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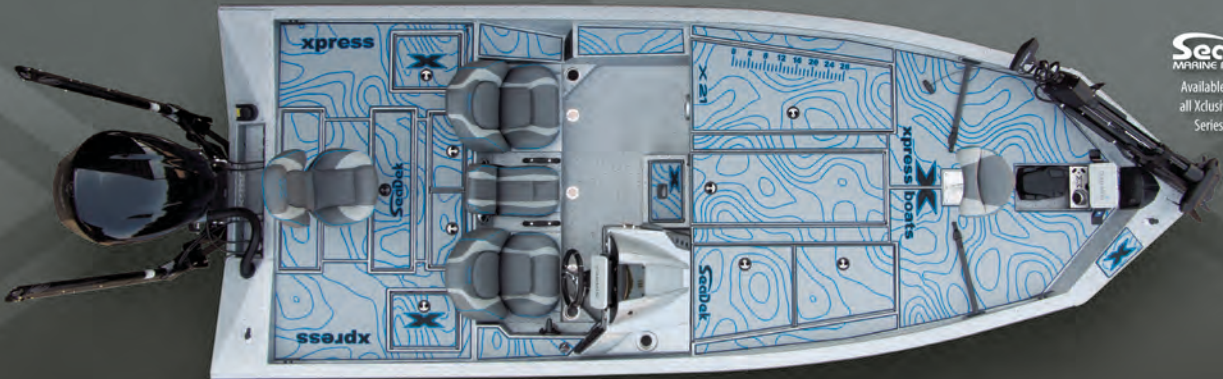


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SLAYS THEM

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Together,  
we're going to get through this.



"I think the road to recovery is just like the Rhythm of Louisiana. It shows the strength of not only this community, but the state. We're going to celebrate. We're going to eventually get back to where we were. It's not going to be easy, but with support and help, we will make it.

I'm always going to be grateful for the help that I received after the storm from Shell and my fellow employees, who also lost so much. This storm touched everyone. Together, we're going to get through this, and we're going to come out of it better."

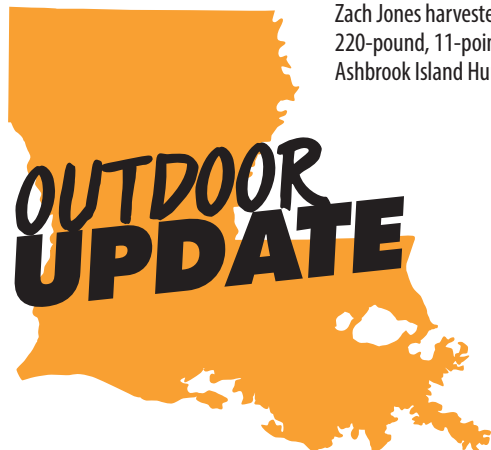
MATTHEW LOOSEMORE

Production Team Lead, Shell Norco

*Pictured with daughters Adrienne (left) and Allie (right) in his hurricane Ida damaged home in Norco*

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Zach Jones harvested this 220-pound, 11-point buck at Ashbrook Island Hunting Club.

## BIG BUCKS BECOMING OLD HAT FOR HUNTER, 20

**I**t By Glynn Harris all started for Zach Jones of Sterlington eight seasons ago, when, at 12, he downed a trophy buck. Almost every year since, Jones's name comes up, as he has laid another big buck on the ground.

So it was no surprise when a photo appeared on Facebook in early November with Jones, now 20, posing with another wall-hanger, a 160-inch, main-frame 10-pointer with a characteristic split brow tine.

Jones's success has resulted, in part, by the area he hunts. He and his father are members of Ashbrook Island Hunting Club on the Mississippi River, an area that is managed for trophy deer. In addition, Jones puts in the time locating and zeroing in on the big bucks in the area.

Jones has laid his rifle aside and hunts exclusively with archery equipment.

"I hunt with a Hoyt Defiance bow, Easton Full Metal Jacket arrows and Rage Hypodermic broadheads," Jones said. "This is the same equipment I have used the past three seasons."

Jones, a student at Delta Community College, will transfer after one more semester to Louisiana-Monroe, where he will major in construction management with a minor in Insurance.

"I have had trail-camera photos of a particular big buck since 2016," Jones said. "In his first pictures, I saw that he had a split G2, and that's the way I could keep up with him each year. We didn't run cameras in 2019, but I have had him on camera every other year. I got my first photo of him this year the day before bow season opened."

### TROUBLESOME HOG

The area where the buck had been hanging out featured a big thicket that bordered a 500-acre bottomland. The deer like to



hang out and feed on numerous pecan trees and briars in the area. On the afternoon of Nov. 5, Jones mounted his Millennium lock-on stand around 2:45.

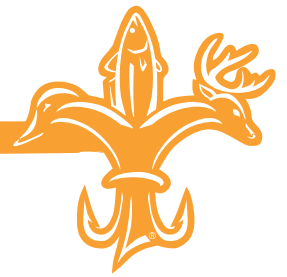
"I was on one side of a ridge where it meets the hardwood bottom in a briar thicket next to an L-shaped food plot; my dad was in a ground blind along the other leg of the food plot," Jones said. "Around 4, a big doe and her two yearlings came out and were feeding on the pecans that were dropping. Then suddenly, a big hog came up the ridge in a full run, ran out in front of me, and my dad texted me moments later that the hog had run by him at 15 yards."

### TARGET ACQUIRED

Jones' confidence level dropped after the hog had run through, assuming that the hunt had been spoiled. Two minutes later, however, he looked up to see a big buck 65 yards away on the food plot. It looked like the same buck he had seen three weeks before at 25 yards that he passed on because he wasn't sure it met the strict criteria that club has in force.

"I think the hog running through probably pushed him out of the thicket, because he stepped out only a few minutes after the hog ran through," Jones said. "When I saw the split G2 on the antler, I knew it was the one I was targeting. The buck worked his way in behind me and was feeding on pecans. I had to get down on one knee to shoot around a sapling blocking the way. I got on him and released my arrow at 36 yards. The buck ran about 25 yard and fell."

The buck's rack featured 10 points, plus the split brow tine. Aged at 6½ years old and weighing 220 pounds, the inside spread was 17¾ inches, bases were 5 inches with main beams measuring 22 and 24½ inches. The rack green scored at 160¾ inches. ■



# LOUISIANA WATERFOWL STAMP COMPETITION HAS 1ST FEMALE WINNER

**BELOW:** Elaine Erikson's winning portrait for the 2022 Louisiana duck stamp competition.

**L** From News Reports  
ouisiana native Elaine Erikson has won the 2022 Louisiana Waterfowl Conservation Stamp competition sponsored by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. She is the first woman to win the contest.

The annual contest, in its 34th year, determines the image on what is commonly called the Louisiana duck stamp.

Erikson, a retired CPA from River Ridge, was born and raised on Bayou Teche in Iberia Parish. This was her first time entering the contest.

Her paintings tend to be very realistic in style, revealing extensive detail. Erikson's favorite medium is acrylic, but she also paints in oil, watercolor, colored pencil and pastels. She belongs to several area art guilds and has shown paintings in numerous art shows in the New Orleans and Baton Rouge areas.

The fulvous whistling duck was the species selected for this year's contest, and Erikson's painting features two ducks resting in a marsh setting.

Seventeen entries were posted, including seven from Louisiana residents.

Larry Wilburn of Dayton, Texas, was second, and Anthony Padgett of Noblesville, Ind., third. Wilburn placed third in both the 2016 and 2017 contests. Padgett won the 2009 Louisiana contest, was second in 2021 and third in 2020.

Louisiana provides primarily breeding habitat for fulvous whistling ducks. They arrive from wintering areas in Mexico, or further south, from mid-April through early May, taking up residence primarily in the rice-growing region of southwest Louisiana.

The 2022 stamp will go on sale June 1, 2022. Erikson will retain the original artwork and will have reproduction rights to the image for prints and other commodities after LDWF uses the image to produce the stamps. ■



## LDWF HUNTING, FISHING LICENSES ON LA WALLET

**T** From News Reports  
he Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has partnered with LA Wallet to bring digital hunting and fishing licenses to Louisiana citizens. Effective this past Oct. 18, citizens with a Louisiana driver's license or state ID can use LA Wallet to display their licenses on their smartphones.

Licenses can be purchased on the LDWF website, through an approved retail vendor or at the LDWF headquarters in Baton Rouge. The LA Wallet app is free for the public.

To connect your LDWF licenses to LA Wallet:

- Tap the LDWF Licenses credential shown on the homepage.
- Read the disclaimer, then tap the yellow Connect LDWF Account button at the bottom.

- Once your LDWF account is found, tap Yes to add your licenses. Your LDWF account information will display at the top of the screen, along with your hunter education number and federal duck stamps, if they are found. To see your individual licenses, tap the category to expand the licenses in that category.

Licenses may still be carried in several other ways:

- **Email.** If an email address is available and a license is purchased, a digital version of that license will be emailed.
- **Image.** An individual can also take a photo of their license and store that photo on their phone.
- **Paper.** We recommend folding the license and storing it in a zip-top bag or laminating the paper print between two pieces of packaging tape. ■



Doug Jones took this big, 10-point buck nicknamed "Junior" on Nov. 2 in Beauregard Parish.

# YEAR-ROUND SURVEILLANCE PAYS DIVIDENDS IN *BIG BUCKS*

**D** By Glynn Harris

eer hunting for 52-year-old Doug Jones is an all-year proposition. He is not a law breaker who hunts year-round, but he works all year in order to keep deer fed as well as keeping up with their activities. Once deer season opens, Jones has a distinct advantage and improves his chances at downing big bucks.

His diligence paid off on the afternoon of Nov. 2 when he came to terms with a 6½-year-old, 10-point, 156-inch buck.

"I work for the railroad, and I always plan my vacation for the period when the rut begins in Area 3," said Jones, who lives in Rosepine. "I have a camp on my lease in Beauregard Parish, and I spend the time staying at the camp and seriously deer hunting."

Jones hunts on the 2,500-acre Bear Head Hunting Club and concentrates on a 900-acre section where he has his stands and keeps out feed all year.

"I feed persimmon-flavored rice bran and a product called Big Bucks," he said. "I keep feed out throughout the year and keep cameras on to keep tabs on what the deer are doing in the area."

For the past four years, Jones has been getting photos of a variety of bucks, while one in particular has captivated his attention. It's a buck Jones called "Junior."

"I started getting this buck's pictures and knew he had potential to be a real trophy, so I've watched him and kept up with him for the past four years," he said.

## **GROUND BLIND IS RIGHT CHOICE**

Jones has access to box stands around the lease, but his preference is to hunt from ground blinds, believing they give him an

advantage being more at eye-level with the deer. On the afternoon of Nov. 2, he crawled into a ground blind around 4, a blind that overlooked food plots and a feeder.

"Not long after getting into my blind, two does came to the feeder and began feeding," Jones said. "I just watched them because I don't shoot does in this area; I'm only after horns."

In a moment, a spike appeared from the woods and came to feed. After a few minutes, it left the food plot.

"The next visitors to the feed were a group of four does that were bunched up and were acting somewhat nervous," Jones said. "I have studied deer behavior for a long time, and when I saw them together and acting strange, I knew that a big buck had probably herded them up together, now that the rut was kicking in, and would likely make an appearance shortly. Then, Junior stepped out."

"The big buck came out of the woods, looked down the lane and started walking toward the does. At 125 yards, he stopped and turned broadside, and I hit the trigger on my Ruger .308; he dropped in his tracks."

## **IMPRESSIVE BUCK**

The buck, estimated to be 6½ years old, sported a symmetrical rack of 10 points with one small sticker too short to measure. Inside spread was 19⅞ inches; the tines were all lengthy, and the circumference at the base of each antler was impressive and ran throughout the rack. Taking the buck to K&K Taxidermy in Reeves, the rack was green scored at 156%. ■

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# DELAYED HALLOWEEN PAYS OFF WITH ALLEN PARISH BUCK

Mason Boudreaux of Lake Charles took a 10-point trophy buck with his crossbow while hunting in Allen Parish.

**H** By Glynn Harris  
alloween is a big day for kids, especially when it comes to getting to trick-or-treating. Mason Boudreaux, 25, from Lake Charles, had gotten a text from his fiancé that it was time to leave his deer stand and head home to get ready to take their two youngsters for the annual treat-gathering event.

Something happened, however, that put the brakes on his trip home: a 144-inch, 10-point trophy buck.

"I hunt on a 200-acre lease in Allen Parish with some friends, and I decided to head to my ground blind that morning with my crossbow to see what I could see," Boudreaux said. "I had only gotten in the lease at the beginning of bow season, so I really didn't know what was there. I just wanted to go sit and see what might show up."

Crawling into his ground blind at 5:45 that morning, he sat until noon without having any action.

"I like to use a grunt call, especially now that the rut is about to begin in Area 3," he said. "I had used it off and on all morning without success. Around 11, I hit the call (and) I heard a buck responding as it grunted back."

## ONE MORE TRY

Boudreaux's stand overlooks an area with a few openings that are surrounded by thickets. The grunt made by the buck came from a thick area he couldn't see into.

"About the time I was getting excited about hearing a buck grunting, I got a text from my fiancé telling me I needed to come home and help her get the two kids ready to go trick-or-treating," Boudreaux said. "I texted her back that I had heard a buck grunt, but no matter



what, I would leave my stand at noon to head home. I figured if he hadn't shown up, I'd at least know where he was hanging out and come back and hunt him later."

At noon, Boudreaux stepped out of his blind, preparing to head home. He got his backpack on his shoulders, picked up his crossbow, looked up and saw a big buck standing at 120 yards. The buck, alerted to Boudreaux's movements, darted back in the thicket.

"I was sick at my stomach knowing I was looking at the biggest buck I have ever seen, and I have to leave," Boudreaux said. "I figured that before I headed home, I'd move in a little closer to where I had seen the deer and give it one more try."

Easing down the lane about 50 yards, Boudreaux found a tree he could sit down against, and he hit the grunt call again.

"I let it get quiet for 5 minutes or so and hit the grunt call," he said. "A few minutes later, I hit the call again. I heard him grunt and could tell he was moving in my direction. Then he stepped out at 70 yards, eventually coming to within 60 yards of where I sat, and (he) turned broadside."

## TAKING THE SHOT

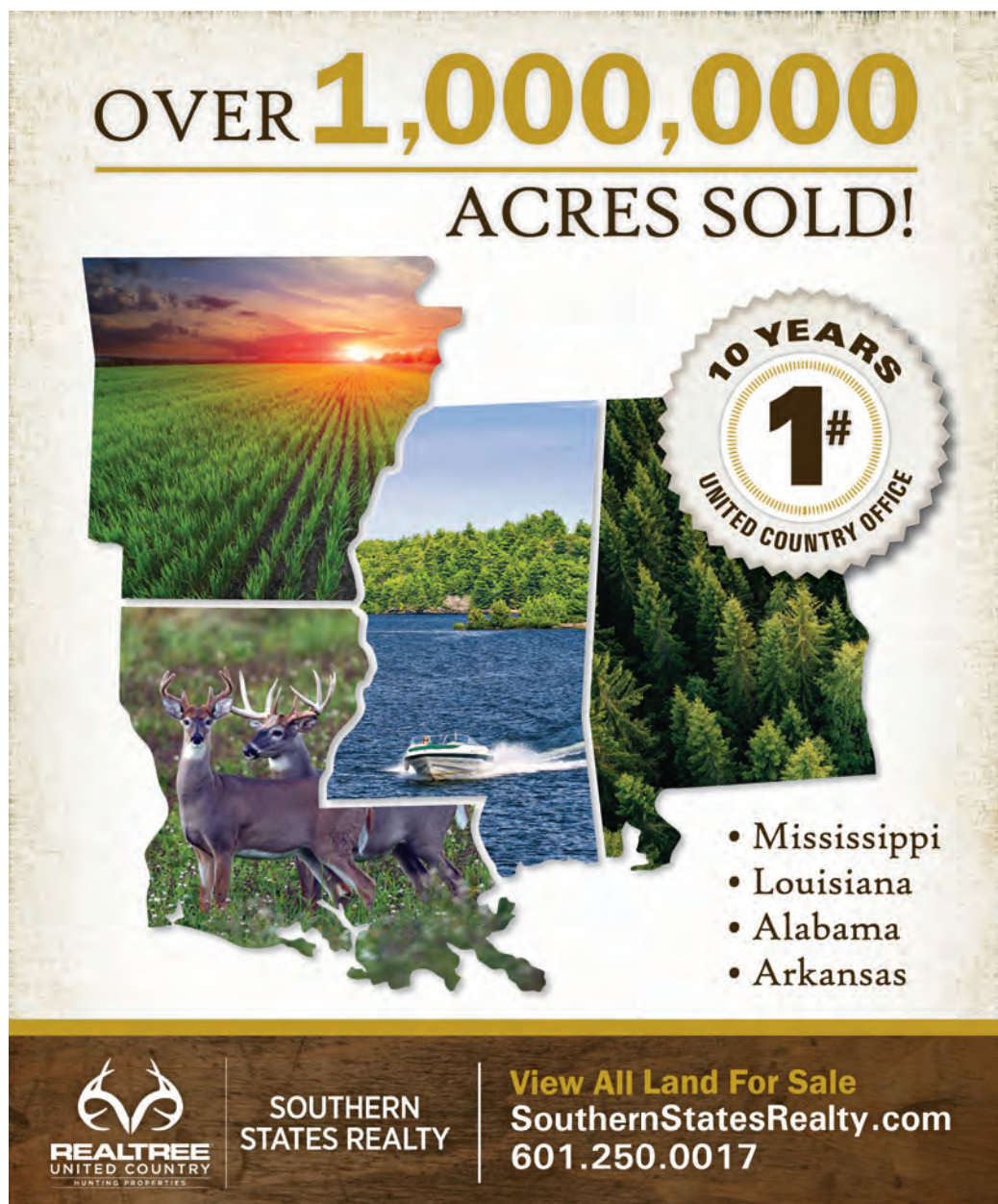
Boudreaux had practiced with his Ten Point crossbow and Wicked Ridge bolts tipped with Rage broadheads and felt comfortable hitting a target at 50 yards. He felt 60 yards would be his maximum range, so he held high and released the bolt.

"The buck ran into a thicket, and I heard him crash," he said. "Since time was of the essence, I headed that way immediately and found him piled up 10 yards into the thicket."

The buck, which weighed 182 pounds, was estimated to be 3½ or 4½ years old. It sported a heavy rack of 10 points and an 18-inch inside spread. The rack was green scored at K&K Taxidermy at 144 inches.

For Mason Boudreaux, it was a Halloween trick that turned into a treat. ■

**““”** *The buck ran into a thicket and I heard him crash. Since time was of the essence, I headed that way immediately and found him piled up 10 yards into the thicket.*



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# BABY, BUCK ARE DOUBLE BLESSINGS FOR HUNTER

Calhoun's Stuart Baum received a double blessing the last week of October: a new baby girl and a big 9-point buck.

**C** By Glynn Harris  
alhou'n's Stuart Baum, who owns his own barber shop in Columbia, received a double blessing the last week of October.

On Oct. 27, his wife, Tiffany, gave birth to Ada, the couple's third child and first daughter. On Oct. 29, after bringing his wife and baby home, Baum, 30, followed Tiffany's suggestions to go hunt the big buck he had been targeting, saying it would be special to get the buck the day they brought Ada home.

Before the day ended, Baum had the big 9-point buck on the ground.

"While being at the hospital with Tiffany, my phone kept ping-ing, and the big buck I had been hunting kept showing up on my trail camera," Baum said. "I knew I needed to be in the woods, but attending my wife and baby daughter were foremost on my

mind. Once we got home, Tiffany insisted that I go see if the big buck might show up, so I did."

The property Baum hunts in Caldwell Parish consists of 1,500 acres of farmland dotted with CRP sections, ideal hang outs for big bucks.

"The previous week, I got my first trail-cam photo of the buck," Baum said. "I had been moving around the farm, putting cameras out at different, likely looking locations, hoping to target a big buck. When I found one area with a fresh rub on a good-sized tree, that's where I decided I wanted to hunt him and that's where he showed up the week I got him."

## **BACHELOR GROUP**

Several bucks, including the big one, were still hanging out in a bachelor group. Soon after Baum climbed into his box stand the

afternoon of Oct. 29, deer began filtering out of the thick stuff to browse on grass growing in the two shooting lanes he could see from his stand. Baum had slipped in the back way to reach his stand at 5:30 because he felt action would be taking place shortly and didn't want to alert the deer.

