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

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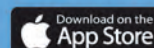


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MLF anglers Tyler Stewart of Dubach (left) and Cliff Crochet of Pierre Part show off some nice Caney Lake bass. The MFL Pro Tour will visit Caney, D'Arbonne and Bussey Brake for an event in February.



MLF PRO TOUR WILL VISIT LOUISIANA

CANEY, D'ARBONNE, BUSSEY BRAKE ARE FEBRUARY 2022 DESTINATIONS

S By Kinny Haddox

imply put, Major League Fishing has decided to make small big — and it's doing it in Louisiana.

The world's largest tournament fishing organization is opening its 2022 Major League Fishing Bass Pro Tour with a six-day event in February on three small north Louisiana Lakes. The first four days of the elimination event are on 16,000-acre Lake D'Arbonne in Farmerville. Day 5 will be held on 2,200-acre Caney Lake, and the championship will be on the newly renovated 2,000 Bussey Brake Reservoir in Bastrop on Day 6.

The lakes are small, but the catches could be huge during the Feb. 5-10 event. Caney Lake holds six of the top-10 bass spots in the Louisiana state fishing records. Last summer, Bussey gave up a lake-record bass, a fish that weighed almost 13 pounds. D'Arbonne has large numbers of 6- to 8-pound bass, and it won't be surprising to see a couple much larger caught. Then there's the \$100,000 prize that goes to the winner in the 80-angler field. A purse of almost \$800,000 will be divided among the field; every angler takes home a check from the tournament.

"I think it is awesome," said bass pro Cliff Crochet of Pierre Part, who fishes the Bass Pro Tour circuit. "I'm so thankful that the visitors bureau up there brought this to promote our state. It's fantastic. Fishing on smaller lakes like that offers some challenges, but the format of MLF makes it possible. And we throw every fish back immediately after it's caught."

FEBRUARY FISHING

Crochet said that in February, prespawn patterns like throwing a jerkbait or Rat-L-Trap or flipping jigs and plastic will probably be key techniques.

"It doesn't matter whether you are on a big lake or small lake; that's what you do this time of year," he said.

Angler Gerald Spohrer of Gonzales also fishes the MLF Pro tour,

having qualified through other MLF qualifying circuits.

In case sportsmen worry about pro anglers hurting these water, MLF has no traditional weigh-in. Fish are caught, digitally weighed and recorded in the boat by a trained marshal, then immediately released in the same spot they were caught. There's even a penalty if an angler drops a fish in the boat.

The tournament will be broadcast live on MLF NOW! and streamed to the Major League Fishing app, MyOutdoorTV (MOTV), and on MajorLeagueFishing.com. Each stage will also air on the Discovery Channel beginning in July 2022. Anglers can watch the action and see what the pros are catching, the lures they are using and the techniques that work.

HOW THE COMPETITION WORKS

The 80-man field is broken into two groups. Half the field will fish on Day 1; the second half will fish on Day 2. On Day 3, the first group fishes again, and on Day 4, the second group fishes again. Total, cumulative weights will then decide who survives to move on and fish on Day 5.

On Day 5, the competition will move to Caney Lake in Chatham where the top 20 from both groups fish in what is called the Knockout Round. At the end of that day, only the top 10 will move on to fish on championship day.

On Day 6, the Top 10 anglers will move to Bussey Brake in Bastrop to determine the champion. Previous catch totals are erased, and the angler who catches the most total weight at Bussey Brake will be the champion.

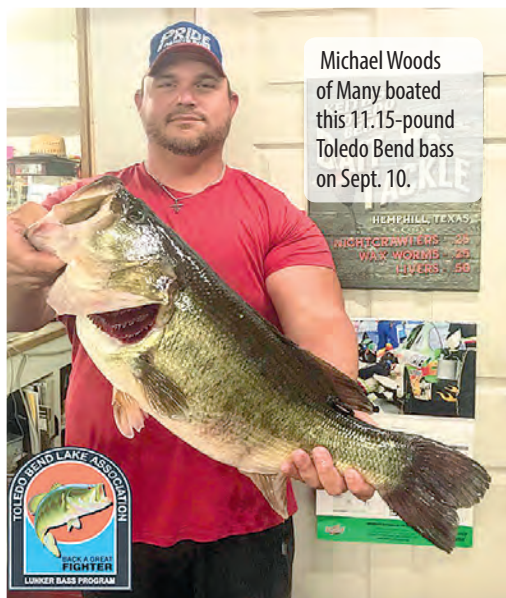
"I can't wait to get up there," Crochet says. "The lakes are off limits 30 days prior to the event. I've fished Caney and D'Arbonne before and look forward to fishing all three of them. The coverage from this event will blow folks away. Louisiana has a lot more to offer than hurricanes and broken levees. We need to show folks that." ■

TOLEDO BEND ANGLER BOATS 11.15-POUND BASS

By Kinny Haddox

Trying to figure out where to find a lunker bass in sprawling 190,000-acre Toledo Bend Reservoir is tough enough during daytime. At night, it can be even more of a challenge, especially when you are after a double-digit bass.

So angler Michael Woods of Many turned to a fishing spot where he could use a night light to help rouse out an 11.15-pound Toledo Bend hawg on Sept. 10. He found the big fish under a pier that featured with several good lights in about 8 to 10 feet of water.



Michael Woods of Many boated this 11.15-pound Toledo Bend bass on Sept. 10.

"I started out in a deeper spot that I've caught a lot of big fish on," Woods said. "But it was almost 11 o'clock, and I didn't have but about 8 pounds of fish and no big ones, so I decided to move to the bank and fish some deeper piers. I chose that one because of

the lights that help me see what I'm doing. And the big fish seem to like piers with lights. The area was also in a little deeper water, so I thought I might be able to pick my weight up there."

TOURNAMENT CATCH

Fishing in a Many Bass Club tournament, Woods pulled up to the pier and made about five or six flips with jigs and big worms. He changed to a 10½-inch junebug/red Cajun Bigeaux worm, and it hadn't hit the water good when he felt a bite.

"When I set the hook and was reeling the fish in, I knew it was a good one, but I didn't know it was that big," he said. "Then it jumped, and I saw how big its mouth was, but it wasn't until I had it in the net and picked it up until I realized it could go over 10 pounds.

"I was pretty excited," he said. "It's just like a big old buck. Once you've got your hands on it, your knees start shaking, and you get all fired up. This is my third Toledo Bend Lunker Program bass, and the third one was just as exciting as the first one. I put it on my scales and saw it was around 11 pounds, but I didn't wait for them to lock in. I just got her in the livewell, because I didn't want her to die. I was a lot happier knowing that I'd have a big weight in the tournament after that, but I was so worried about her I stopped fishing every few minutes and checked to make sure she was making it."

MISSISSIPPI TO ALLOW LOUISIANA CHARTERS TO USE PORTS

From News Reports

Due to the impacts of Hurricane Ida on Louisiana coastal communities and infrastructure, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is allowing Louisiana charter captains possessing a Louisiana Charter Boat Fishing Guide License, Louisiana Mothership License or Louisiana Charter Skiff License and following all Louisiana regulations and requirements associated with above licenses to launch and land from Mississippi ports through Dec. 31, 2021.

Any passengers fishing onboard these vessels must possess the appropriate Louisiana Charter Passenger or Louisiana Charter Skiff license. In order to fish in Mississippi territorial waters, a Mississippi Charter For-hire License must be purchased at the MDMR Licensing Office, located at 1141 Bayview Avenue in Biloxi.

As a reminder to all individuals participating in these activities, no red snapper may be possessed or landed in Mississippi territorial waters while Mississippi's recreational season on red snapper is closed, regardless of the status of any other state's red snapper season. ■

HIS BIGGEST BASS

She did. Woods was able to certify the weight and let the fish survive. He worked hard to keep her alive in the livewell. The fish was the tournament's big-bass winner, and Woods won the event with a 5-fish limit weighing 19.35 pounds.

Woods' earlier Toledo Bend Lunker Program catches were a 10.25-pounder in 2020 and a 10.32-pounder in 2018. Woods works on turn-around construction jobs and is away from home frequently, but when he's home and has free time, he hits the lake regularly when he feels like the fish are biting.

Woods isn't sure why it took six or seven flips to get the big fish to bite. He said the bait could have made a difference, or he might have just finally aggravated her into biting. He caught the fish on a Pride rod made by Bill Kistler in Conroe, Texas, using a Diawa Tatula 100 series reel spooled with 20-pound Seaguar InvizX line. He was fishing in the mid-lake region around the Pendleton Bridge area.

IMPORTANT THERMOCLINE

Woods said one of the keys to finding big bass on Toledo Bend in late summer is to watch the thermocline. During the day, it isn't much of an issue, but at night, if you go much deeper than 8 to 12 feet, you'll be fishing water the fish aren't inhabiting. He said to just stay above the thermocline and you'll find fish, as long as the water is still relatively warm.

Woods' fish was seventh heavier than 10 pounds that was entered in the lunker bass program this season. To find out more about the program, visit <https://www.toledobendlakeassociation.com/lunker-bass-program.html>. ■

BAYOU GAUCHE FISH KILL

LDWF DOESN'T EXPECT LONG-LASTING IMPACT ON LAKE SALVADOR

A By Will Miller
fish kill related to Hurricane Ida was at Bayou Gauche in Lake Salvador at Bayou Gauche. Chris Boudreaux of Belle Chasse reported seeing an incredible number of dead freshwater fish and crabs as he traveled to his camp at Short-Cut Resort near Bayou Gauche on Sept. 7.

"There were dead sac-a-lait, bass and catfish — including some big cats — in the water at Bayou Gauche," Boudreaux said. "It was an amazing number of fish; it seems like the saltwater just poured in up there and killed everything."

Boudreaux, who speculated that a fish die-off was probable up the water system as far as Des Allemands, also saw evidence that a substantial storm surge moved through the area.

"Water settled about 7 or 8 feet above (normal), and I poured saltwater out of (items in my shed) that were 4 or 5 feet (higher)," he said. "That would make it a



Bass, sac-a-lait, catfish and crabs were found dead in Lake Salvador's Bayou Gauche a few days after Hurricane Ida.

10- or 11-foot surge, easy."

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries warned residents of the potential for fish die-off in a news release published on Sept. 3. According to the release, fish kills related to hurricanes are generally caused by low dissolved-oxygen levels in the water, storm surge, the churning up of oxygen-poor water and sediment and a sudden input of large amounts of organic debris into waterways. Decomposition of organic material will further deplete the dissolved oxygen in the water, causing fish to "suffocate."

KILLS NO SURPRISE

Boudreaux said he's seen similar fish kills

after previous hurricanes.

"But I've never seen it happen at this scale; of course, I've never seen a storm this big, either," he said.

Boudreaux's camp sustained severe damage during the storm, especially to its roof.

"My camp is done," he said. "I don't have the time or supplies to rebuild the roof."

Boudreaux worries about what recovery will look like.

"Hopefully, (Ida) hasn't destroyed the fishing (at Bayou Gauche) forever; it's sickening to think about," he said.

COMEBACK EXPECTED

Louisiana's native fish species have a perfect record of rebounding from hurricanes and other seemingly catastrophic environmental events.

"Storm-related fish kills have occurred in Louisiana since before recorded history, and the ecosystems have evolved to be resilient and bounce back from them," the LDWF release read. "While fish kills are shocking to experience and can appear devastating, they often lead to a rejuvenated system that is healthy and naturally replenished in the following years." ■

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An oiled tricolored heron observed at the Alliance Refinery oil spill.

OILED BIRDS TREATED

Belle Chasse oil spill caused by Ida has birds in rehab center

LDWF Photo

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' efforts to rescue oiled birds continues at the site of an oil spill near Alliance Refinery at Belle Chasse along the Mississippi River.

The spill occurred during Hurricane Ida's onslaught of the area on Aug. 29; however, the first cases of oiled birds were documented on Sept. 5. The oiled birds were observed within heavy pockets of crude oil throughout the facility as well as nearby flooded fields and retention ponds.

LDWF is working in partnership with the Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to save the birds. Alliance Refinery, owned by Phillips 66, is assisting in the recovery.

The number of oiled birds observed on-site had increased from the 50 described in initial reporting to more than 100.

"At last check, we have brought in close to 25 oiled birds, and there have obviously been some dead birds which were collected as evidence as well," said Jon Wiebe, an LDWF biologist.

RECEIVING CARE

Efforts to capture birds impacted by the spill are ongoing. Once captured, birds are sent to a rehabilitation center to receive care.

"We have clean-up that is ongoing, but the longer that the oil is available in the environment, the more chance there is for exposure, and with more chance of exposure, there is more chance for injury, leading all the way up to mortality," Wiebe said.

"One limiting factor is that there are a number of oil spills that are occurring throughout the state, so companies that are designated for doing that type of work are spread very thin."

It may take weeks before the effort to save birds and other animals affected by the spill is completed. Black-bellied whistling ducks, blue-winged teal and a variety of egret species were among the birds found. Alligators, river otters and nutria were also affected by the spill.

TWO BIRDS RELEASED

LDWF released its first two rehabilitated birds, a purple gallinule and a king rail, on Sept. 16.

The release of more rehabilitated birds will be based on their individual recovery status and approved by LDWF. There is no standard number of days for rehabilitation.. ■

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ROPED RED SURPRISES NEW IBERIA FISHERMAN

BOSTON CANAL REDFISH HAS GARROTTE HANGING OUT

When Mike Viguerie of New Iberia posted pictures on a popular Louisiana fishing page of a redfish that his cousin caught, he knew they would attract some attention; the fish had certainly captured his attention.

He couldn't stop thinking about the strange fish and the mystery of how it came to be the way it was.

Donald Gilbert, Viguerie's cousin, caught the bull red in Vermilion Bay near the mouth of Boston Canal on Aug. 21. He'd hooked the fish on the bottom on a Carolina rig and dead shrimp.

It was a good-sized bull red, but that's not what made it special. What made it one-of-a-kind was the garrote that dangled from its "throat."

In the images Viguerie posted on social media, cordage springs from the fish's flesh in two places, rope-like appendages tied together at its side in

a neat knot. A long tag dangles from the knot where the line has been broken or cut. The rope is brown and green with age, and a deep scar runs vertically from one outlet of the rope to the other behind the gill plate; the scarring is blood red where the rope has scored into the fish's flesh.

Gilbert fought the fish for 10 minutes on heavy tackle, so when he hauled it into the boat, neither man suspected that the fish was anything more than a nice bull red on an otherwise slow day.

"I didn't notice the



A redfish Donald Gilbert caught Aug. 21 in the mouth of Boston Canal came equipped with a rope through its gills.

rope because it was turned away from us while we were removing the hook," Viguerie said.

But when they flipped the fish, they needed a moment to process what they saw.

"I realized that someone had roped and tied it, and that it had got away somehow," Viguerie said. "After I realized what I was looking at, I took the pictures.

"The fish had been tied for a long time, because the skin had grown over the rope," Viguerie said. "I think that somebody wanted to use it in a rodeo; it was a huge fish, but when it was tied — maybe a year or two ago — it was probably under 27 inches and could have been used for a limit."

The men decided to keep the fish.

"But later on, I started feeling bad about it," Viguerie said. "I wish I would have cut the rope as close to the skin as possible and let it go; but we hadn't caught many redfish that day, and my cousin wanted to keep some."

Viguerie kept the fish's head of the fish in his freezer for a couple of days but eventually threw it away.

"My wife got fussy about it," Viguerie said, laughing. "I thought somebody might want to look at it, but eventually, she won out."

SKULLDUGGERY?

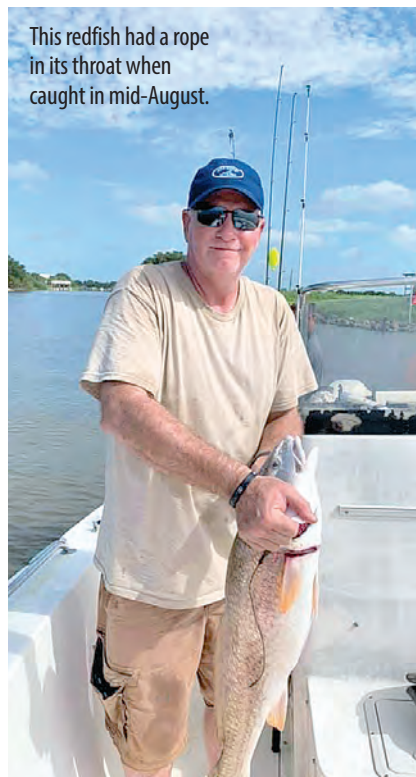
Viguerie still wonders about how the fish was tied.

"Typically, you run a rope through the mouth and out of a gill and tie it, but this fish couldn't have been tied that way," Viguerie said. "The rope didn't come out of the mouth; the rope came up and out at the top of the gill-plate, and the other end came out between the fins at the bottom, through the skin."

"So, maybe (he) put the rope through both gills, and as the fish grew, (it) grew around the rope until (it appeared to be) coming out of the skin," Viguerie said. "Somebody tied it that way so the rope wouldn't leave any marks on the mouth; they were probably (cheating) in a redfish rodeo."

THEORIES ABOUND

The pictures Viguerie posted on social media received an immediate reaction from local fishermen, many of whom posited their own theories about how the garrotted fish got that way.



This redfish had a rope in its throat when caught in mid-August.

Jake JG wrote: "In the fall, when there's a NE wind, 7 to 11 mph, I lasso redfish in the marsh. Conditions gotta be right though. Rope only snapped on me a couple times. Must be one of those. Nice recovery."

David Alphonso Jr. observed: "Redfish are amazingly durable. #RedfishStrong"

Mark Blanchard asked: "Could it have been part of a gill net someone set out illegally?"

Douglas Greig wrote: "Looks like decoy string. We (accidentally) caught a redfish

in a decoy where we made a loop to shorten the string."

Brian Laughlin offered: "It was possibly too small at the time it was caught, so someone tied it up, and when the warden showed up, they cut the line."

Errol Campbell exclaimed: "Crab line got him!"

"You can't handle the truth."

"Whatever happened to the fish, it got away, and then I killed it," Viguerie said.

"And after it lived through all that... I'm kind of upset about it now."

"I wish I would have cut the rope, and let it go," Viguerie said. "Everybody who (has) commented about it has a theory, but I think someone tried to cheat in a rodeo; I think that's what really happened."

Some mysteries are not meant to be solved, and that's okay.

But still... What happened to the garroted redfish? ■

DR. GAR?

TULANE PROFESSOR BOATS 6-FOOT-6 FISH IN BIG MUDDY

G By Will Martin
Grant McCall, an anthropology professor at Tulane from New Orleans, caught a monster, 6-foot-6 alligator gar while fishing on the Mississippi River near Mardi Gras Pass on Aug. 22.

McCall and his 4-year-old son, Adrian, were fishing with Glen Swift, a commercial, long-line catfish angler who often assists McCall in his research of prehistoric (Amerindian) mound sites in Plaquemines Parish.

"I'd mentioned to him that I was going to be (in the Empire area) with my son, and he suggested that we go out on the boat and fish," McCall said. "I knew my kid had never been on a boat before, so I thought, 'Yeah, let's do it.'"

After setting off from Delta Marina at 9:30 a.m., the three fishermen headed for Mardi Gras Pass.

They searched the pass for a suitable place to fish, eventually settling on a small, shallow bay that abutted a cow pasture. They pulled their boat onto the shore, and fished from the bank.

"I was fishing with what I refer to as my 'Frankenpole,' which is a weird combination of stuff," McCall said — a 7-foot, Coastal Tough rod wearing a Zebco 606 reel spooled in 30-pound braid.

McCall had fished in a marsh the previous day and had not replaced his tackle, which consisted of a 50-pound monofilament leader tied to a modified, 3-way rig with a ½-ounce bank sinker on one line and a short, steel leader sporting a No. 5/0 circle hook on the other.

"It was from fishing saltwater the day before; I'd been afraid of getting cut off by a redfish or something like that," said McCall, who was even using cut mullet left over from the previous day's trip.

"He looked at his phone and mentioned something about it being 93 degrees outside," McCall said. "I (thought) it was more like 193 degrees."

Try as he might, McCall found it difficult to focus on fishing. He had his son to think of — a task made more difficult by a bull that was running around behind them in a field. But somehow, with a wary eye on the cows, he noticed a little tug of his line.

As he pulled the rod from its holder, McCall felt a second, harder, jerk.

"I set the hook," he said, but the sinker caught on the bottom. "I was just kind of snagged."

Luckily, the secondary line attached to the sinker broke, and the fish "took off halfway across the canal," McCall said. "And from



Grant McCall's alligator gar, caught Aug. 22 in the Mississippi River near Mardi Gras Pass, measured 6-foot-6 from nose to tail and was estimated at between 110 and 120 pounds.

there, it was all about wearing it out with the drag on my reel."

The fight lasted 15 to 20 minutes.

"It was a shallow bay, the depth trailing off gradually," McCall said. "So, I pulled the fish up into the shallows. (Swift), who is in his 70s, was like a ninja; he got in the water, and with one swift stroke, gaffed the fish in the head, just above the gills, and pulled him onto shore."

McCall didn't have scales big enough to weigh the fish, but he estimated it at between 110 and 120 pounds.

"This was really a once in a lifetime thing," McCall said, "and it was fluky in a lot of different ways. I just had the right tool and was in the right place at the right time; chance took care of the rest, I guess."

"I've had catching one of these big gar on my bucket list for decades," he said. "Now, I can cross that one off the list." ■

YOUNGSTER CATCHES HUGE BASS FROM POND

On July 18, 10-year-old Landon Smith of Natchitoches caught a bass that's a personal best and will be hard to beat. The monster largemouth weighed an impressive 12.05 pounds. It was so large that the fifth-grader was struck speechless for a time on the bank after landing it.

