per day allowed for the remainder. Daily bag limit for coots is 15. Daily bag limit for mergansers is 5, only 2 of which may be a hooded mergansers. The merganser limits are in addition to the daily bag limit for ducks. The possession limit on ducks, coots and mergansers is three times the daily bag limit. Youth and Veterans only: EAST - Nov. 13 & Feb. 5. WEST - Nov. 6-7.



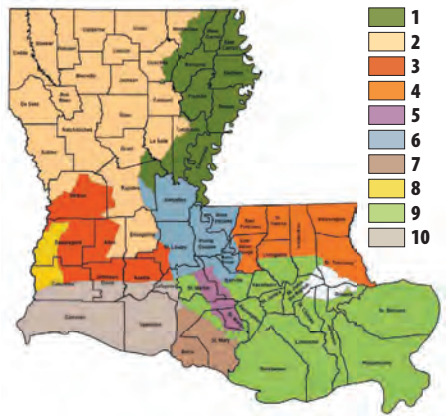
	EAST ZONE	WEST ZONE	
GEESE (snow, blue, Ross & white-fronted [specklebelly])	Nov. 6 - Dec. 5	Nov. 6 - Dec. 5	Daily bag limit for light geese (snow, blue, Ross') is 20, with no possession limit. The daily bag limit for white-fronted geese is three, with a possession limit of nine.
CANADA GOOSE SEASON	Dec. 18 - Jan. 30	Dec. 18 - Jan. 2 Jan. 10 - Feb. 6	The daily limit for Canada geese is one per day, with a possession limit of three.

	EAST ZONE	WEST ZONE	
CONSERVATION ORDER FOR LIGHT GEESE	Dec. 6-17 Jan. 31 - March 6	Dec. 6-17 Jan. 3-9 Feb. 7 - March 6	No bag or possession limit. See pamphlet for more detail.

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

DEER SEASONS

2021 - 2022 Deer Hunting Areas



AREA	ARCHERY (Either-sex)	PRIMITIVE FIREARMS (All either-sex, except as noted)	STILL HUNT (No dogs allowed) (All either-sex, except as noted)	WITH/WITHOUT DOGS (All either-sex, except as noted)
1	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Nov. 13 - 19 Jan. 24 - 31	Nov. 20 - Dec. 10 Jan. 3 - 23	Dec. 11 - Jan. 2
2	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Oct. 23 - 29 Jan. 17 - 23	Oct. 30 - Dec. 7	Dec. 8 - Jan. 16
3	Sept. 18 - Jan. 15	Oct. 9 - 15, Jan. 3 - 9	Oct. 16 - Nov. 28	Nov. 29 - Jan. 2 (certain areas)
4	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Nov. 13 - 19 Jan. 24 - 31	Nov. 20 - Dec. 10 Jan. 3 - 23	Dec. 11 - Jan. 2
5	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 13 - 19 (either-sex) Jan. 24 - 31 (bucks only)	Nov. 20-21, Nov. 26-28 (either-sex) Nov. 22-25, Nov. 29 - Dec. 10 (bucks only)	Dec. 11-12, Dec. 18-19 (either-sex) Dec. 13-17 (bucks only) Dec. 20 - Jan. 23 (bucks only)
6	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 13 - 19 Jan. 24 - 31	Nov. 20 - Dec. 10	Dec. 11 - Jan. 23
7	Sept. 18 - Jan. 15	Oct. 9 - 15 Jan. 3 - 9	Oct. 16 - Nov. 28	Nov. 29 - Jan. 2
8	Sept. 18 - Jan. 15	Oct. 9 - 15, Jan. 3 - 9	Oct. 16 - Nov. 28	Nov. 29 - Jan. 2
9	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 13-19 (either-sex) Jan. 24 - 31 (bucks only)	Nov. 20-21, Nov. 26-28 (either-sex) Nov. 22-25, Nov. 29 - Dec. 10 (bucks only)	Dec. 11-12, Dec. 18-19 (either-sex) Dec. 13-17 (bucks only) Dec. 20 - Jan. 23 (bucks only)
10	Sept. 18 - Jan. 15	Oct. 9 - 15, Jan. 3 - 9	Oct. 16 - Jan. 2	



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Jenna Mills, 12, killed her first buck, a spike, while hunting with her paw-paw, Robert Reames, on Nov. 30 in East Baton Rouge Parish.

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Ringo Luke with a big Grand Isle red caught on a gold spoon.



Ethan Romero caught this 20-inch speckled trout in Sabine Pass.



Connor Wallace, 11, shot and killed this 110-pound doe on Oct. 31, 2020, during a youth hunt in Bogalusa.



Camden Sobert holds up the 4.6-pound bass he caught in a private pond in Central Mississippi.



Andrew Weems caught this sheepshead while fishing for reds on May 26, 2019, in the marsh southwest of PAC.



Lauren Glaser caught this sheepshead in Grand Isle on July 23.



Shooter Chemin dropped this 9-point buck in East Feliciana Parish during 2020-2021 youth season.



Nicholas Gorum with a 7-pound, 3-ounce bass he caught using a Fluke on April 22 on the Sabine River. It was released after the photo.

Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



Bobby Campo caught and released this bull red on a trip to Hopedale.



Brady Farlow caught this 39-inch bull red on dead shrimp in Three Mile Pass on July 18, 2021.



While hunting with her father, Logan Rhodes, and friend, Maci Dugas, Mia Rhodes, 8, had her dream of harvesting a big buck become a reality on Nov. 28, 2020, when she killed her first Louisiana buck, a Natchitoches Parish 8-point.



Mike Davis and his son, Reese, spotted these bulls churning off the Elmer's Island beach on Aug. 3, 2021.



Christian Sullivan from Florence, Miss., Andrew Davis from Brandon, Miss., and Justin Sullivan from Crystal Springs, Miss., were on a charter July 17, 2021, fishing with Triple Tail Charters out of Venice, when this 160-pound swordfish was boated.

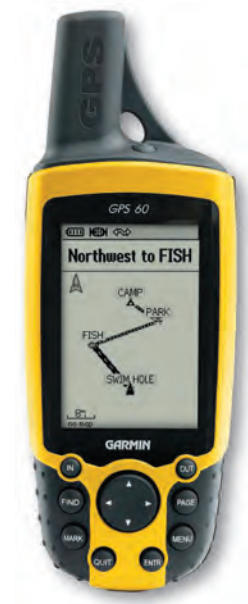


DJ Stilley, 9, of Albany, has a passion for fishing and loves to go to his family's fishing camp in Dulac. On July 31, DJ, along with his father, Daniel Stilley Sr., his uncle, Roger Doody Jr., and his cousin, Cameron Doody, went fishing south of Cocodrie. This was DJ's first offshore fishing trip, and with his first cast, he hooked this big jack crevalle.



Connor Sullivan, 15, took his first deer with a crossbow. Tucker, the dog pictured, tracked and found the buck for him on Oct. 18, 2020.

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Esten Fusilier (left) and Lloyd Silvey, along with family members, shot 36 teal on the opening day of the second split on Pecan Island.



Todd and Angela Cullen and Blye, Lindsey, Lilly and Ty Barras caught 97 beautiful sac-a-lait with Living the Dream Guide Service at Toledo Bend on July 11. They used live shiners.



Makayla Mills, 15, killed her first buck, an 8-point, hunting with her uncle, Ethan Reames, on Nov. 30 in East Baton Rouge Parish.



Charlie Beaullieu with a nice limit of marsh reds and a bonus blue catfish that were caught at El Gato Negro slough.



Shelby Theriot went alligator hunting with her dad and his friend for the first time this year.



Breck Kline hooked his first redfish while fishing the Rigolets.





First cousins Jude LaPoint, 10, and Madelyn LaPoint, 9, each killed their first deer on Nov. 14, 2020, at Grande Lake Rod and Hunting Club near Marksville. Both does weighed 120 pounds.

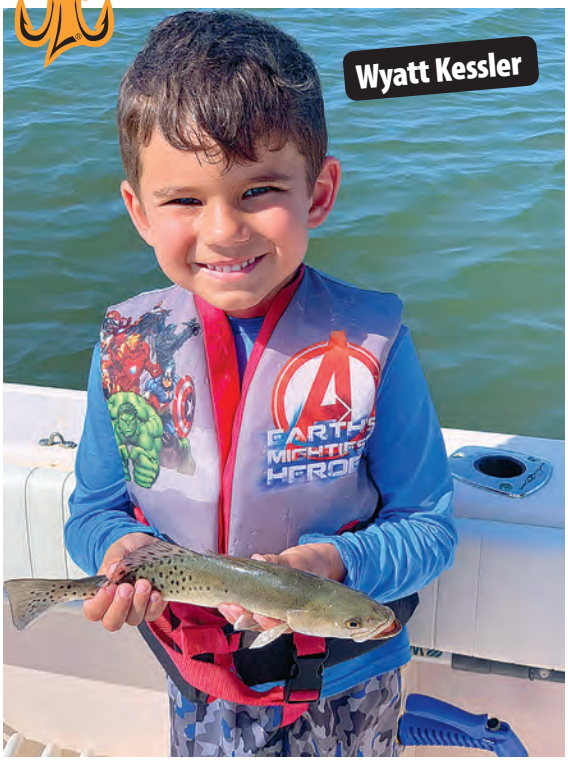


Landon Sobert with a 5 ½-pound bass caught in a private pond in central Mississippi.

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Wyatt Kessler caught his first speckled trout in Grand Isle with his MeMe and Pappy. It wasn't a keeper, but he is hooked!



John Notariano took this nice 192-pound, 8-point from central Tangipahoa Parish at about 40 yards with a 180-grain .30.06 bullet on Dec. 2, 2020.



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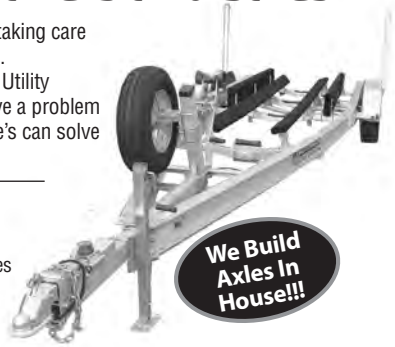
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