"There is one lane facing north and another northeast, and several bucks in the group, including a nice 10-point buck and a couple of 8-pointers and a 7- came out on the north-facing lane," Baum said. "Ten minutes after the other bucks showed up, the big one I had on camera made his appearance. He was obviously the boss, because he kept pushing the other bucks around as they nibbled on the grass. When he turned broadside at 80 yards, I got on him and hit the trigger on my .35 Whelan, and he dropped on the spot."

Baum first called his wife to report his good fortune, then called a friend who was working on a track hoe on adjoining property. The friend brought Baum's 4-wheeler to load and transport the deer to his truck.

## A BIG BUCK

"I knew he was a good buck from the photos I saw on my camera, but the closer I got to him, the more impressed I was with not only his rack, but his body size," he said. "He ended up weighing 245 pounds."

The buck was a main-frame 9-point with four tines on one side and five on the other. Inside spread was 16 inches. The rack carried plenty of mass, with the measurement between the second and third points being 5 inches on one side and 6 on the other. The rack was green scored at 147% inches. ■



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Joe Carpenter took this trophy 12-point buck in Union Parish on Oct. 26.

# BIG BUCK CHOOSES CORN OVER DOE AND PAYS FOR IT

FARMERVILLE TEEN GETS DROP  
ON GREAT, UNION PARISH STUD

**A** By Glynn Harris  
big doe was apparently quite hungry when she sauntered up to Joe Carpenter's feeder on the Lower Place Hunting Club in Union Parish at 7 a.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 26.

She stayed and fed for a solid hour.

"It was hard to believe that she stayed there and ate for that long," Carpenter said. "I checked the time and realized that when 8 a.m. rolled around, she was still there eating."

Carpenter, 19, from Farmerville, is a student at Delta Community College. Beginning in June of this year, a big buck had been showing up on trail cameras placed around the hunting club.

"We had been watching him on camera as he showed up periodically and knew he was a good buck," Carpenter said. "I was just hopeful that he would show up when I was on my stand."

## A CHANGE IN THE WEATHER

A cool front was approaching when Carpenter headed out that day; he was hoping that with the change in weather, the deer might be moving better.

"I got into my box stand around 6:50, as it was just starting to get light," he said. "My stand overlooks a feeder 165 yards out front of the stand. My stand overlooks three lanes, the one with the feeder and two other ones.

"The feeder went off, throwing corn at 7, and within a minute, here came a doe to the feed on the ground. While I watched her, I saw two other does cross the other two lanes. At 8:05, while the doe was still eating around the feeder, I looked up and saw a buck step out at 180 yards or so. The doe got nervous but kept feeding as the buck approached. He came up to her and bumped her to make her leave so he could begin feeding."

Although the buck was in plain sight, there was a problem; the deer stood facing Carpenter for 10 minutes as it ate.

"I was getting more nervous all the time, because I knew it was



the big buck we had on camera, and I was frustrated because he stood facing me for so long," Carpenter said. "Finally, he turned broadside, giving me a shot.

"I took the shot — I was using my aunt's .35 Whelan — and the deer was obviously hit through the shoulders, because he used his back legs to sort of crawl across the plot into the woods. So I called my dad and told him what I had shot."

## FAMILY TRADITION

Carpenter's father told him to wait for a while to make sure the deer was down for good, so he stayed in his stand for an hour until his father arrived.

"When Dad got there, I got down, and we walked down to where the deer was standing near the feeder," Carpenter said. "Just before we got to the feeder, Dad looked off to the left and saw the deer lying there; he had already died."

The buck was impressive, sporting a 12-point rack with an inside spread of 20 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches and 27-inch main beams. Bases were 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches, with mass carrying throughout the rack. The buck, estimated to weigh 200 pounds, was green scored at 153 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches. ■



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# WARM WEATHER DOESN'T STOP MINDEN ARCHER

**C** By Glynn Harris  
ool, fall weather has been a long time coming this year, as warmer than normal temperatures have hung on. Carson Bolyer, 26, from Minden, decided that 80-degree temperatures and hordes of hungry mosquitoes wouldn't keep him from sitting on his deer stand the afternoon of Oct. 20.



Carson Bolyer of Minden battled 80-degree temperatures and hordes of hungry mosquitoes to take a Webster Parish 12-point buck on Oct. 20.

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It was a great decision, resulting in him tagging a 12-point, 160-inch trophy buck. "We have a 6-month-old little one who requires plenty of attention from my wife and me, so I have to prioritize my time for deer hunting," Bolyer said. "That afternoon seemed to be a good time for me to slip away a couple of hours to try for the big buck I had seen on my trail camera two days before." The property Bolyer hunts is in northern Webster Parish; his family has leased it for the past 20 years. The property covers 500 acres, but Bolyer restricts his attention to a particular 100-acre block he prefers to hunt. "I had found this buck on my camera twice; first on Oct. 2 and then again on Oct. 18," he said. "That is the reason I decided to put up with the heat and mosquitoes: to see if he might show up that afternoon."

## TAKING THE SHOT

Climbing 20 feet up a big tree along a fence row around 4:30 that afternoon, Bolyer settled into his lock-on stand and turned on his Thermacell to keep pesky mosquitoes at bay. Bolyer said he was sweating and hoped his scent would not present a problem. However, he noted that the wind was right, which gave him a measure of confidence.

"I don't have food plots or feeders out where I hunt, but I always take a coffee can of corn I scatter before getting in my stand," he said. "Before long, I could hear deer walking in the woods to my right, but the trees prevented me from seeing what it was. I figured it was a doe and two yearlings I saw nearly every time I hunt that stand."

Around 6:50, Bolyer heard a deer getting closer. From the way it was walking, he thought it might be a buck, so he clipped his release on his bow string and got ready. He expected the deer to go to the corn he had put out, but instead, the deer came directly toward the tree where he sat.

"I happened to look down, and this big buck stepped out 12 steps in front of me," Bolyer said. "I was still sitting and knew if I stood it would alert the deer, so I drew my bow. The deer heard it when I drew back and looked toward me just as I released my arrow. He was only 7 steps from my tree when I shot."

## CALLING IN REINFORCEMENTS

Bolyer shoots a Hoyt Carbon Matrix bow, Easton arrows with Swacker broadheads, and he thought his shot was good.

The deer bolted and ran back into the pines, but Bolyer said he thought he heard him crash down.

"I called my wife, and then my dad, who lives not far from where I was hunting," he said. "I waited a few minutes, got down and walked over to where he was standing and found my arrow with blood on the fletching. I waited for my dad to come, we followed a dim blood trail with just a few drops until it stopped. We decided to back out as it was already dark by now."

Bolyer called a friend, Jacob White, to bring his blood-trailing dog, Moco, and see if they could locate the buck.

"They got there around 10:30, Jacob released Moco, and the dog made a bee-line in the direction the deer had run," Bolyer said. "In just a minute, White called back, 'Here he is; I didn't know you had shot a stud.'"

The deer had only run 60 yards before expiring.

The buck was a main frame 8-point with two sticker points on each side, giving the rack 12 total points. With both main beams more than 25 inches long and bases exceeding 5 inches — carrying mass throughout the rack — the inside spread was 18 inches. The buck weighed in at 200 pounds and was judged to be 4½ years old. Putting the tape on the rack, the green score came to 160 inches. ■

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# THANKFUL HUNTER DROPS BIG, ALLEN PARISH MONSTER

AFTERNOON TRIP TO HUNT CLUB  
PAYS OFF FOR RAGLEY MAN

**A** By Glynn Harris  
big, 12-point, Allen Parish buck that had shown up once on a hunter's trail camera made his next move at exactly the right time for Joshua Saucier.

Saucier, 36, from Ragley, dropped the almost 150-inch buck in its tracks at 60 yards late on the afternoon of Oct. 17, the day after the season opened in Area 3.

"I'm active in my church, and my wife and I attended worship services that morning," Saucier said. "After we went home, had lunch and watched a football game on TV, I was thinking about the picture of the big 12-point I had seen only 3 days before on my trail camera. My wife encouraged me to head on out that afternoon to see if I might be able to see the buck. It didn't take much persuasion for me to agree with her, so I took my 12-year-old son, Wyatt, with me and we headed for the lease late that afternoon."

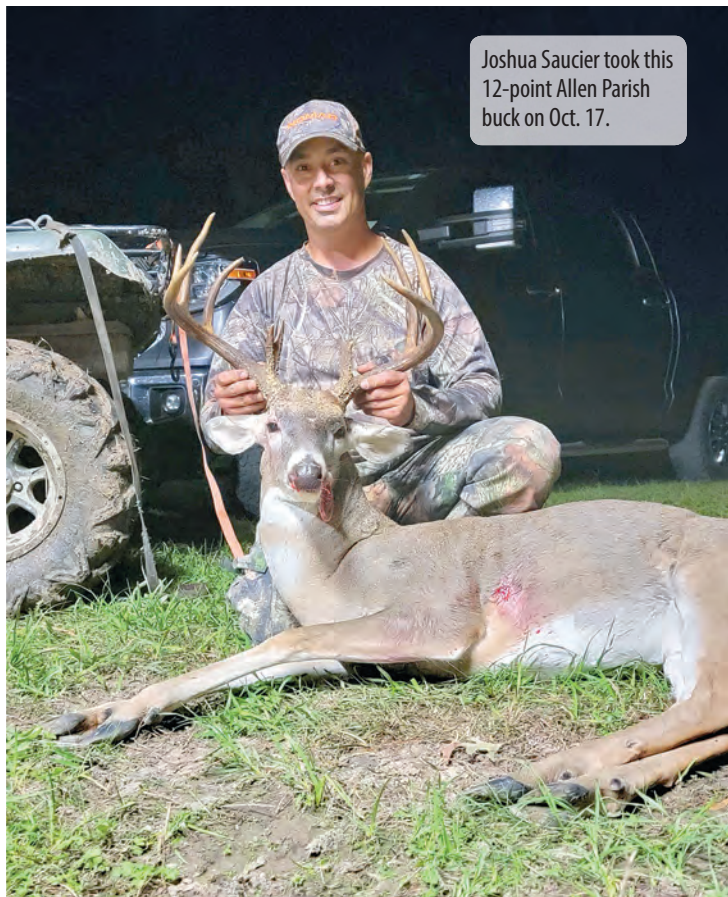
Saucier had only a 20-minute drive from his home to Clear Creek Hunting Club, which has a 5,000-acre plot of land leased from timber companies.

"My pastor is president of the hunting club; he encouraged me to join, and this is the first year I have been in the club," he said.

## RUB LINE GIVES BUCK AWAY

Scouting the property before the season opened, Saucier located an old rub line along a logging road that separated planted pines from a marshy area. He dropped his son off in a box blind and told him to stay put until he came to get him at dark.

"On my way to the area Sunday afternoon, I was walking the rub line and noticed a new rub on a sweet gum sapling," Saucier said. "The wind was in my favor, so I decided to hang my stand, giving me a good view of the line of rubs I had found. I fastened my climbing sticks, climbed a tree and secured my saddle stand, which gave me a good view of the area."



Joshua Saucier took this 12-point Allen Parish buck on Oct. 17.

At about 6:30, Saucier saw a doe walking down the old road and thought about taking a shot. He elected to let her walk, knowing any chance at the big buck would be over.

"She walked on past me, and I was worried she might catch my scent, so I eased my saddle stand around to watch her when I saw movement in the woods," he said. "At first, I wasn't sure what the other deer was, except it had a big body and I figured it was a buck; it was following the doe. I picked up my rifle — I was shooting a .25-06 H&R — got the scope on the deer and saw one side of the rack. He stopped in a little gap 60 yards away that gave me a perfect but narrow view of his shoulder, so I shot, and he dropped."

## COUNTING HIS BLESSINGS

Climbing down, he started walking toward the fallen buck and remembered that it seemed to grow in size the closer he got.

"When I got there and saw it was the buck I had seen on camera only once, I dropped to my knees and thanked the Lord for blessing me with this buck," he said.

The buck carried a main-frame 10-point rack with splits on both brow tines. Estimated at 200 pounds, the rack had a 17-inch inside spread. Saucier took the deer to taxidermist Chancy Frith at K&K Taxidermy in Ragley who measured the rack at 149 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches.

"I picked up my son, got my 4-wheeler from my truck and we went to where the deer had fallen. As thrilled as I was," he said, "I think Wyatt was even more excited." ■

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# FEMALE ARCHER ARROWS "MEGATRON"

**B**y Mike Giles  
Becky Nicosia of Baton Rouge climbed into her 20-foot ladder stand about 2:30 on Oct. 16 and settled in for an afternoon hunt on land she owns in Adams County, Miss. She knew a big buck, nicknamed "Megatron" was using the area, but she hadn't gotten a shot. Moments later, that changed, and she dropped the 13-point, 160-inch, 185-pound trophy.

After Nicosia got into her stand, several does came into view at the edge of her food plot and started browsing.

"I saw a few does and then saw Megatron come out and start walking towards me," said Nicosia, who shoots a Mathews Chill SDX with a peep sight and one pin. She uses a rangefinder to range shots around her stand and mentally marks her kill zone at 30 yards.

"Megatron got within range but suddenly turned and started walking away. He looked back for just a second, and I let the arrow fly."

Nicosia shoots Easton Axis arrows tipped with 100-grain Wasp broadheads. Her shot hit home, and the buck ran about 50 yards and piled up.

## WAITING UNTIL THE RIGHT TIME

Nicosia has been bowhunting for 30 years and is an expert archer and hunter; people that knew her were not surprised that she passed up this same buck last season. Dead deer don't grow bigger antlers; that's something Nicosia and her husband, Donnie, keep in mind when managing their property and deer herd. "We've been watching this buck for 3 years," Nicosia said. "We

have been putting out Antler Max attractant as a supplemental feed during the spring and summer. The supplemental feeding with protein really puts on the antler growth. We only shoot mature bucks or cull racks if we see they're not growing bigger.

"I video'd him last year because he had so much potential," she said. "He was about a 138-inch, 10-point last year, and this year, we estimated that he'd grown into the 160-inch range with 13-points, so we were going to try and harvest him if we got an opportunity."

## MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

When you manage a hunting property for older, mature deer you've got to shoot a lot of does, and Nicosia usually shoots a few with her bow each season.

"We manage the property and pick out the ones we want to shoot and the ones we want to let grow," Nicosia said. "Last year, I saw the buck we named Megatron on my mom's favorite stand, called Boot's Hill. I got him on video twice last year feeding in the foot plot and eating acorns."

Nicosia saw him the second week of bow season, but he got no closer than 50 yards, so she didn't shoot.

"I have a bow shop and teach archery and sell a few bows," said Nicosia. "I grew up hunting with my dad, Doc Harvey, and killed my first deer with him in my late 20s. I just love hunting with a bow." ■

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Michael O'Neal got some help from his 7-year-old son, Wesley, to take down this 12-point trophy buck on Ashbrook Island.



## SON'S WHISPERED INSTRUCTIONS MAKE FATHER'S TROPHY SPECIAL

**Dr.** By Glynn Harris  
Michael O'Neal would no doubt have gotten a big 12-point buck even without whispered instructions from his 7-year-old son, Wesley, but the fact that the youngster was there with him added something extra to the hunt.

O'Neal, an internal medicine physician who works at Ochsner Health Center in Monroe, had his son with him on Oct. 9 on Ashbrook Island along the Mississippi River, a hunting club in which he holds membership.

"I was targeting a buck that first showed up on our cameras in 2017 as a 10-point," O'Neal said. He was a 10-point the following

year, and then in 2019, he had developed two kickers that carried over to this season."

Around 4:15 on the afternoon of Saturday, Oct. 9, O'Neal had his son with him and chose a site to hunt from a lock-on stand that overlooked several persimmon trees that were producing fruit, a favorite food for deer.

"There were actually two lock-on stands in a tree; I got Wesley tied in and secured on one of the stands while I got in the other just above where he sat," O'Neal said. "I had been teaching him about the age difference in deer, and that afternoon, we got to see several of different ages as the deer began showing up to feed on the persimmons."

## AGING DEER

With the first deer showing up within minutes after settling into their stands, the father and son got to speculate on the ages of the bucks.

"We had a small 6-point and then another little 8-point show up, and Wesley was whispering to me correctly that these bucks were immature," O'Neal said. "Later, I saw a bigger deer standing behind some brush at around 50 yards, and when it stepped out, Wesley whispered, 'Dad, that's a mature buck.' He had my phone and began videoing the buck as it approached the persimmon tree. When it got there, Wesley whispered, 'Dad, you gotta shoot this one; he's mature.'"

The youngster became impatient and wondered why his father hadn't taken a shot, but there was a slight problem.

"Wesley had a good clear view of the deer, but there was a small branch in the way, obscuring my visibility," O'Neal said. "When the buck finally stepped out from behind the branch at 18 yards, I released the arrow."

O'Neal shoots a Mathews bow and uses Gold Tip arrows and Rage broadheads. His shot was dead on; the buck only ran 25 yards before tipping over.

The buck, estimated to be 7½ years old, weighed in at 199 pounds, quite a bit less than in its prime. The rack was a main frame 10-point with two sticker points. The inside spread was 19 inches, main beams were 22 inches each with good mass throughout the rack. The buck was green-scored at 149% inches.

## A SPECIAL HUNT

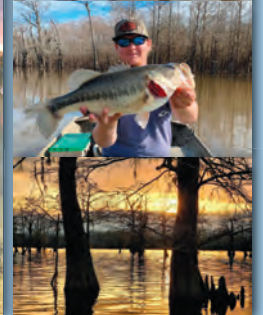
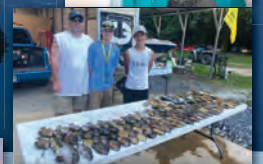
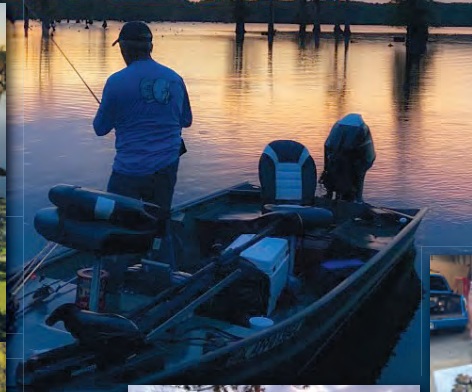
"This hunt would not have been nearly as special had Wesley not been there with me to witness the whole thing," O'Neal said. "When we got down, he wanted to follow the blood trail even though the deer had fallen within sight of us. When it was all over, he said, 'Dad, I was your good-luck charm today, and I think this is my favorite memory of all time.'"

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Kody Hickman of Hornbeck killed this trophy 10-point buck at Peason Ridge WMA on Oct. 9.

# CHOICE OF BOW OVER RIFLE PAYS DIVIDENDS FOR HUNTER

PEASON RIDGE WMA SPITS OUT 153-INCH BUCK FOR LOGGER

**O**pening day of primitive weapons season in Area 3 was Oct. 9, and Kody Hickman, a 23-year-old logger from Hornbeck, planned to hunting that day, but he wondered what weapon to take to his stand.

"After thinking about it for a while," Hickman said, "I decided to take my bow, because I really prefer to bow hunt rather than gun hunt."

Hickman only hunts public land, and one of his favorite areas is Peason Ridge Wildlife Management Area, a 74,309-acre tract in three parishes: Sabine, Natchitoches and Vernon.

"I hunt the Vernon Parish portion of the area, mainly because it's only about 15 minutes from my house," Hickman said.

Peason Ridge is owned by the U.S. Army, which also owns Fort Polk WMA. Both areas are subject to restrictions when maneuvers are taking place. Rolling pine hills, meandering streams dotted with acorn-producing oaks dominate on Peason Ridge.