Smith caught the bass while fishing with his grandfather, Rodger Smith, on a private pond near Atlanta, La., at approximately 5:45 p.m. That afternoon, they set off for a 3-acre pond on the family's property. The sky was overcast, but bright. An easy breeze greeted them as they approached the water, rustling the alligator grass and willow leaves. A stand of cypress trees stood still and silent.



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"Pawpaw and I went down to the pond to fish," Landon Smith said, "and when we got there, I saw this little swirl in the water."

He appreciated the opportunity for what it was and cast a plastic worm to the site of the commotion. The bass hit the lure, but not with conviction. Landon reeled in and cast a second time. Persistence did the trick.

Wham! A bass slammed the bait in about 3 feet of water.

"After I threw it over there the second time, the bass hit it," Landon said, "and when I set the hook, I thought I'd hooked into a log."

A DREAM FISH ON HIS LINE

But it was not a log, no sir. The youngster had hooked into the kind of fish men dream of catching, some until their fishing days are done.

He'd hooked the fish with a Lew's Mach 2, rod-and-reel combo and a Culprit worm, fire-and-ice color, Texas-rigged with a small bullet weight.

"It took him not longer than a minute to reel it in," Rodger Smith said. "He was fishing with a 50-pound line."

"I was surprised," Landon Smith said, "and I was really excited."

"He was so excited, he couldn't talk," Rodger Smith said, chuckling.

Landon Smith tried to revive the fish so it could be released back into the pond, even placing the bass into a bathtub in his attempt, but it was not to be.

"I dropped it a couple of times," Landon Smith said. "It was so heavy."

In the end, the Smiths decided to mount the fish and keep it as a memento of a special experience in Landon's budding outdoors life, an outdoors life that began with fishing trips with his grandfather when he was only 3 years old.

PURSuing A SPORTSMAN'S LIFE

"This is not the only big fish he's caught," said Marilyn Smith, Landon's grandmother. His previous best was a 10-pound bass, and he's caught a few 8-pounders and several 5-pound fish to boot.

"He's just got a natural knack for it," she said. "It's uncanny how well he can place his (casts)."

"He's an all-around

sportsman," Rodger Smith said. "He loves the outdoors and all types of hunting and fishing."

Landon Smith, who has taken three deer to date, is excited about the 2021-22 season.

"He's looking for the big buck this year," Rodger Smith said.

"We've got a 16-point buck on our land," Landon Smith said, "and I'm going to get him this year." ■

“After I threw it over there the second time, the bass hit it, and when I set the hook, I thought I'd hooked into a log.**”**

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THE LATEST FISHING VESSEL MAY BE A PWC

JET SKIS CAN BE RIGGED TO FISH WITH MANY ADVANTAGES OVER TRADITIONAL FISHING BOATS

P By Will Martin
eople have been fishing from personal watercraft (PWCs) since the first mass-produced models hit the market in the early 1970s. One cannot deny that — at least where catching fish is concerned — anglers are an innovative lot, and the sun has certainly not set on the curious fisherman zipping across the water on a WaveRunner, rod and reel in hand, eager to try a new spot or employ a fresh technique.

But the time of PWC fishing has truly arrived. Across the globe, anglers are outfitting their vessels with fish-finders and other electronic gear, and expanding the capabilities of a recreational machine that was once considered a niche technology.

Jock Smith is a PWC fisherman from Lacombe who spreads the good news about this new way of catching fish with evangelical zeal. He is a traveling construction superintendent, and he was exposed to PWC fishing while working in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

"I drove down to the docks to check out the boats, and I saw about 20 guys on jet skis all rigged up for fishing," Smith said.

When he asked what they were doing, they told him they were fishing for wahoo, mahi, and tuna. Yes, tuna.

"(The fishermen) were using their jet skis to fight tuna," Smith said. "They'd let the tuna drag them around until (doing so) wore the tuna out; (then) they'd pull the tuna onto sleds that floated behind their jet skis, and haul them back to shore."

At the time, Smith was living in an apartment in the area. It was a work arrangement, and he didn't have room to store his boat. "So, I brought my jet ski (over) there, rigged it up for fishing, and I tell you ... I had so much fun."

That was three years ago. Smith has been fishing from a PWC ever since.

A CAPABLE CRAFT

Designed to take a beating, PWCs are capable in rough water.

"They're practically unsinkable," Smith said, "and the seas don't beat you up like they do on an 18-foot boat."

"If you rig them out right, you don't really need a lot," he said.



Gena Randall shows off the 30-inch red that she caught near the Rigolets from a jet ski. It's her personal best.

"Don't bring a tackle box bigger than your mama's suitcase... or a Yeti ice chest that weighs 150 pounds; it's possible to build a fishing jet ski without overloading it."

He has rigged two removable ice chests on the back of his vessel. One he uses as a cooler for food and drinks. The other is a bait-well complete with a battery-operated bubbler that can keep 50 shrimp alive all day with a little ice thrown in occasionally to keep them cool.

Smith has equipped his vessel with three rod holders behind the seat, as well as one on each side, allowing him to troll with five rods at a time.

"Three-seater jet skis have comfortable seats," Smith said. "You can throw your legs over the side (and use it as a bench)." PWCs have gotten bigger and bigger over the years, and are now stable enough for serious fishing.

"I've (installed) two batteries (controlled by a) little switch, so that if one battery dies, I've got a backup," he said. "And it's got a spotlight and directional lights, so if I'm out after dark, I can (operate legally)."

"(To hold my fish), I've slung two (fin-proof) zipper-type, ice chests over the seats like saddle bags," he said. "My girlfriend caught a 30-inch red on Sunday — her personal best — and it fit perfectly inside; if you fill those puppies up with fish... man, you've got a mess of fish."

The vessel is also outfitted with a fish-finder and bilge pump.

PROS AND CONS

As a fishing technology, PWCs have a lot to offer: They are cheap to maintain, easy to store, and cheap to run.

"(My girlfriend and I) went fishing all day (recently), and when I

refueled my jet ski afterwards, I think I put 4½ gallons in it." Smith said, laughing. "It's just so easy,"

Cleaning and flushing the motor after a day on the water only takes about 15 to 20 minutes. It used to take him hours to clean his old, 24-foot boat after each outing.

PWCs are perfect for operating in shallow water, too. "We (go) into little canals and shallow ponds," he said. "I just leave my GPS on, and follow my lines back out."

AND THEY'RE FAST

"If I can't find clean water in one area, I can shoot down a ship channel and find (it) somewhere else," he said. "My jet ski really cruises at 50 mph, which means that nothing is more than 30 to 40 minutes away, and I'm not burning a lot of fuel to get there."

Smith believes his ability to move efficiently from spot to spot is a major reason that he catches fish on days when others struggle. He feels that people in traditional fishing boats don't move as much as they probably should because of time and fuel considerations. "(But) I can zip around and find the good water," he said.

"And when (we're) done fishing, we'll go hang out at a sandbar or ride around; you get the enjoyment of being on a jet ski, too."

One major drawback is that you can't fit more than 2 people on a PWC, not comfortably, anyway. But Smith sees a potential upside to this limitation. "When you've got a 24-foot boat, you've also got plenty of friends who want to go fishing (every weekend)..." he said, laughing, "but when you pull up to refuel, they'll all disappear on you." "Not a problem for a jet ski (fisherman)," Smith chuckled.

““” *And when (we're) done fishing, we'll go hang out at a sandbar or ride around; you get the enjoyment of being on a jet ski, too.*

Smith typically fishes Rigolets, Lake Borgne, and Lake Catherine. "I've been fishing out of my jet ski for about three years now," he said. "It's funny; every time I pull up at the launch in Rigolets, I have a crowd of people admiring my jet ski, telling me how cool they think it is, and now, I've got four or five friends that have rigged their own jet skis for fishing."

The cool factor matters, of course, and these days Smith sees PWC fishermen trolling his home waters more than he used to.

MANUFACTURERS CATCHING ON

The industry has gotten wise to the growing demand for ready-built PWCs for fishermen, though some are only available in New Zealand, where PWC fishing is incredibly popular. The Sea-Doo Fish Pro (MSRP \$13,899) and the Kawasaki Ultra LX-F (currently unavailable in the USA) lead the pack, but with interest growing in God's Country, one would expect to see offerings from Yamaha and Honda in American showrooms soon. ■



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TEAL TAKEDOWN: SWLA GOOD, OTHER AREAS WERE SPOTTY

WEATHER WAS PLEASANT, BUT IT DIDN'T AFFECT
TEAL NUMBERS ACROSS LOUISIANA MARSHES

As By Darren Digby
Louisiana's early teal season wrapped up, there was no shortage of pots simmering with freshly taken birds, hot off their annual migration.

The season will be remembered by the unusually pleasant weather for many of the 16 hunting days thanks to three cool fronts that brought dry, stout, northerly winds and abnormally low morning temperatures. As ideal as that may seem, the reality is that such seemingly ideal weather can make for more challenging hunting with September teal merely passing through en route to points much to the south of the Bayou State.

It was mostly business as usual in the rice country of south-west Louisiana. Haiden Richard with Southern Parish Outdoors (337-230-8157) again enjoyed an extremely productive opening weekend, and the hunting, for the most part, remained strong in the Gueydan area's agricultural lands. Richard's only complaint was that fronts seemed to push out more birds than they brought in, making for a few slow mornings despite the comfortable weather.

"Overall it was a great season, even if not quite as consistently strong as last year," he said. "We held plenty of birds before the season opened, but those cool fronts seemed to mostly hurt us more than help."

Richard noted that on some of the slower mornings, a return trip to the same blind in the afternoon proved to be the ticket, something other hunters also observed when the birds seemed to wise up to the morning pressure.

"Despite that middle weekend being slow for about everyone around here, it picked back up in the second week, and we did pretty well through the closing Sunday, even if it took going in the afternoons," he said. "Without those fronts coming through, we probably do as well or better than last year."

I was able to close out my season with a strong hunt in the freshwater marshes near Klondike with Doug's Hunting Lodge (337-536-7902). Teal season guests there saw many of the same ups and downs related to the cool fronts, but overall they had a productive couple of weeks.

On the east end, it was tough sledding around Delacroix, where very few teal were encountered on most hunts. Success as a whole was spotty at best. The few bright spots were pastures flooded by Hurricane Ida's rains, as well as areas down the Mississippi River where habitat seemed to weather the storm better than was expected. Based on several reports, the area from Pointe a la Hache down toward Venice held the majority of southeast Louisiana's birds, much like last year.



Darren Digby

Hunters in southwest Louisiana had a decent September teal season, but success was spotty elsewhere.

Around Lake Pontchartrain, including Big Branch NWR along with Pearl River WMA, reports of success were also few and far between. Unlike the 2020 season, tide levels remained fairly normal, save for the middle weekend as the remnants of Hurricane Nicholas stalled out and ultimately dissipated over the region, bringing persistent easterly winds.

Even if it made for some challenges, the early season cool fronts brought in additional species like pintails and shovelers, and a seemingly above-average number of green-winged teal mixed in. Given much of our flyway is experiencing varying degrees of drought, the early season cool fronts may bode well for Louisiana hunters waiting for waterfowl seasons to arrive in November. ■

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BALDWIN WOMAN TAGS HUGE GATOR ON SHERBURNE WMA LOTTERY HUNT

W By Will Martin
hen Maria Ellis, 35, of Baldwin, entered the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries office to collect the alligator tags she'd won for the Sherburne WMA lottery hunt, office personnel looked at her a little sideways. In their defense, they probably don't see many alligator hunters who are women.

"You can send him in..." one of them said, nodding towards the parking lot.

Ellis said that the tags were hers. "I'm a female..." she said, and then she laughed. She could not know it, but she would be doing a lot more laughing in coming days. Indeed, she'd be laughing last, thanks to an 11½-foot alligator taken from Big Alabama Bayou.

As Ellis, her brother-in-law and helper, Bryan Mires, and a photographer, Craig Weenum, approached the first line of their 6-line set on the afternoon of Sept. 6 and spied the 11½-foot alligator on the bank, the laughing was more of the nervous kind.

"No, there's no way that gator is on our line," someone said.

They took some pictures, and then the alligator slid down off the bank. As the boat drew near, the alligator began to bob up and down, pulling at the line.

"The gator definitely knew that he was caught," Ellis said. "It kept rising and falling in the water, tugging on the line."

When the boat got close, the alligator went down in the water.

A DIFFICULT SHOT

"My brother-in-law grabbed the line, and pulled the gator close to the surface so I could shoot it," Ellis said, "but the alligator kept submerging, fighting the line, and the boat rocked each time that it sank into the water."

Ellis kept thinking: "Oh my God, he's going to knock the boat, and I'm going to fall into the water."

Each time the boat rocked, Ellis climbed up and down to the gunwale. All that movement made for a difficult shot.

"You get this natural high; you feel flooded with all these emotions, and you've got to work through them and do your job as humanely as possible," said Ellis who fired four times. Two of her shots hit the alligator's "soft-spot," but the last one killed the gator.

"I heard the gurgle on the fourth shot; that was the kill-shot," Ellis said.

DEAD WEIGHT

"We had to pull the alligator to the bank because we couldn't lift it into the boat without some kind of leverage," Ellis said. "We pulled the boat parallel to the bank, and my brother-in-law got out.

"The three of us hauled it into the boat," she said. "It actually took



Maria Ellis of Baldwin killed this 11½-foot alligator in Big Alabama Bayou on Sept. 6, one of three reptiles she tagged on a lottery hunt on the Sherburne WMA.

us between 45 minutes and 1 hour to get it in; it was a struggle.

"There's no way I could have handled that 11½-foot gator on my own," Ellis said. "When we got to my sister's house, we had to use a tractor to pull it out of the truck.

"We never expected to pull up on a big, old gator like that," Ellis said. "You can see the excitement on our faces in the photos of us pulling the gator out of the water."

"We were elated to get a gator that huge. It's a once in a lifetime gator."

In the next few days, Ellis filled her remaining tags with a 9-foot-9 gator she harvested on Little Alabama Bayou and a 7-foot-4 gator from Big Alabama bayou.

"I won the tags, so I gave all of the kill-shots," Ellis said. "I did a lot of the work, too — I wasn't just there to be pretty."

Ellis wrestled the 9-footer into the boat by herself. She's very proud. ■

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The COVID-19 pandemic continues to create problems, but take heart, deer season will happen as scheduled, and the very wet spring and summer have made for excellent growing conditions for both habitat and deer.

Many hunters know that breeding dates for white-tailed deer are based upon embryo and fetal measurements. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' website has these dates and a breeding map for the state (www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/deer-breeding-periods). During my tour of duty with the department, I spent a good deal of time gathering this data.

Breeding ranges were established for various areas using the earliest and latest known date. This range may include a time period of 3 to 4 months, depending

on the size of the collection. The average peak breeding period, generally 2 weeks, is also presented. While this is always a good time to hunt, the fact is, breeding can shift forward or backward every year by a week or two. If the rut comes early, hunters who wait until the average peak may miss out on some good hunting opportunity that might occur early in the season, and likewise, hunters who hunt a late rutting herd may use up all their vacation time if they hunt too early. This effort presents the predicted breeding dates for 2021, and it appears the rut will be an early one, something many deer hunters desire, since it gives them opportunity in the late season to hunt ducks.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020? >

2021

RUT REPORT

WET WEATHER DURING A WARM SEASON POINTS TO AN EXCELLENT YEAR FOR DEER AND POSSIBLY AN EARLY PEAK OF BREEDING, NO MATTER WHERE YOU'RE HUNTING.

■ By David Moreland



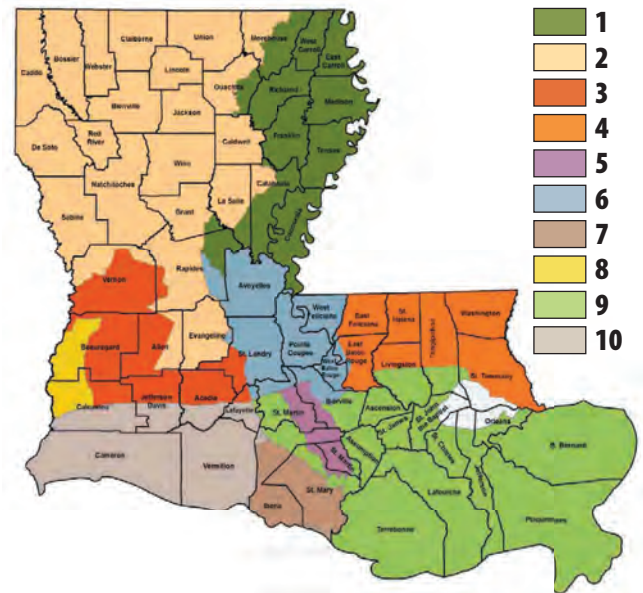
WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

The prediction for 2020 was for breeding to start at the beginning of the first 2 weeks of the peak month for each area, for example, November for Area 2 and December for Area 4. But it seems the peak activity may have been around the second and third weeks of the various months. In Area 4 in East Feliciana Parish, I killed a 3½-year-old, 6-point buck that was feeding early one morning on Dec. 11. It had a good body at 160 pounds but not much headgear. The tarsal glands indicated it had been scraping. Over the next few days, I saw deer, but nothing that I wanted to shoot. Then, on Dec. 17, deer sightings went to zero, and I mean zero. It wasn't until Jan. 2 that I saw my next deer, two racked bucks feeding together. What I think happened was that the actual breeding activity was going on and deer were in what many hunters called lockdown. As I have often alluded to, during the breeding time, it seems that deer just disappear, only to reappear once the breeding is over. During the first breeding period, biologists expect to see about 70% to 80% of the does bred, then the remaining does will cycle and breed during the next round of activity. I continued to see deer for the rest of January, including several adult bucks that I hope will be around this season.

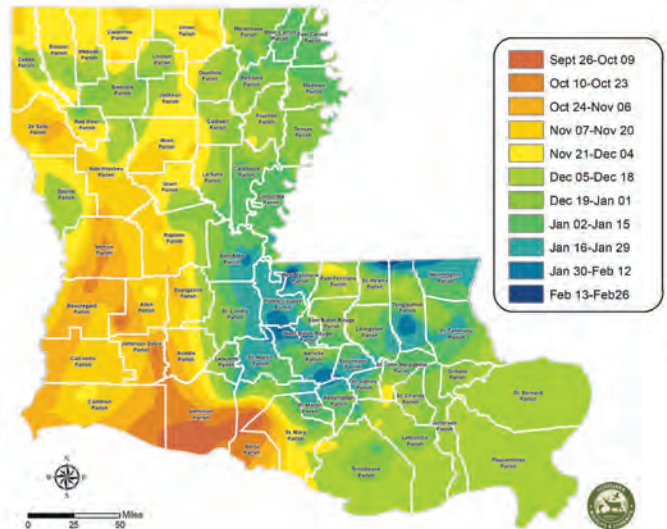
AREA SUMMARIES >



2021 - 2022 Deer Hunting Areas



LOUISIANA ESTIMATED DEER BREEDING PERIODS
10/13/2014



The peak of buck activities varies around Louisiana, with some areas hitting the same stages almost three months apart.

THE 2021 RUT PREDICTION

AREAS 3, 7, 8 & 10

- Pre-Rut**
Aug. 8 - Sept. 6
- 1st Scraping Period**
Sept. 7 - 19
- 1st Breeding Period**
Sept. 20 - Oct. 5
- 2nd Scraping Period**
Oct. 6 - 19
- 2nd Breeding Period**
Oct. 20 - Nov. 3

AREA 2

- Pre-Rut**
Sept. 7 - Oct. 5
- 1st Scraping Period**
Oct. 6 - 19
- 1st Breeding Period**
Oct. 20 - Nov. 3
- 2nd Scraping Period**
Nov. 4 - 18
- 2nd Breeding Period**
Nov. 19 - Dec. 3

AREAS 4 & 9

- Pre-Rut**
Oct. 5 - Nov. 3
- 1st Scraping Period**
Nov. 4 - 18
- 1st Breeding Period**
Nov. 19 - Dec. 3
- 2nd Scraping Period**
Dec. 4 - 18
- 2nd Breeding Period**
Dec. 19 - Jan. 1

AREAS 1, 5 & 6

- Pre-Rut**
Nov. 4 - Dec. 3
- 1st Scraping Period**
Dec. 4 - 18
- 1st Breeding Period**
Dec. 19 - Jan. 1
- 2nd Scraping Period**
Jan. 2 - 16
- 2nd Breeding Period**
Jan. 17 - 30

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AREA SUMMARIES

The prediction for 2021 is a rut where peak scraping begins before the peak month in each particular area. This would mean earlier deer activity than last year, and hunters should be prepared for this with their vacation schedules. If one waits until the holiday seasons, Thanksgiving and Christmas, the good activity may be over in some areas. This is one of those years when hunters will be able to hunt the predicted rut in all areas. Sometimes in the late breeding areas, the rut extends into February and hunters miss out on some action.

Areas 3, 7, 8 and 10, most of southwest Louisiana, are early rut areas. Archery season opened on Sept. 18, and gun hunting begins in early October. Bowhunters should have seen good activity when that season opened. This is not the land of big bucks, but a 130-class deer is possible. West Bay WMA and Fort Polk WMA are the primary public deer-hunting areas. Some federal refuges that offer limited deer-hunting opportunities. While the weather is often warm, the rut is on, and it's time to hunt. Hunters in Area 10 need to be aware that the season limit



is three, not six like most of the state. Area 10 hunters should also note the either-sex and bucks-only days.

AUGUST 2021 Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10

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

SEPTEMBER 2021 Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10

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

OCTOBER 2021 Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10

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

NOVEMBER 2021 Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10

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

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2021 RUT REPORT

Biologists are able to sample deer fetuses that are collected to predict fawning dates and breeding dates.