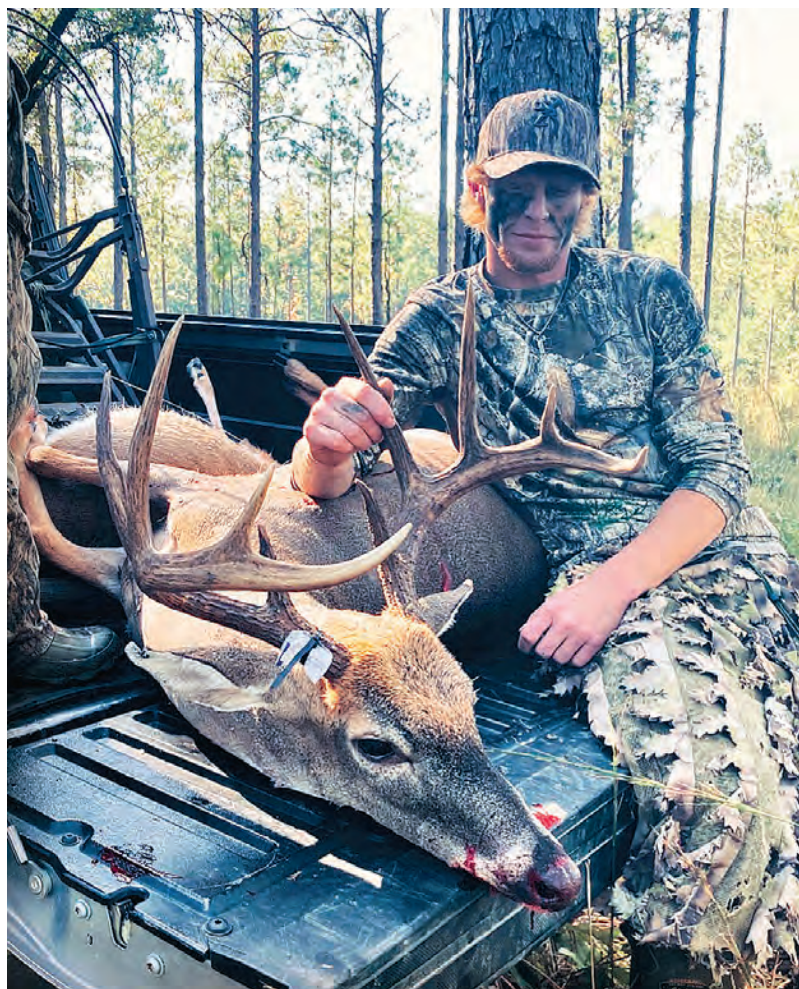
The morning of Oct. 9, Hickman left his rifle and carried his Martin Alien bow and quiver of 340 Gold Tip arrows fitted with 110 grain Hatchet broadheads.

"I found a long draw where oaks were growing, trees that were producing acorns I knew deer liked," Hickman said. "Taking my Summit climbing stand, I climbed a big pine 30 feet and waited to see if something might show up."

## NEW TERRITORY

Hickman was taking a chance on the location he chose being a good spot because of the availability of the mast deer love; any deer he saw would be one he had never seen before.

"I settled into my stand and hadn't been there long when I saw movement down the draw, and there stood this big buck, 200 yards away," he said. "I was mentally kicking myself for leaving my rifle standing in the corner, because here I sat with my bow. All I could do was watch the deer standing there, when I noticed something happening in my favor; the deer started feeding down the draw, picking up acorns as he headed in my direction. I kept watching as the buck worked its way closer and closer,



**“***I couldn't believe my good luck to have a buck that size come all the way down the draw to where I was; it was like I had him on a string.***”**

and as it got within bow range, I was able to draw. I released the arrow when the buck turned broadside at 8 steps from my tree."

Hickman's aim was dead-on; the buck only ran 25 yards before collapsing and falling.

"I couldn't believe my good luck to have a buck that size come all the way down the draw to where I was; it was like I had him on a string. It surely was nerve wracking though, to have to wait him out," Hickman said.

The 10-point buck weighed 184 pounds, was estimated to be 4½ years of age with an inside spread of 19 inches. Antler mass carried throughout the entire rack. The antlers were green scored at 153½ inches. ■

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# BEAR PROBLEMS DRAWING ATTENTION

MEMBERS OF SOCIAL-MEDIA GROUP WANT LDWF ACTION

**H** By Kinny Haddox  
unters in several areas of Louisiana are frustrated and growing impatient with increasing damage to deer stands, feeders and other equipment caused by an unchecked, unmanaged and fast-growing population of black bears.

And it's not just in the river bottoms, where bears traditionally are suited to live. Concerned hunters have now set up a Facebook page to call attention to the growing problem. And it's booming.

One of the hardest-hit parishes is Union, which in many seasons leads the state in deer harvest. The social-media page

started there and grew quickly. The Louisiana Black Bear Report Group page picked up almost 1,000 new members the first 48 hours.

The official "About the Group" explanation is, "A place to report Black Bear sightings in Louisiana. We as hunters want LDWF to use this information to hopefully open a black bear season Louisiana."

However, the photos, videos and comments show hunters' frustration and aggravation that the state's wildlife leaders seem to be ignoring. One of the most dramatic photos posted is from the Adams Hunting Club, showing a very large black bear taking down a deer feeder and looking as if he is about to body slam it like Hulk Hogan in the wrestling ring. The person posting also said three other bears had climbed the tree and were working to detach the feeder from the tree.

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## TROUBLE SPOTS

"We are trying to get as many eyes in the field watching game cameras and trying to facilitate as many photos on one page as we can, so the state can understand where hot spots are and maybe realize we are going to have to manage them," said Greg Hicks, one of the page's founders. "The amount of money it is costing hunters because of the damage is extremely frustrating. That means it is costing the state tax dollars, too. That doesn't even begin to tell what farmers are up against. We just don't want the bear problem to get like the feral hog problem and be out of control before people in charge realize how significant it is."

Perhaps the most worrisome to Hicks and others is all these additional bears in the piney woods. The area is already stressed to the max with hogs and deer, and now bears all competing for the same food sources and habitat. Something's going to lose, and Hicks is afraid it is going to be whitetails. It is already impacting the number of people who hunt and the money they spend. ■



Hundreds of hunters are posting photos of damage like this done to a deer stand earlier this month. Damage includes doors ripped off, windows broken and torn out, seats destroyed, feeders torn up and even furniture removed from stands and ripped to shreds.



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# DECEMBER'S RUT CALENDARS

**D**eer season is close to its halfway point, and while rutting activity has already wrapped up in some parts of Louisiana, it's slated to kick into high gear in other areas.

In Area 2, northwest Louisiana, the second breeding period, which started Nov. 19, is forecast to end about Dec. 3.

After that, hunters will have to concentrate on food sources for any shot at bucks.

Deer in Areas 4 and 9 will be wrapping up the first rut on or about Dec. 3, with the second scraping period estimated to run from Dec. 4 through Dec. 18. The second breeding period is forecast for Dec. 19 through Jan. 1.

In the Mississippi Delta and upper and lower Atchafalaya Basin, the pre-rut is slated to wrap up on Dec. 3, with the first scraping period running Dec. 4 through Dec. 18, immediately followed by the first rut, Dec. 19 through Jan. 1. ■

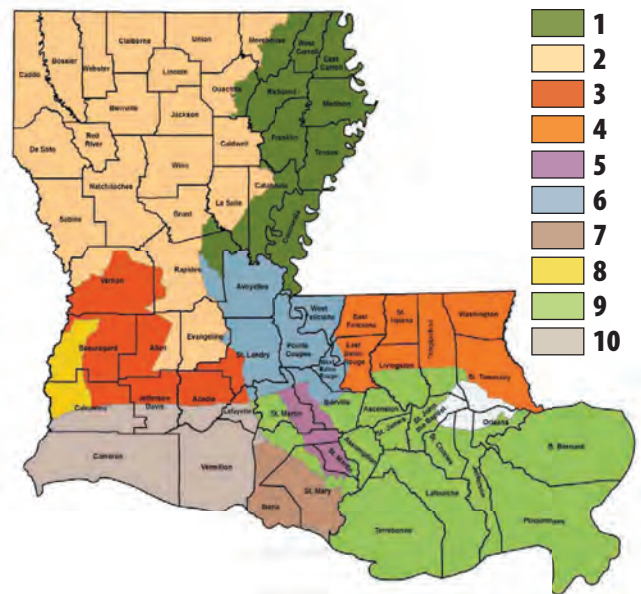
## DECEMBER 2021 Area 2

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	

## 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	

## 2021 - 2022 Deer Hunting Areas



## 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	



# **SIMPLICITY SLAYS THEM**

**BERWICK BOWHUNTER HAS GONE BACK TO BASICS WHEN HE PLANS HIS DEER-HUNTING EXCURSIONS. THAT CHANGE HAS PAID OFF IN RECENT SEASONS.**

■ By Don Shoopman

Rick Small

# THE 8-POINT BUCK that a hunter killed on opening day of bow season

a couple of months ago illustrates his back-to-basics approach, one that increases his success while saving him money and, yes, even his sanity.

Duval Arthur Jr., 39, of Berwick, who supervises the criminal division for the St. Mary Parish sheriff's office, became enamored by an oak ridge he found three years ago, the first season he hunted on a 1,000-acre property.

Arthur's trail cameras and first-hand sightings early that season proved there were "a bunch of small bucks" on the oak ridge, but he wanted to locate big bucks. As a result, he "bounced around" all over the property most of the season, quite unsuccessfully.

Then, he simply changed his game plan.

"Late December, I went into the middle of the property that stays nasty with mud and water," he said. "I found an opening in the middle of a bunch of thickets and when I first found it, I found a big, 8-point dead head and figured this is probably a good spot to hunt. So on Dec. 23, 2019, I shot a big 8-point."

Fast-forward to Oct. 1, 2021. As opening day approached, Arthur realized something.

"I completely forgot about the oak ridge. This year, I put out two cameras, one of them a cell camera," he said.

He consistently saw three mature bucks from July through Aug. 29, the day Hurricane Ida smashed into southeast Louisiana. But Arthur got no bucks on camera after the storm, going from 70 to 75 daily photos of bucks to two photos a day of does.

"I didn't see bucks for 2, 2½ weeks," he said. "A good buck finally came back up after a cold front. I only saw it at night and early in the morning.

"So, opening morning I said, 'I'm going to get tore up by mosquitoes, but I'm going.' That morning, there were three bucks at my stand (before legal shooting hours), so I couldn't go

hunt until after they left. It was after daylight when I went to sit. I didn't see anything."

## A CHANGE OF PLANS

That night, he planned to help out at a friend's deer hunting camp in Mississippi. Arthur called his buddy, who suggested he stay home and try for one of those bucks.

Arthur agreed, and he returned to the oak ridge in the afternoon. Just before the sun sank, the 8-pointer appeared, circled the hunter and walked toward him.

"Thank God I wasn't downwind (of him)," Arthur said.

Arthur drew his Mathews compound bow and sent an Easton 5MM Full Metal Jacket arrow toward the target, 23 yards away. The Schwacker broadhead thwacked home just above the deer's right shoulder.

Wise use of trail cameras, particularly videos and common sense were keys to his first deer this season. Most important, he's keeping it simple.

## KEEP IT SIMPLE

Arthur credits a local outdoorsman, Jason St. Germain, for opening his eyes to the excesses affecting his deer-hunting suc-



Duval Arthur Jr. took this nice 8-point buck on his lease on Oct. 1, 2021, opening day for archery season in Louisiana. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Duval Arthur Jr. started killing good bucks when he quit relying on the latest gimmicks and technology and went back to deer-hunting basics.



cess. St. Germain has the means to get into all that stuff, Arthur said, but he heads out for a deer hunt wearing blue jeans and a green shirt, then emphasizes the basics, like setting up and playing the wind.

Arthur, who got hooked on bowhunting in 2014, admitted he had lost those basics.

"I would drive myself crazy. I had 15 cameras. Five deer on three different islands. I was kind of overthinking it," he said. "I was my own worst enemy. All the crap that I'd buy. Everybody's got 'something that works.'"

Arthur had been through the gimmicks-and-gadgets stage, spending \$1,000 or so a year on the latest-touted equipment and gear.

"I used to drive myself crazy doing all that extra crap. You need to tone it down, keep to basics. I just dumb it down," Arthur said. "If you understand the basic concept on how deer work, it's going to happen. If you keep it simple, find a bed, find the food, play the wind, monitor the cameras to make sure when they're stirring."



**Don Shoopman** fishes for freshwater and saltwater species mostly in and around the Atchafalaya Basin and Vermilion Bay. He moved to the Sportsman's Paradise in 1976, and he and his wife June live in New Iberia. They have two grown sons.

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Duval Arthur Jr. eats, sleeps and lives deer hunting; he's got no desire to take any other big-game animal.

## CANDID CAMERAS

Arthur believes a video camera is the best tool because, for example, so many times a hunter doesn't see the buck behind the doe.

"I use the hell out of my cameras," said Arthur, whose go-to choices are Tactacam and Browning Defender.

He also watches "everybody else's" success stories on videos.

"I watch tons of deer-hunting videos on YouTube," he said.

A former dyed-in-the-wool duck hunter, Arthur hunts deer exclusively because of the challenge they present.

"The only hunting I like is whitetail. I don't want to hunt any other animal — not elk, not moose. I'm addicted to shooting whitetail deer. I enjoy the chase. They're extremely smart, especially the older, mature bucks," he said.

When Arthur first started hunting deer, one of his goals was to fill out six deer tags. After a few seasons, shooting young deer lost its appeal, so he raised the bar.

## ON THE ROAD, AGAIN

Through about 17 seasons, Arthur has harvested about 50 deer in Louisiana, Illinois, Kentucky and Kansas. He killed a 250-pound whitetail while bowhunting in Illinois. He has some other favorites, including four shoulder mounts of bucks that "are very special to me," as well as about 20 skull mounts of "good deer that I'm proud of."

He has expanding his deer hunting to Mississippi and Texas



this season.

Arthur hunted in October in Louisiana and Texas, where he shot a good-sized buck on Oct. 24 on a ranch. He planned to hunt deer three weeks in Illinois and Kansas in November before returning to Louisiana to hunt the rut. December and January are reserved for in-state deer hunting, plus trips to Mississippi and Texas.

Deer hunting in the Midwest has made Arthur a better hunter in Louisiana.

"I learned everything I know up north. It's a true hunting atmosphere. Hunt. Intercept. It's a totally different ballgame than down here, easier up north," he said. "It's just the volume of deer. You can pattern them. It's just tough down here, man."


When the deer hunting gets tough in his home state, the tough get going, as he has proved, and they keep it simple. ■

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A large buck with impressive antlers stands in a field of tall grass. The buck is facing left, and its antlers are large and multi-tined. The background is a soft-focus field of grass and trees.

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WAY. HERE'S HOW TO AVOID  
THEM AND TAG THAT BIG BUCK.**

# **OBSTACLE** **COURSE** ■ By Kinny Haddox

**D**eer hunting isn't always fun and games, and no matter how much you plan and prepare, Mother Nature can still throw the most-seasoned deer hunter's game plan into a tailspin. The later it gets in the season, the more this can become a factor.

Americans are obsessed with televised game shows; hunters are no different. Sometimes, the more challenges presented, the more rewarding the win. The win, of course, means you brought home that big deer you've been targeting.

Paul Meeks of Tallulah has just about seen it all, and there's no doubt one adversary above all others that can snap defeat from the jaws of victory. It's the wind.

## **OBSTACLE NO. 1: THE WIND >**



## OBSTACLE NO. 1: **THE WIND**

"The most-aggravating issue in deer hunting is the wind," he said. "You can't even depend on the weather forecast. They say it will blow one way, but you get in the stand and it is coming from another direction. Or you get in the stand and it shifts. It can go from light and variable to brisk just like that. And even if it doesn't spook the deer you are hunting, it leaves you sitting there thinking you don't have a chance of going undetected."

Being detected is the kiss of death, not only for big deer but for does. Manage the wind and make sure it isn't blowing your scent to the deer.

"When it comes to big bucks, they have nowhere that they

have to go, and if they bust you, you may not see them again in daylight the whole season," he said. "It's even worse for does. I want to make one thing clear: I enjoy shooting a couple of does each year for the meat, and there is nothing more challenging than hunting does. They are more skittish, especially the older does. Even a big old buck doesn't do all the stopping, looking and sniffing that a big, old doe does."

## OBSTACLE NO. 2: **DOES**

Meeks said does are more wary because they are actually watchdogs for bucks. Nature just set it up that way. Does protect their yearlings and the big bucks. If you run off the does,

you've run off the bucks. So be quiet, and be still and treat them just like a buck."

Being quiet and being still are, in fact, next on his list of uh-ohs. If you make noise or wiggle around and allow deer to see you, you're busted. And if you ride your 4-wheeler close enough to the stand for them to see or hear it, you're busted.

Things are a little better during the rut when bucks seem to lose all their good sense. But again, you have to make sure and manage the does to keep them from telling on you.

Meeks is the founder of API Outdoors, the nation's largest producer of climbing tree stands; he invented one of the first climbing stands. A member of the Louisiana Legends of the Outdoors Hall of Fame, he and his son own Great Day, a manufacturer of specialty accessories for all-terrain vehicles. He is a regular speaker at banquets and events, and he knows his way around the deer game.

**OBSTACLE NO. 3: MIND GAMES >**

Keeping the wind in your favor is the only way you can fool a big buck's nose. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Don't forget about does. You might be targeting big bucks, but your hunting property probably needs to have a few does taken, and you don't want does ruining your chances at bucks.



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## OBSTACLE NO. 3: MIND GAMES

Weather conditions like temperature and rain make a difference, but they seem to mess with hunters' heads more than the deer.

"I know some great deer hunters who bag huge deer in the pouring-down rain," he said. "If you can get in the stand during the rain and be there when it stops, that's a good way to overcome what could be a bad day. Sometimes after a rain, especially in the rut, those deer will get back out and freshen up rubs and scrapes."

Perhaps Meeks' most-rewarding deer hunt was on a hot, windy day when he wasn't even going hunting until his wife reminded him he couldn't kill one sitting in the den.

"I had been hunting this big deer and had it pinpointed, but I wasn't even interested in going because it was so hot, and the wind was blowing right into the area he was laid up in," Meeks said. "I knew I couldn't hunt the stand I had set up because of the wind, so I made the decision to walk almost a mile out of my way and come in on the other side. I just sat down by a tree and made a little brush blind. I had not been there long at all when I heard some grunting and deer running around. I hit my grunt call a couple of times, and down through an opening, I saw a doe run across. It wasn't but a few seconds later that the big buck came into the opening and stopped. I shot him, and

## IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE...

It can happen to anybody. In the blink of an eye.

Perhaps the most-dreaded "obstacle" to a successful hunt is falling out of a tree stand.

Paul Meeks preached and taught hunter safety for 40 years, then, last year, it happened to him, and was almost tragic. He tells the story so others know it can literally happen to anyone in a heartbeat — and not just in a climbing stand, but even in a box stand.

Last season, he and his son, Ilar Paul, headed to Kansas on Dec. 13 to hunt. Kansas weather is often rough in December, but they had a good first-day hunt from commercially made, elevated box blinds that helped cut the cold and wind. The second day, they decided on an all-day sit. They saw several good bucks, but none they wanted to shoot. That afternoon the sun came out and the snow melted a little, creating some icy footing.

On the morning of Dec. 16, they decided on another all-day sit, expecting the deer to be move in the better weather.

"We took the Ranger to our stands," Meeks said. "I dropped Ilar off at his stand and reminded him that I would see him at dark. I parked, gathered up my equipment and headed for my stand. It was a beautiful morning, and there wasn't a thought in my mind of any danger with getting into my stand.

"When I reached the stand, I proceeded to climb up the



stepladder with no problem. Stepping onto the platform was easy. Next, I had to step to the right side of the platform to reach the door knob. Unconsciously, I leaned against the handrail on the right side of the platform. In a second's time, the handrail gave way or bent just enough that I lost my footing on the icy platform.

"Before I knew it, I was hanging upside down over the edge of the platform, supported by only a one-handed grip on the handrail. I could feel my grip on the rail slipping but there was nothing I could do but let go. Next, I was falling toward the metal braces that were attached to the blind's legs.

"Immediately, my left side was on fire with pain. When I decided I wasn't dead, I tried to move. I couldn't — my clothing was hung on the metal brace that ripped through my ribs. At that point, I tried to gather my sense. Fortunately, I could reach my cell phone and called my son. He was there in just a few minutes, put me in the Ranger and headed to our truck."

Meeks was stabilized at a nearby hospital before a trip to a trauma center in Wichita. He is back on his feet and, miraculously, almost totally recovered.

"I want to give credit to God for His presence through this whole ordeal and the miracles that I know he performed," Meeks said. "That's the only reason I'm here today." ■

You can't kill a deer from the couch in your man cave. Hunt as often as you can and as often as conditions will allow. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Paul Meeks' dangerous 2020 fall from a deer stand wasn't from a climber or lock-on, but from a platform stand.



he fell in his tracks.”

The deer was a main-frame 10-pointer with six sticker points that scored in the 160s.

That story points out another obstacle for hunters. Don't take the easy way out. Had he not gone to so much trouble, he would never have taken that deer.

## OBSTACLE NO. 4: ANIMALS

Mother Nature can also throw obstacles your way. The growing numbers of black bears, feral hogs and coyotes can throw

off even the best-laid hunting plans. The good news is, they are mostly avoiding you as much as you are them, but their feeding, travel and bedding habits can also change the movement of deer.

“Deer aren't afraid of bears and hogs; they just don't like to be around them,” Meeks said. “That's what I've found. There are some people up here really hurting because the bears are literally running the deer out of their woods. It's out of control. We need a season on them or some relief of some kind.