Northwest and central Louisiana make up Area 2. It covers a large portion of the state, and November is the key month to be hunting. However, with an early rut being predicted, the first primitive weapons season and the opening week of gun season should prove to be great for hunters. As previously mentioned, the 2020 rut appeared to have peaked around Nov. 15. There are within this area, pockets of deer that, due to their genetic make-up, breed later than what one normally sees in Area 2. Check out the LDWF website to find these.

While most of Area 2 is considered to be piney woods habitat, this area will produce some trophy deer. If you passed up some small, adult bucks last year, it is anticipated that with this year's extended growing season due to abundant rainfall, they will be larger.

Area 4 includes southeast Louisiana, north of Lake Pontchartrain, and is well known as the Florida Parishes. Area 9 includes some portions north of Lake Pontchartrain as well as those lands south of the lake. Area 4 is predominately piney woods habitat, while Area 9 includes marsh, swamp and



hardwood forests along the Mississippi River. Both areas will produce quality deer and an occasional Boone & Crockett class buck. Like southwest Louisiana, a 130-class buck is a trophy. Habitat changes and suburban sprawl have taken its toll on the deer landscape. For whatever reason, Area 4 continues to have a 3-deer limit, rather than the statewide 6-deer limit. Hunters should see activity in mid-November this year.



SEPTEMBER 2021 Area 2

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

OCTOBER 2021 Area 2

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

NOVEMBER 2021 Area 2

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

DECEMBER 2021 Area 2

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

This bachelor group of three velvet bucks will likely break up once they begin to rub trees and shed their antler coatings.



OCTOBER 2021

Areas 4 & 9

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

JANUARY 2022

Areas 4 & 9

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

NOVEMBER 2021

Areas 4 & 9

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

DECEMBER 2021

Areas 4 & 9

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

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Areas 1 and 6 include bottomland hardwood and swamp hardwood forest habitat with agricultural lands along the Mississippi River. This is the land of the giant, trophy bucks. Area 5 includes the lower Atchafalaya River Basin and is swamp/hardwood habitat with some agricultural lands. In recent years, this area has been hammered with heavy flooding and like Area 4, it has a 3-deer limit. The rut in these areas generally occurs in January and February, and it is not uncommon for hunters to continue to see rutting activity in March and even bucks with antlers in early April. This year, rut activity should begin in December and be over with by the end of January. Does in these areas do not generally wean their fawns until after November due to the late fawning, so bowhunters should keep this in mind.

As always, it is important for hunters to read the 2021-22 Hunting Regulation brochure. While the tagging system has not changed, stores no longer issue the nice deer tags we have been getting. Instead, tags are printed on regular paper, so you will have to do some work of your own to make them waterproof

NOVEMBER 2021 **Areas 1, 5 & 6**

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

DECEMBER 2021 **Areas 1, 5 & 6**

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



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Greenbriars are favorite foods of whitetails as evidenced by the tips of these plants that have been nipped off.



and tear proof. Hunters still have to report their harvest, and it is important that you do this so biologists will get sound information on when to establish seasons and adjust regulations. ■



David Moreland is a former wildlife biologist with LDWF, having served as the state's deer biologist for 13 years and as chief of the wildlife division for three years. He and his wife, Prudy, live in Baton Rouge and own property in East Feliciana Parish.

JANUARY 2022 **Areas 1, 5 & 6**

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



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ATTAKAPAS ISLAND

■ By Don Shoopman

HOPPING WHITETAILS

ATCHAFALAYA BASIN PUBLIC LAND IS KNOWN FOR FISHING, DUCK HUNTING, BUT DON'T SELL DEER HUNTING SHORT, ESPECIALLY DURING ARCHERY SEASON.

When Brad Romero Jr. of New Iberia fishes for sac-a-lait and bass in the Atchafalaya Basin, he usually heads for the fertile waters in and around the Attakapas Island Wildlife Management Area.

When he goes duck hunting, he often targets those same waters.

When he goes deer hunting, which he does very, very often during that season, he hauls himself to the waters around the Attakapas Island WMA, which is accessible by boat only. It's a special place, because he enjoys deer hunting there, perhaps more than he does on a Four Bayou Hunting Club lease he hunts in St. Mary Parish or in the Kisatchie National Forest.

It's all about the water.

The Atchafalaya Basin's deer, he said from a decade of experience, stay around or in the water, whether the nation's last great overflow swamp is high or low.

WATER=COMFORT ZONE >

WATER = COMFORT ZONE

“I guess they feel safe,” Romero said. “Every now and then, they’ll be on high ground or in the briar patches. But nine out of 10 times, they stay next to a duck hole or close to a waterway.

“They don’t come on land during the day. They know you’re on the land,” as well as four-legged predators.

Romero knows that deer go deeper into the water and circle around when they sense a threat or hear a motorboat. With the bayous, sloughs, lakes, pipeline canals and swamps, they have plenty of room to roam on the 27,962-acre WMA.

Romero started hunting in the Atchafalaya Basin at age 4, going with his father, Brad Romero Sr., pretty much every weekend. He also hunted a lot with his grandfather, the late Ossie Romero Jr., whose passion was hunting with deer dogs. His father continues the tradition on a hunt-club lease near Phillips Canal.

Romero began hunting by himself when he was 12 or 13, and he was going on his own when he was 15 or 16.

Romero, who works repairing boats and outboard motors, taught himself how to hunt Attakapas Island WMA, but he fished it for a year or two before he hunted it, all while in high school.

“I had some friends who told me about it,” Romero said. “They brought me fishing on that end, and I found the fishing better than the other end. I actually went hunting one morning and saw deer in back of Crew Boat (Chute).”

That trip sparked a long-lasting relationship between Romero and the WMA, where he has hunted deer and ducks from one end to the other and west to east inside the public land’s boundaries. In more than 10 seasons, he has killed six bucks, including two 8-pointers in 2018, and has harvested quite a few more does than bucks; his first deer on the WMA was a small doe.

“How many missed or seen?” he said. “I don’t know. Way more.”

Romero’s passion for hunting the WMA was fanned last season when he saw the huge rack, still in velvet, of a buck killed in October, reportedly by an Acadiana deer hunter who frequents the WMA.

“That thing is a giant. I’m talking probably 16 points. It’s the biggest deer I’ve ever seen,” Romero said.

ATTAKAPAS OVER SHERBURNE >

Brad Romero has killed six bucks and at least as many does while hunting the Attakapas Island WMA the past 10 years. He has learned the public hunting area well.



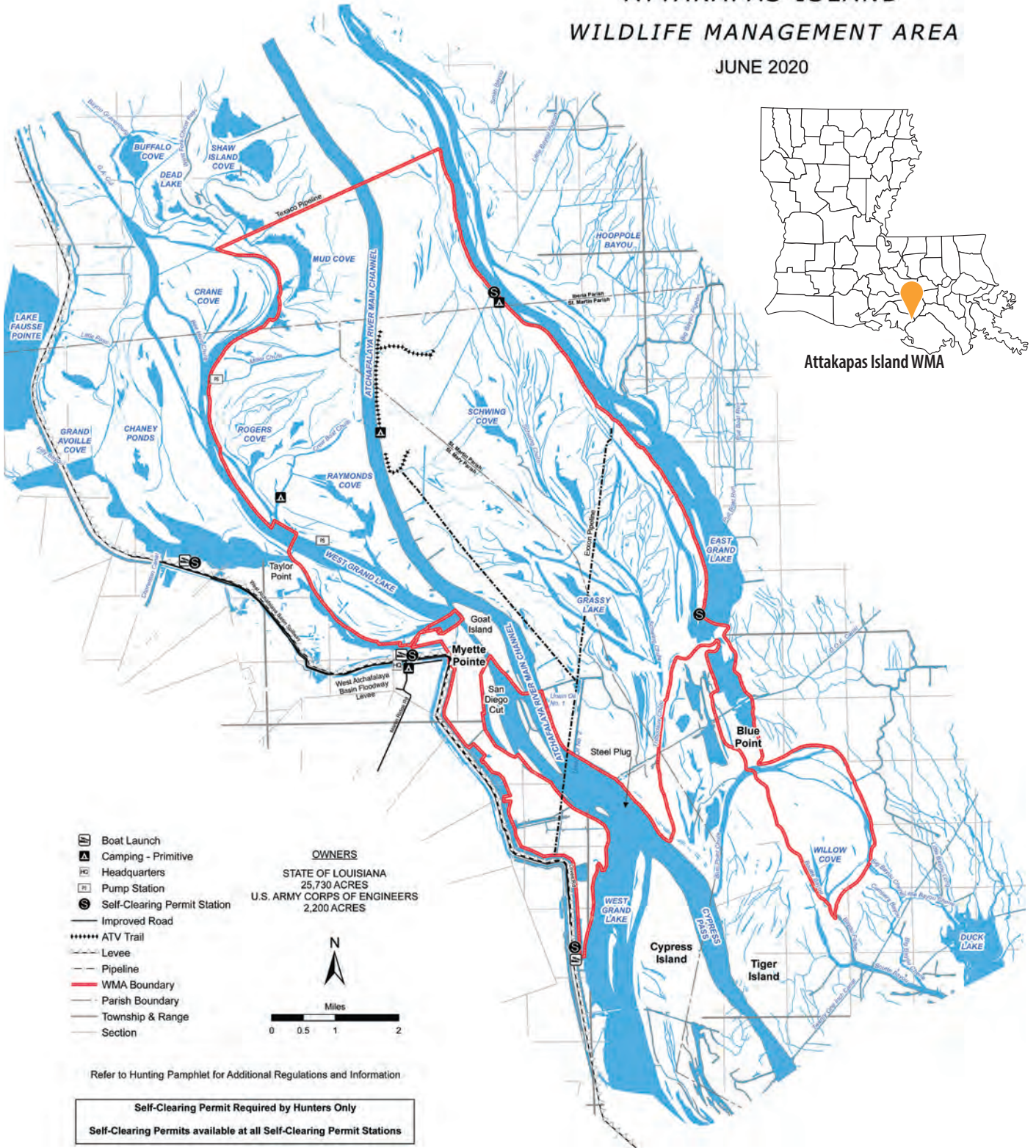
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ATTAKAPAS OVER SHERBURNE

While Sherburne WMA may be more popular among deer hunters, Romero prefers Attakapas Island WMA. He finds the public land north in the Atchafalaya Basin more crowded during hunting season, plus, he said, it is “pig-infested.” Admittedly, he said, wild pigs are becoming more of a problem where he loves to hunt.

The past few seasons, Romero has hunted closer to Taylor Point near Charenton Lake after spending the better part of multiple seasons farther north around Mud Cove.

He said he’s probably walked the WMA from Myette Point to Crew Boat. If he doesn’t know just about every yard of it, he’s close, because he hunts the WMA 50 to 60 days each season.

Romero, 27, is equally adept with rifle, archery equipment and muzzleloader, strong suits that enable him to hunt through the WMA’s respective seasons for primitive firearms, firearms and archery. He hunts with a Browning .30-06, a Mathews Creed compound bow and a muzzleloader he loads with .457 bullets.

Attakapas Island’s deer feast on acorns, which are abundant, and, early in the season, cockleburs. Cockleburs?

“They eat something in those cockleburs when the cockleburs are green. I don’t know what they’ve got in them,” he said.

Romero’s greatest memory from last season was of a doe creeping low, left to right, in front of him during rifle season. It wasn’t just any doe.

“I never saw such a big doe, definitely an old doe,” he said, noting that trail-camera photos showed the age in its face. “It’s a big doe, a 180- to 200-pound doe. She’s still dropping babies.”

Hunting Attakapas Island is best during periods of high water. However, deer hunting closes when the Atchafalaya River stage at Butte La Rose reaches 15 feet; it reopens when the river stage recedes to 14 feet, according to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.



RIGHT: This photo of a huge buck with its antlers in velvet made the rounds last season after it was killed, reportedly by an Acadiana hunter on the Attakapas Island WMA. Brad Romero (above), who loves to hunt the WMA, said it’s the biggest buck he’s ever seen on the public land.



Submitted by Brad Romero

“It’s not that hard when the water’s high,” he said. “The easiest way to hunt deer out there is find ridges when it’s high water. It’s definitely tough when the water’s low. If you don’t know where the deer stay, you’re probably wasting your time. When it’s low, you pretty much got to find duck ponds, or, say, wetlands areas. They like to stay around ponds.”

WEST BANK A GOOD CHOICE

Some of the best hunting can be upriver on the west bank, where high ground goes farther inland.

“I’ve seen people get lucky and kill a deer off the river — 50 yards in. It’s easy for a person to hunt. Get along the river and find some oak bottoms and find deer feeding,” he said.

The best time to hunt the WMA is when the rut is stronger.

“I hunt Attakapas in late season because of the rut; usually at the end of December, January, is when it really gets good. It’s really the best shot at getting a good buck,” he said.

The state acquired Attakapas Island WMA in 1976. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also owns several tracts of land that are managed as part of the WMA. ■



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.

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REVERSE SEARED VENISON

Pass the backstrap ... but hold the bacon. The backstrap, or loin, is the king of cuts when it comes to venison. Some prefer it smeared with cream cheese, stuffed with jalapenos and wrapped in bacon, while others like it sliced and fried. Whatever your preference, this king of cuts should be treated

like the prize it is. I prefer to cook backstrap like filet mignon: salt, pepper, a hard sear and basted with butter.

Nothing pairs with backstrap better than the chanterelle mushrooms that are growing in the Louisiana woods where the deer in your freezer was once grazing.

PREPARATION: Serves 2

Rub your backstrap with 1 tablespoon of olive oil, then salt and pepper generously. Set the seasoned backstrap out to warm up to room temperature (~30 minutes).

While the backstrap is coming to room temperature, preheat your oven to 215°F.

Place the seasoned backstrap on top of a baking sheet with a rack and place in the heated oven until it reaches an internal temp of 120°F (~45 to 60 minutes depending on the thickness).

While the venison is coming to temperature in the oven, roughly chop the chanterelle mushrooms and mince the shallots and garlic.

Heat a medium pan to medium-high heat and add the butter. When it melts and starts to bubble/brown, add the chanterelle mushrooms and shallots. Once the shallots turn translucent and the mushrooms release their moisture (~3 to 5 minutes), pour in the wine and minced garlic.

When the liquid in the pan is reduced by half, lower the heat to medium-low and pour in the cream. Season to taste. Stir

thoroughly until reduced to the desired consistency or until it coats the back of a spoon.

While the chanterelle mushroom cream sauce is reducing, heat a cast-iron pan to high heat and add a tablespoon or two of high-temp oil to the pan. Sear the venison on all sides. Once seared, lower the heat to medium and add butter, whole garlic cloves and rosemary to the pan. Baste the venison on all sides with the butter until it reaches your desired internal temperature.

Once your venison reaches the desired doneness, remove from pan and let rest for 5 minutes. This will allow the juices to re-absorbed into the meat.

Plate the venison, top it with the chanterelle cream sauce, and serve with your favorite sides. ■

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

INGREDIENTS:

Venison:

8- to 10-inch venison backstrap or 2 tenderloins

2 TBSP high-temp oil (vegetable, avocado, etc.)

1 TSP coarse sea salt

1 TSP fresh ground black pepper

2 cloves garlic

1 sprig Rosemary

2 TBSP butter

INGREDIENTS:

Chanterelle Cream Sauce:

1 cup chanterelle mushrooms (store-bought mushrooms will work great, too)

1 shallot

2 cloves garlic

2 TBSP butter

¼ cup of white wine

1 cup heavy cream

Coarse sea salt and fresh ground black pepper to taste



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There's something about a 25,000-acre Wildlife Management Area inside the nation's last great overflow swamp that appeals to squirrels and squirrel hunters in the know.

Attakapas Island WMA is far from the biggest or most notable public squirrel hunting area in Louisiana. In fact, other WMAs in the Lafayette Region give up thousands more squirrels. But none can match the average yield per hunt at Attakapas Island last season : 2.3 squirrels per hunter.

"As far as hunter effort, it's been one of the best ones in the region. It is the best," said Tony Vidrine, a biologist with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, emphasizing that the WMA's boat-only access reduces the crowd.

Attakapas Island WMA is inhabited primarily by fox squirrels, with some grays and, Vidrine said, a surprising number of black squirrels. All thrive on the food available. "They don't have a lot of oaks there, but they do good," Vidrine said.

A prime stretch is along the west bank of the Atchafalaya River starting at Myette Point. Head upriver to check out the higher ground, ridges where squirrel hunters have success.

There are other smaller WMAs that offer just as much for avid squirrel hunters than the larger WMAs. Regional biologists across the state recently reported on hunting prospects for squirrels and rabbits.

HAMMOND REGION >

BIOLOGISTS THINK IT WILL BE A GOOD SEASON FOR SQUIRRELS AND RABBITS ON PUBLIC-HUNTING AREAS ACROSS LOUISIANA. HERE'S WHERE TO FIND THEM.

WMA

By Don Shoopman

SMALL GAME



WMA SMALL GAME

WMAs with managed timber and lots of early successional habitat will typically have good, huntable populations of rabbits.

HAMMOND REGION

TOP WMAS FOR SQUIRRELS

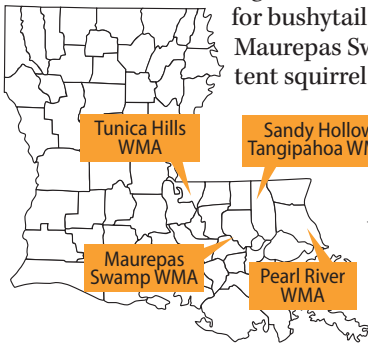
Pearl River WMA: 1.7 squirrels per hunter effort;
Maurepas Swamp WMA: 1.1 squirrels per hunter effort;
Tunica Hills WMA: 0.9 squirrels per hunter effort.

TOP WMAS FOR RABBITS

Sandy Hollow WMA: 0.08 rabbits per hunter effort;
Tangipahoa Parish School Board WMA: 0.3 rabbits per hunter effort;
Maurepas Swamp WMA: 0.23 rabbits per hunter effort.

Southeast Louisiana doesn't lack for squirrel-hunting success. Last season's harvest numbers show that the Hammond

Region boasts fine hunting at times for bushytails. Pearl River WMA and Maurepas Swamp WMA provide consistent squirrel harvests, according to Jillian



Day, Hammond Region biologist manager, and Brad Breland, the region's biologist supervisor for LDWF.

"Our WMAs provide hunters the opportunity to hunt a diverse range of habitat types, from upland hard-

woods to down cypress, tupelo swamps and brackish marsh. Whether it be abundant mast-producing hardwoods or the early successional habitat ... all provide ample resources for small game," Breland said.

Squirrel hunters can't overlook Pearl River WMA, especially north of US 90, which is accessible by foot. The preseason outlook there is at least fair.

"The 2020 mast survey showed average white oak and slightly above hickory production with below average red oak and gum," Day said.

Maurepas Swamp WMA can be considered a sleeper. While mast surveys aren't conducted there, it ranks as one of the region's top squirrel producers.

At Tunica Hills WMA, the 2020 hard-mast survey was below average for the primary forage in this upland hardwood forest. The reduction in hard mast may have caused a drop in reproduction this spring, Day said.

This region's top rabbit hunting areas are Sandy Hollow WMA, Tangipahoa Parish School Board and Maurepas Swamp WMA. "Although not all of this area is excellent rabbit habitat, (Maurepas Swamp) is over 112,000 acres and has a fair amount of spoil banks and natural ridges to hunt," Day said.

Prescribed burning keeps Sandy Hollow WMA in early successional habitat. There is plenty of edge habitat surrounding numerous fields and openings.

Tangipahoa Parish School Board has three separate tracts for rabbit hunting, each managed for timber production. Recent timber operations have produced quality rabbit habitat.



COASTAL LAFAYETTE REGION

TOP WMAS FOR SQUIRRELS

Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA: 0.97 squirrels per hunter effort;
Lake Boeuf WMA: 1.75 squirrels per hunter effort.

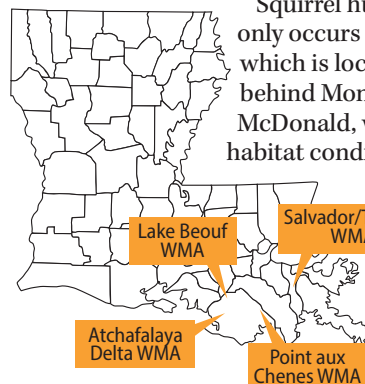
TOP WMAS FOR RABBITS

Lake Boeuf WMA: 2.0 rabbits per hunter effort;
Salvador/Timken WMAs: 1.53 rabbits per hunter effort;
Atchafalaya Delta WMA: 0.9 rabbits per hunter effort;
Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA: 0.59 rabbits per hunter effort;

This region's WMAs are known more for great waterfowl hunting, but they offer at least some fair to good squirrel and rabbit hunting.

Squirrel hunters may want to check out Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA, while rabbit hunters can consider Salvador/Timken WMAs, Pointe-aux-Chenes and Atchafalaya Delta WMA.

Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA has one can't miss spot, according to biologist Vaughan McDonald of LDWF.



"Squirrel hunting on Pointe-aux-Chenes only occurs on the Point Farm Unit, which is located in Montegut directly behind Montegut Middle School," said McDonald, who pointed to favorable habitat conditions this season on Point

Farm, a historically productive area for squirrels.

Lake Boeuf WMA, which has boat-only access, thus less hunting pressure, gives up squirrels



Rabbits will normally be found in extremely thick cover, like relatively new cutovers and other overgrown areas.

each season, McDonald said. Like Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA, habitat conditions are favorable there.

Rabbit hunters can find their targets on any of the region's WMAs. Typically, Salvador/Timken have the highest harvest total, but Lake Bouef WMA yields the most rabbits per hunter effort.