“I can tell you, without a doubt that when you overcome obstacles to take a deer, it makes it so much better,” he said. “That deer that I spent so much time on and went the extra mile — I was prouder of it than any bigger deer that I've killed just walking out to the stand, waiting an hour and taking it right where and when I knew it would be.” ■

### STICKS & STRINGS >



*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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## STICKS AND STRINGS

Sammy Romano



A dry fire can be devastating to a bow setup.

# DRY FIRES SET FIRE TO PLENTY OF BOWS

DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT PULLING BACK A BOW WITHOUT THE PROPER ARROW AND RELEASE

I am writing as I sit at work, waiting for a customer who is bringing in his bow for an emergency repair. It's 8 a.m., and he is leaving for an outfitted Missouri whitetail hunt at noon.

His bow was dry-fired by a "buddy" with whom he was practicing. Until he gets here, I'm not even sure if I have all of the parts I'll need to repair the bow. This will be the fourth or fifth dry-fired or derailed bow I have repaired just before someone's major hunting trip this week. It seems ignorance is winning the war over common sense, so this inspired me to write about some of these incidents in the hopes of saving someone else from being put in the horrible situation these guys are in.

Here are some of the more common causes of archery mishaps and my advice for avoiding them. I give the same speech about dos and don'ts every time we sell a bow, and sadly, all of these are included under the DON'T column.

### NO DRY FIRES, EVER

The first one is obvious, but I feel the need to reiterate it here anyway. **NEVER, EVER DRY-FIRE ANY BOW.** When you dry-fire a bow — shoot it without an arrow of proper weight securely and fully snapped onto the string — the energy that would have been transferred to the arrow has to go somewhere. That some-

where is rarely a good place, especially with today's high-speed bows. The excess energy is dissipated as vibration and noise, and it often does severe damage to the bow.

Damage from a dry fire may include broken string and cables, bent or broken cams or even broken limbs. In very rare cases, there is no obvious damage to the bow, but even then, it often causes the bow to become untuned.

Notice what I wrote about proper arrow weight and fully nocking the arrow. Most people consider a dry fire to be shooting the bow without an arrow at all, but if the arrow is too light or isn't fully attached to the string, the result can be the same.

In many cases, probably even 50% of the time, the person who dry-fires the bow isn't the bow's owner. It amazes me that someone will pick up another person's weapon without first asking, but I see this time and again. Often, while the archer is walking to the target to retrieve their arrows, a "buddy" who is watching him shoot picks up their bow and lets it rip without an arrow in it. The archer hears the sickening sound, and turns around to see the friend holding what is left of his or her bow with a

dumbfounded expression on his or her face. Never leave your bow unattended if you can help it. Also, explain to anyone attending a practice session not to touch your bow or dry-fire any bow.

### BOOZE? NO BOW

Alcohol also plays into many of these dry-fire scenarios. Other than the obvious fact that alcohol and weapons don't mix, alcohol greatly increases the "stupid factor" for both the archer and any bystanders. While I feel bad for anyone whose bow has been dry-fired, I'm reminded of what Forrest Gump's Mama always said: "Stupid is as stupid does." I won't belabor this point any further, suffice to say that Darwin takes effect here quite often.

### TUNE UP, TUNE OUT

A third common cause I see for dry fires is someone working on or tuning their own bow. The human brain — especially



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

the male human brain — does not multi-task very well when performing unfamiliar tasks. I recently had a customer who had just dry-fired his bow once, dry-fire it again while tuning it for broadheads. His broadheads were hitting a half-inch to the right, and after adjusting his rest slightly to compensate, he forgot to put his arrow back in the bow. You can imagine his disgust when he released another empty string and his bow exploded for the second time in a week.

One customer derailed a bow twice and dry-fired his backup bow, all within three days. His wife had purchased some lighted nocks for him online. After he derailed the first bow, he came in and purchased a new one. This was a Saturday, and he was leaving for Kansas on a big hunt in just a few days, so I restrung the original bow and rigged his new one on the spot.

I mentioned that his lighted nocks looked like they were inferior Chinese copies of a Nockturnal. On Monday morning, he was back with both bows blown up. The Chinese-made nocks were the culprit. The flimsy plastic from which they were made allowed them to disengage from the string at full draw. We got him fixed up, and he is in Kansas hunting as I'm typing this.

Most of the above issue could have been easily avoided by using a little common sense. Today's high-powered bows are not forgiving of dry fires or derails. Pulling these bows without a release will result in a string derailing if the bow is torqued even slightly. In many cases, this is even more damaging than a dry fire.

Never pull a bow unless you are using a release with an arrow loaded and are aiming at a safe target. A little good judgement now will save a lot of agony and expense later. Good luck this season. ■



The bow suffered a splintered limb that was caused by a derail/dry-fire.

Sammy Romano



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# FALLING DUCK NUMBERS IN LOUISIANA HAVE HUNTERS LOOKING FOR WAYS TO STOP THE DECLINE OR OFFSET IT.

By Steve Himel

It used to be so easy. Before the start of duck season, we would make a trip or two to our lease or favorite public-hunting area, get our blinds and equipment ready, then show up on opening day to enjoy great duck hunting.

Some years were better than others, and there was always a lot to complain about, but we always seemed to have plenty of ducks. Many of us took that for granted.

Things have changed for most Louisiana waterfowl hunters. Some legendary Louisiana duck-hunting areas may have few ducks, and almost all areas are not as productive as a few years ago. Even the sacred ritual of opening morning is only a shadow of what it once was.

Many casual duck hunters have left the sport and turned to fall fishing and deer hunting. But for the remnant of die-hard duck hunters who live and breathe waterfowl-ing, that's not an option. So, what do they do now? Some knowledgeable hunters from around Louisiana provided some answers.

**UNDERSTANDING TRENDS >**

# DISAPPEARING DUCKS?!

## UNDERSTANDING TRENDS

An old Cajun once said, “You kant keel what ain’t dere.”

When ducks no longer show up in places where you hunt, you will not have much success. The trend over the past few years is clear: fewer ducks are wintering in Louisiana.

This was confirmed by Larry Reynolds, the former waterfowl program manager for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, who provided information to help understand exactly what is happening in Louisiana with declining wintering waterfowl populations.

The information gathered through aerial surveys over the past few years indicates a significant downward trend in duck numbers, most notably in southeast Louisiana. Fewer ducks are coming to Louisiana, and some areas that have had good numbers for many years have hardly any ducks. According to Reynolds, some reasons for the decline include: changing weather patterns, agricultural practices, declining habitat and the proliferation of invasive aquatics plants.

Mike Benge, president of Delacroix Corp., one of the largest landholders in Plaquemines and St. Bernard parishes — which leases thousands of acres for duck hunting — can’t pinpoint a single thing.

“There is no simple answer,” he said. “Causes include migration issues, which have to do with changing global weather patterns, wet and dry cycles up and down the flyway and historical

numbers of spillway openings. Our coast can simply not hold the number of waterfowl it once held.

“While feeding in the midwest has had some impact, I do not believe declining wintering duck numbers can be blamed on that. The most-important issue for us is our coastal habitat decline. I have not seen my lease-holders canceling their leases, but I have noticed that on certain days, the launch parking lot is filled and on other days, not so much. Waterfowlers are eternal optimists and will always hunt, no matter what the circumstances.”

The decline in duck numbers is complex, with many contributing factors, and trends don’t appear able to turn around quickly. Redistribution over Louisiana has also changed. Hunters in southeast Louisiana have been some of the most-affected. On the east bank of the Mississippi River, popular hotspots such as Caernarvon, Reggio, Delacroix and the Biloxi Marsh have experienced a significant dropoff in ducks over recent years. Areas around the mouth of the river have continued to be the top spots for ducks in southeast Louisiana, but they have not held nearly as many ducks as in past years. The west bank of the river has been in decline for many years due to habitat loss, and it continues to hold few ducks. Southwest Louisiana has fared better, but the number of wintering ducks remains below long-term historical averages.

## FINDING DUCKS >

Gardon Hoffpauir, owner of Spoonbill Adventures Guide Service, is not giving up on Louisiana’s duck hunting.



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Geese offer an exciting diversion for disappointed duck hunters. **BELOW:** Hunters in southwest Louisiana have fared better than those in southeast Louisiana.

## FINDING DUCKS

To be successful, you must find ducks and hunt where they are. Moving to areas ducks were using was once as simple as moving across the pond or to another pond close by. Now, it might mean moving to another part of the parish, or the next parish over, or across the state, or even out of state.

Finding ducks will take effort, and you may have to reallocate your resources. Money spent on leases and duck boats could be redirected to pay hunts. It might even be time to try some public-land options. Remember those ponds on public land where you started duck hunting? It might be time to give them a try again. Being open-minded and creative will be the key for hunters who do not want to give up the sport.

## NETWORKING, COOPERATING

If the skies are empty where you hunt, you'll need to find new options. Now more than ever, the opportunity to network with other duck hunters exists via social media, hunting chat rooms and other online groups; they're easy places to start. Try forming your own private duck-hunting network, starting with the people you know who hunt waterfowl. Ask them to add their contacts. Soon, you will have a large group of hunters networking, and you should get a good idea who is successful and the best places to find ducks. Hunters can then offer to swap duck hunts, inshore or offshore fishing trips, deer hunts and other outdoor pursuits. Here are some online places to start:

- louisianasportsman.com
- refugeforums.com
- duckhuntingchat.com
- ducks.org

## TREAT YOURSELF

Many accomplished duck hunters cringe at the thought of paying someone to take them hunting. After all, they already know more about duck hunting than almost anyone else, right?

Even though guided hunts may never replace the sense of reward and accomplishment of doing it yourself, adding a



# GO WEST. YOUNG HUNTER-MAN

After a disappointing 2020-2021 season in the Caernarvon area, last January, I decided to go west. A fellow hunter recommended Spoonbill Adventures Guide Service in Welsh. The owner, Glardon Hoffpauir, extended an invitation on short notice, so I took him up on his offer.

Hoffpauir cautioned me that this had been a tough season by his standards, but the pintails and specklebellies were still playing in the waning days of the season. We set up in a pit blind overlooking a flooded rice field with a large spread of duck and goose decoys all around us. As legal shooting time arrived, clouds of geese rose into the brisk, late-January wind on their way to feed, a real spectacle. Plenty of ducks and geese were there to watch, and more than a few were interested in our setup, but things are tough in late season, so we had to work for the ducks taken.

"We have definitely seen a decrease in ducks this year and an overall downward trend over the last few years," said Hoffpauir (337-368-5969). "We see very little migration on cold fronts; the ducks and geese come down and stay. They just move around and get more and more weary as the season wears on.

"We have plenty of fields to hunt, both flooded and dry, and the single most-important factor for birds is a south wind. The birds come in at night to feed in the fields and then head south before sunrise. On a north wind, they have already passed us by the time shooting time comes. When you have a south wind, it slows them up, and we see more birds on those mornings. Days with a south wind and bright sun are the best."

Hoffpauir's goal is "to have everyone leave happy. I think I have done that because they keep coming back, even when the hunting is slow. Even though the duck numbers are down, I still have hope." ■

few guided trips might add some excitement to the disappointment that many hunters have experienced in recent years. You may even learn a thing or two — but you don't have to admit that to anyone. Trips to southwest Louisiana, to Arkansas and even Canada have made priceless memories for some hunting buddies.

## LOWER EXPECTATIONS

Duck hunting in Louisiana will probably never be what it once was, but that doesn't mean we still can't enjoy it just as much. Success should not be judged by the



**Capt. Steve Himel** has hunted and fished in Southeast Louisiana for over 45 years. He operates Marshland Adventures, LLC and has been a freelance outdoor writer for the past 20 years. He is a member of the Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association.

number of ducks on straps, but by the satisfaction and enjoyment of pursuing the sport. Making memories with family and friends is what will be remembered and cherished. ■

## DECIPHERING THE DATA ➤

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# DECIPHERING THE DATA

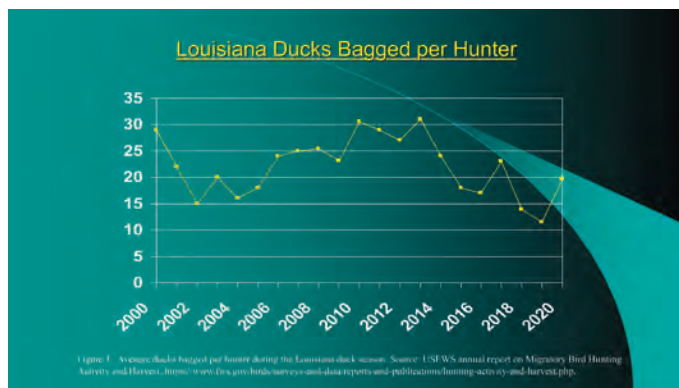
### Mid-winter Survey for All Ducks

	Louisiana	Miss. Flyway	%
5-year average			
1996-2000	3,820,000	6,392,000	60%
2001-2005	3,910,000	6,381,000	61%
2006-2010	3,109,000	6,531,000	48%
2011-2015	3,686,000	7,742,000	48%
2016-2020*	2,818,200	7,036,000	40%
Jan. 2021	2,261,000	5,772,000	39%

\* WI and MN did not conduct surveys in 2019-21

#### Fewer ducks coming to Louisiana

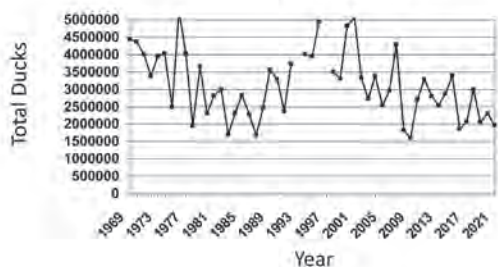
- Over 25% reduction in 5-year averages since 1996;
- From 60% of total Mississippi flyway to 39% from 1996 to 2021.



#### Fewer ducks bagged by Louisiana duck hunters

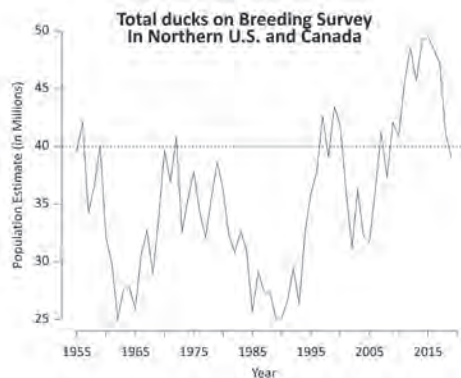
- From a high of over 30 ducks per hunter to a low of under 15 ducks bagged during 2000 – 2020.

### Coastal Transect Aerial Survey January 1969-2021



#### Fewer ducks on Louisiana's coast

- From 5 million to 2 million ducks on our coast from 2001 – 2021



Graphs and data courtesy of Larry Reynolds, LDWF

#### High continental duck populations

- Nearly 50 million total ducks in 2015

#### What does the data show?

Ducks are disappearing in Louisiana. ■

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■ By John Flores

**WITH SPECKLEBELLIES  
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# **GEESE DON'T PLAY GAMES**





## When it comes to waterfowl hunting locations, finding or choosing one can be like a game of

# “DUCK, DUCK, GOOSE”

You go around in circles until you think you've chosen just the spot you want to hunt. Then, suddenly, you find yourself in a desperate game of chase with fewer birds, educated birds and with competition not seen anywhere else along the Mississippi Flyway.

Essentially, by the time mid-December rolls around, ducks and geese have been hunted for three months, from Canada to Louisiana.

They have been enticed into gun range by some of the best callers in the flyway and sky-busted by the unethical. They've been lured, coaxed, tricked and tempted. They've been duped, seduced and inveigled.

In Vermilion Parish, the town of Gueydan, population 1,328, is known as the “Duck Capital of America” — and rightfully so. For more than a century and several generations, the town founded by Jean Pierre Gueydan in the late 1800s was surrounded by rice fields and coastal marsh. It was a mecca for waterfowl that migrated to the region annually.

But over the past three decades, much of that has changed, with coastal wetlands loss as well as changes in agricultural practices, where sugar cane and crawfish ponds are encroaching more and more in southwest Louisiana.

Increased hunting pressure in the region is a growing problem, too, where a hunting blind on nearly every 100 acres of land is common. And finally, climate change has impacted the

duck migration, causing some hunters to see fewer birds during the season.

Despite the challenges, Gueydan remains a waterfowl hotspot year-in and year-out, with both private- and public-land producing average to above-average harvests.

One thing the changes have brought to the region is less attention on ducks and more of a focus on white-fronted geese. John Saucier, owner/operator of Sportsman's Charters in Gueydan, and one of his top guides, Jack Cousin, have both seen a thing or two over the years when chasing specklebellies during a long season.

They point out that much of their focus is paying attention to three things when it comes to speck hunting: concealment, decoys and calling. That said, if you concentrate on these things for white-fronted geese, they will also help put ducks on your strap as well.

### CONCEALMENT IS NO. 1

*What you do the whole season matters at the end.* “Concealment is No. 1, for sure,” Saucier said. “I tell people all of the time, ‘You take care of your blinds to a certain extent the whole season, from Day 1 to Day 74, because what you do the whole season matters at the end.’”

Saucier recommends that hunters take extra care of the natural vegetation that grows on their levees.

Make sure to conceal your duck blinds with vegetation that's present in the immediate area of the blind and refresh it throughout the season.



“You don’t want to be riding all over your levees with your 4-wheelers,” he said, “and you sure don’t want to be letting people walk circles around your pit blind, mashing down the grass and vegetation, so you give them a designated area to stand and walk to the blind.”

“With your 4-wheelers,” he said, “you want to hug the levee and drive parallel to it all the way to the blind when dropping off people. You drop them off, drive past, turn around and take the same track out that you came in on. You don’t want 4-wheeler tracks all over the place out in front of your blind.”

Cousin and other guides are constantly digging up and cutting new brush throughout the year to keep things natural as winter frosts knock vegetation down.

“We’re hunting these levees over the course of a whole season, so we think about that and what kind of preparations do we have to make to maintain it,” he said. “You start thinking about it and getting into a habit of doing it during the early teal season. You have to think about what’s down the road in order to be successful through the whole season.”

Another point Saucier makes is to brush your blind to match the natural habitat you’re working with.

“If we’re hunting a ryegrass or winter wheat field that has winter wheat on it, we’re going to use cedar branches, because they’re the closest match to the habitat we’re hunting on,” he said. “By contrast, if we’re hunting Johnson grass, then we’re going to be digging a lot of clumps of it and making it all naturally blend in with the levee where the pit blind is.”

Cousin said most people have a blind or two, while outfitters like Sportsman’s Charters have 12. Each blind has to be approached differently when it comes to concealment.



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

“You might have some spots with no levee grass hardly at all,” Cousin said. “You have to figure out a way to brush the blind low-profile. You don’t want it sticking out like a sore thumb; specks do figure that out. In other words, you just can’t brush them all the same, across the board. A lot of people think some of the things we say are absolutely crazy and often razz us, saying, ‘You brushed that blind 19 times this year.’ I think a lot of people think that’s overkill, but it isn’t.”

Cousin summed up concealment by saying you don’t want any irregularities between where you’re hiding and what everything else looks like. He remembers one time when a flock of white ibis flared when passing over his blind. “If you can’t brush a blind where a white ibis can’t see you, how do you expect a specklebelly not to spook?”

**DECOYS A TO Z >**

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## DECOYS A TO Z

*You wouldn't think white-fronted geese are that smart, but they don't live to be 20 years old because they're dumb.*

Anyone who knows a birder knows they often use a playback call to attract the species they want to view. With pinpoint accuracy, a warbler, vireo or bunting can locate the source of the sound. Waterfowl are no different. The question is, what will they see?

"Using high-end, fully flocked decoys is a good place to start," Saucier said. "You don't want to use old, beat-up or faded decoys. We also tend to use fewer decoys late in the season. There are days we'll use just five, six or maybe eight decoys and place them upwind from us.

"The way you trick those late-season birds is not calling until those geese are directly downwind from you. They know exactly where that sound is coming from, so you want to make them think it's coming from the decoys. You wouldn't think white-fronted geese are smart, but they don't live to be 20 years

old because they're dumb."

Saucier and Cousin said it's not all about making noise and note that late-season specks will often make multiple passes before committing. What's more, it's about steering them. Therefore, they caution hunters not to overcall.

"If they're coming in an area, and they're already looking at your decoys and loafing across 50, 60, 70 yards high, almost in gun range, it could be three notes, it could be three clucks, it could be a long call and two clucks to finish them," Saucier said. "Some people get to where it's all about making noise. That works up north, because they're hunting birds that aren't getting shot. Pressure is what we have down here."

Saucier said that fully flocked decoys come darker than standard plastic decoys and therefore don't shine. He emphasized that you don't want any glare coming from your decoys.

The downside to flocked decoys is they are more fragile and require more care when being handled.

Additionally, one thing Cousin and Saucier do after the first split of the season is clean their decoys. They also clean them



Specklebellies have become a real draw for waterfowl hunters in the Gueydan area. But waterfowl habitat is on a decline, and hunters with a good spot need to keep it in top-notch shape. **RIGHT:** Paying attention to detail is a key to taking limits of specklebellies once the season really gets going and birds are being more heavily pressured.



whenever they get muddy. They also spend time painting and touching up plastic decoys when necessary.

And they never leave their decoys out.

“In the late season, we’re hunting smaller spreads. We’re picking up decoys daily and never leaving them out. And we’re making sure they’re cleaned daily,” Saucier said, emphasizing the little details and length they go to being successful.

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## DEALING WITH PRESSURE

*In the end, laziness doesn't kill them*

The area around Gueydan has some of the best specklebelly goose callers in the nation. Additionally, with blinds leasing for big money, it's not uncommon for them to be no more than 100 acres apart.

Besides some of the best callers, hunters are also using some of the best decoys.

"You have to manage your pressure. You should let your blinds rest," Saucier said. "Most of the blinds around Gueydan can only take three or four days of hunting per week; more than that you're not going to kill anything. The birds are just not going to go there when there's too much pressure. In the end, laziness doesn't kill them. It's all about being consistent, following the same pattern you use in the first part of the season and not over-pressuring birds."



## PUBLIC OPPORTUNITY

There are public-hunting opportunities around Gueydan. One is White Lake Conservation Area down Highway 19 where lottery hunts for both ducks and geese are held.

Gueydan has always been a coastal hotspot for ducks and geese until recent years, when white-fronted geese have become more of the focus. No matter, it's a region with plenty of birds. Just remember it can be like a game of "Duck-Duck-Goose." Make sure you choose wisely.... ■



Try to limit the amount of time you spend hunting any single blind to three or four days a week. More pressure will negatively affect geese.

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# 10 KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL SPECKLEBELLY HUNTING

• Concealment is the most-critical aspect of successful hunting. Brushing blinds to the natural height of the levee and keeping them up through the season is important.

• Protect your levees and keep vegetation looking natural throughout the season.

• Line up your decoy spread with the wind.

• Don't overcall late in the season; specklebelly geese have been called by some of the best callers in the flyway. It's not about making noise.

• Fully flocked decoys often work better than standard plastic ones; white-fronted geese are in full winter plumage and tend to be darker feathered in the late season.

• Don't use your 4-wheeler to chase cripples; it muddies the field in front of the blind, causing it to look unnatural.

• Pick up your shells and don't leave them around the blind. Empty shotgun shells shine and can spook wary geese.

• Go the extra distance and hide your 4-wheeler as far from the blind as you can. Left too close, it can cause geese to flare.

• Keep your decoys clean and natural looking.

• Don't leave your decoys out; pick them up after each hunt. ■

Keep everything around your blind as natural as possible so it blends into the surroundings and won't alarm approaching geese.

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

**HUNTING SEASONS**

SPECIES	SEASON DATES	BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT	
<b>DOVES+</b>	(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
<b>WOODCOCK^</b>	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31		3	9
<b>TEAL</b> (blue-winged, green-winged, cinnamon)	Sept. 11 - Sept. 26		6	18
<b>RAILS*</b> 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
<b>GALLINULES*</b>	Sept. 11 - 26	Nov. 13 - Jan. 5	15	45
<b>SNIPE</b>	Nov. 2 - Dec. 5 Dec. 18 - Feb. 28		8	24
<b>QUAIL</b>	Nov. 20 - Feb. 28		10	30
<b>RABBIT</b>	Oct. 2 - Feb. 28		8	24
<b>SQUIRREL</b>	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)

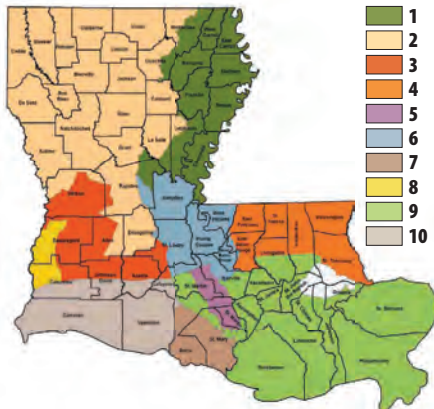
**WATERFOWL SEASONS**

	EAST ZONE	WEST ZONE	
<b>DUCKS*, COOTS &amp; MERGANSERS</b>	Nov. 20 - Dec. 5 Dec. 18 - Jan. 30	Nov. 13 - Dec. 5 Dec. 18 - Jan. 2, Jan. 10-30	
<p>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 &amp; Feb. 5. WEST - Nov. 6-7.</p>			
<b>GEESE</b> (snow, blue, Ross & white-fronted [specklebelly])	<b>EAST ZONE</b> Nov. 6 - Dec. 5	<b>WEST ZONE</b> Nov. 6 - Dec. 5	<p>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.</p> <p>The daily limit for Canada geese is one per day, with a possession limit of three.</p>
<b>CANADA GOOSE SEASON</b>	Dec. 18 - Jan. 30	Dec. 18 - Jan. 2 Jan. 10 - Feb. 6	
<b>CONSERVATION ORDER FOR LIGHT GEESE</b>	<b>EAST ZONE</b> Dec. 6-17 Jan. 31 - March 6	<b>WEST ZONE</b> 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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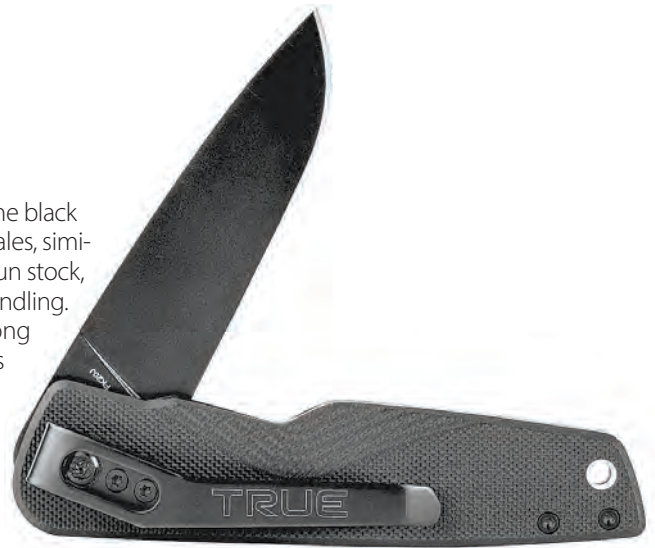
The knife is only 3/4-inch deep, so it fits

easily into a pants pocket. The black oxide finish includes G10 scales, similar to the checkering on a gun stock, that are textured for easy handling.

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The gun is only 43 3/4 inches long. It comes with a Turkish walnut stock featuring a pistol grip. The trigger is selectable.

**MSRP: \$809**

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## HUNTER OF THE MONTH

### Paisley Langton

Paisley Langton, pictured here with her father, Blake Langton, was born with arthrogryposis multiplex congenita, which limits her range of motion and muscle mass severely. With a few modifications made to her rifle, she was able to harvest her first deer on the evening of Oct. 9. It was taken on private land in Sabine Parish.

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## ANGLER OF THE MONTH

### Gage LeBlanc

Gage LeBlanc, 10, loves to fish for sac-a-lait and bass. He tries to fish every weekend with his grandpaw, either in Henderson Lake or the Atchafalaya Basin. His grandpaw brings him as much as possible and even sets his jig pole down to troll around for his grandson to fish.



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**W**ith the air temperature hovering about 28 degrees, compounded by howling winds that multiplied the chill factor, few people would venture out to fish, particularly in an 18-foot skiff on a body of water as large and wide open as Lake Pontchartrain.

On such a day, most people would probably rather crank up the heater and stay home to watch television, especially on Super Bowl Sunday.

But on Jan. 31 1999, Kenny Kreeger with Lake Pontchartrain Charters in Slidell braved the horrible weather and had the best fishing day of his life. Near the old Highway 11 bridge spanning the raging, white-capped lake, he tossed a Sparkle Beetle on a 3/8-ounce jighead toward the pilings holding up the decades-old structure.

“The fish were

just slamming that day,” Kreeger said. “I already had a bunch of 5- to 6-pound trout in the box when the big one hit. I thought it was about a 10-pounder, so I put her in the livewell, but she went belly up. I kept fishing and caught my limit with five trout over 6 pounds, eight over 5 pounds and the rest over four pounds. I never caught a trout under 4 pounds that day. That was a heck of a day and year.”

Kreeger’s big fish wound up weighing 11.99 pounds, the largest speckled trout caught in Louisiana since May 1950, when Leon Mattes landed a 12.38-pounder. While many Louisiana fishermen might not even think about specks until spring, the winter can produce quality action. Anglers probably won’t fill ice chests, but they might notch a better average, as Kreeger proved that blustery January day.

**GO DEEP, SLOW >**



# WINTER wonderland

■ By John N. Felsher

**TROUT FISHERMEN DON'T NEED TO STORE THEIR TACKLE WHEN COLD WEATHER ARRIVES. JUST START LOOKING IN DIFFERENT KINDS OF PLACES AND FISH A LITTLE SLOWER. SPECKS WILL STILL BITE.**



## GO DEEP, GO SLOW

When the thermometer bottoms out, look for the deepest water and fish as slowly as possible. In cold water, cold-blooded trout won't hit baits worked the same way they would in May. With decreased metabolism, even hungry specks won't move far or fast, but they might grab something staring them in the face.

"Trout migrate to deeper holes when the water gets cold," Kreeger said. "In the winter, I use a 3/8-ounce, plain, lead jighead tipped with a plastic trailer and work the bait very slowly. I just bounce it a little off the bottom or pick it up an inch or two and let it fall back down. I work it like that all the way back to the boat. Trout get very lethargic in the cold water and might just watch a fast bait go past them."

Across the vast, south Louisiana marshes, you typically find very little naturally deep water, except in a few larger lakes. Lake Pontchartrain averages about 12 to 15 feet deep. In cold water, fish often hold tight to hard structures, such as concrete pilings that hold up bridges. These concrete objects can absorb solar heat even on the coldest days and radiate that warmth into the surrounding water. On a chilly day, just a 1- or 2-degree difference in temperature could dramatically affect cold-blooded trout.

"In Lake Pontchartrain, trout are usually in 11 to 12 feet of water," Kreeger advised. "When it's cold, the trout like to lay up

against those bridge pilings and won't move very far. They get down into little holes at the bottom. We drag a lure right along the edge of those pilings. In the winter, the trout bite so faint that many people don't even realize a fish hit. Sometimes, we just see the line twitch. People need to really pay attention."

Surrounded by marshes and fed by rivers, both Calcasieu and Sabine lakes in southwestern Louisiana also regularly produce big trout. Both average about 5 to 8 feet deep but have deeper shipping channels. They also contain numerous oyster reefs and some artificial structures that attract trout. Both connect to the Gulf of Mexico through passes lined by jetties, hard structures that also absorb and radiate heat.

## MARSH BAYOUS, CANALS

In marshes near Delacroix, Hopedale, Venice, Golden Meadow and Cocodrie, anglers find uncountable bayous and thousands of miles of canals. Mostly built for oil exploration or extraction, these canals usually run about 8 to 15 feet deep, while surrounding marsh ponds might only hold a foot or two of water. Many ponds go almost completely dry when frigid north winds create hard, low tides in the winter.

"I fish the small, deep bayous, not the big bayous," said Tommy Pellegrin of Custom Charters, who fishes the Cocodrie and Dulacree areas. "I look for a bayou that bends and weaves a little,



Lisa Snuggs fights a big trout in the marsh near Cocodrie, La. With limited deep water in the marshes, try to find holes that might hold fish during cold weather. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Although most people fish a popping cork rig in the warmer months, it can also work during the winter if it's fished properly, that is, slowly.



with a big flat about 3 feet deep and some grass or something on it next to water 6 to 8 feet deep. The trout come out of the deep water to feed. I also like to fish the curves in the bayous where we find the deepest water.”

Work the entire depth range in these canals. Throw baits as close to the shoreline as possible and drag them out to the deepest water. Besides plastic enticements, anglers can thread fresh shrimp on jigheads and work them like soft-plastic baits. With natural baits, leave the offering still for long periods. If nothing bites, move it a few feet at a time.

“I like lures that imitate cocahoe minnows,” Pellegrin said. “I like a 3-inch minnow (olive green back/pearl belly). I usually use a ¼-ounce jighead, but sometimes, I drop down to a ⅛-ounce so it falls slower. Let the bait settle on the bottom and then jump it up a little. Keep moving it slowly like that. If the bait passes in front of its nose, a trout will suck it up, but it won’t chase it.”

Many canals end in a wide, deep, turning basins. Perhaps a wellhead stood there or still does. When temperatures plummet, speckled trout drop into these deeper basins. In the right spots, where they find reasonable temperatures and little tide to fight, specks can stack up in huge numbers.



**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](http://JohnNFelsher.com).

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Mike Herrmann admires a speckled trout he caught during the winter while fishing in the marshes near Delacroix, La.

## SLOW WATER ROCKS

“In cold water, slower tides are better than fast tides because if the water’s cold, the fish are cold and not moving much,” Pellegrin said. “It doesn’t matter if it’s going in or out, as long as it’s moving a little. If it gets extremely cold, I fish dead-end canals where the tide won’t be moving much.”

Most people consider a popping cork a warm-weather technique, but it can produce fish year-round. Sometimes, winter temperatures remain moderate, or a warming spell passes through, making trout feed more aggressively. On a falling tide, toss a live shrimp, minnow or plastic imitation under a popping cork as far up these tiny drains as possible. Let the tide carry it out naturally.

“When we get some warmer days during the winter, the water temperature might rise, and trout will become more active,” Pellegrin said. “In the winter, I prefer a quieter cork. I don’t want it to make a tremendous amount of noise, because trout are not as aggressive as they would be in the spring or summer. I like the old-style, clip-on oval corks because they make the least noise, but they still move the bait. Under the cork, I fish a PowerBait Rattle Shrimp or a 2-inch minnow imitation in a glow color. I dip the tail in chartreuse dye.”



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Tommy Pellegrin shows off a speck he caught while fishing near one of the barrier islands. Look for cuts with deeper water.

## BARRIER ISLAND DITCHES

When he wants to catch bigger specks, Pellegrin heads to barrier islands like Timbalier or Isles Dernieres at the edge of the Gulf, where he finds deeper water and fishes larger baits, like 5-inch soft-plastic trailers on jigheads.

"I like to find deeper troughs and cuts in the islands, usually about 4 to 8 feet deep," Pellegrin said. "Some deep cuts can produce good fish if people know where to look. In the right spots, we catch some big, aggressive trout. In the winter, trout by the islands average about 15 to 20 inches, but we catch many that exceed 20 inches. The inside waters produce better numbers, but trout will be smaller, about 12 to 14 inches long on average."

Many people look for diving seagulls during warmer months, but you might spot some bird action in the winter. When water temperatures drop, trout commonly feed on smaller prey. Watch for smaller birds on colder days.

"Many people call the little terns 'liar birds,'" Pellegrin said. "Most of the time, the terns dive on small fish like anchovies. During the winter, even a little liar bird diving could mean trout feeding on those same, small fish. Don't ever pass up any bird activity during the winter, because that's definitely a sign of bait in the area."

On cold days, trout tend to congregate in places that offer the best combination of comfortable temperatures and food. In the right spot, an angler could put a bunch of fish in the boat quickly, with little competition. Any cast might produce the trout of a lifetime, even on the coldest day. Just ask Kenny Kreeger. ■

For information about Kenny Kreeger of Lake Pontchartrain Charters, call 985-643-2944 or visit [www.lakepontchartraincharters.com](http://www.lakepontchartraincharters.com).

For information about Tommy Pellegrin of Custom Charters, call 985-851-3304 or visit [www.customchartersllc.com](http://www.customchartersllc.com).

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Todd Jouett showing off his reward for trudging through the cool waters at the north end of Turner's on Lake Calcasieu.



## LEAVE THE BOAT FOR WINTER SPECKS

Wading is an effective tactic for fooling trophy trout when the water cools

**P**ersonally, I am looking forward to our winter trout pattern to arrive; I realize I may be in the minority to share that sentiment.

As the mercury continues to drop, I will be looking for trout feeding on mullet in the shallows. Aside from the obvious signs — fleeing mullet, swirls and slicks — I will be keying in on shell and areas with a dark, mud bottom. Both shells and areas with a dark bottom will warm up faster and stay warmer than others. Just a degree or two is a very significant difference in water temperature. Pay attention to the water temperature as you move from one location to another.

Another piece to the puzzle is the proximity to deep water. Whether it be a flat adjacent to the ICW, a river, a bayou or a gut, trout need some sort of access to deeper water during the winter. They will retreat to deeper water when the temperature drops and return to the flats to feed as the sun warms an area.

When targeting winter trout, I prefer to wade. Can we catch big trout from the boat? You bet we can; however, I believe wading puts the odds ever more in your favor of landing that trophy trout. In my opinion, wading offers several advantages to fishing from a boat. First, it allows you to cover an area slowly and thoroughly. Even if the wind is howling, wading allows you to fish an area at your own pace. Wading also allows an angler to fish an area while making a minimal amount of noise compared to fishing from a boat. The other biggie is the knowledge one can gain from wading an area. No matter how many electronics you have on your boat, the best way to learn the ins and outs of an area is to get out and walk it. Wading will give you the ability to learn where the transitions are, depth changes, where humps and guts are as well as finding shell patches.

There are a few lures that I consider must-haves when wading for winter trout: Corky Fat Boys, Maniac Mulletts, Super Spooks and MirrOdines. Slow-sinking and suspending-type baits are

A pink/gold Super Spook ranks high on the list of all-time great topwater lures for speckled trout. Aaron Hommel landing a nice specimen in Coffee Ground Cove in the cool fog.



deadly when targeting trophy winter trout.

I have the most confidence in my Super Spooks when the water temperature is 60 degrees and up, but I have caught trout on topwaters in water as cool as 50.

There is no disputing the effectiveness of a Corky Fat Boy; it has earned its reputation up and down the Texas coast and into Louisiana. However, for the average angler, a Corky can be a challenge to fish effectively. A great number of anglers figured that out after the Corky rush.

There is no silver bullet when it comes to catching trophy trout; granted, some anglers will get lucky but for the vast majority of us being successful requires persistence and skill mixed with some blessings. In my opinion a MirrOdine is much easier to fish for a less-experienced angler, while still providing an exceptional opportunity to get that trophy trout to bite. Also, the MirrOdine does not require the tweaking that a Fat Boy does after catching a fish or two. I repeat that the Fat Boy is absolutely deadly for some winter trout; it is, however, a more technical lure to fish, requiring both skill and patience. For those of you who have yet to experience the results that you desire using a Fat Boy or any other type of suspending or slow-sinking lure, don't be discouraged. Continue to work and inquire to achieve your desired results. No one will ever know all there is to know about this wonderful sport of fishing, to me that is what is so addicting. ■

*Capt. Adam Jaynes guides on Sabine Lake, Lake Calcasieu and surrounding waters. He can be reached at 409-988-3901, on Facebook or at just-fishsabine.com.*

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Robbie Campo finds great success with speckled trout in December fishing the interior of the Biloxi Marsh.



## KEEPING OLD MAN WINTER AT BAY

Shell Beach trout bite best in warmer water; below 53; look for reds, drum, sheepshead

By Joel Masson

**R**obbie Campo, owner of Campo's Marina in Shell Beach, said the December fishing has amazing potential, based upon one, very important factor.

"If it doesn't get too cold, the fishing is going to be just like November; it's going to be awesome," he said. "The warmer it stays, the better off it's going to be for fishing."

Campo recommends anglers stick to areas in the interior of the Biloxi Marsh, such as Stump Lagoon, for speckled trout.

"If you're going to fish Stump Lagoon or Pete's Lagoon or Muscle Bay, what most people do is drift, find the fish and then put the power poles down and fish it for a while," he said.

Contrary to popular belief, the fish aren't always close to the shorelines, according to Campo.

"I have seen people in the middle of Stump Lagoon, reeling them in one after the other," he said.

This month, although live bait isn't crucial, Campo said it's a good idea to bring some shrimp as an insurance policy. Some days, for whatever reason, the fish won't touch plastic lures with any consistency.

"Sometimes, you can get them started with live shrimp and then switch them over to plastic," he said. "I've seen that done many times."