With the exception of Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA, every area in the region is accessible only by boat. Most successful rabbit hunting in the region is in the marsh.

"Overall, we expect this rabbit season to be on par with past seasons," McDonald said. "There have been no significant impacts since last season that we would consider detrimental to the upcoming rabbit season."

LAFAYETTE REGION >



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.

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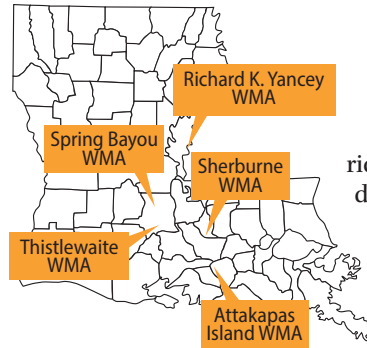
TOP WMAS FOR SQUIRRELS

Richard K. Yancey WMA: 1.5 squirrels per hunter effort;
Sherburne WMA: 1.0 squirrels per hunter effort;
Thistlethwaite WMA: 1.0 squirrels per hunter effort;
Spring Bayou WMA: 1.2 squirrels per hunter effort;
Attakapas Island WMA: 2.3 squirrels per hunter effort.

TOP WMAS FOR RABBITS

Richard K. Yancey WMA
Sherburne WMA

Good mast production the past several years bodes well for squirrel hunting prospects on Lafayette Region WMAs. Richard K. Yancey WMA, Sherburne WMA and Thistlethwaite WMA all had squirrel harvest numbers higher than 1,000 in 2020-21. Richard K. Yancey WMA's immense size harbors good stands of oaks, which have been producing more than enough mast. Other conditions point to another outstanding season.



“There was minimal hurricane damage on this WMA during last year’s storm season, so this should not be a factor. Flooding on the WMA was also minimal this spring and summer, so flooding was not a factor

in flooding timber or having an adverse effect on mast productions,” said biologist Tony Vidrine.

Sherburne WMA saw a decrease in squirrel harvest in 2020-21. Vidrine expects hunter success to be back to normal in 2021-22. Favorable mast production and the lack of hurricane damage and minimal flooding are preseason positives there.

Vidrine points rabbit hunters to Sherburne WMA and Richard K. Yancey WMA, where seasons have been expanded. Because rabbit populations are dependent on habitat, more rabbits should be on the ground. The former has recent timber cutting going for it, while the latter has a diversity of prime habitat for rabbits. The lack of flooding and no hurricane damage is a good combination for rabbits.

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LAKE CHARLES REGION

TOP WMAS FOR SQUIRRELS

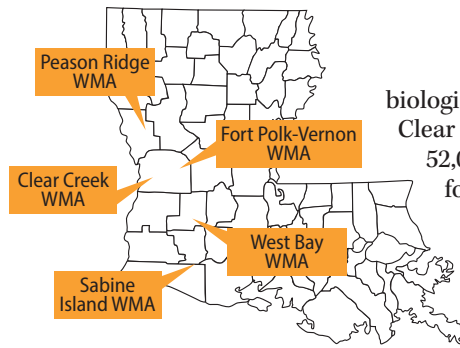
West Bay WMA: 1 squirrel per 2 hunter efforts;
Peason Ridge WMA: 1 squirrel per 2 hunter efforts;
Fort Polk-Vernon WMA: 1 squirrel per 2 hunter efforts;
Clear Creek WMA: 1 squirrel per 4 hunter efforts;
Sabine Island WMA: 1 squirrel per 1 hunter effort.

TOP WMAS FOR RABBITS

Clear Creek WMA: 1 rabbit per 1 hunter effort;
West Bay WMA: 1 rabbit per 6 hunter efforts;
Peason Ridge WMA: 1 rabbit per 3 hunter efforts.

Go west, squirrel hunters, to bag squirrels consistently in the Lake Charles Region.

West Bay WMA presents perhaps the region's best opportunity to bring down squirrels, according to biologist Wendell Smith of LDWF. It's a long WMA with a myriad of creeks running through it and plenty of mast-producing trees. On the north end — south of Interstate 10 — there are more hardwoods. The WMA's bottomland hardwoods are full of cat squirrels. The key to success is scouting the creek bottoms, according to



biologist Wendell Smith.

Clear Creek WMA, at more than 52,000 acres, has the ingredients for successful rabbit hunting: minimal pressure, prescribed burns to produce excellent early successional habitat, robust pine plantations, rolling hills and many draws, according to Smith.

As a result, the upcoming season's outlook is promising for Clear Creek WMA. So are the prospects for West Bay WMA and Peason Ridge WMA.

The Lake Charles Region's WMAs have benefitted from forest-thinning efforts to enhance wildlife habitat, Smith said.

MINDEN REGION

TOP WMAS FOR SQUIRRELS

Bodcau WMA: 1.1 squirrels per hunter effort;
Loggy Bayou WMA: 1.5 squirrels per hunter effort;
Bayou Pierre WMA: 0.7 squirrels per hunter effort;
Soda Lake WMA: 0.3 squirrels per hunter effort.



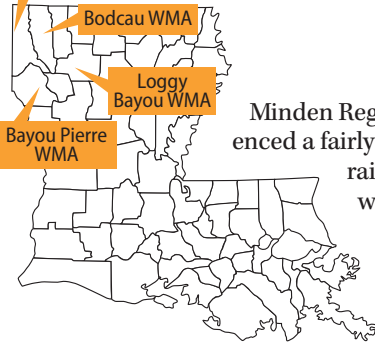
Mast-producing hardwood trees will attract plenty of squirrels and concentrate them for hunters.

Soda Lake WMA

Bodcau WMA

Loggy Bayou WMA

Bayou Pierre WMA



Minden Region WMAs have experienced a fairly mild summer, sufficient rainfall and were out of harm's way from 2020's hurricanes.

That combination is reason for optimism entering the small-game season, which opens Oct. 2. Such optimism shouldn't be

tempered by bitterly cold winter weather and flooding on both Bodcau WMA and Loggy Bayou WMA, the top two squirrel hunting areas in the region.

"We did have some significant winter weather this year," said biologist Jeff Johnson of LDWF, "but things have been good since that time. We've had some flooding on Bodcau and Loggy, but nothing outside the norm for these WMAs. We were lucky to be far enough north and west that our WMAs in this region didn't have any significant impacts related to hurricanes."

Bodcau WMA has a variety of habitat beneficial to squirrels, including vast acreage of hardwood bottomlands and small drainages that feed into Bodcau Bayou. Mast-producing trees line those feeder creeks. There also is mixed pine/hardwood habitat in the more upland areas.

Rabbit hunting prospects are best on Loggy Bayou WMA and Bayou Pierre WMA. Habitat conditions on both areas should be fairly good due to plenty of rain during a fairly mild summer.

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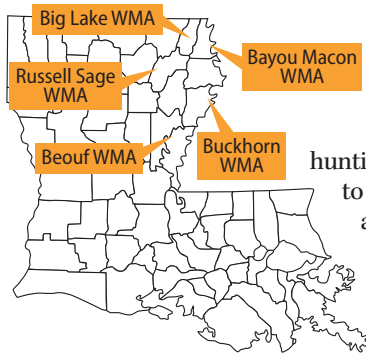
MONROE REGION

TOP WMAS FOR SQUIRRELS

Big Lake WMA: 2.4 squirrels per hunter effort;
 Bouef WMA: 1.3 squirrels per hunter effort;
 Russell Sage WMA: 1.1 squirrels per hunter effort;
 Bayou Macon WMA: 2.1 squirrels per hunter effort;
 Buckhorn WMA: 1.8 squirrels per hunter effort

TOP WMAS FOR RABBITS

Russell Sage WMA: 0.7 rabbits per hunter effort;
 Big Lake WMA: 1.3 rabbits per hunter effort;
 Bouef WMA: 0.3 rabbits per hunter effort;



Louisiana squirrel hunting could be at its best this season on several areas in the Monroe Region.

Hunters who enjoy woods hunting in its purest form gravitate to Big Lake WMA, a 19,231-acre area with mature bottomland hardwoods and access across the WMA. Hunters had plenty of success there in 2020-21, and it looks like



Hunters on Big Lake WMA averaged almost 2½ squirrels per outing last season.

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more of the same this season, according to Mitch McGee, an LDWF biologist.

McGee labeled last season as “excellent,” with many squirrels bagged from near Hog Lake, around Buckshot Trail and off Roaring Bayou.

Other top squirrel harvests in his region were at Boeuf WMA and Russell Sage WMA. The former features soft and hard mast-producing trees, as well as many “cavity trees” that biologists try to save to harbor wildlife.

Spring flooding the past few years has been the bane of rabbit populations in the Monroe Region, McGee said. He’s hopeful this year’s rabbit numbers will bounce back and be more prolific.

Russell Sage WMA and Boeuf WMAs should offer fair hunting for rabbits in those reforested areas that have plenty of ground cover with briars.

PINEVILLE REGION

TOP WMAS FOR SQUIRRELS

Dewey W. Wills WMA: 1.7 squirrels per hunter effort;
 Alexander State Forest WMA: 1.2 squirrels per hunter effort;
 Little River WMA: 1.3 squirrels per hunter effort;
 Sabine WMA: 0.87 squirrels per hunter effort.

TOP WMAS FOR RABBITS

Sabine WMA: 0.4 rabbits per hunter effort;
 Dewey W. Wills WMA: 0.25 per hunter effort.

Cliff Dailey, the region's LDWF biologist, has fielded more and more calls from squirrel hunters wanting the lowdown on squirrel-hunting specifics at Dewey W. Wills WMA.

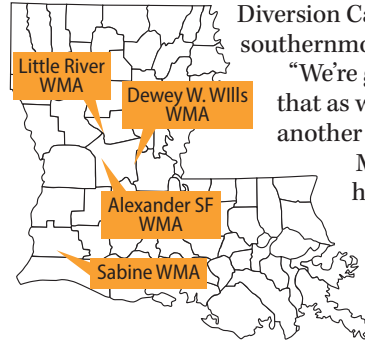
Dailey said some of those callers were from Avoyelles and Pointe Coupee parishes who hunt Richard K. Yancey WMA in the Lafayette Region. Apparently, they wanted to hunt squirrels in an area that gave up the state's second-highest harvest in 2020-21.

Squirrel hunting on Dewey W. Wills WMA is a big deal. "Yeah, there's a big squirrel effort out there every year. There's a lot of private camps within and along Dewey Wills and public campsites inside," Dailey said. "They fill up every opening weekend. Everybody comes out and camps."

Dailey doesn't anticipate any dropoff from the 4,583 squirrels harvested during 2020-21. "The mast crop on these areas has been slightly above average in recent years, equating to good recruitment of young to the population," Dailey said.

Dewey W. Wills WMA's prime squirrel hunting areas include the Greentree on the south end near Saline Lake, along Muddy Bayou north of the Diversion Canal, and along Big Ridge Road.

He pointed out that Dewey W. Wills WMA has a "Small Game Emphasis Area" allowing squirrel hunters to bring their dog(s) to tree squirrels for the first part of the season. That area, covering about 500 acres, is on the west side of LA 28 to south of the



Diversion Canal all the way to the area's southernmost boundary.

"We're going to try to expand on that as well. We're going to expand to another unit" in the future, he said.

Most of the region's rabbit-hunting success is on Sabine WMA, which features replanted clearcuts that provide good rabbit habitat and browse, and Dewey W. Wills WMA.

A large part of Sabine WMA has undergone either a clearcut or thinning within the past three years, a process that provides an abundance of escape cover and early successional food plants that help rabbits thrive. ■



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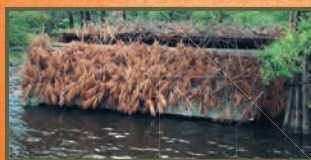


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HUNTER OF THE MONTH

Colin Grezaffi

Colin Grezaffi harvested this 9-point buck in Pointe Coupee Parish back in January 2021.

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ANGLER OF THE MONTH

Miki McManus

Miki McManus caught this bull red in the south cut of West Cove on Aug. 8, 2021. She was using a live mud minnow under a popping cork and fought the fish for at least 15 minutes. The red was 41 inches long and weighed 27 pounds.



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GET OVER THE HUMP

FOR FALL LARGEMOUTH

■ By Kinny Haddox



ONE PLACE BASS WILL GANG UP IN OCTOBER TO FILL THEIR BELLIES ARE UNDERWATER HUMPS. HERE'S HOW ONE ANGLER ATTACKS THEM.

October is kind of “Hump Day” in the life of largemouth bass.

They are through the hot months, and instinct tells them cool weather is soon to come. Sometimes when that happens, they just don't act right. That's especially frustrating for anglers who try to pinpoint where bass are and what they want to eat.

But here's one thing you can depend on: even when they get weird, if you'll spend some time keeping a close eye on the submerged humps in your home lake, bass will probably be there. “October is a weird month for bass,” said guide and pro fisherman Josh Jones of Sapulpa, Okla. “It's a time when bass are getting ready to transition, and you can't really predict what they will do every day. Weather and water temperatures control that. If it stays hot, they'll stay on summer patterns. If we have early cold fronts and the water cools significantly, it will put them on the move. Sometimes they do a little bit of both. One place that fish will relate to during this time, though, is the humps.

“In some lakes, the humps are notable, 10- to 15-foot deep rises next to 20 to 30 feet of water. On some lakes, especially lakes like you have in Louisiana, a hump may be 6 to 8 feet deep and the water around it only 12 to 15 feet deep. They aren't that dramatic. The ones that are generally most effective this time of year are the ones that are not too far from a creek or river channel where the fish can easily migrate.”

A hump is an underwater island; it could be the top of a hill that was flooded when a lake was formed. Most humps have natural structure like stumps and fallen trees, but in older

lakes, those may have decayed or silted over. Humps can have gradual inclines or sudden drops, but they all hold potential for bass-fishing success. In fact, almost every hump is unique,

HUMPS AREN'T CREATED EQUAL

All humps are not created equal, but Jones said picking out the best ones for bass isn't that hard. Some are great, and others are not so great.

“The most-successful humps I fish are usually near deeper water, especially secondary creeks this time of year,” he said. “If you find a hump right by a channel, that's money. What even makes it more money is when it has brush on top of it. The majority of baitfish are in deeper water, and if there is a hump with brush all around it, the baitfish will be swimming around that brush.

“The brush is a great ambush point for bass; they'll hide in that brush and then ambush baitfish when they swim past. Later in the day, when the sun's out, the fish relate to them even more. So you find a good hump with plenty of brush and fish it when the sun is up and puts fish close to cover, that's the recipe.”

TIME OF DAY A GAME CHANGER

“There are times I'll get to a hump at daylight and not see any fish on the humps on the electronics,” Jones said. “But don't let that discourage you. Keep coming back to check. If you wait until 10 o'clock, they may be all over it. What they are doing is roaming around feeding, then they return to the humps and brush to get out of the bright light.”

WHEN TOO BIG ISN'T TOO BIG

If an 8-inch bait like the Phoney Shad Glide Bait made by Phony Frogs USA that looks big enough to clean and eat just doesn't sound reasonable, just take a look at a gizzard shad from one of the lakes Josh Jones fishes.

“There's no 'too big' when it comes to going for big bass, and this lure is a prime example of that,” Jones said. “It takes some getting used to, but it's a fish catcher. Sometimes it works when nothing else does. There are times when bass realize something is fishy and they'll just follow it to the boat. When you see them following it and not biting it, switch to something else.” ■



One's phony (Phoney Shad Glide Bait) and one's real (a gizzard shad), but big bass will gobble both of these up when they are hungry on the humps.

Josh Jones loves to find a hump filled with big bass. After finding them with his depth finder, he'll target them with several different baits.

"Remember, a hump is not necessarily cover; it's just a feature, something different. Bass are drawn to that. The humps with brush, now that's cover, and it ups the game. One near deeper water is just a bonus."

When it's hump day for bass, Jones has four major weapons for getting them into the boat. In stained water, typical in Louisiana, a crankbait is the No. 1 choice.

He starts off fishing humps he can reach with a deep-diving bait like a 6th Sense Cloud 9 C25 on a Dobyn's Champion 908 crankbait rod. He bumps the bait along the edge of the brush. A C10 model works for shallower humps as well. He also likes to use the swim jig. When he spots really big bass on his electronics and can't get him to hit a crankbait, he will go into his tackle box for an 8-inch Phoney Shad Glide Bait. The bait is a last resort because it's a huge bait and can spook the fish, plus, it is uber-expensive. But sometimes, it is what the big ones want.

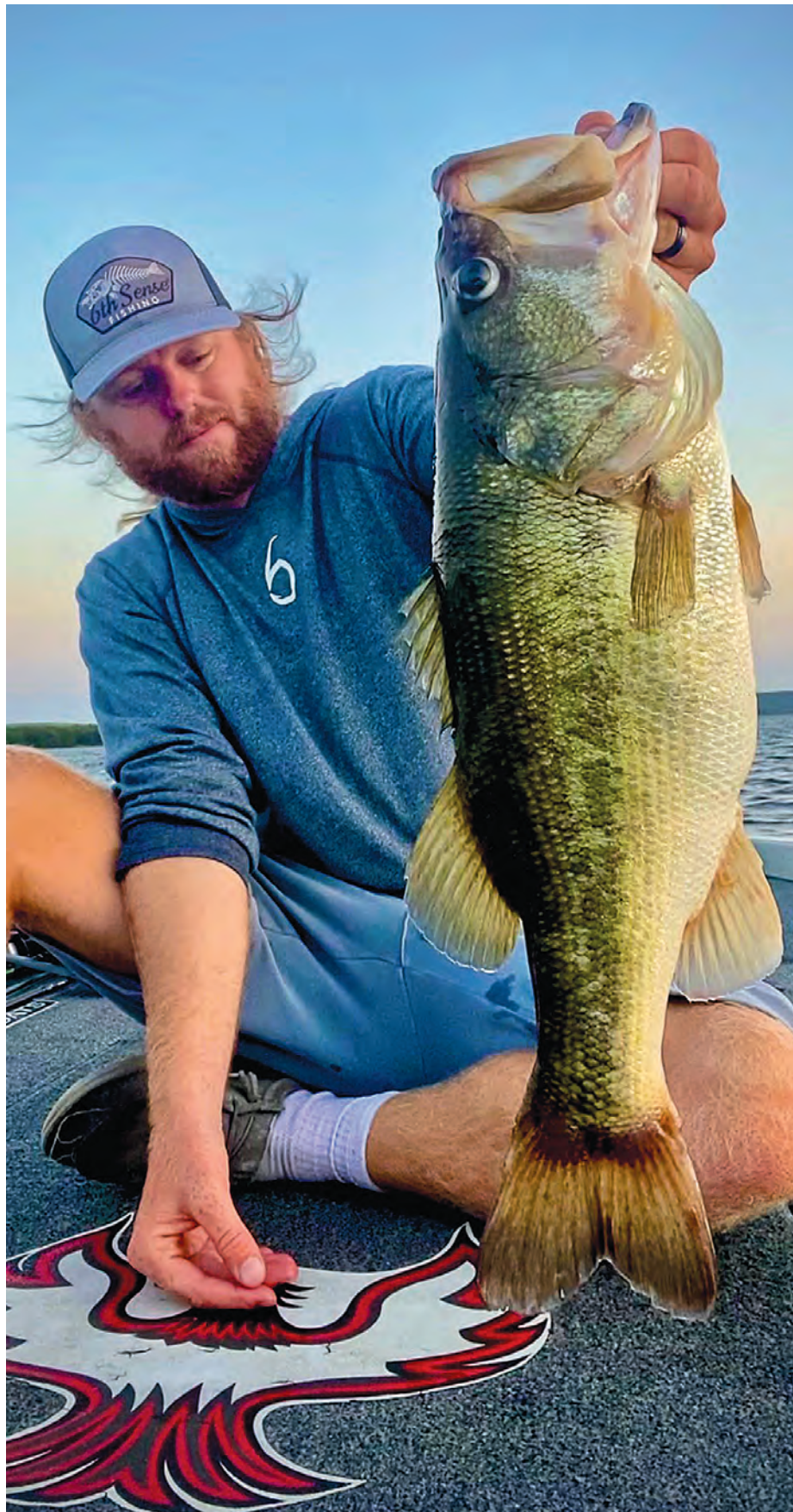
MAKING BASS HEARTS FLUTTER

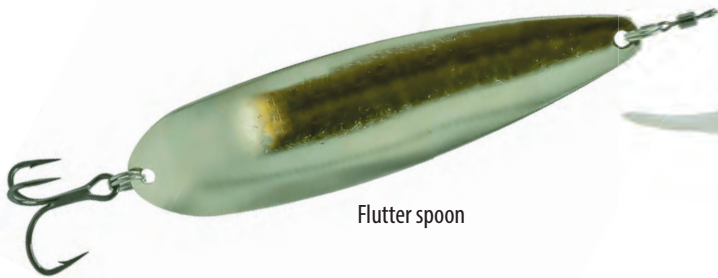
Jones uses another bait that isn't on most anglers' radar for hump bass. He loves targeting big fish with a 5-inch 6th Sense flutter spoon.

"Most anglers are leery of a huge flutter spoon because it's just a hunk of metal that doesn't look cool like most of our baits. But when he drop it down by the fish, it looks like a big old shad fluttering past them," Jones said. "They hit it just out of reaction more than anything else. They are offended that anything like that would try and swim right past them. If they had time to think, they'd be saying, 'Hey, that isn't real food,' but a bass doesn't often take time to do that."

Jones' favorite color and pattern for all the baits he fishes is some variation of shad.