For plastics, Campo likes the lemonhead and shrimp creole colors in the Matrix Shad line of baits.

December can also bring cold weather, and when that

happens, Campo keeps a close eye on his water temperature gauge.

"Usually, when your water temperature goes below 53 degrees, a trout gets lockjaw," he said. "For consistent action, 53 is your cutoff point."

When the water gets too cold, Campo recommends anglers switch to targeting black drum, sheepshead and redfish because of their tolerance to cold water.

"I've seen those bite with the water 48 degrees," he said.

There are a lot of places anglers can find these fish, but Campo certainly has his favorites.

"The old cut in the Long Rocks is generally your best spot, but anywhere along those rocks is usually good," he said.

When the waves aren't too rough to get outside, Campo said the platforms out of Shell Beach, like wells, chair rigs and the Central platform, can hold a lot of sheepshead, as well as redfish. He said certain areas along the structure are better than others.

"You want to fish the side of the well that the shell pad is on," he said. "That is generally where the sheepshead will hang, because they're feeding on top of those shells."

Not only is the style of fishing simple, but the rigging is as well. Campo suggests a ½-ounce Deathgrip jighead with a piece of dead shrimp. On days with more swift tides, he'll add a split-shot about a foot above the jighead.

"You can catch them with dead bait all day-long," he said. ■

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## PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

Chris Holmes



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

# PADDLE UP A WINTER REDFISH

CHOOSE YOUR TRIPS WITH CAUTION,  
THEN PUT THE HAMMER DOWN ON REDS

A big, winter redfish can be a real opportunity — and a challenge — for kayak-bound anglers.



**F**ishing during the summer is obviously more popular in Louisiana than fishing during the winter. However, as the Sportsman's Paradise, we have so many hook-and-barrel pursuits that it's tough to do it all. Fishing, as opposed to hunting, has no closed seasons, so sportsmen who enjoys both tend to slack off a bit on fishing during the winter to take advantage of hunting seasons.

For those kayak anglers who don't hunt — or those that get a weekend or two free from hunting — redfish fishing this time of year can be fantastic. They are cold-water tolerant and predictable. Kayakers who carefully pick their locations and techniques can find some very hot cold-water action.

Winter in Louisiana is a relative term. One day may demand full, winter gear, while others may allow for wearing shorts and sandals. The key to successfully pursuing redfish is a consistent weather pattern. General winter conditions bring to the coastal marshes extremely low tidal conditions and cold fronts with nearly unbearable winds.

Of course, kayak anglers are particularly susceptible to the elements and should avoid unsafe conditions. Proper wind and waterproof gear is essential. As conditions calm, they can actually be a boon to the tactful kayak angler.

## LOW-WATER ADVANTAGES

The low tides of winter allow kayak anglers to actually see the bottom conditions and structure in given areas. Oyster bars are readily visible and point the angler to areas where redfish congregate in winter. The inside turns of a bayou will show mud flats; however, the outside banks of any sharp turns are scoured deeper than the surrounding areas and are

a good bet for finding concentrated redfish.

Fishing an oyster-covered bottom that runs deep into a canal or an outside bayou turn generally leads to redfish stacked up — literally on top of each other. They gather where the deep water provides warmer, more stable temperatures. It is not uncommon for a group of kayak anglers to catch and release scores of reds without ever moving from a spot.

Winds concentrate bait against the shoreline, and reds are there to wreak havoc. Utilize this to your advantage and either stake out within casting distance or drift down the shoreline as conditions allow. Finding such areas that receive the wind generally means a redfish bonanza that can quickly provide plenty of action.

Weather stability is the key. Immediately after a front can be slow. However, a few days after the passage, when the weather stabilizes, reds are generally stacked in deeper areas. If it warms a bit, reds move in and spread out along nearby shallower bays and shorelines. The bright, winter sun quickly radiates through the shallower waters to the dark muddy or shell-covered bottoms. This causes the water in these areas to warm by several degrees. Even this slight warming of the water temperature can turn winter redfish into feeding machines. They are a bit more spread out, but can still be caught. They remain in these areas in order to have easy access to move back to deeper, warmer waters when conditions again turn cold.

## NOT PICKY EATERS >



## PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

continued

### NOT PICKY EATERS

Reds are bottom feeders and root around searching for any critters they can find. They have a powerful crusher in their mouths that are great for dispatching their favorite prey of shrimp and crabs. However, redfish also eat small fish and readily take artificial baits. Any artificial bait that reasonably resembles food to a redfish is quickly devoured if cast in their vicinity. They are not picky.

Known for their quick, drag-burning runs, these bronze brutes can easily test an angler's stamina. There is nothing more exciting than a big red screaming across a clear, shallow pond. Their power is evident as soon as you set the hook and they put up a great fight in the kayak. Be ready for strong, charging runs, sometimes pulling the kayak with them as they try to regain their freedom.

During the winter, dead shrimp and live minnows are the preferred baits of many kayak anglers. Slowly fished, Carolina-rigged on the bottom or dangling under a popping cork, these natural offerings easily entice a hungry redfish.

However, for those that prefer the trickery of artificial baits, redfish are quick to oblige. Soft plastic minnow imitations, small crankbaits, and spinnerbaits, all put redfish on the end of your line. A major redfish favorite is the weedless gold spoon. They can't resist the wobble and flash of these glittery chunks of metal. Spoons are simple to use and their streamline shape and weight make them ideal for kayak casting in winter winds.

### HYPOTHERMIA KILLS

Kayakers are particularly susceptible to hypothermia. Kayaks offer no protection from the elements, and you are going to get wet. For safe fishing in cold-weather conditions, wearing a PFD and warm, wind and waterproof clothing from head to toe is a must.

Your body heat drops quickly if you are wet or exposed to cold wind. Tight clothing hinders circulation and can contribute to hypothermia.

Here are some tips for preventing and dealing with hypothermia.

- Dress appropriately and stay warm and dry.
- Conserve energy. Exhaustion leads to a quicker onset of hypothermia.
- Symptoms of hypothermia are confused speech, sleepiness and disorientation.
- Shivering is your body's attempt to generate heat and ward off hypothermia.
- Alcohol, caffeine and tobacco exacerbate hypothermia and should never be used if you will be exposed to winter elements.
- Treat the symptoms of hypothermia with dry clothing, a warm fire, warm liquids (no coffee, tea or alcohol) and high-energy foods.



Redfish in Louisiana's marshes will fall for a number of different lures or baits. It's not unusual to catch and release dozens from the same spot once you locate them.

### CONCENTRATED BY THE COLD

Contrary to some belief, redfish don't just show up in the marsh in winter. They live there for the first several years of their lives until they move offshore into the Gulf of Mexico for spawning. However, winter conditions can greatly concentrate them.

When the weather is cold, battling one redfish after another from a kayak quickly warms things up. While challenging, redfish are relatively easy to catch and offer terrific sport for kayak anglers. Instead of sitting by the fire dreaming of those warm spring days to come, put on some warm, waterproof gear and head to the marsh for some of the hottest kayak fishing around. ■

## SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope



Barracudas are among the ocean's most-vicious predators; they're found inshore, offshore and everywhere in between. BELOW: This 'cuda was caught 50 miles offshore.

# SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: GREAT BARRACUDA

### VICIOUS PREDATOR SWIMS IN MOST OF THE WORLD'S OCEANS, AND IS AT HOME ANYWHERE

**T**he great barracuda, *Sphyræna barracuda*, is a large, missile-shaped predator found throughout the world's oceans. It is a menacing-looking fish, with a mouth full of sharp teeth, and it lives up to their looks when hungry or provoked.

In the United States, they are commonly referred to simply as barracuda, because the great barracuda is the only species of its family that is numerous enough to draw attention from anglers.

It varies widely in its coloration, depending on the water where it's living. Most are blue-gray along the back, fading to silvery white along the bottom of their bodies. They often have a row of dark bars and black blotches along their sides.

Barracudas have two dorsal fins; the second one is usually dark purple to black with a white tip. The anal and caudal fins match the second dorsal. They have powerful jaws, and their teeth look like fangs. Their teeth are so long that they have holes in their mouths opposite the teeth, allowing the fish to close its mouth without biting itself.

These fish are commonly seen and caught by anglers around oil rigs, wrecks and reefs, natural and artificial. Most are caught offshore, but it's not uncommon for anglers to catch them around near-shore structure.

Barracudas have a large swim bladder that allows them to hover close to the surface without moving. This makes them deadly to other fish, which happen

upon them without being alerted to their presence. Once those fish are in range, the barracuda launches into action with a sudden burst of speed, capturing its prey with a quick slash.

## OPPORTUNISTIC

A barracuda's diet consist of any living creature in the sea. They are known to attack fish larger than themselves, biting them into chunks. Barracudas aren't very mobile, but they can exceed speeds of 27 mph in short bursts. They hunt solo for the most part, but fisheries biologists have observed several working together to herd schools of prey.

Aside from hunting their own prey, barracudas will often eat the scraps of other predator fish. They are known for hanging around spear fishermen in hopes of stealing their speared fish. On rare occasions, they have bitten spear fishermen while attempting to nab their catch.

Anglers targeting barracuda have the most luck with live bait, but artificial lures retrieved very quickly will also draw strikes from these fish.

Barracuda are rarely misidentified, but they are sometimes mistaken for king mackerel or wahoo. They are often called "cudas." Another nickname is "giant sea pike."

Louisiana's state-record barracuda, caught by A.C. Mills in August 1970, weighed 50 pounds. The Mississippi state record, caught by Matt Glenn, weighed 52 pounds, 6 ounces. He caught the fish

in August 2012.

The world-record barracuda weighed 87 pounds, 3 ounces. Christian Loranger caught it in September 2012 off the coast of Christmas Island, Kiribati.



Brian Cope



**Brian Cope** of Borden, S.C., is a retired U.S. 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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Caney Lake



**BASS ARE LINING UP FOR HOLIDAY GOODIES, AND ANGLERS NEED TO KNOW HOW TO SET A BIG SPREAD FOR BIG HAWGS. HERE'S ONE EXPERT'S MENU.**

**CANEY LAKE'S**

# **Christmas Cheer**

By Kinny Haddox

## Kids may be all snuggled in their beds in December, but it's not sugarplums dancing in the heads of their bass-fishing fathers who frequent

# CANEY LAKE

A dependable trophy lake in Jackson Parish, Caney is good all the time, but this is the month its bass begin to belly up to Christmas dinner and fatten up for the spring spawn.

Bass anglers know this is the time of the year that Santa can put a bunch of big bass in their stockings — a great time to try and break that 10-pound mark. Another plus is that fishing pressure is not as bad as you would think.

Corey Harris of West Monroe has a lot of experience on the lake. In December 2018, he landed his personal best, a 13.57-pound bass that he weighed, photographed and released right where he caught it. He also recalls with a laugh that he was the only boat on the lake on that miserable day.

From catching numerous 10-pound fish, plus his all-time best, he also teamed up with local angler Hunter Freeman a couple of years ago to boat a 5-fish limit that weighed 36.30 pounds. The two anglers caught more than 40 bass that December day, most of them weighing 4 pounds or better.

"That was an absolutely perfect day," he said. "That was a once-in-a-lifetime trip, but it could happen again the way Caney is today."

Knowing what made that "perfect day" can also help anglers catch their own trophy bass or huge stringer. The first tip Harris offers doesn't have to do with water temperature or water clarity or the Solunar Tables. It has to do with the sky.

"That is the first thing I look at in December to determine how, where and what I'll fish with: The sky. I look to the sky," he said. "If it's sunny, I know I need to go look for fish offshore. If it's cloudy, I know the fish are going to be up shallow, even in the colder months."

He describes "offshore" as water 15 to 25 feet deep. The sun also tends to keep fish bunched up on grass beds or brush tops that cover much of the lake's bottom. He said the best areas seem to be near the bends in the creeks and channels.

When it's cloudy, Harris said fish will stay in 6 feet of water or less pretty much all day. Fish tend to roam, however, and where you caught them yesterday, they may not be today. He has also noticed that fish may bite in different areas on different days, even though fish are still in all those areas. You just have to be methodical and find the ones that will bite.

When it comes down to it, his best days on the lake are when the weather seems to be at its most miserable.

"The second key to big bass is the grass," Harris said. "What's made Caney have such a remarkable comeback is that the grass is pretty much all over the lake now. That supports the whole life cycle of the lake, and that is where the bass are going to be."

BELOW: A jig and plastic trailer of some sort is a tremendous lure on Caney Lake in December, whether you're fishing shallow or deep.



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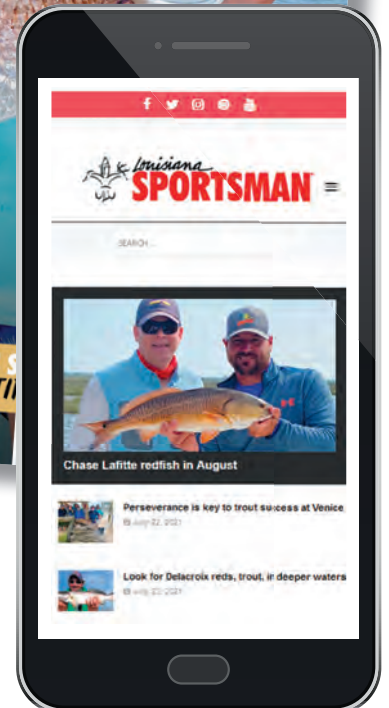
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“One time, they killed all the grass out of the lake, and it almost killed the lake. Now, it is flourishing, and we need to keep it that way. To try and kill the grass in Caney would be a death sentence for the best big-bass lake in Louisiana.”

Harris looks for the greener grass. The older, dying patches don't hold very many fish, probably because the dying grass sucks oxygen out of the water and doesn't offer as much warmth as the green, healthy grass beds.

A host of lures will catch Caney bass this time of year, but Harris has two without which he won't go to the lake.

“There's no doubt the two best lures at Caney are a Rat-L-Trap and a jig with a plastic trailer,” he said. “You can pound the grass beds shallow or deep with a jig, and they'll eat it up. The best way to work it is to cast it out and slowly bounce it back across the bottom or through the holes in the grass.”

Fish love the red or crawfish colors, but they will also hit gold or silver when they are really biting. But some days they are a little more picky about how they like their Rat-L-Trap presented.

“Some days, they just want you to tick the top of the grass with the Trap and keep it moving,” Harris said. “Other days, they want it down in the grass. Let it fall in the grass and rip it out. They'll usually hit it as you pull the bait away from the grass.”



Still other days, you just have to throw it out as far as you can and burn it back across the top of the grass. In December, that isn't as common as other months, but it often produces when nothing else will.

“You just have to let the fish tell you how they want it on that particular day and part of the lake.”

Caney provides more than just big bass. If an angler wants to go catch 2- to 4-pounders, that's a very realistic expectation, especially on cloudy days.

“What you need to do is just tie on a Rat-L-Trap and a jig and hit the shore and fish the grass,” Harris said. “Keep up with where you are catching fish, and work those areas more than once. You just have to put in some work; work a lot of shoreline and find where they are.”

Harris said to try shallow water near the bank and also out on the edges of the grass in slightly deeper water to see where the fish are, especially the ones that are biting.

Caney has two commercial landings and the Jimmie Davis State Park, offering all kinds of services and facilities for easy angler access. ■



..... Rat-L-Traps and over lipless crankbaits are great baits to cast when Caney Lake bass are shallow in December, that is, when the sun isn't out.  
..... ABOVE: Caney has been known as a big-bass lake for years. The chances for catching a real lunker are great as the weather cools in late fall.  
.....

Santa will bring savvy Caney Lake bass fishermen these lures for Christmas (top to bottom): Rat-L-Trap, DB-22, 6XD, Xboss25, Red Eye Shad, jig with Zoom twin-tail trailer, jig with Strike King minnow trailer, jig with Rage Tail craw trailer.

## WHAT DO CANEY LAKE BASS WANT FOR

# Christmas?

Dear Santa:

We have been good this year. This is what we want for Christmas, please.

— Caney Lake bass

When Corey Harris of West Monroe wants to unwrap a livewell full of largemouths in December, he has a whole list of lures he knows Caney Lake bass will want.

Here are his favorite baits for this time of year:

- Rat-L-Trap in white craw;
- Rat-L-Trap in original craw;
- Bill Norman DB22 in chartreuse/blue;
- Strike King 6XD in barfish;
- Profound Outdoors Xboss 25 in old blue;
- Strike King Red Eye Shad in gold;
- War Eagle Finesse Jig with Zoom twin-tail trailer in pumpkin;
- Homemade jig with Strike King Minnow trailer, black/blue;
- Homemade jig with Rage Tail Craw trailer in Okeechobee craw. ■



### SPOON-FEED CANEY BASS >



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

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# Spoon-feed

## CANEY BASS AFTER A HARD COLD FRONT

Most of Corey Harris's approaches to December bass fishing are traditional, but he has one trick for tough conditions that catches, in his own words, "everything in the lake."

And it works best at a time when most fishermen just stay home.

"When we have a hard cold front, I mean, one of those where it drops from 60 to 30 degrees, it's not an ideal time to go bass fishing," Harris said. "But that's when I like to go, locate fish and drop a Cotton Cordell spoon right on top of their heads."

Sudden cold weather usually catches some threadfin shad by surprise; they cannot tolerate the cold. On days after a front, Harris said you'll see dying shad flitting on the surface before they die and sink to the bottom.

That's where the spoon comes in. It's the lure and technique that produced Harris's first

double-digit bass — a 10.20-pound trophy — on Caney several years ago.

"That spoon looks just like a shad dying and falling to the bottom," Harris said. "Plus, it's one of the easiest ways to catch bass you can think of. You just lower it down and raise it up; they do the rest. One thing to watch for: a lot of times when you are jigging it, the line will go slack. That means one has swum up to the spoon and sucked it in. And here's another thing. Everything in the lake will hit a spoon — bass, crappie, catfish, even big old chinquapin bream."

Harris switches to a spinning outfit for the spoon so he can use lighter line. First, lighter line gives the spoon more action. Second, a spinning outfit is easy to handle wearing gloves, which is a good thing after a hard cold front. ■

**TRICK WORM >**



Jigging spoons are death on Caney Lake bass during and after a December cold front. They do a great job imitating dying threadfin shad.



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## LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

Guide Charlie King caught this bass, which weighed almost 11 pounds, at Toledo Bend on his go-to soft plastic bait the past 10 to 12 years, a Zoom Trick Worm.



# A TRICKY, TRICKY WORM

ZOOM'S TRICK WORM STILL GOING STRONG, CATCHING BASS AFTER BASS

**In** late October, an out-of-state bass angler visiting Keith's Toledo Bend Tackle near Hemphill, Texas, asked the owner if there was a new artificial lure worth a try before fishing a bass club tournament at nearby Lake Sam Rayburn.

Keith Nabours thought about it a few minutes, then said he tells customers who really want to catch bass to fish an oldie but goldie — a Zoom Trick Worm in redbug color. Hundreds and hundreds of anglers have been sold on the soft plastic worm over the years, hooked on it, you might say, just like the bass they target.

Charlie King of Coushatta, a town 45 miles south of Shreveport on US 71, knows first-hand what Nabours was talking about. He has been catching bass consistently on a redbug Trick Worm.

King, who runs Charlie King Professional Fishing, started guiding part-time in 1991 and went full-time after he retired as a registered nurse in 2014. He has fished FLW and BASS tournaments circuits off and on for 30 years, and he's been relying on redbug Trick Worms since 2008.

Zoom Bait Co. Inc., introduced the Trick Worm in 1981. It was the first straight-tail, high-floating, super-soft plastic worm for fishing shallow water.

Why is it so effective?

King, 69, laughed and said, "Ha ha. Lord, I don't know. It doesn't resemble anything. It's a straight-tail worm with a skinny profile."

## A PRO TALKED IT UP

King said he got a heads up on it about 15 years ago when he was fishing the same bass tournaments as pro Harold

Allen from Shelbyville, Texas. Allen was doing well — "On a roll," King said — and he'd talk about the reason behind his success on stage: fishing a Trick Worm.

"Nobody ever picked up on it," King said. "One day, about 10, 12 years ago, I was struggling. I said, 'Hell, I might need to try one.' I picked one up and started throwing it, and it's worked for me ever since. It was all because Harold Allen talked about it years ago.

"That bait's been a killer for me in eastern Texas and northwest Louisiana. I throw it 90% of the time. I go to a Senko most of the time in the spring, but I still throw a redbug Trick Worm."



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.



Zoom Trick Worm

Keeping it locked in his hand has been rewarding in more ways than monetary.

"I've caught a lot of big fish on that," he said.