When the bass baits he uses don't draw strikes, he downsizes to a bait he normally uses for crappie. On one fishing trip this year, Jones found more than 100 bass scattered around a large hump holding in the brush and suspended around it, but he couldn't get them to bite anything. The fish were ultra spooky, and there had been a lot of fishing pressure.





Flutter spoon



6th Sense C25

“I know it sounds crazy, but when that happens, I tie on a ¼-ounce, 2½-inch Crappie Magnet curlytail crappie lure and drop it on their heads,” Jones said. “They can’t tell that’s a fake, and they gobble it up. I’ve caught numerous bass like that. It sounds unbelievable, but if you watch Facebook very much, you’ll notice a lot of crappie fishermen holding up big bass they’ve caught on crappie jigs and poles.”

HOLDING ON HUMPS

Humps don’t always produce. Jones said bass can be finicky — no, make that downright weird — this time of year. As bass start feeling the natural instinct to go into their fall feeding patterns, there are some days when you can spot fish but can’t get them to bite.

Anglers regularly concentrate on humps in the summer, but fish still relate to them in the fall, especially when colder weather doesn’t really hit until later. Fish will often hold on humps, then move up creeks and onto flats to feed as the shad and baitfish move up. But often, those baitfish also move back to the humps, especially those closer, traditional fall spots.

Bass do the same things, then come back to humps to hang out. Even though they aren’t as actively feeding, they’ll still bite when you put the right goodies in front of them.

“They are smarter than we give them credit for, and combine that with changing conditions this time of year, it can be tough,” Jones said. “Sometimes, the fish will move. There may be 80 on a hump one day, then the next day, nothing. When you have a good hump pattern, though, make sure you cover the whole hump and attack it from different directions and with different lures. Sometimes, that is what it takes to get them to bite.”

You can save yourself a lot of time on the lake looking for humps by studying a topographical map before fishing, if they are available. ■

To watch his videos or follow Josh Jones, check out Josh Jones Fishing on Facebook.

**COTTON CORDELL
BOY HOWDY >**



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.

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LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

Cotton Cordell's Boy Howdy has been reintroduced and is ready for action.

COTTON CORDELL BOY HOWDY

A REVERED, OLD TOPWATER LURE GETS A NEW LOOK AND RETURNS TO THE MARKET

Bass fishermen in the know have hailed a 26-year-old Fort Smith, Ark., bass angler as a hero for his recent work with artificial lures.

Dustin Elder helps them put bass in the boat whenever they throw Cotton Cordell's tail-weighted Boy Howdy, a discontinued topwater that was dusted off at his urging, redesigned and reintroduced last year by PRADCO Outdoor Brands.

Elder, who began his association with PRADCO while he was in college, made it his business to get the ultra-popular lure from a few decades ago back on the clear waters of lakes in the region and across the U.S.

"I've been throwing it since I was 7 or 8 years old, nearly 20 years, since I was able to cast a spinning rod out," Elder said.

It's deadly when bass are schooling, slurping up baitfish, because it mimics panfish, like bream, going to the surface to pick off a snack. It's also deadly over brush piles and other structures for the same reason because it "looks like bream popping," according to Elder.

"The biggest tip is just to try it. It gets bit because it has action no other top-water bait has. It's really neat," he said.

"Typically, when they hit the bait, they just about choke on it."

VERTICAL FLOATER

Elder said the Boy Howdy floats vertically, practically straight up and down in the water, when it's motionless.

The best situations for a Boy Howdy bite are when fish are suspended, perhaps around a point or a big flat. Cast and find a cadence that triggers bites, he advised.

Elder has plenty of opportunity to tie on the Boy Howdy and give it a workout on his favorite bodies of water in and around Arkansas.

"I'm fishing all the time. I spend about every bit of free time bass fishing, crappie fishing guiding. I just love to fish," said Elder, who earned a bachelor's degree in advertising and public relations at the University of Arkansas in 2017, where he was on the bass-fishing team. While he was studying, he had his sights set on joining PRADCO, where his father, Chris Elder, was a pro staff member and knew Bruce Stanton, now vice president/general manager. The younger Elder talked to Stanton and shared his plans.

Elder began his career with PRADCO in

January 2018 after starting as an intern in May 2016. He has been PRADCO's promotional staff manager since April.

Elder's knowledge and affinity for the Boy Howdy paved the way for its reintroduction in 2020.

"This tail-weighted model was around in the 1990s. It was a closely guarded secret for schooling fish. People were hoarding them," he said. "It was popular in clear-water lakes in Arkansas, Missouri and Texas. Lake Ouachita, where I grew up, is where it is probably known as the best (topwater)."

ANGRY ANGLERS

The Boy Howdy was discontinued, and hundreds of bass anglers were upset. Elder listened to them.

"I heard from enough people, 'You've got to bring it back!' Finally, we did," he said. "I mentioned it since I was pretty much an intern, as I grew into the 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.

Dustin Elder, PRADCO's pro staff manager, has been fishing with Boy Howdys since he was a boy. He was instrumental in getting the topwater reintroduced for catches of bass like the "hawg" he is holding.



pany. I said, 'I want to bring back the tail-weighted Boy Howdy, and they allowed me to.'

That was during the summer of 2019.

NO CHANGES

"The design was done exactly as the same ones that my grandpa used. It's actually a really simple, weighted topwater," Elder said, whose father made a video demonstrating how to work it in September 2020. View it at https://youtu.be/sP_thFWEzOs.

PRADCO re-introduced the bait at ICAST 2020. Of course, due to COVID-19, the splash was muted compared to normal times.

The reintroduced Boy Howdy is 4½ inches long, weighs ¾-ounce and is armed with No. 4, short-shanked treble hooks.

Elder said Cotton Cordell increased the available colors on the Boy Howdy from the original four to 10. So far, the favorites are clear/blue nose, black/gold, chrome/blue and chrome/black.

Boy Howdys hit the market, to the joy of many, in the fall of 2020. "Sales have been very good," he said. "There were a lot of people lined up who wanted to buy several of them. It was very well received, especially around the Diamond Lakes around central Arkansas — Hot Springs and the Little Rock area."

At Trader Bill's Outdoor Sports in Hot Springs, he talked to "a lot of people."

"I'll see them at the store, and they say, 'My grandpa caught so many fish on it.' I've heard a lot of reviews like that," Elder said.

For more information on the PRADCO Outdoor Brand products, including Cotton Cordell, go to pradcooutdoorbrands.com.

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Guide Paul Keith said Caddo Lake's big bass feed primarily on shad in the fall.

CADDO LAKE BASS MOVING TO CHANNELS, FEEDING ON SHAD AS OCTOBER ARRIVES

Long-time guide said bigger bass are keying on shad that have grown to full size

By Will Martin

Located in the northwestern corner of the state, Caddo Lake sprawls lazily across the Louisiana-Texas border. It's an old lake and has been a hotspot for anglers since prehistory, taking its name from the Amerindian tribe that once lived there.

Caddo Lake is an interesting October bass-fishing destination; it offers unique topography, plentiful grass and big fish at a key transition time between summer and winter patterns.

At roughly 25,400 acres, Caddo Lake is large, though quite shallow, with an average depth of just 4.6 feet. The lake is situated inside a beautiful cypress forest and has been generously stocked for about 40 years.

Throughout those years, Caddo Lake has maintained a reputation for producing monster largemouth bass. In fact, the official lake-record largemouth weighed in back in 2010 at a freakishly huge 16.17 pounds, breaking the previous lake record of 16.01 pounds. Incidentally, either fish would have become Louisiana state records had it been caught on the correct side of the Texas-Louisiana line.

Caddo Lake certainly inhabits a special place in the heart of Paul Keith, who grew up in Mooringsport and has guided bass-fishing excursions on Caddo for 29 years. He operates Caddo Lake Guide Service, an outfit with a reputation for putting clients on big fish. He has spent a minimum of 200 hours on Caddo each year as long as he can remember.



Here are Keith's tips for targeting big bass on Caddo Lake.

BASS ON THE MOVE

October is a transition month at Caddo Lake. Bass are feeding exclusively on shad after feeding on a variety of prey, from crawfish to amphibians, earlier in the year.

"By October, some schools (of shad) are made up of individuals too large for 10-inch, 2½-pound, bass to eat," Keith said. "Those 1- to 3-inch shad are now 4 to 6 inches long, and a transition occurs, (in which) big bass begin to gang up and feed on larger baitfish."

On Caddo Lake in October, the likelihood of finding large, feeding bass increases as the temperature drops.

"And we've already experienced some cooler weather," Keith said, "and like (clockwork), I've started picking up large bass."

Keith focuses this month on schools of shad on shallow flats adjacent to creek and river channels, primarily at depths of 2 to 4 feet. Large bass stack up in deeper water to feed.

"Most of Caddo Lake's fishable water is between 2 and 4 feet deep," Keith said. "And since it is full of cypress trees, grass and lily pads, you never run out of cover. If anything, there's so much cover that it spreads out the fish."

SHAD ACTIVITY LEADS TO BASS

"Because (the lake) is so shallow, targeting grass beds with (electronic fish-finding devices) doesn't really work," Keith said. "You'll go over a school of fish and (your fish-finder) will just pick it up as debris."

"I find more schools of shad by just sitting down and being still sometimes, watching," Keith said. "Watch for shad activity near the surface. Watch for feeding bass, and stay on the lookout for birds."

Where there are feeding birds, there are shad, and the bass won't be far away.

Keith said shad-colored lures in white and silver, ⅜- to ½-ounce Chatterbaits, Alabama rigs, and Texas-rigged weightless Flukes should be your go-to tools on Caddo Lake.

"I always keep a topwater lure handy, too," Keith said, recommending a big Zara Spook or a Whopper Plopper to get the job done. ■

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The fall drawdown concentrate Lake Bistineau's bass around deeper channels.



Photo courtesy Hannah Winget

LAKE BISTINEAU DRAWDOWN OFFERS BASS BIG BUFFET AS OCTOBER ARRIVES

North Louisiana's Lake Bistineau is a fantastic location for October bass fishing. From now through December, big fish are easy to target if you know where to look. Armed with a little knowledge of the lake and advice from a local pro, you'll be happy you chose Bistineau, a place where bass-angling dreams often come true.

Homer Humphreys of Minden is a veteran bass pro with 40 years of guiding experience across Louisiana's northern corridor; he's the kind of fisherman it pays to listen to. And according to Humphreys, beginning in October, "It's on like a chicken bone at Lake Bistineau."

Bistineau is a special place, and not just because it sits in a forest replete with beautiful cypress and tupelo trees. Each year, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development open water-control structures to draw down the water level to approximately 8 feet below pool stage to control the expansion of the invasive aquatic plant, giant salvinia.

In practical terms, the lake shrinks from about 15,500 to 10,000 acres, concentrating the fish and setting up one of Louisiana's unique fishing opportunities.

DRAWDOWN AFFECTS FISH

"The bass have even changed their behavior," Humphreys said. "It's something we've noticed while guiding in the last few years, and (our) predictions have changed about where they move.

"The bass tend to stay where water is always available," he said.

"(They) stack up in the channels, and other species like bluegill and white perch do the same thing."

During the drawdown, anglers should launch from Port of Bistineau Launch, Bossier Public Launch, Grice's or Bayou Dorcheat Public Launch.

"And once you launch into the channel, stay in the channel," Humphreys said.

"The largemouth bass will be stacked up on the edges.

"Use a Strike King Square Bill 1.5 crankbait in a shad color or chartreuse," Humphreys said.

"Or you can (use) a 1/4-ounce, Homer's Clown spinnerbait in

chartreuse and white or white and fish as fast as you want."

If you decide to slow things down, Humphreys also recommends fishing a trick worm in redbug color with a 1/4-ounce weight. If you prefer topwater action, he recommends a small chugger or a Devil's Horse.

"But a frog is probably the No. 1 topwater bait because (of the) alligator grass," Humphreys said.

Fish either white or black frogs depending on light levels. Use black on sunny days, and white when it's cloudy.

BRUSH UP ON COVER

"People have been putting out brush piles for 40 to 50 years," Humphreys said, advising anglers to focus on brush piles or similar cover near channels or areas that keep plenty of water during the drawdown.

Humphreys said visiting anglers should stop Country Market, a store in Sibley that specializes in top Lake Bistineau baits.

"It has got everything you need: the best colors and baits," he said.

Remember, shooting the breeze for a few minutes with local fishermen before you hit the water can be as important as any other preparation you could make. ■

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Kase Nobile shows off a 7.28-pound largemouth bass that his father, Ben Nobile, caught while they were fishing Toledo Bend Reservoir.



TOLEDO BEND BASS PUT ON FEED BAGS

Falling water temperatures in October bring out the best in feeding largemouths

By John Dean

I've decided against dividing my time after September between the bass fishing on Toledo Bend and the deer hunting around Toledo Bend.

Starting this month, I'm going to devote at least 90% of my outdoors endeavors to the bass I love to catch on this border lake shared by Louisiana and Texas.

Why? It's one of my favorite times of the year, a fun time for any bass angler. The fish are moving out of deep water, are aggressive and, most important, eating whenever the water finally starts to cool.

I'm really looking forward to it. I feel strongly about October. I'll be out there chasing bass, not deer. Quality and quantity should be the order of the day, any time of the day.

It's past time to say good-bye to the 105- to 108-degree heat-index readings we've experienced. But they usually end in late September. October is a prime time, when the season changes from summer to fall and with each passing cold front, the water

temperature starts to drop. When the water temperature gets into the 70s, hang on. Take advantage of that, because there will be spring-like water conditions, minus the spawn, of course. The bass come alive, going after food sources such as shad, bream and crawfish to feed up for whatever winter brings.

Both bass and baitfish head to shallower waters, so it's time to target 10 feet of water or less, usually 5- to 7-foot depths.

What to fish with? Chunk and wind, and you can't go wrong. A Delta Lures Thunder Jig or a Stanley Racket Blade, two fine bladed jigs, will work. Those companies' respective swim jigs are my first two choices. I like ½-ounce models. There are times for ⅜-ounce models — in colors based on water clarity. Those range from black and black/blue in stained water to golden bream in clearer water. I prefer a gold blade on any bladed jigs.

I tell you what, getting bit on those bladed jigs, that's the hardest bite I've ever experienced, those and swim jigs. I throw them on 40-pound Power Pro green braid around structure and in underwater vegetation.

Don't put away the plastic frog, for goodness sake, or your favorite topwater. Bass will crush a plastic frog this time of year, as well as a topwater. I can't wait.

There are plenty of other artificial lures that will coax ol' bucket-mouth to bite as water temperatures settle into the 70s. Zoom Super Flukes and Yamamoto Senkos are two of my go-to baits, Neko- or Carolina-rigged in black, black/blue, green pumpkin and watermelon/red.

Other moving baits can be just as efficient as the bladed jigs and swim jigs. A Rat-L-Trap or square-billed crankbait will do the job, as will a jerkbait like a Rogue. Shad or chrome/blue are colors that nail many a bass through October and November. ■

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

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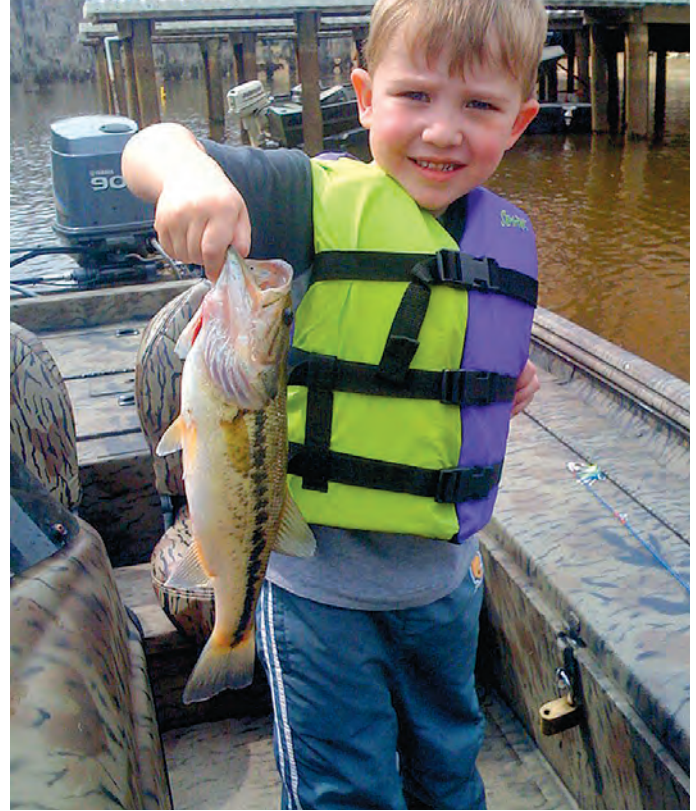
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Jase White got an early start on catching, then lippping bass. He holds up a nice-sized bass at age 4.



OFF-SNACKING BASS ANGLER WHETS HIS APPETITE FOR RACKING UP LIMITS

WHITE HAS QUALIFIED FOR 3 NATIONAL TOURNEYS SINCE THE SEVENTH GRADE

If By Don Shoopman
 bass eat as well as a northwest Louisiana high-school bass angler does during tournaments, there are many more big days ahead for Jase White of Haughton. Already an accomplished angler at 16, White, the son of Brandon and Kristi White, snacks early and often whenever he's fishing across Louisiana, Texas, South Carolina, Tennessee and Wisconsin. He has qualified for and fished national high-school tournaments in the latter three states since 2018. White, who fished bass tournaments with Cole Golden on the Haughton High School fishing team, is becoming known for his

appetite as much as bass-catching prowess. Tommy Abbott, director of the Louisiana B.A.S.S. Nation Youth, remembers watching White eat four cupcakes at the team dinner in Dayton, Tenn., a few days before the 2021 Bassmaster High School National Championship began in July 29 on Chickamauga Lake, one of 17 two-man teams from Louisiana that fished the prestigious event. The Chick, as the reservoir is known, got the best of his two-man team, which finished 266th out of 308.

Abbott had a good chuckle and shared it with an observer. White recalled the event and the desserts he consumed. "I do love some cupcakes. I love any food," White said. "There's a running joke in our boat. Snack. Snack. We like to take little breaks. We keep joking around. It's how we keep going."

White also loves the Louisiana High School B.A.S.S. Nation rule requiring all competitors to take a 10-minute lunch break at 11 a.m. Getting bass to bite, however, has been the key to his success. White and Golden enter the fall season as defending champs in the 2020-21 North Louisiana High School Fishing League, a run that propelled them to the TBF/MLF High School National Championship this past summer on South Carolina's Lake Hartwell. They finished 94th in the 236-team field.

His competitive drive wants to return to Chickamauga at least once before he graduates. "They haven't said where the next one (national championship) is, but I'd be excited to go back to The Chick. I'd like to get a shot at it," he said.

One of White's first big wins came as an eighth-grader, one year after he began fishing bass tournaments. He won the FLW High School Open featuring 49 teams on Nov. 4, 2019, at Toledo Bend. Since 2019, White has 12 Top-20 finishes and five in the Top-10.

A junior, White is looking forward to his last two years in high school and beyond.

"I plan to go fish at the college level. I don't know where," he said. "If I can do well on the collegiate level ... I'll test myself out there. If I'm doing well enough on that level, I'll try the professional level, either B.A.S.S. or MLF," he said.

Jase White's personal best bass is this 10.05-pounder he caught on July 28, 2019.



His immediate goal, he said, is to apply for the Bassmaster High School All-American Fishing Team, which annually recognizes the 12 most-outstanding high-school anglers in the country.

What else would an avid, nearly lifelong bass fisherman shoot for?

"I've been fishing ever since I could walk," White said. "Me and my dad have been fishing tournaments since I was 10, maybe 9, years old. My dad, he's taught me probably 90 or 95% of what I know, him and my grandfather (Kevin White of Taylor, Ark.)," he said. "For the most part, it's been my dad and grandpa. I picked up a little knowledge myself."

White and Golden became a team four years ago. Their mothers were friends, and the boys started hanging out. When White was looking for a partner, Golden was ready to get into tournament bass fishing.

They shined this past spring and early summer on the way to winning North Louisiana High School Fishing League 2021 Anglers of the Year. The Buccaneers' team also held its own on the circuit run by the Louisiana High School B.A.S.S. Nation.

White believes more and more north Louisiana teams will fish Louisiana High School B.A.S.S. Nation tournaments in 2021-22.

White and Golden are fishing bass tournaments out of his father's 2018 bass boat, which was purchased from well-known bass pro Edwin Evers.

"So it's got a little history to it," Jase White said. "(Evers) placed it on an online website to sell boats. My dad happened to be on it. It was a good price. It had everything we wanted. Perfect boat. Perfect timing."



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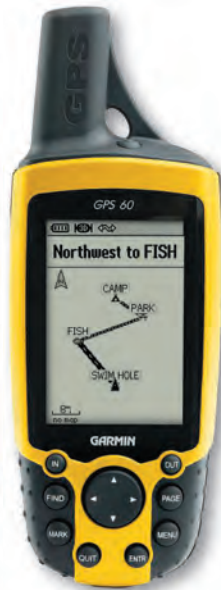
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BASS CLASS
continued

White considers Toledo Bend his home lake. He's caught bass there deep and shallow but prefers the shallows, where he stays on the move and throws topwaters almost any time of the year. His favorites are 3/8-ounce black War Eagle buzzbaits with a silver blade and a chrome/threadfin shad 6th Sense Dogma, a walk-the-dog topwater.

"I love throwing topwaters," he said.

If bass don't bite those, he'll flip a Dirty Jig. He tries to avoid that, he said with a chuckle.

He'll likely have a snack planning his next move. ■

Haughton Fishing's Jase White (left) and Cole Golden teamed up to catch these five bass April 24 on the Red River. The catch was good enough to finish second in the 92-team that fished the North Louisiana High School fishing League's fifth tournament of 2021.

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PUMPKIN SPICE CRAPPIE JIGS — WHY NOT?

T By Kinny Haddox
emperatures are cooling. Leaves are falling. Stores have long-ago broken out way-too-early holiday season merchandise. And then, there's pumpkin spice showing up everywhere.

Everywhere.

Pumpkin spice candles. Pumpkin spice snacks. Pumpkin spice ... tea ... pancakes ... bread ... coffee ... creamer ... caramels and more. Blame it on pumpkin spice latte at Starbucks. That's where the craze started 15 years ago.

So why not pumpkin spice crappie jigs and Crappie Nibbles?

We asked three expert jig-tiers to use their imagination and try and match the colors of cinnamon, ginger, allspice, nutmeg and clove and make us some custom, pumpkin spice crappie jigs.

And we went further. We even mixed a packet of pumpkin spice seasoning in a bottle of Crappie Magnet Slab Bites.

And we actually put them to the test. And we caught crappie on them.

That proves ... well, we're not sure what it proves.

TOP LOUISIANA JIG-TIERS EXPERIMENT WITH THE COLORS THAT GO WITH A FAVORITE, CULTURAL PHENOMENA THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH FISHING.

Other than if you put a good-looking bait in front of a hungry crappie, that crappie will eat it. Orange jigs have been around a long time, and while there are some on the market that are close to that color combination, they usually have some other name or color code.

Our three volunteer jig makers were Wesley "Big Sasquatch" Miller of Doyline, Jimmy Watt of Bastrop and Greg Davis of Tullos, all well known for their top-quality and productive, hand-tied jigs.

Watt went with four color schemes, one mainly orange and brown, one gold body and orange tail, one orange body with a brown stripe and orange and black tail and one copper and tan with an orange tail. As with all his jigs, he added a single gold or silver foil trailer.

Miller made one gold head and one orange and accented the body with orange and gold mix with a small orange split tail. Davis, who makes Crappie G jigs, made three sizes from 1/32- to 1/8-ounce and stuck with all pumpkin — orange with a bit of gold and tan in the bodies and tails.

Wesley "Big Sasquatch" Miller's hand-tied versions of a pumpkin spice jig with a gold and orange head. OPPOSITE PAGE: Jimmy Watt liked the pumpkin spice look so much he made up four options of his hand-tied jigs to offer as crappie Holiday treats.

And as for the Slab Bites, we just took a bottle of McCormick's Pumpkin Pie Spice flavoring and mixed it with the nibbles. We don't have enough evidence to know how much the fish liked them, but there is no doubt it made the fishy nibbles smell a whole lot better. And as a bonus, it also worked well to keep the Slab Bites from sticking together, too.

"The pumpkin spice colors are similar to combination of a crawfish and a grass shrimp mixed together," said Davis. "It's a bug-looking pattern, and that works best for black crappie, but in off-color water, it will catch white crappie, too. A lot of people use orange heads and orange jigs all the time, so this isn't that uncommon. But the pumpkin spice ... that's a first for me."



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FIELD NOTES

PUMPKIN SPICE CRAPPIE JIGS

continued >

Watt laughed and said he'd try anything, noting he knew these were just a novelty, but the colors do catch fish a lot of the year. In fact, some jigs he had already makes were very similar. He said that while these colors are mostly used in the spring or stained water, they work in the fall, as well when fish start feeding up for the colder months. Crawfish season, after all, usually kicks off in November in Louisiana. And most of these jigs look just like crawfish colors.

Colors are important, Miller said, but the main thing is finding fish and making sure you present the bait like they want it. Sometimes the fish are super-aggressive and swim out to nail it. Other times, you have to be quiet, patient and wait until the fish are ready to bite. He agreed with the others



This crappie was a believer in pumpkin spice colors.

that orange, gold and brown are dependable colors in October, not just for household decorations, but for catching fish as well.

Love it or hate it, Fall brings a resurgence of the cultural phenomenon we know as pumpkin spice. Ever since that first pumpkin pie spice coffee hit the market, it's been "a thing." There's no end in sight. And for you history buffs, the origin of pumpkin spice dates back to the Dutch East India Company and are native to Southeast Asian islands.

There are no crappie there, but if there were, we know what we could catch them with. ■

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SPECIES	SEASON DATES	BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT	
DOVES+	(South Zone) Sept. 4 - 18 Oct. 16 - Nov. 28 Dec. 18 - Jan. 17	(North Zone) Sept. 4 - 26 Oct. 9 - Nov. 14 Dec. 24 - Jan. 22	15	45
	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31		3	9
WOODCOCK^	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31		3	9
TEAL (blue-winged, green-winged, cinnamon)	Sept. 11 - Sept. 26	6	18	
RAILS* King & Clapper Sora & Virginia	Sept. 11 - 26 Sept. 11 - 26	Nov. 13 - Jan. 5 Nov. 13 - Jan. 5	15 25	45 75
	Sept. 11 - 26	Nov. 13 - Jan. 5	15	45
GALLINULES*	Sept. 11 - 26	Nov. 13 - Jan. 5	15	45
SNIPE	Nov. 2 - Dec. 5 Dec. 18 - Feb. 28		8	24
	Nov. 20 - Feb. 28		10	30
QUAIL	Nov. 20 - Feb. 28		10	30
RABBIT	Oct. 2 - Feb. 28		8	24
	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.
GEESE (snow, blue, Ross & white-fronted [specklebelly])	Nov. 6 - Dec. 5 Dec. 18 - Jan. 30	Nov. 6 - Dec. 5 Dec. 18 - Jan. 2 Jan. 10 - Feb. 6	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. The daily limit for Canada geese is one per day, with a possession limit of three.
CANADA GOOSE SEASON	Nov. 6 - Dec. 5 Dec. 18 - Jan. 30	Nov. 6 - Dec. 5 Dec. 18 - Jan. 2 Jan. 10 - Feb. 6	The daily limit for Canada geese is one per day, with a possession limit of three.

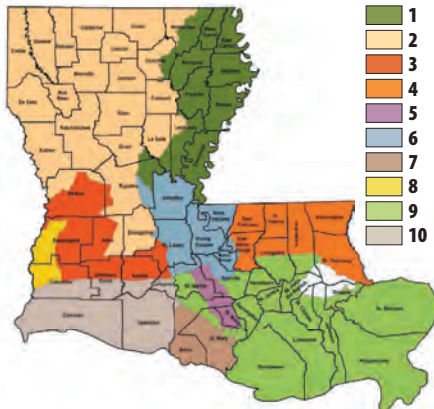


CONSERVATION ORDER FOR LIGHT GEESE	EAST ZONE	WEST ZONE	
	Dec. 6-17 Jan. 31 - March 6	Dec. 6-17 Jan. 3-9 Feb. 7 - March 6	No bag or possession limit. See pamphlet for more detail.

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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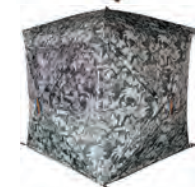


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DuraScent baits are made from a

super-soft elastomer that is extremely durable and flexible, allowing baits to be stretched out to six times their original length, and they also float.

Baits are infused with an all-natural blend of fish-attracting scents including shrimp, crab, fish oil and squid and are available in a variety of color patterns.

For more info, visit: <https://www.gamakatsu.com/>



EINOVA ULTRA FAST POWER BANK

So, what does a hunter or fisherman need with a portable charging station for his electronic devices: laptops, tablets, even telephones?

Well, on a 3-day turkey hunt two seasons ago, I left my phone charger at home. By the time the hunt was over, my phone was running on fumes. Had I kept Einova's 63W Laptop Power Bank in my laptop case, as I do now, I'd have been in high cotton, able to charge my phone repeatedly instead of turning it off and on to save battery whenever possible.

This portable charging station provides

multiple charges for phones, laptops and tablets without having to be recharged itself. Two USB ports and USB-C and USB-A adaptors set you up to keep most any object charged that you might need in a remote deer, turkey or fishing camp.

The charging bank has three ports and can charge multiple devices at the same time. An LCD display showed the remaining battery life at a glance.

MSRP: \$69.99

For more info, visit: www.einova.com.

AVIAN X SPIN MALLARD

It had to happen. Avian-X, which has brought to the waterfowl hunting market some of the most realistic decoys, has added a spinning-wing version, the PowerFlight Mallard, to its lineup.

The PowerFlight Mallard features Avian-X's spot-on, detailed painting and molding, plus heavy duty wings and a life-like head position to perfectly mimic a landing greenhead.

The patent-pending "Angel Wing" design spins 360 degrees at actual duck wing speed, and a remote that's good to 60 yards allows you to spin the decoys wings continually or in an intermittent mode: spinning for 5 seconds, off for 3 seconds, which gives the illusion of a duck landing.

The decoy's weather-resistant housing will

protect in winds up to 30 mph, and the lithium-ion battery is good for 16 consecutive hours of use. It's rechargeable, and a standard 6-volt lead battery can be substituted when recharging the original.

MSRP: \$199.99

For more info, visit: www.planosynergy.com/new-products/



A man wearing a red baseball cap with "LOUISIANA SPORTSMAN" on it, sunglasses, a white button-down shirt, and khaki shorts is sitting on a boat. He is holding a large speckled trout with both hands, showing it to the camera. The background features a large yellow oil and gas rig structure over the water under a clear blue sky.

RIGGING THE TROUT GAME

NEARSHORE, INSHORE OIL AND GAS RIGS ALONG LOUISIANA COAST PROVIDE SPECKLED TROUT WITH PLACES TO FATTEN UP AROUND PRODUCTIVE STRUCTURE. HERE'S HOW TO JUDGE THEM AND FISH THEM.

■ By Jon Miller

The soft and featureless bottoms of the lakes and bays in the Mississippi River estuary hold little interest to speckled trout or fishermen, except where structure raises a hardened edge against that softness. This may be an island, an oyster bed, or an oil and gas rig.

Inshore oil and gas rigs are a normal part of the Louisiana waterscape, yet they are often overlooked as fish-holding structures. Only a small percentage of fishermen actually target specks on these gangly giants that line the horizon. One reason could be that the best rigs are located farther from shore than many fishermen want to venture, and without knowing how to choose one over another, long runs across open water can be intimidating.

CONTINUED ➤

In most areas, rigs are more than a few miles apart, so if you pick the wrong one, you will waste a good deal of time running. Some rules of thumb for choosing and fishing rigs might help someone starting out rig-fishing.

Start with a plan for which rigs you want to fish. These are subject to change while on the water, but pre-planning ensures that you try at least a few rigs with good potential to hold speckled trout. Identifying the best rigs can come from word-of-mouth, from fishing reports or videos, or you can do technical research using online resources.

A few convenient ways to gather useful information online about the oil and gas rigs before you launch your boat do exist. One resource is the SONRIS website run by the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources. This site lists the locations of all oil and gas wells in state waters. Layer this location information with water-depth data so you are fishing the appropriate depth range for the season. In some areas, you can add another layer of data by noting salinity concentrations, either through online salinity charts or salinity models. Salinity values are useful during the spawning months for speckled trout.

CONTINUED >





With dozens of oil and gas rigs lining Louisiana's nearshore coastline, finding the right one that holds big specks isn't as tough as it might seem.



Oil and gas rigs with large tanks usually have plenty of fish-holding pilings beneath them. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Structure associated with rigs can be vertical or horizontal in nature.

Google Earth is very useful for finding rigs, despite having to search for them manually. Satellite images provide another layer of useful information about a rig before you arrive. For instance, you can see its size and shape. A rig with more pipe racks and gangway platforms jutting from the main platform has more fish-holding potential.

Satellite images also reveal whether a rig has a large tank or even more than one tank. Large tanks need a lot of support, which typically means there is a dense forest of pilings under them. As in a dense forest, the closely spaced pilings provide cover from predators and surface area for living creatures. As a general rule, rigs with lots of structure create more habitat than rigs with less structure.

It is also convenient that Placemarks in Google Earth can easily be transferred to mapping programs of the major marine electronics brands without manually inputting coordinates.

The concept that silence is golden when it comes to human-generated noise is a good one. The negative effect of lots of unnatural noise on speckled trout is evident, whether on shallow flats in the winter, along the trestle in Lake Pontchartrain, or around inshore rigs sitting in water less than 10 feet deep. Trout, especially older fish, generally do not feed as readily where we are making a lot of noise. That's why I don't fish rigs that have lots of industrial boat activity. If I reach my target rig and a tugboat and barge are moored to it or a crane is moving items from platforms to ships, I



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choose another rig from my plan and head there.

View inshore rigs as vertical and horizontal planes. The vertical plane is visible as pilings, pipes and concrete walls, and the horizontal plane is the shell pad beneath and around the rig.

Shell pads are laid down when larger rigs are built, but experience shows that many of those pads have either never existed, sunk below the bay floor or have been covered up by sediment. An uncovered shell pad makes the most-productive rig environment for fishing and is more valuable even than the structures in the vertical plane. A good pad provides lots of surface area for benthic organisms to thrive, including crustaceans, croakers and others that will be eaten by speckled trout.



CONTINUED >

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Speckled trout can hold anywhere under a rig pad, but they're prevalent at a place where horizontal and vertical structure meet, like the foot of a pier piling and the rig's pad (below).

A raised shell pad is the very best configuration. I know one rig where the pad is 6 to 12 inches above the surrounding bottom, and in the right conditions, trout will stage below the edge of the pad. I position my boat off the rig and a half-cast away from the edge of the pad. This sets me up to cast a jig onto the shell pad and bounce it toward the edge, where trout will smack it when it reaches the small drop-off. If a rig has a good shell pad, you can expect to find trout anywhere across the pad, from the edge to where the vertical structures rise, based on the conditions of the day and the presence of large predators.

A rig's vertical plane is also a productive habitat for various organisms, including barnacles and schooling species of finfish. If you are targeting sheepshead, an abundance of barnacles is a good sign. While speckled trout do not eat barnacles, they will eat organisms that feed on barnacles, so the biodiversity of the vertical plane is an asset. Trout will also use the vertical structures as protection from larger predators.

Many rigs in Louisiana are in poor repair and have collapsed gangways, orphaned pilings and pipe scattered on the bottom. Be prepared to hang up on these relics, but despite being an annoyance, this debris increases the potential habitat for various organisms and speckled trout. Some of my most-productive spots are derelict pipe racks that do not look significant but hide a wealth of trout-holding habitat at their base.

Work the bottom when targeting trout around rigs. Trout often feed further off of some rigs because of good horizontal plane habitat or sometimes because of strong tide, but the most-productive zone is where the horizontal and vertical planes intersect. This area can provide trout with opportunities to forage for benthic organisms and schooling finfish, while giving them cover to escape from large predators such as sharks and dolphins.

The easiest way to present the bait into this productive zone is with a jig carrying a plastic body or even a live shrimp. This allows the bait to be cast against pilings or into the piling forest under a tank. That is essential when there are dolphins and sharks cruising around the rig. If you are using live bait, you might fish it on a Carolina rig or under a sliding cork, two methods that can get the bait into the zone where the trout can safely feed. ■



MARSH MAN MASSON >



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

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MARSH MAN MASSON

Todd Masson

Capt. Sal Gagliano and the author filled a box with speckled trout throwing TKO Shrimp under corks.



NEVER A BETTER TIME TO FISH CORKS FOR TROUT

Photos by Todd Masson

A SOFT-PLASTIC SHRIMP FISHED UNDER A CORK IS THE BEST THING YOU CAN OFFER A SPECK IN OCTOBER

Almost two decades ago, I had one of the most humbling fishing experiences of my life on a trip with Capt. Ross Barkhurst near the mouth of the Mississippi River.

Barkhurst had been catching some really nice speckled trout — legitimate 3- and 4-pounders that were biting like schoolies — and he invited me to tag along with him to do a story for *Louisiana Sportsman*.

Of course, I didn't let the opportunity pass me by, and on the first day both of us had clear schedules, I met Barkhurst at Venice Marina. We headed southeast to Blind Bay, stopping in a cove with roseau-cane points on either side.

The water didn't look especially pretty. The spot didn't look especially inviting. There was no bait or any other sign that speckled trout would be there, but Barkhurst seemed quite confident.

I expected him to pull out a topwater, a jerkbait or at least a paddletail, but what

Barkhurst reached for was his cork rod.

Time has erased the memory of what hung below the cork, but I will never forget the cork itself. It was a Bomber Paradise Popper, new at that time.

A TOUGH LESSON

The reason I remember it is because, using that cork, Barkhurst made an absolute fool out of me. I was of the opinion before that trip that corks really didn't matter. I thought they were just a means for suspending lures in the strike zone.

But that day, Barkhurst blew my preconceived notions out the river-stained water. He caught at least 10 speckled trout for every one I caught. I was using the same lure, fished the exact same depth, and watched him put fish after fish in the boat while I might as well have been eating a sandwich — a really big, dry one that took forever to chew.

I finally took Barkhurst up on his offer and tied on a Paradise Popper of my

own. Needless to say, my catch rate skyrocketed.

In the time that has passed since then, many cork brands have been developed with features making them as good as or better than the Paradise Popper. My favorite is the VersaMaxx Knocker, which has a great sound and allows me to quickly and easily adjust my leader length.

PERFECT CORK TIME

That's all germane now because October, to me, is made for cork fishing. Many specks have made their move to the inside, but bait is plentiful, so the fish haven't yet schooled up around features that force bait to concentrate.



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

Capt. Sal Gagliano likes to drift flats and reefs and throw TKO Shrimp under corks this month.



They're typically scattered over flats, and to me, the most efficient way to target specks on a flat is to make long drifts, tossing soft-plastics under corks and stopping to make multiple casts wherever you get bites.

That's Capt. Sal Gagliano's favorite technique as well, and he likes one bait in particular below the Four Horsemen cork he fishes.

"That TKO Shrimp is unbeatable," he said. "The fall rate of that bait makes it look exactly like a real shrimp in the water."

A SHRIMP THING

That's important this month, because the marshes are chock-full of white shrimp that are getting big and looking to make their move to the outside bays. Speckled trout engorge themselves on the crustaceans, hoping to get as fat as possible before the lean winter months.

Anything that looks like a shrimp is in danger, and the TKO matches the real thing almost perfectly.

I like to start with the lure a foot above the bottom, and move it up if I'm not getting bites or getting fewer than I think I should. Most often, a foot above the bottom is the magic zone, but I've seen many times that the fish are thickest a foot or two below the surface.

Nearby submerged aquatic vegetation is also critical for pro-

ducing October speckled trout in the areas I fish. Shrimp use the grass to hide from the specks, and the specks know that, so that's where they go to feast on the shrimp.

No one ever accused a shrimp of being smart. ■

CALCASIEU LAKE TROUT ➤



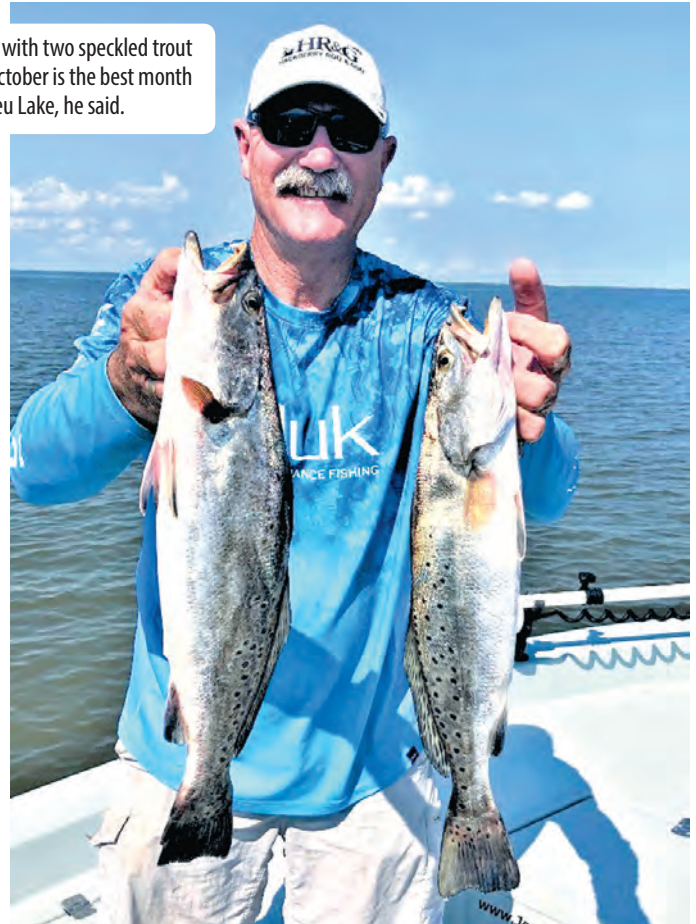
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Capt. Kirk Stansel has his hands full with two speckled trout he caught last fall in Turner's Bay. October is the best month for speckled trout fishing in Calcasieu Lake, he said.



GUIDE GIVES PLENTY OF 'LOVE' FOR OCTOBER AT CALCASIEU LAKE

Specks, reds start feeding up as weather changes

A By Don Shoopman
veteran charter boat captain can fish Calcasieu Lake any time he wants.

If Kirk Stansel, who along with his brothers Bobby and Guy owns Hackberry Rod & Gun, wasn't a saltwater fishing guide, he knows when he would want to be on Big Lake, as it is known in southwest Louisiana.

"Oh, yeah, I l-o-v-e October," Stansel said, emphasizing the word "love". "If I had one month to take off, I'd take off Oct. 15 to Nov. 15. If I had to take a vacation. It's probably the best month of the year to catch fish. The entire system explodes. What happens is, cold fronts are coming in."

That's when speckled trout, redfish and even flounder begin gorging themselves for the fast-approaching winter, Stansel knows from experience. They get "turned on," he said.

He will go to any number of areas that get hot.