The biggest? He caught a hawg that weighed almost 11 pounds in August 2013 at Toledo Bend and another 8.49-pound fish in June 2017 at Lake Bistineau.

among many, many others, know what it can do. ■

*For more information on the Zoom Trick Worm and other Zoom Bait Co. Inc. products, visit [zoombait.com](http://zoombait.com) or call 706-548-1008.*

**BASS CLASS >**

## QUALITY AND QUANTITY

During the Bob Sealy Big Bass Splash in October on Lake Sam Rayburn, King's redbug Trick Worm accounted for 61 bass, the biggest being 2.81 pounds.

"I fished them until I ran out of a couple bags," he said.

Of course, it's a staple whenever he has a guide trip. King has found different ways to catch bass on it: Texas-rigged, Carolina-rigged, wacky rigged, punching grass and even probing deep or shallow brush at Lake Sam Rayburn and Toledo Bend.

"It gets through brush easier and faster," he said.

Much of the time, King fishes a Trick Worm Texas-rigged under a ¼-ounce worm weight that he pegs. When he wants to fish it in brush tops, he'll use a ½-ounce worm weight, also pegged in Texas-rigged fashion.

King, has found that a Trick Worm triggers more strikes than a larger, flashier curlytail plastic worm, which sometimes hangs up when the tail wraps around a limb.

"It's more of a finesse worm. It's a real versatile bait.

Like I say, it has year-round appeal. It'll fish shallow, it'll fish deep and it'll fish in-between," he said.

Nabours, Allen and King,

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Tyler Jordan (left) and Chance Shelby from Live Oak High School hoist the bass that gave them a fourth-place finish in the Louisiana High School B.A.S.S. Nation High School State Bass Tournament for 2020-21 out of Doiron's Landing.

# LIVE OAK SENIOR STARTS SEASON ON TOLEDO BEND WITH BIG WIN

## SHELBY SETS HIS SIGHTS ON SCHOLARSHIP NAMED FOR HIS LATE 'UNCLE'



**Of** all the lofty goals a Louisiana high school bass angler has set for himself as a senior, there's one that he covets.

Chance Shelby of Watson wants to earn a scholarship or two, naturally, but not just any old scholarship. Winning the Live Oak High School fishing team's John Morgan Spring Scholarship would mean so much to him, he said.

It's personal.

Spring, Shelby's cousin — he called him "Uncle" — was critically injured in a boating accident on Labor Day 2014 when his boat's steering cable broke. He died of his injuries a few days later at 52. The high school keeps the memory of Spring, a church-going family man and outdoorsman, alive with the scholarship.

"It's just within our school fishing team, the little derbies. It's on a point system, so I am trying to fish as many as I can. It would be an honor for me to win that," Shelby said.

The son of Bill and Wendy Shelby, Chance Shelby and partner Tyler Jordan had a resounding win on Sept. 11 in the season's first tournament, the 2021 West Division Team Trail opener at Toledo Bend. Their five-bass limit weighed 15.47 pounds, including a 6.49-pounder that was the biggest fish of the day.

Shelby and Jordan caught lightning in a bottle that afternoon. At 1 o'clock, they had a limit that might have weighed 10 pounds.

"The cool thing is, it only took us 45 minutes (to upgrade to their final weight). It just happened so quick, in a 30-yard stretch," he said.

The rarified air of a first-place finish at Toledo Bend fizzled at the next stop, Oct. 2 on the Red River. Unable to prefish, Shelby

and Jordan finished 47th with two bass weighing 3.24 pounds.

They are anxious to shake off that bump in the road.

"I think a lot of guys have tournaments like that," he said. "You've just got to get back on your feet."

Shelby, 18, has the experience to do just that. He learned from one of the best around as a freshman when his boat captain was rising pro fisherman Logan Latuso of Gonzales. They were both fishing "cookie jar" tournaments on Blind River when they met.

They started talking more and more during the season, Shelby said. He eventually asked Latuso, a Bassmaster veteran, to be his boat captain his first year on the Live Oak High School fishing team. Shelby had a Top-5 finish and a couple of Top-10s in 2018-19 and qualified for the first of his four state tournaments in the Louisiana High School Bass Nation.

Shelby, who qualified for nationals his sophomore and junior years, was one of six Louisiana anglers who attended the inaugural Bassmaster High School Combine in mid-October at Decatur, Ala.

**“***It's just within our school fishing team, the little derbies. It's on a point system, so I am trying to fish as many as I can. It would be an honor for me to win that.***”**

Now he's hoping to secure one more berth in the high school national tournament, oh, and become Angler of the Year.

Shelby and Jordan started teaming up as juniors in high school. The pairing has clicked for both, including the win this season and a fourth-place finish with 26.3 pounds in the two-day state tournament May 8-9 out of Doiron's Landing in Stephenville.

"I fish pretty quick in the front of the boat," Shelby said. "He fishes slow in the back. We both adapt really well once we figure out a pattern."

Shelby's strength is fishing a SPRO plastic frog. When he's targeting bigger bass, he'll punch a Missile Baits D-Bomb.

"But if I have to, I'll go flip docks, flip a jig, unless we have four fish or three fish. I like to throw a trick worm," he said. "I like to throw a Shaky Head, because if you fish slow, you can really out-finesse them with that. I've been throwing it a long time. I just got used to it. My dad taught me how to do it."

Shelby was an eager student when his father started taking him bass fishing when he was around 5.

"I loved it. I still love it," he said.

His favorite bass tournament memory is a father-son effort in a Jacob Dugas Memorial Bass Tournament. The Shelbys won with 18 pounds and had the big bass at 5.4.

He's had a few contacts from college coaches and is hopeful, particularly after the combine in Alabama, of receiving a scholarship to fish in college.

"Honestly, after college, probably what I'm going to do is fish (Bassmaster) Opens and try to qualify for the Elites," he said.

"And he'd like to take home that scholarship named for his 'uncle.' ■



This hefty bass helped Chance Shelby of Watson notch a 10.2-pound total catch in 2016.

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# TOLEDO BEND BASS AGGRESSIVELY FEED UP FOR WINTER

## Red is the hottest color for moving baits

**A**t By John Dean  
Toledo Bend, as November turns to December, I'll be seeing red. That's a good thing, as the 12th month promises to make us forget about the tough summer and early fall on the border lake shared by Louisiana and Texas. The bass bite started picking up, as expected, in late October.

Bass will be even more aggressive in late November and through December as they put the feed bags on for whatever winter we get in western Louisiana and eastern Texas. I'm getting pumped up now, having been begging for a weather change. The cold fronts, most bringing some heavy rains, have been rolling through the region.

Why red? That's the color you need for the crankbaits and lipless crankbaits that work so well at this time of year, because of stained water conditions. It's the prominent color for triggering strikes, particularly with lipless crankbaits.

I believe it's going to be a great month for a couple of reasons. The water will be much cooler, in the 60s and 70s. The lake level should be higher because of recent and future rainfall associated with weather systems. And it's the time bass are in the migratory mode that began in late October.

Basically, opportunities increase so much this month with migrating fish. It's a prime opportunity to get your hands on a big 'un, a Toledo Bend hawg, perhaps one destined for the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program. The big bass become more aggressive. No matter what size, their main objective is to eat, and that will be the norm unless the water temperature drops below 52 to 55 degrees.

It's the perfect setup to drop the trolling motor and go with moving baits such as crankbaits and lipless crankbaits in black/blue, black, golden bream or chartreuse/white (depending on the water color) bladed jigs, gold/orange or shad-colored jerkbaits, topwaters and even Alabama rigs.

I learned about the value of red crankbaits long ago during a bass tournament. Larry Nixon of Hemphill, Texas, one of the original Hemphill Gang, was fishing. I wasn't having any luck north of Pendleton Bridge, where much of the water had mud-died considerably.

Nixon suggested heading south until I found green water and start fishing about a mile past that with something red. I used a candy apple red Rebel Shallow R along the shoreline starting at Millionaire Point, then into the Indian Mounds, and I had the

Mark Romero of Baton Rouge got this nice-sized bass while fishing with John Dean at Toledo Bend. Dean expects bass fishing success to be above-average in December.



most-unbelievable bassing experience of my fishing life. I took 2½- to 6-pounders to the scales daily and finished third. Future legend Jimmy Houston won the tournament.

Red hasn't been a secret the past few decades. It'll come into play from now through the spawn.

Target bass in 5- to 7-foot depths. Hopefully, the water level does rise, because the more water, the more bass go farther in, and they may even be around wood cover, and that's very likely.

My December plan of attack is to fish those depths with moving baits. I'll target creeks, because baitfish move in via the drains, especially the back end of creeks. I'll make a lot of casts, stay around drains and have fun catching bass.

It's that time of year. Enjoy. ■

*To contact John Dean about a guided fishing trip on Toledo Bend, call him at 936-404-2688.*

# MAIN RIVER AMONG BEST SPOTS FOR OUACHITA RIVER LARGEMOUTH BASS

Squarebill crankbaits will produce best fished around laydowns in productive areas

By Kinny Haddox

It's a good bet this has never happened before — a Ouachita River bass fishing report provided by an angler from Hawaii.

But it is a good thing. Matty Wong won a recent BASS Nation tournament on the Ouachita out of Monroe's Forsythe Boat Dock. A 33-year-old Hawaiian native now living in California, Wong was glad to share the latest on fishing the meandering river with other fishermen.

Wong said the patterns he used in the tournament should hold up through the rest of the year, barring excessive high water or a drastic change in temperature. He leaned on a variety of squarebill, balsa crankbaits for his best bass. He fished bluegill, shad and chartreuse baits but said he caught fish on other colors as well. His recommendation is to fish a natural bait color, or something that closely resembles it. He also had good luck fishing a brown jig.

"I basically call that trash fishing," he said. "It's fishing a lot of baits and covering a lot of water. The fish aren't stacked up. It's typical for this time of year. I think the key to catching them on the main-river channel, where I would concentrate for bigger bass, is to get the lure into cover and really burn it. The fast retrieve will work to trigger strikes."

The balsa baits also have really good actions, especially at fast retrieve speeds. Wong fished a Kung Fu jig and a War Eagle spinnerbait with a chartreuse blade and chartreuse trailer. He felt like that matched the river's water conditions.

Wong's best tip for locating productive, main-river areas is to

find unusual stretches of laydowns where something looks different. He also suggests looking for places that are on a bend in the river or appear right after a sandbar. He said areas that have long stretches of mud, then good laydowns, on a regular bank are good for holding fish.

Wong also said fishing up the popular Bayou D'Arbonne area is good. He caught several good fish there but didn't want to make the long run far up the bayou.

"I was fishing the main-river channel because I thought that is where I could catch the biggest bass," he said. "I think those better fish hang off the main river because that's where most of the baitfish are. But fluctuating temperatures tend to pull them out into the edge of the river. That's something important to remember."

Wong said finding those key areas and then working the best nearby cover includes fishing mostly laydowns that have fallen into the river. Fish can be caught near the bank and on out in the laydowns. They reposition at different times of day in relation to the sun and water temperatures. On any given day, fishermen just have to figure it out.

Another faraway angler, Taylor Smith from Washington finished second. His catch proves the diversity of the bite on the river this time of year. He trailered his bass boat, borrowed a smaller aluminum boat and push-poled through shallow water into a backwater area with a deep spot in the back. He stuck with a white Bandit crankbait for his best catches and said that is a great approach because it mimics the baitfish in the river. ■

**LAKE VERRET BASS,  
BOEUF SAC-A-LAIT ➤**



Matty Wong with two chunky Ouachita River bass that helped him win a BASS Nation tournament.

# HOME FOR HOLIDAYS? HEAD FOR VERRET

Early prespawn bass beginning to stir

**A**t By Don Shoopman  
a time when much of the country shivers during cold fronts while waiting for Christmas and New Year's Day, Robbie Latuso, a pro fisherman from Gonzales, catches bass in an area southwest of his hometown — and a number of them are deep into the spawn cycle.  
"My best bass memories in December are in the Lake Verret system," said Latuso, 55. "I've caught bass over there in December spawning. Everybody else is in the Spillway, having given up on it that time of year."

The owner of a ServiceMaster Restore franchise, he's been busy since Hurricane Ida but hopes to shake loose for some trips to Verret this month.

"I haven't stopped since Ida," said Latuso, who will concentrate mostly on the canals around Verret in Assumption Parish, east of the West Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee. The Crackerhead canals and canals along Grand Bayou, plus Bay Alcide and the Oxy Field, and locations along Bayou Chermie and Bayou Sherman, are his among his favorite spots in December.

Crackerhead and canals connected to Bayou Chermie and Bayou Sherman are perhaps the odds-on favorites for Latuso to fish in December.

"It's a good time to go. Everybody starts deer hunting. You've got LSU football. So you've got a lot of people off the water," Latuso said.

Most assuredly, he will be on the water, either by himself, with his son, Logan, or with another fishing buddy. He has fished the region with his son so often over the years that the younger angler reaps more bites in more places.

"Oh, yeah, he knows it better than me now. I can't beat him down there anymore," said Robbie Latuso, who knows from



Robbie Latuso (left), a veteran Bassmaster Elite pro, and his son, Logan, who fishes Bassmaster Opens, have won several tournaments with bass like these this time of year at Lake Verret.

experience the first bass to fire in the December spawn are the big ones.

"I've caught so many that were about to bust with eggs that I know they were spawning, or about to," he said last December in a bassmaster.com interview.

Latuso recalled a trip 10 or 15 years ago when he and a buddy nailed hawks in the Lake Verret system on a big spinnerbait with a No. 7 turtle-back blade. The big, hungry bass were feeding on big baitfish.

"That was fun. It was definitely a good time," he said.

Anglers can get in on the good times with an assortment of lures, including topwaters, he said, because typically, Old Man Winter hasn't frosted south central Louisiana.

"You might catch on jigs," Latuso said. "You might catch on soft plastics. Anything you want."

If Latuso has his druthers, he'll have a fishing rod with a ½-ounce chartreuse/white or chartreuse/blue/white Delta Lures spinnerbait with single or double Colorado blades tied on when he visits the Lake Verret.

"Play it by ear the size, the vibration. See what they like," he said.

Whatever he's got on the business end of his fishing rod, he'll target mainly wood in 2- to 5-foot depths. Hardwoods, cypress trees, stumps, deadfalls, you name it. Latuso prefers to pick out the most dominant cypress trees in a protected area and pepper them with casts from every possible angle.

He will keep a sharp eye out for mats of vegetation, either lily pads or grass beds, which are begging to become punching targets. ■

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# BASS PRO TURNS TO LAKE BOEUF FOR SAC-A-LAIT IN DECEMBER

**W**hen December rolls around, bass pro Tyler Rivet puts his spinning combos to work in the fertile waters around his hometown of Raceland.

However, Rivet won't be targeting bass with those outfits. He'll be trying to outwit sac-a-lait, known in other reaches of the country as crappie or white perch.

"That time of year, you just have to have 20 bags (of soft plastics) on deck until you figure them out. I swear, sometimes I think they're more picky than bass," said Rivet, who stocks up on Southern Pro Stinger Shad and Bobby Garland Baby Shad.

While nearby Lockport and the vast Bayou Black area are viable crappie-fishing destinations in December, Rivet's favorite is Lake Boeuf in northern Lafourche Parish. A 2022 Bassmaster Classic qualifier who had a sterling college career at Nicholls State, Rivet, 27, grew up fishing there, launching right behind his house.

"I'll be using LiveScope. It's amazing. I was catching them down there 14 feet down last time I went fishing. It's definitely fun.... It's crazy," Rivet said.

He calls it his fun time, either fishing alone or going with his buddies.

"It gives me a break from bass fishing," he said.

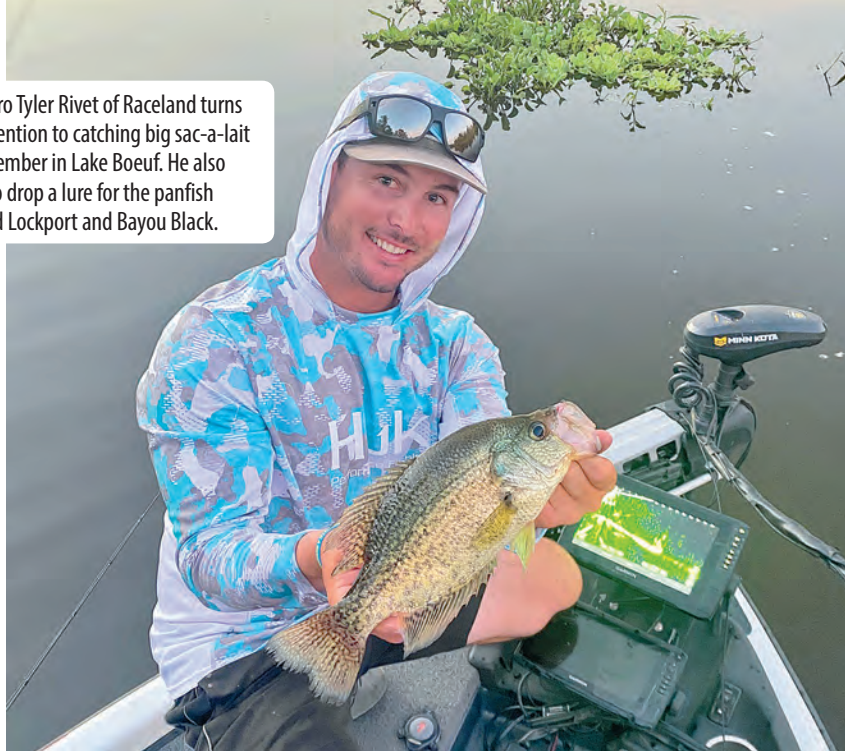
Lake Boeuf, as well as Lockport and Bayou Black, satisfy his appetite for putting slabs in the boat. He points anglers to the canals around Lake Boeuf.

Surprising to some fishermen, they might catch spawning fish in Lake Boeuf, he said. "Sac-a-lait always spawn the first of January or even December, sometimes."

His favorite color combo for soft plastics is chartreuse/blue, but he also likes silver, which he believes represents a shad or shiner, and, sometimes, pink.

A 1/16-ounce or 1/32-ounce jighead is best, he said, tied to a 10-pound fluorocarbon leader that's 10-foot-8, tied to

Bass pro Tyler Rivet of Raceland turns his attention to catching big sac-a-lait in December in Lake Boeuf. He also likes to drop a lure for the panfish around Lockport and Bayou Black.



10-pound braid. He uses the same spinning outfits he uses to catch bass.

If the weather's warm, he'll fish "cut grass" along a deep canal's shoreline. If it's cold, he'll adjust the cork to a depth of 4 feet and target structure off the bank in deeper water.

"That time of year, one day you catch two, the next day you go back and catch 100. Find one, you find them all," he said. ■



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The author's bass boat after receiving new carpet, seats, a trolling motor with a recessed foot-pedal tray, and electronics. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** The author adds the final touch to his bass-boat restore. A recessed foot pedal tray relieves fatigue.

# BEAT WINTER BY RESTORING A BASS BOAT; IT'S A PROJECT

**F** By Nick Vaccaro  
or some anglers, bass fishing is a year-round battle of wits and determination. Layers of clothing, paired with face masks and skull caps, enable continued participation. Other anglers love the sport but display limitations. For those, numerous cups of coffee and a boat-restoration project can fill the idle time in a wet and cold winter.

Of course, an angler can restore any boat he or she sees fit, and the process is not exclusive to bass boats. Bass fishers, however, are a different breed, and as a result, they take the restoration process beyond limitations to produce the ultimate bass-busting machine. Following a barrage of steps can yield success.

## CHECK THE HULL

When purchasing a boat that's the right candidate for restoration, buyers must exercise caution. In most cases, if you are buying a boat needing work — and not a \$60k newbie — you are more than likely working within the confines of a budget. The budget is often the biggest obstacle.

Most items in the restoration are typically cosmetic, but not the hull. Unless you are a fiberglass guru, avoid damaged hulls or those that look suspect. Giving several knocks with the knuckles around the transom can discover any softness or rot. Brown stains traveling downward from outboard mounting hardware are a tell-tale sign of potential decay. Unless your budget is quite large, steer away from the stains.

Hulls that show severe signs of wear and stress cracking should be avoided; they can be a ticking time bomb that can leave you stranded or sinking. Neither makes for a good day of fishing.

## GEL COAT

That sexy sparkle that glistens in the sunlight is gel coat. Buyers should not necessarily run from a light, chalky finish, as long as they understand some time and elbow grease will be warranted in bringing back the luster.



Photos by Nick Vaccaro

Refinishing an oxidized gel coat is a step-by-step process utilizing soapy water, several rags, and various courses of sandpaper. When attempting to revitalize the gel coat, be sure to read all manufacturer instructions. A visit to YouTube goes a long way.