"I'm telling you, Turner's Bay, anywhere in West Cove, you can fish the reefs, under the birds, along the shoreline. I don't care how you like to fish — topwater, soft plastics, suspending lures, live baits — all of it works," he said.

Stansel is partial to one spot: the upper end of the lake just south of the Intracoastal Waterway, within sight of the The Ellender Bridge.

"Turner's Bay is real good," he said. "(You can fish where) the birds are working, or drift until you hit a fish. It varies. I mainly go up there and look for birds. If not, I drift the reefs. If I hit something, I anchor off right there. When you get in 'em, you want to keep 'em

going. Also, you can catch redfish on the shoreline up there, and you catch bigger trout on the shoreline."

Two access points are nearby: Calcasieu Point Landing and the Ellender Bridge Landing. The Calcasieu Bridge Landing has a bait shop that sells live shrimp, which the finfish love to eat.

Stansel said he usually fishes with a soft plastic, specifically a watermelon/red Lil John on a 1/4-ounce leadhead. He fishes it on 30-pound Power Pro braid with a 2-foot leader of 30-pound monofilament attached either with a barrel swivel or a Uni-Knot.

Why a braided line setup?

"I just do. It doesn't cut if you get in the oysters," he said.

Overall, saltwater fishing in the system "has come around this year" despite impacts from two hurricanes in 2020 and a deep freeze over the winter. Most of the speckled trout that went into ice chests this year averaged 17 to 20 inches long.

Turner's Bay can get crowded at times, especially in October.

"Yeah. It's usually crowded on weekends, and a lot of times it's crowded during the week, especially after a cold front," he said. "Shrimp come out of the marsh and go up the river and stuck up in there." ■

For more information about Kirk Stansel or to set up a fishing trip on Lake Calcasieu, call 337-762-3391.



Speckled trout like this one caught on a charter trip with Kirk Stansel can be caught in October in Calcasieu Lake. One of the many hotspots is Turner's Bay.



Paying attention to birds working above fleeing shrimp can lead to solid stringers like this one. Shrimp were popping on an outgoing tide, and trout and redfish were chasing them to the surface while seagulls assaulted from above.

BIRD IS THE WORD

Egrets, gulls can lead anglers to great fishing on Sabine, Big Lake

By Adam Jaynes

There is a certain amount of guilt I feel writing about fishing when our neighbors, family and friends are suffering from the aftermath of a massive hurricane.

Last hurricane season, it was my area that suffered the wrath of the Gulf; thus far, we have been spared this year. To live on the Gulf coast, you have got to be resilient, and the people of Louisiana most definitely are. We tolerate these storms because we love living on the Gulf coast and the opportunities that living here offers, including fishing.

We are quickly approaching the absolute best time to be on the water in southwest Louisiana and southeast Texas. Both Sabine Lake and Lake Calcasieu absolutely come alive during the fall. Shrimp pour out of the marshes in droves, with trout, redfish and flounder hot on their tails. Birds will line the banks and fill the sky for the opportunity to nab a fleeing shrimp. As a young boy, my dad taught me to watch and learn from the birds' behavior to locate fish on Sabine Lake. If egrets were lining the shoreline, he would say flounder were there; he keyed on that and still does.

If the birds are on the banks, they are there for a reason: they have located something to eat. During the fall, that food source is primarily shrimp. If the shrimp are there, you can count on predator fish being close by. Plenty of times, we have located flounder and redfish solely based on the activity of egrets and other shorebirds lining the banks of the Sabine.

Primary areas are typically close by to a marshy outflow or bayou. Coffee Ground Cove and Game Warden Cove are a couple of key areas of focus on Sabine Lake. They are well known, and well known for a reason: they consistently produce fishing.

Although Gulp! has become incredibly popular, it comes in a rather distant second to a twin-tail, white Mister Twister grub

tipped with shrimp. We fish them on 1/8- to 1/4-ounce jigheads and bounce them off the bottom. Flounder and redfish can't resist them. Your pocketbook will thank you as well; Mister Twister grubs are considerably less expensive than Gulp! and last longer.

Seagulls are the other main birds that help locate fish during the fall, especially speckled trout. The bird activity typically really gets hot and heavy during October and can last through December and into January. Locating quality trout under birds can sometimes be a different story. A general rule of thumb is, if you can hear the slurping, sucking sound of trout eating shrimp on the surface, they are normally better quality fish. Also, if you see foam rings on the surface from trout eating shrimp they are normally keeper fish or better as well.

School trout are generally all very similar in size. If you catch a handful that are undersized, it's probably best to move on to the next school to look for better fish. But if you are catching better fish, do your best to stay with that school, as they all will likely be close to the same size.

Baits that mimic shrimp are your best bets. Smaller topwaters and shorter grubs are my go-to lures. Zara Spook Jrs. and Bass Assassin Sea Shads can be deadly. Be prepared to go through a good amount of plastics if you get on a good bite. When they're thick, the bite often comes as soon as the lure hits the water.

Turner's Bay and West Cove on Calcasieu, aka Big Lake, are areas with some high bird activity during the fall. Between Willow Bayou and Johnson's Bayou on Sabine are as well. Keep your eyes open and let the birds assist you in finding a good bite during the fall. You will be hooked! ■

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



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**REDFISH NOW PRESIDE OVER JEAN LAFITTE'S
OLD STOMPING GROUNDS IN THE BARATARIA ESTUARY.
HERE'S HOW TO PUT THEM IN YOUR TREASURE CHEST.**

Photos by John N. Felsher

■ By John N. Felsher

OPPOSITE PAGE: This redfish fell for a soft-plastic shrimp imitation in the marshes near Lafitte, La. **BELOW:** Kim Norton of Bomber Baits shows off a redfish he caught while fishing with Bourgeois Charters in the Barataria Estuary near Lafitte.

In the early 1800s, notorious pirate Jean Lafitte

used the labyrinthian waters of the Barataria estuary to smuggle his ill-gotten goods into New Orleans and gold from his customers out of it.

According to legend, Lafitte stashed his cache somewhere in the estuary. Nobody ever found it, if it exists, but he did lend his name to a town in Jefferson Parish and other entities. From the town of Lafitte, people can find gold of a different sort, more like copper, to be precise. Some of the world's best redfish action is in the estuary, and the best time all year to target them is the fall.

"October is a great time to catch redfish in the Barataria estuary," said Mike Helmer, co-owner of Capt. Phil Robichaux's Fishing Charters in Lafitte. "When the weather cools, the fishing gets better in the fall, and the redfish get more cooperative. They feed up before the winter hits."

The Barataria estuary generally includes the wetlands from Lake Salvador to the Gulf of Mexico and between LA 23 and LA 1. It roughly follows the Barataria Waterway, a straighter, dredged version of the old Bayou Barataria, once a wide Mississippi River tributary eons ago. At the south end, Barataria Bay connects to the Gulf through passes near Grand Isle and Grand Terre islands.

North of the estuary, the Davis Pond Freshwater Diversion Project diverts fresh Mississippi River water into the wetlands through Lake Cataouatche, which connects to Lake Salvador. In parts of the estuary, anglers often catch largemouth bass and redfish, as well as other mixed species, in the same place at the same time.

"The Davis Pond Diversion affects the salinity around Lake Salvador," Helmer said. "People can also catch bass in the Bayou Rigolettes area, the Pen and the Bay L'Ours area. Once we go 6 to 8 miles south of the marina, the water gets too salty for bass. A redfish will eat anything a bass will eat and vice versa. Redfish hit Texas-rigged worms. Bass hit gold spoons when we're fishing for redfish."

PONDS AND SLOUGHS

At times, sportsmen can see huge schools of redfish ravaging mullet and other baitfish in Lake Salvador. However, since water becomes saltier the farther south one goes, the best redfish action typically occurs in the countless ponds and marshy sloughs between Lafitte and the Gulf.

"In the summer, redfish stay in the main lakes because of heat, but in October, they generally move back into the shallows as the water cools," Helmer said. "In the fall, we fish the duck ponds in water about a foot deep. People can find redfish in any shallow, marsh ponds they can get a boat in to fish, but this



Mark Davis, a professional angler and television show host, lands a redfish he caught while fishing in the Barataria Estuary near Lafitte.



Photo by John N. Felsler

area has a lot of posted property. People need to watch where they go, especially during duck season. We catch mostly slot reds in the marshes, but sometimes, the bull reds come inshore with the trout in the fall because they feed on smaller specks.”

The shallow ponds make great hunting grounds for marauding redfish. In the fall, hungry reds gorge themselves on shrimp, minnows, baitfish, crabs and other morsels to prepare for the coming winter. Spot-tails commonly get in water so shallow their coppery backs break the surface. Many anglers enjoy sight-fishing for reds, especially fly-rod enthusiasts. Reds regularly dip their heads to munch mussels while flagging their spotted tails above the surface.

“The fall is a great time to fish for redfish in the Barataria estuary,” said Theophile Bourgeois IV of Bourgeois Fishing Charters

in the town of Barataria. “Any of the ponds and bayous north of Barataria Bay should hold good redfish numbers. We look for good, clean moving water draining the ponds out of some (ditches).”

If people can’t spot actual fish, they frequently see the large, V-shaped wakes reds make while cruising or chasing prey. Many anglers drive through prime waters looking to spook reds. If they see good activity, they might let that spot settle down for a while and return to fish it later.

“When I’m scouting for redfish, I look for any fish activity, especially fish pushing wakes or moving around,” Helmer said. “We move bigger fish while we’re running around in the boat. Once we can find where they want to stay, we can catch them.”

SHRIMP MIGRATION

Also watch for shrimp or small baitfish popping the surface. Shrimp migrate in the spring and fall. When a cold front hits, shrimp start leaving the marshes and inland lakes to head to deeper waters offshore. When shrimp move, predators follow. A shrimp migration could kick off a major feeding frenzy. During a shrimp frenzy, use live shrimp, fresh shrimp or soft-plastic imitations.

A popping cork rig tipped with live or fresh shrimp makes an excellent presentation for redfish, trout, flounder and other species. Anglers can also use live cocahoe minnows or pogies, mullet chunks, crab pieces and some artificial temptations to put spot-tails in the boat.

“A popping cork rig is a great way to catch redfish for people with any skill level,” Helmer said. “Normally, we bait a popping cork rig with fresh shrimp. Sometimes, we use the whole shrimp. A popping-cork rig

BELOW: Gerald Sansoni shows off a redfish he caught on a spinnerbait while fishing in the Barataria Estuary near Lafitte, La. Spinnerbaits provide flash and vibration, making tempting targets for redfish. The blades flicker in the water like the swimmer fins on crabs, and redfish love nothing better than eating a crab.



Photo by John N. Felsner

with plastic shrimp also works very well.”

When jerked, the cork pops the water, simulating a fish striking prey on the surface. A soft-plastic shrimp, like Gulp!, Vudu or similar temptations flies up to the surface when the angler pops the cork, exactly what a live crustacean would do to escape danger. Fish hear the commotion and then see the bait falling and attack.

POP IT, BUT SLOWLY

“There’s art to working a popping cork effectively,” Helmer said. “With a popping cork, we want to make noise, but not move the rig very far. Fish react to the noise. Just pop it and let it stay in its area. That’s the secret. Many people make the mistake of popping and then reeling it too fast. They keep popping



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Mark Davis shows off a redfish he caught on a Bomber Walkie Talkie topwater bait while fishing with Theophile Bourgeois Charters in the Barataria Estuary.

and popping, but fish it slowly. Pop it and let it sit for several seconds. Then, pop it again.”

Popping-cork rigs work especially well around shallow, weedy shorelines and points. Watch how the water moves and cast so the prevailing winds or tidal current carries the cork parallel to the shoreline or across a point tip. Anglers can also drift corks over reefs or next to vertical structures such as pilings or bulkheads.

“I particularly like to fish windy shorelines with popping corks in the fall,” Helmer said. “I put the wind at my back so we can make long casts and let the wind or tide sneak the bait down the bank naturally.”

DRAINS ON FALLING WATER

During a falling tide, small ditches drain marsh ponds. Falling water levels force minnows, shrimp and other prey to leave their protective cover and seek deeper water. Redfish and other species frequently gather at the drain mouths to wait for the flow to deliver their breakfast. Cast a popping-cork rig as far upstream as possible. Let the current carry the bait naturally downstream, but occasionally pop the cork.

“Tide is critical for finding redfish,” Helmer said. “As long as the water is moving, it’s good, but I prefer to fish a falling tide. Fish position themselves to face into the tide or wind current, because that’s how they feed. During a falling tide, redfish stack up around the mouths of openings and little cuts in the marsh, waiting for the tide to bring them something to eat.”

A soft-plastic shrimp under a cork also works well around little ditches. Anglers can also fish a shrimp imitation without a cork, weightless if possible. Attach a small split-shot to the line for casting heft if necessary. Cast the shrimp upstream so it tumbles along with the tide like a crustacean roused from its protective cover. Lift the bait off the bottom as needed to keep it in the flow. Use the reel only to take up slack line.

JIGS, SPOONS

Anglers can catch redfish many other ways. Of course, the old standby, a ¼-ounce jighead sweetened with a plastic trailer and tipped with a piece of shrimp works well. Also, hook a live cocahoe to a jighead and drag it over the bottom. Spinnerbaits, swim jigs and topwaters also produce good action.

One of the oldest and still most effective redfish baits, a gold spoon, gives off considerable vibration and flash. Many spoons come with weed guards so anglers can run them around weeds or over oyster beds.

“Sometimes we spank the redfish on gold spoons,” Bourgeois said. “Silver or bronze colors also work.”

Areas across the Barataria estuary can produce excellent fall redfish action. Some better areas include the marshes around Little Lake, The Pen, Bayou St. Denis, Bayou Perot, Bayou Dupont, Bayou Rigolettes, Turtle Lake, Lake Laurier, Long Bay, Round Lake and Barataria Bay.



People may never find Lafitte’s legendary golden cache, but they certainly could enjoy rich action from a different sort of treasure every day in the Barataria marshes. ■

For info about Mike Helmer of Capt. Phil Robichaux’s Fishing Charters, call 504-689-2006 or visit www.fishwithphil.com. For Theophile Bourgeois IV, call 504-341-5614 or visit www.neworleansfishing.com.



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.

BIG BAYS EAST OF RIVER SHOULD REBOUND SOON

Look for white shrimp to pull in reds, trout

T By Rusty Tardo
 raditionally, October is one of the best fishing months. The biggest threat of a major tropical system is basically over, the weather is cooling, humidity falls, shrimp show up in inside waters and fishing explodes for both redfish and trout.

Every coastal fisherman looks forward to October, and it gets even better in November and continues until the real cold arrives in December or January — if it arrives at all.

But these days are anything but traditional. A muddy river of freshwater pouring incessantly through the Mardi Gras Cut has changed everything in the area.

Long-time charter captain Chad Dufrene (985-637-6357) summed it up when he said, “When you’re catching largemouth bass at Stone Island, you know just how much things have changed.”

“The super low-salinity water means the trout look elsewhere to spawn, and the redfish have been affected also,” he said. “But I have hopes that the storms have pushed up some good water and plenty good fish along with it. I know the marsh is full of white shrimp, because you can see them jumping everywhere. If the fish were pushed in with the storms then there’s plenty shrimp to hold them here on the inside and the fishing should be great.”

Dufrene reminds anglers to exercise real caution when traversing the marshes, because Hurricane Ida has silted in areas that were deeper passes, and there are numerous potential submerged hazards in the water, including a car submerged around the Lost Lake pipeline.

“If we get some semblance of normal, the bigger lakes should hold reds. Lake John, Shrimp Lagoon, Lake Ponton, Bakers Bay — all that area should be good fishing,” Dufrene said. “You’ll want to fish points, cuts and coves with market shrimp under a cork. I like to keep dead shrimp in a ice bucket slush. It keeps them firm, and the reds will devour them.”

For specks, Dufrene suggests

Chad Dufrene poses with Will Higdon, 9, of Seminary, Miss., who caught this 10-pound redfish on market shrimp under a popping cork.



fishing the outside edges of the big fringe bays, like Lake Campo, Oak River Bay, Bay Lafourche, Lake Robin and Pato Cabello, on over to Four Horse Lake.

“I’d also try over towards Lake Coquille and Lake Calabasse, where trout usually show up this time of year,” he said.

The best baits are live shrimp under a popping cork, and shrimp imitation lures.

“Naturally, you want to look for clean, moving water in any of these mid-area lakes and fringe bays. Look for some good prominent points with current lines around it, look for shrimp jumping and look for birds diving. Wherever you find any of that, fish right there,” he said. ■

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SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope



Cobia are a favorite fish of nearshore anglers, who catch them on a variety of baits and lures across the Gulf Coast.

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: COBIA

Brian Cope

Cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*) are long, torpedo-shaped fish with dark brown backs, dark brown sides and white stomachs.

Most have two distinct, silvery stripes that run the length of their sides. Their lower jaw protrudes farther out than their upper jaw. These fish have deeply forked tails. They have broad heads, and seven to nine isolated spines along the forward section of their backs. A long dorsal fin with 27 to 33 rays is located behind these spines.

Their growth patterns are a bit of a mystery to fisheries biologists. A 2-year-old cobia can be longer and heavier than a 6-year-old fish. Their growth rates are based much more on their diets than their ages.

A REAL BUFFET

And when it comes to diets, cobia are not picky eaters. They will eat just about anything they can fit in their mouths. Studies have found as many as 39 different species of fish in a single cobia's stomach. And while anglers most often

use fish as bait for cobia, the same studies have shown that crabs make up the majority of a cobia's diet.

When young, cobia look very much like remoras, except for the absence of the suction cup-shaped mouth. When older, they resemble sharks, except for the absence of a shark's iconic dorsal fin. They are the only members of the *Rachycentridae* family.

These fish are pelagic, living most of their lives offshore, but they enter estuaries occasionally. Fisheries biologists have found that some small groups of cobia do not migrate at all, but they aren't sure why.

They are fairly solitary fish, traveling in very small pods only during spawning season, which lasts through the summer. Most spawn in the mouths of inshore bays and creeks, but some spawning occurs in the open ocean. Cobia often travel closely with sea turtles.

CURIOUS FISH

They are curious fish, constantly investigating surface objects and noises that

most other species of fish avoid. Anglers often slap the sides of their boats, play loud music, and scatter potato chips and other food items on the surface. Any of these acts can draw cobia in to investigate. When one is spotted, anglers cast a lure or bait in front of the fish. They very often take the bait immediately.

Some common nicknames for cobia include Man in the Brown Suit, lemonfish, ling, black salmon, black mackerel, prodigal son, cabio, and crab eater.

The Louisiana state-record cobia weighed 149.75 pounds and was caught by Garnett "Lucky" Caudell. He caught the fish in Grand Isle Block 69 in May 1965. Mississippi's state record weighed 106 pounds, 13 ounces. Randy McDaniel caught the fish in May 1996. ■



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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	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	
Fri 1	█	█	█	█	46
Sat 2	█	█	█	█	45

Sun 3	█	█	█	█	53
Mon 4	█	█	█	█	61
Tue 5	█	█	█	█	69
Wed 6	█	█	█	█	71
Thu 7	█	█	█	█	59
Fri 8	█	█	█	█	47
Sat 9	█	█	█	█	33

Sun 10	█	█	█	█	25
Mon 11	█	█	█	█	28
Tue 12	█	█	█	█	37
Wed 13	█	█	█	█	27
Thu 14	█	█	█	█	23
Fri 15	█	█	█	█	24
Sat 16	█	█	█	█	25

Sun 17	█	█	█	█	37
Mon 18	█	█	█	█	47
Tue 19	█	█	█	█	57
Wed 20	█	█	█	█	64
Thu 21	█	█	█	█	56
Fri 22	█	█	█	█	49
Sat 23	█	█	█	█	40

Sun 24	█	█	█	█	38
Mon 25	█	█	█	█	40
Tue 26	█	█	█	█	41
Wed 27	█	█	█	█	47
Thu 28	█	█	█	█	57
Fri 29	█	█	█	█	47
Sat 30	█	█	█	█	40
Sun 31	█	█	█	█	31

25 50 75
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LUNAR PERIODS					
TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED					
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT		
1:46 AM	7:27 am - 10:57 am	4:33 PM	7:52 pm - 11:22 pm	☾	
2:48 AM	8:23 am - 11:43 am	5:10 PM	8:48 pm - 12:08 am	☾	
3:53 AM	9:22 am - 12:24 pm	5:44 PM	9:47 pm - 12:49 am	☾	
4:59 AM	10:21 am - 1:03 pm	6:16 PM	10:46 pm - 1:28 am	☾	
6:06 AM	11:20 am - 1:42 pm ☀	6:46 PM	11:45 pm - Midnight	☾	
7:15 AM	12:22 pm - 2:20 pm ☀	7:17 PM	Midnight - 2:07 am	☾	New
8:25 AM	1:23 pm - 3:01 pm	7:50 PM	12:47 am - 2:45 am	☾	
9:37 AM	2:27 pm - 3:45 pm	8:27 PM	1:48 am - 3:26 am	☾	Perigee
10:51 AM	3:32 pm - 4:34 pm	9:09 PM	2:52 am - 4:10 am	☾	
12:03 PM	4:39 pm - 5:27 pm	9:58 PM	3:57 am - 4:59 am	☾	
1:13 PM	5:41 pm - 6:27 pm ☀	10:55 PM	5:04 am - 5:52 am	☾	Low
2:15 PM	6:42 pm - 7:28 pm	11:58 PM	6:06 am - 6:52 am	☾	Half
3:08 PM	7:38 pm - 8:30 pm		7:07 am - 7:53 am ☀	☾	
3:52 PM	8:28 pm - 9:30 pm	1:04 AM	8:03 am - 8:55 am ☀	☾	
4:30 PM	9:11 pm - 10:29 pm	2:11 AM	8:53 am - 9:55 am	☾	
5:02 PM	9:49 pm - 11:25 pm	3:16 AM	9:36 am - 10:54 am	☾	
5:30 PM	10:23 pm - 12:19 am	4:19 AM	10:14 am - 11:50 am	☾	
5:57 PM	10:57 pm - 1:09 am	5:19 AM	10:48 am - 12:44 pm	☾	
6:23 PM	11:29 pm - Midnight	6:18 AM	11:22 am - 1:34 pm ☀	☾	
6:49 PM	Midnight - 2:01 am	7:16 AM	11:54 am - 2:26 pm ☀	☾	Full
7:17 PM	12:03 am - 2:53 am	8:14 AM	12:28 pm - 3:18 pm	☾	
7:48 PM	12:38 am - 3:44 am	9:13 AM	1:03 pm - 4:09 pm	☾	
8:22 PM	1:16 am - 4:36 am	10:11 AM	1:41 pm - 5:01 pm	☾	
9:01 PM	1:56 am - 5:28 am	11:09 AM	2:21 pm - 5:53 pm	☾	Apogee
9:46 PM	2:41 am - 6:21 am	12:05 PM	3:06 pm - 6:46 pm	☾	
10:37 PM	3:30 am - 7:12 am	12:57 PM	3:55 pm - 7:37 pm ☀	☾	High
11:33 PM	4:22 am - 8:02 am	1:45 PM	4:47 pm - 8:27 pm ☀	☾	
	5:15 am - 8:51 am ☀	2:28 PM	5:40 pm - 9:16 pm	☾	Half
12:32 AM	6:10 am - 9:36 am ☀	3:07 PM	6:35 pm - 10:01 pm	☾	
1:35 AM	7:06 am - 10:18 am ☀	3:41 PM	7:31 pm - 10:43 pm	☾	
2:39 AM	8:04 am - 10:56 am	4:13 PM	8:29 pm - 11:21 pm	☾	

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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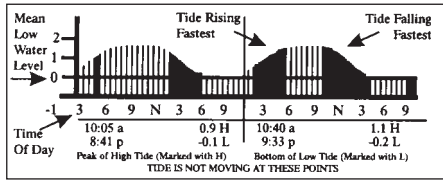
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How to use the **SPORTSMAN** Tide Guide

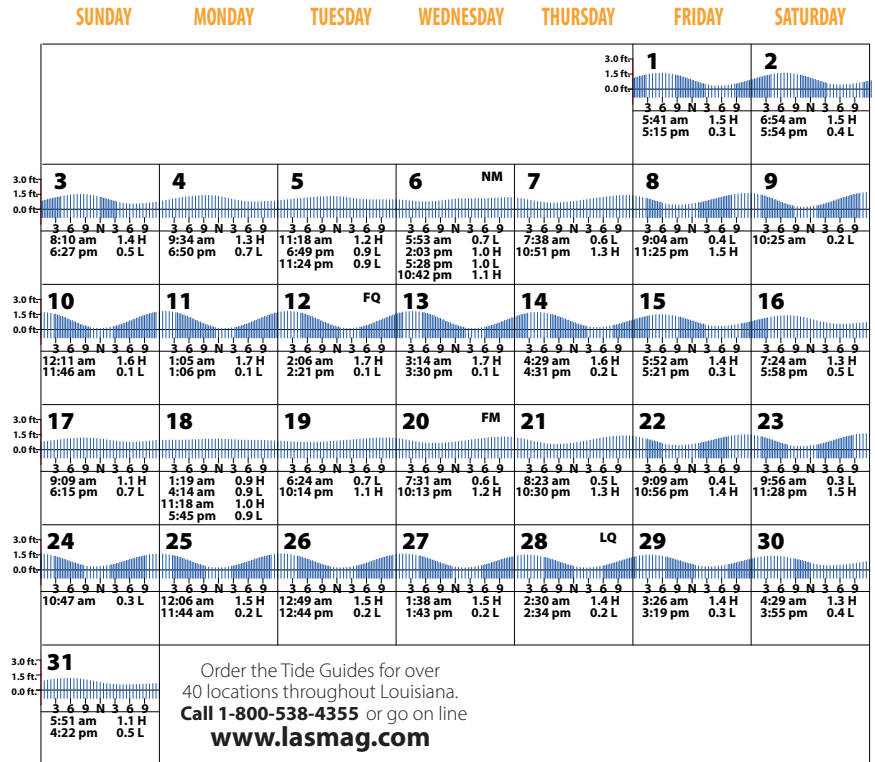


Fish feed most actively when the tide is moving. Louisiana Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most-active feeding periods each day in the Tide Guide. Just fish those times indicated in black. To find the best time to fish your favorite honeyhole, find the spot under Tide Corrections that is closest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

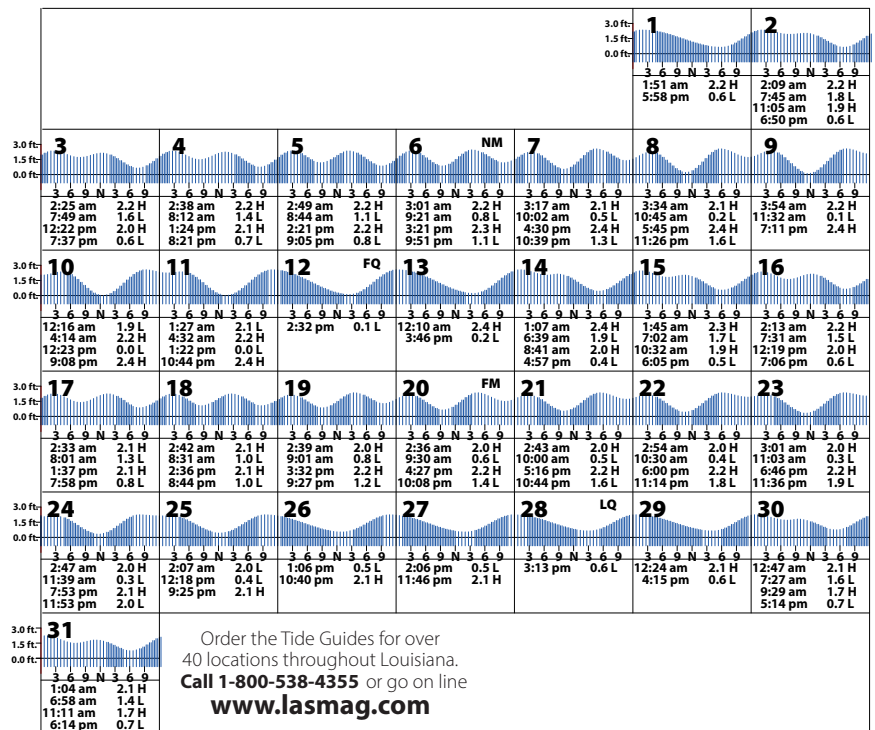
Tide Corrections

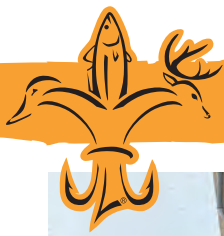
East Point, Grand Isle	HIGH	LOW
Barataria Pass	+1:00	-0:10
Bastian Island	+0:41	+0:12
Bay Gardene	+2:51	+2:44
Bayou BonFouca	+9:59	+10:11
Breton Islands	+0:54	+0:48
Caillou Boca	+0:40	+0:48
Caminada Pass	+0:20	+0:12
Chandeleur Light	+0:37	+0:34
Chef Pass	+5:17	+5:07
Cocodrie	+1:22	+1:33
Comfort Island	+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



Calcasieu Pass Lighthouse Wharf





Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



The Greco crew

The Greco crew had a big day on a trip out of Myrtle Grove with Capt. Max Martin from Drum and Co. on Aug. 19.



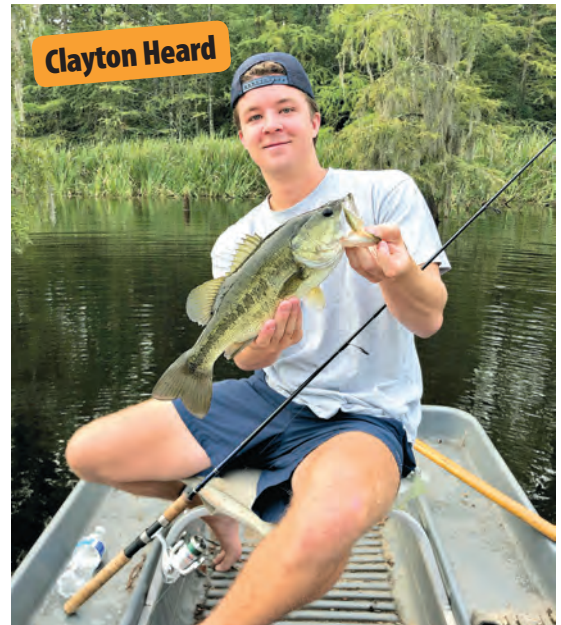
Tyler, Turner, Bristol, Ryan Boswer

Tyler, Turner, Bristol and Ryan Boswer of Bluff Creek, the owners of Hooks and Heritage, show off a nice, 99-pound hog they killed.



Jacob, Juul, RJ, Braxton, Luke, David, Grady, Jagger

Jacob, Juul, R.J. and Braxton Hill, Luke Ventura, David Tyser, Grady Hill and Jagger Stafford got dove season off with a bang in East Feliciana Parish.



Clayton Heard

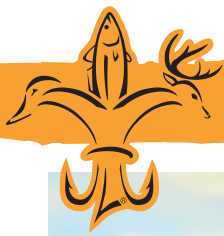
Clayton Heard of Chapel Hill, N.C., a junior at Tulane, had a great day bass fishing near Natchitoches with a fraternity brother, William McCarthy.

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Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



David Osborne

David Osborn was fishing Lake Borgne on Sept. 18, 2021, with his father-in-law, Jim Walther, when they limited out on reds.



William Bass

William Bass, 7, from Cameron, caught this beautiful red snapper this past summer.

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Amelie, Julie Nicholson

Sisters Amelie and Julie Nicholson with some beautiful snapper caught using pogies in the West Delta out of Venice.



Kael Stock

Kael Stock, 8, of Destrehan, a top-drawer youth basketball player, took time off to catch his first redfish with Capt. Lloyd Landry on Aug. 21 out of Dularge.



Mia Lirette caught this nice redfish in Dularge.



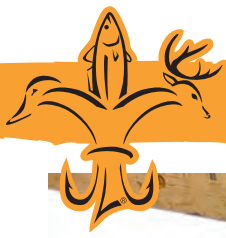
Cary "Honey" Brignac of Houma hooked and landed this redfish on a recent trip to Lost Lake.



Kaiden Joel's first bull redfish, this 23-pounder, was the biggest of the day on a Sept. 19 trip with his uncle.



Garrett Taylor caught this 5.15-pound bass early one morning at the Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge. This one was released for another day.



Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



Abe Ibrahim, Haz Tuqan

Abe Ibrahim and Haz Tuqan had a very successful fishing trip out of Venice on Aug. 2, 2021.



Charles Palmer

Charles Palmer from Oklahoma took his first offshore trip aboard the *Four Play* out of Grand Isle and caught his first Mahimahi.



Burgess family

The Burgess family had a very successful fishing trip with Capt. Jared Broussard of Du' South Fishing Charters in Bayou Dularge on July 7, 2021.



Colton Duddleston

Colton Duddleston, 5, caught his first flounder on Lake Calcasieum. It was 17 inches long.



John Pivach

George Pivach, Jake Bergeron, Jack Pivach and Jude Bergeron pose behind John Pivach, who is holding a big bull red caught on July 10, 2021, in Barataria Bay. The fish weighed 48 pounds.



Morgan Breaux

Morgan Breaux, 15, of Kaplan caught her first redfish in July on Vermilion Bay.



Mathiew Breaux

Mathiew Breaux, 12, of Kaplan, hooked his first redfish in early April at St. Joseph's Harbor in Cameron Parish.



Nicholas Johnson

Nicholas Johnson took this cobia out of Fourchon while spearfishing around the rigs on Aug. 7, 2021.



Mallory O'Brien Taylor

Mallory O'Brien Talley celebrated her birthday by landing this 88.36-pound amberjack out of Port Fourchon after a 30- to 40-minute battle.



London Osbon

London Osbon caught this 21-pound drum casting from the side of a gravel road leading to Elmer's Island, using cracked crab on a Carolina rig.



Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



Justin King

Justin King caught this monster bull red on light tackle on July 23. He was fishing on a barrier island mothership trip with Explore Kayak Adventures in the Quatre Bayou Pass area.



Vickie Cloutre

Vickie Cloutre caught this 25-pound, 34-inch red snapper while fishing on her 33-foot Freeman out of Hurricane Hole Marina in Grand Isle.



Alex Hammers

Alex Hammers caught this 34-inch red in the surf at Holly Beach on July 31. The fish, which hit cut mullet, was released alive.

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Olivia Voisin

Olivia Voisin, 7, caught this 5-foot gar in Dularge on July 25.



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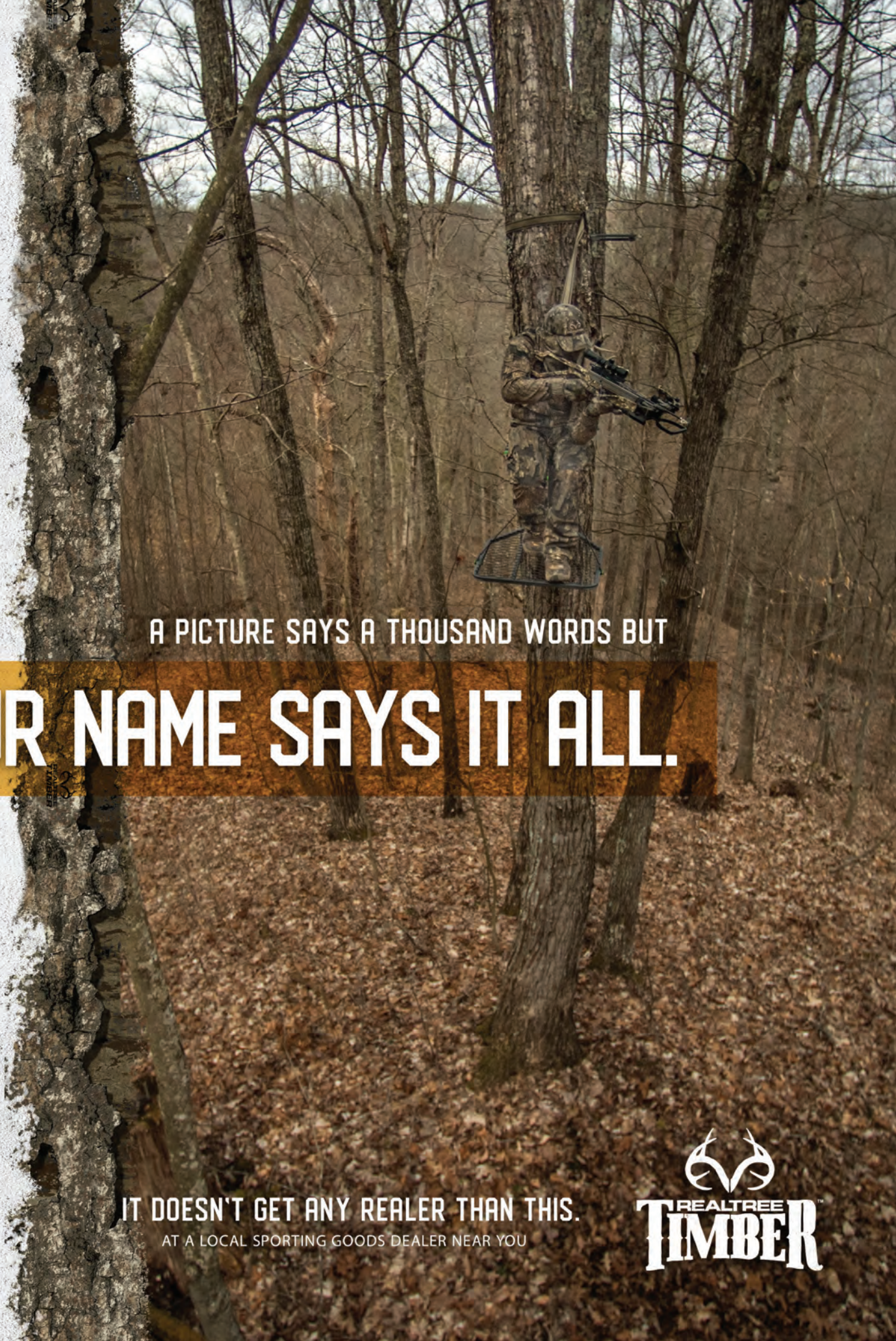
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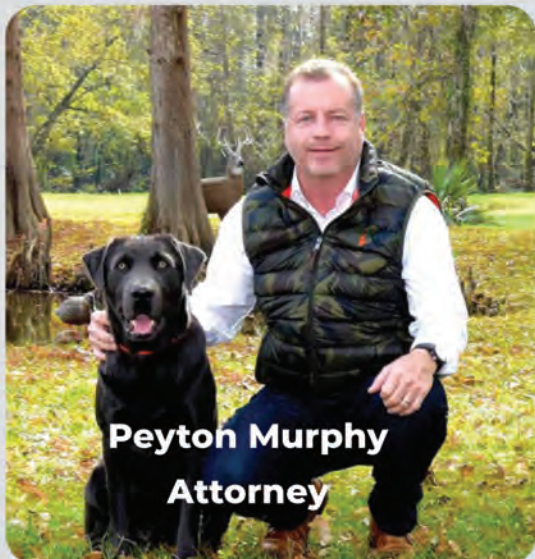
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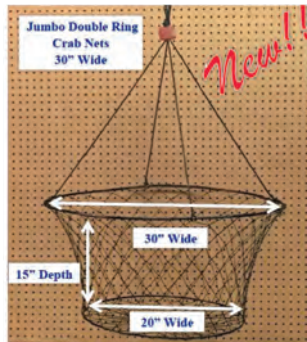
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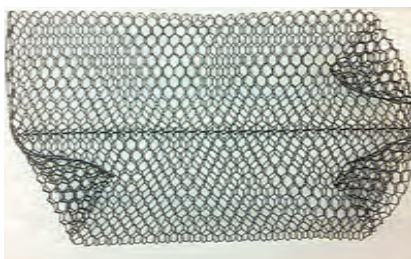
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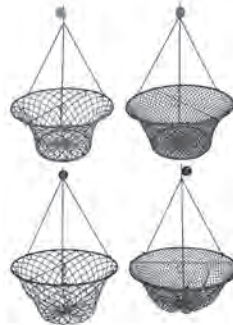
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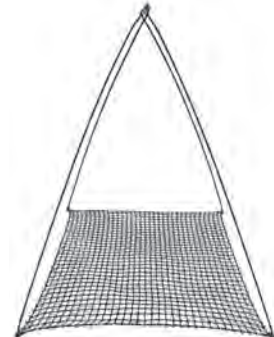
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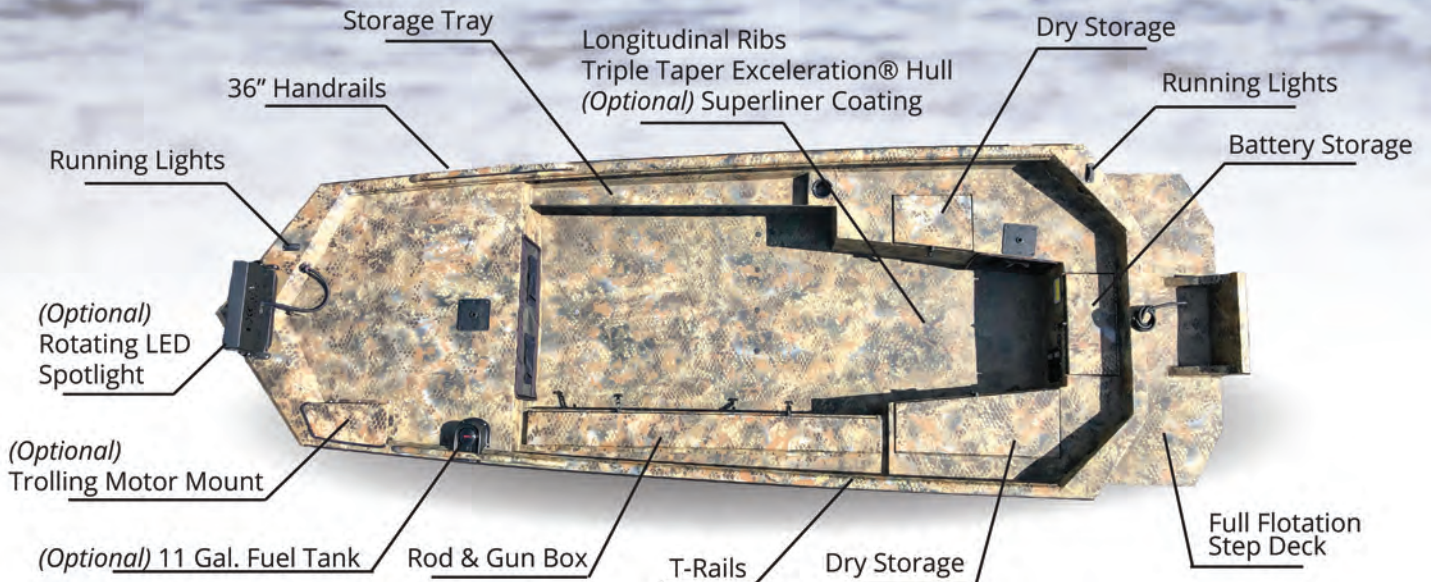
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