## CARPET, SEATING ISSUES

You get what you pay for, which has never been truer than when installing carpet in your bass boat. Avoid products that are not meant for this type of use. Just because the carpet at the local building supply store is specified for outdoor use does not mean it is best suited for a bass boat's flooring and decks.

Restorers will save money down the line by going straight to a marine carpet provider. Spend the money on better products and installation goods. After getting glue stuck to various parts of your body, you will not want to tackle this area of the project ever again.

Seating falls into the same category: a significant investment. Besides the striping and decals, the seats will accentuate that fine bass boat to be. Locate a marine provider and splurge. After spending time on this project, you will want to enjoy your new ride every weekend. Get the seats that are big and comfortable. Nothing makes a fishing trip more miserable than being uncomfortable and fatigued.

## TROLLING MOTOR, ELECTRONICS

After getting the aesthetics out of the way, it is time to drill down on the bass-hunting tools: the trolling motor and depth finders. Splurge for a larger trolling motor that is at least 24 volts to combat windy conditions. Nothing is more frustrating than fighting wind when you should be battling bass.

It is easy to go overboard with electronics here and buy the biggest and best — the ones that look like wide-screen TVs. Remember to stay within your budget. Enhancements are always possible later and only involve a few screws, whereas upgrading carpet involves solvents, scrapers, sweat and cussing. Again, spend more on the carpet.

## LAST OF THE ADVICE

Bass fishermen love to spin yarns, tell stories and report how they handled an issue. The internet is an incredible source of forums and groups; ask questions if any doubt surfaces.

Local fishing clubs can undoubtedly help guide you with dos and don'ts. Just remember, when it comes to that winter restoration project, it is always better to ask questions in the present than regret a wrong decision later. ■



An advertisement for Louisiana Sportsman back issues. The background is a sunset over a body of water with trees. At the top, there are five magazine covers with headlines like 'FEBRUARY'S SAC-A-LAIT', 'GET READY FOR BEEF BATTLE', 'BULL'S-EYE BREAM', 'SPEAKING AND THE WAY', and 'BIG-BASS HANGOUTS'. A red speech bubble contains the text 'LIMITED QUANTITIES WHEN THEY'RE GONE, THEY'RE GONE!'. Below the covers, the text 'Louisiana SPORTSMAN' is written in a stylized font. At the bottom, the words 'BACK ISSUES' are written in large, bold, white letters. Below that, the website address 'shop.sportsmannetwork.com/collections/louisiana-sportsman' is displayed in white text.

Don't pull your boat up the ramp, then park it where it is an obstacle to other boaters dropping in or pulling out. Get out of the way before getting ready to leave.



# BOAT-RAMP ETIQUETTE 101

Brian Cope

KNOW THE PROCEDURE, GET IN AND OUT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, BE KIND

**B**y Brian Cope  
Boat-ramp etiquette 101 is a class that's rarely taught but greatly appreciated by most boaters who spend any time on water serviced by public access areas.

Boat ramps are the gateway to a fun day, but they can also be the source of unnecessary stress, especially when crowded. And that's even more true when boaters don't use proper boat-ramp etiquette.

Boat-ramp etiquette comes down to being courteous and thoughtful to other boaters looking to launch or retrieve their boats. While this seems obvious to most of us, a single boater who is either unprepared, rude or simply oblivious can back up traffic and spoil the party for everyone else. Don't be that boater.

Next time you launch your boat, keep these tips in mind, and you'll be one cog in the well-oiled machine of a smooth-running boat ramp:

## IS BOAT READY?

Have all your prep work completed before you back your boat down the ramp. Some boat landings have designated "Make Ready" lanes that are out of the way of the ramp. If yours doesn't, find a place that's out of the way of boaters who are backing down or pulling up the boat ramp. Install your boat plug and remove all straps except the trailer's winch strap. Have the key in the ignition and make sure your boat is ready to go as soon as it's backed down the ramp.

Think of everything you need in the boat. This is the time to load it all. Don't wait until you're on the ramp to do this.

Remember, once you're on the ramp, your only goal is to get the boat off the trailer, secured to the dock, out of everyone else's way, then drive your truck to a parking spot.

## LAUNCH EFFICIENTLY, GET OUT OF THE WAY

Once you're on the ramp, launch your boat as quickly and safely as possible. This is not the time to check air pressure in your trailer tires or put your cooler in the boat. Whether you have a friend with you or you're doing this alone, keep in mind that others are waiting.

Other boaters realize it may take a little longer when you're alone; no one will mind. But if you're sitting on the ramp, checking your spark plugs, adding your lunch box or other almost-forgotten items into the boat is the wrong move. Back down the ramp, remove the winch strap, secure the boat to the dock, and pull your truck out of the way and park it.

When tying your boat to the dock, make sure it is out of everyone's way. Remember that other boaters need enough room to back their trailer AND to back their boat off the trailer.

## BONUS TIP NO. 1

When you're at a remote boat landing with no painted lines for parking spaces, don't pull up the ramp in a straight line and park so you're lined up to back down the ramp when you return. If you do, you're blocking the ramp. Other boaters need that space to back their own boats.

Now that your boat is in the water and your truck is out of the way, you can load

any items you may have forgotten before you backed down the ramp.

Be just as mindful when retrieving your boat

Once your day on the water is complete, it's time to retrieve your boat. Keep in mind, once you're on the ramp, your only goal is to fasten your boat to the trailer. Back your trailer down, load the boat, fasten the winch strap and pull your truck out of the way of the ramp. Only then should you do anything else.

You'd be surprised — or maybe not if you've used some of the same boat ramps I have — to see how often someone will pull their boat out of the water, park at the top of the ramp, then proceed to unload their boat, toss out their unused bait, bag their trash and walk it to the trash can, check their tire pressure, all while parked at the top of the boat ramp preventing anyone else from using it.

## BONUS TIP NO. 2

Some folks are just oblivious. Maybe they're new to boating and don't realize they are in everyone else's way. Some of the most-courteous people can seem rude because they just don't understand boat-ramp etiquette.

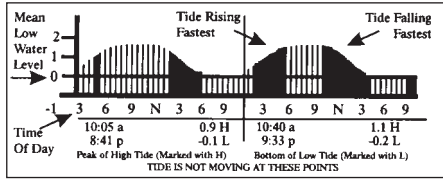
When you see these things at the boat ramp, stay calm and help educate those who don't realize their behavior is blocking the ramp. Anytime I've heard another boater say something like "Would you mind moving out of the way so we can use the ramp?" It's always been met with a surprised look of realization, followed by "Oh, sorry. My bad," or something similar. ■



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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

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Order the Tide Guides for over 40 locations throughout Louisiana. Call 1-800-538-4355 or go on line www.lasmag.com			2.0ft. 1.0ft. 0.0ft. <b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> NM
<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> FQ	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> FM
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b> LQ	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Order the Tide Guides for over 40 locations throughout Louisiana. Call 1-800-538-4355 or go on line www.lasmag.com			3.0ft. 1.5ft. 0.0ft. <b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> NM
<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> FQ	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> FM
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b> LQ	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	



# HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK

## GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

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

Digital images must be at least 500KB and in jpeg format. Print photos cannot be returned.



**Dana Holliday**

Dana Holliday poses with her first buck. The 10-pointer was harvested on Jan. 17, 2021.



**Madeline Gautreaux**

Madeline Gautreaux shot this buck in Mason, Tex., on Nov. 13, 2020.



**Matthew Weaver**

Matthew Weaver holds a beautiful redfish caught in Hopedale.



**Dr. Ernie Burch & Scott Heggamen**

Capt. Billy Ellenwood put Dr. Ernie Burch and Scott Heggamen on some big reds out of Four Point Bayou; they used fly rods.



**Owen Guilliot**

Owen Guilliot, 11, used crickets to catch bream while fishing in Henderson on July 2, 2020.



**Lance Cosgrove**

Lance Cosgrove of Marrero enjoyed his first youth duck hunt out of Venice.



**Hollis Arneemann**

Hollis Arneemann with the 350-pound Red Stag Bull he shot with a Ruger Scout 308 at a ranch in Mississippi. He shot his first deer with his dad for his 7th birthday.



**C.C. Holloway**

C.C. Holloway of Thibodaux caught her biggest bass to date in early October 2021 at a private pond in Napoleonville.



# HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



**Jenna Whitmer**

Jenna Whitmer hooked this big amberjack on May 28, 2021, fishing out of Venice.



Cameron Dworak, Kelsea Watts, Emma Remetich, Marcel Szabo, Perry Rosenson and Shane Hopkins all helped land this 148-pound swordfish. The crew had a great Memorial Day in Venice.



**Carter Landos**

Carter Landos, 14, killed this 11-point buck in Beauregard Parish while making an all-day sit on Oct. 30.



**Jackson Baldrige**

Jackson Baldrige, 4, of Lewisburg enjoyed chasing after and catching a big frog in his father's crawfish ponds.

Blake Blomkalns, Jacob Juul and John Bier helped bring in this snapper haul out of Cocodrie in June 2020.



**Blake, Jacob & John**



**Cameron Dennis**

Cameron Dennis caught his personal best, this 22-inch redfish, at Shell Beach on May 31. Cameron was fishing with his father and grandfather.



**Ayden Cosgrove**

Ayden Cosgrove of Marrero enjoyed her last youth duck hunt in Venice.



**Colette Lebourgeois**

Colette Lebourgeois holds a big bass caught at Forked Island on May 29, 2021.



**Elliott Adkins**

On June 1, Elliott Adkins hooked this blue catfish, his personal best, on a live bluegill in Slidell. He's pictured here with his little brother, Houston Vick.



**Luke Sages**

Luke Sages with a bull red caught in Dularge fishing with Capt. Bill Lake.

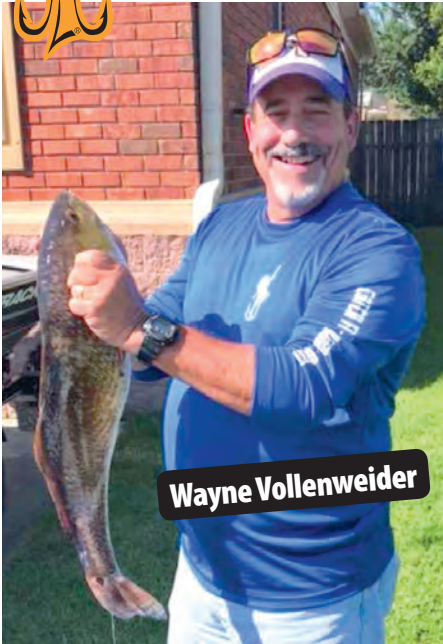


**Dalton Guidry**

Dalton Guidry caught this redfish while fishing the Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA. He was using Legacy Custom Tackle and sight-casting from his tower.



# HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



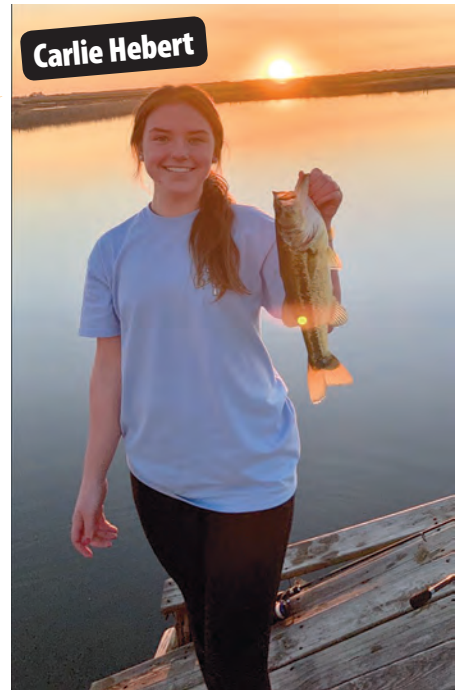
**Wayne Vollenweider**

Wayne Vollenweider caught this big red in Shell Beach.



**Bob Breck**

Chief Meteorologist Bob Breck holds up a nice Shell Beach flounder.



**Carlie Hebert**

Carlie Hebert caught this nice bass in a pond in Kaplan.



**Kyle & Khanh Huynh**

Kyle Huynh hooked his first flounder fishing with his father, Khanh, in Myrtle Grove on April 4, 2021.



**Adaline Elmer**

Adaline Elmer was 5 years old when she reeled in this big drum at Rockefeller Refuge on May 15, 2020. She was using crab that she also caught on a drift line.



**Caroline Panepinto**

Caroline Panepinto caught nice Memorial Day redfish in Shell Beach. It was the first she caught by herself.



**Ava & Anna**

Ava Roy and Anna Wiltz with a black drum caught on a trip to Dulac with their grandfather.



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

The "Best Days" column is based on the ever-changing positions of the sun and the moon, rating each day on a scale of 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more solar/lunar influence that day is experiencing (see "Value" column or corresponding black bars). The two Primary periods (Moon Overhead and Moon Underfoot) vary in length from one hour to three-and-one-half hours, depending on a number of important lunar cycles, such as how close the moon is to the earth that day and how high its orbit is. The solar symbols alert you to when a Primary period overlaps a major solar period (eg: Dawn, High-Noon, and Dusk). The secondary periods of Moonrise and Moonset last about one hour each... 30 minutes before and after the listed time. (See key at bottom of each month for more detail.)

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

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

**AVAILABLE PRODUCTS:**  
**The 2022 PrimeTimes Wall Calendar.** \$13.95 (plus \$4 s&h). Know the best days, best times, and their relative strengths for all of 2022 with this information-packed, full-color, 11-inch by 17-inch, graphic peaks

and-valleys forecaster. Includes rise and set times for the sun and moon, space to log your catches, "Timely Tips," plus fish and game symbols showing you each month's don't-miss periods. Also includes exclusive summary charts revealing the best and worst days of 2022, the year's best periods, and look ahead at 2023, and more. Comes with FREE 2022 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for \$8.95, plus \$3 s&h. **Book: "How to Know When to Go" by Rick Taylor.** \$14.95 (plus \$4 s&h). 100 pages, 43 illustrations. A comprehensive look at the main factors influencing fish and game activity periods, plus how to devise an effective when-to-go game plan using any year's PrimeTimes calendars. Individual assessments of bass, panfish, deer, turkey, and more.

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2021		BEST DAYS				VALUE
DEC		POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	
Wed 1						34
Thu 2						42
Fri 3						51
Sat 4						54
Sun 5						42
Mon 6						31
Tue 7						21
Wed 8						17
Thu 9						24
Fri 10						36
Sat 11						27
Sun 12						23
Mon 13						25
Tue 14						27
Wed 15						39
Thu 16						50
Fri 17						60
Sat 18						65
Sun 19						56
Mon 20						47
Tue 21						38
Wed 22						33
Thu 23						32
Fri 24						31
Sat 25						34
Sun 26						42
Mon 27						30
Tue 28						23
Wed 29						22
Thu 30						30
Fri 31						39

25 50 75  
AVERAGE

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		LUNAR PERIODS				TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED	
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT				
3:45 AM	<b>8:44 am - 10:22 am</b>	3:12 PM	<b>9:09 pm - 10:47 pm</b>				
4:58 AM	<b>9:48 am - 11:06 am</b>	3:49 PM	<b>10:13 pm - 11:31 pm</b>				
6:13 AM	<b>10:55 am - 11:57 am</b>	4:32 PM	<b>11:20 pm - Midnight</b>				
7:30 AM	<b>12:05 pm - 12:53 pm</b> ☀	5:25 PM	<b>Midnight - 12:22 am</b>				
8:44 AM	<b>1:12 pm - 1:58 pm</b>	6:26 PM	<b>12:30 am - 1:18 am</b>	Low			
9:50 AM	<b>2:18 pm - 3:04 pm</b>	7:35 PM	<b>1:37 am - 2:23 am</b>				
10:45 AM	<b>3:17 pm - 4:09 pm</b>	8:46 PM	<b>2:43 am - 3:29 am</b>				
11:30 AM	<b>4:07 pm - 5:13 pm</b> 🌄	9:56 PM	<b>3:42 am - 4:34 am</b>				
12:07 PM	<b>4:50 pm - 6:12 pm</b> 🌄	11:03 PM	<b>4:32 am - 5:38 am</b>				
12:38 PM	<b>5:27 pm - 7:09 pm</b>		<b>5:15 am - 6:37 am</b>	Half			
1:06 PM	<b>6:01 pm - 8:03 pm</b>	12:06 AM	<b>5:52 am - 7:34 am</b> ☀				
1:32 PM	<b>6:35 pm - 8:53 pm</b>	1:06 AM	<b>6:26 am - 8:28 am</b> ☀				
1:57 PM	<b>7:05 pm - 9:45 pm</b>	2:04 AM	<b>7:00 am - 9:18 am</b> ☀				
2:23 PM	<b>7:39 pm - 10:35 pm</b>	3:01 AM	<b>7:30 am - 10:10 am</b>				
2:52 PM	<b>8:14 pm - 11:26 pm</b>	3:59 AM	<b>8:04 am - 11:00 am</b>				
3:23 PM	<b>8:52 pm - 12:18 am</b>	4:56 AM	<b>8:39 am - 11:51 am</b>				
3:59 PM	<b>9:35 pm - 1:11 am</b>	5:55 AM	<b>9:17 am - 12:43 pm</b>	Apogee			
4:40 PM	<b>10:22 pm - 2:02 am</b>	6:52 AM	<b>10:00 am - 1:36 pm</b> ☀	Full			
5:27 PM	<b>11:12 pm - Midnight</b>	7:47 AM	<b>10:47 am - 2:27 pm</b> ☀				
6:19 PM	<b>Midnight - 2:54 am</b>	8:39 AM	<b>11:37 am - 3:19 pm</b>	High			
7:16 PM	<b>12:04 am - 3:44 am</b>	9:25 AM	<b>12:29 pm - 4:09 pm</b>	Winter			
8:16 PM	<b>12:58 am - 4:30 am</b>	10:06 AM	<b>1:23 pm - 4:55 pm</b>				
9:16 PM	<b>1:51 am - 5:13 am</b>	10:42 AM	<b>2:16 pm - 5:38 pm</b>				
10:17 PM	<b>2:46 am - 5:52 am</b>	11:14 AM	<b>3:11 pm - 6:17 pm</b> 🌄				
11:19 PM	<b>3:40 am - 6:30 am</b>	11:43 AM	<b>4:05 pm - 6:55 pm</b>				
	<b>4:33 am - 7:05 am</b>	12:11 PM	<b>4:58 pm - 7:30 pm</b>	Half			
12:22 AM	<b>5:31 am - 7:39 am</b>	12:39 PM	<b>5:56 pm - 8:04 pm</b>				
1:26 AM	<b>6:28 am - 8:16 am</b> ☀	1:09 PM	<b>6:53 pm - 8:41 pm</b>				
2:34 AM	<b>7:28 am - 8:56 am</b> ☀	1:42 PM	<b>7:53 pm - 9:21 pm</b>				
3:46 AM	<b>8:32 am - 9:40 am</b>	2:20 PM	<b>8:57 pm - 10:05 pm</b>				
5:00 AM	<b>9:38 am - 10:34 am</b>	3:06 PM	<b>10:03 pm - 10:59 pm</b>				

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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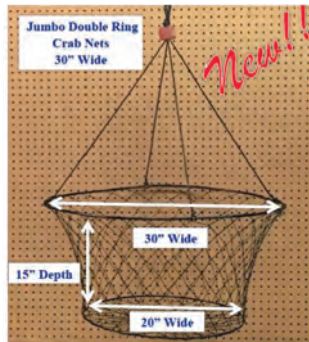
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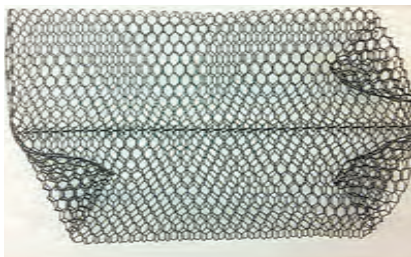
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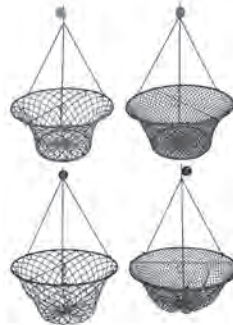
**Trawls**



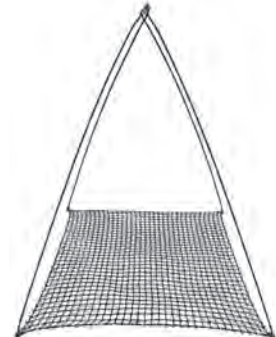
**Crawfish Pillow Traps**



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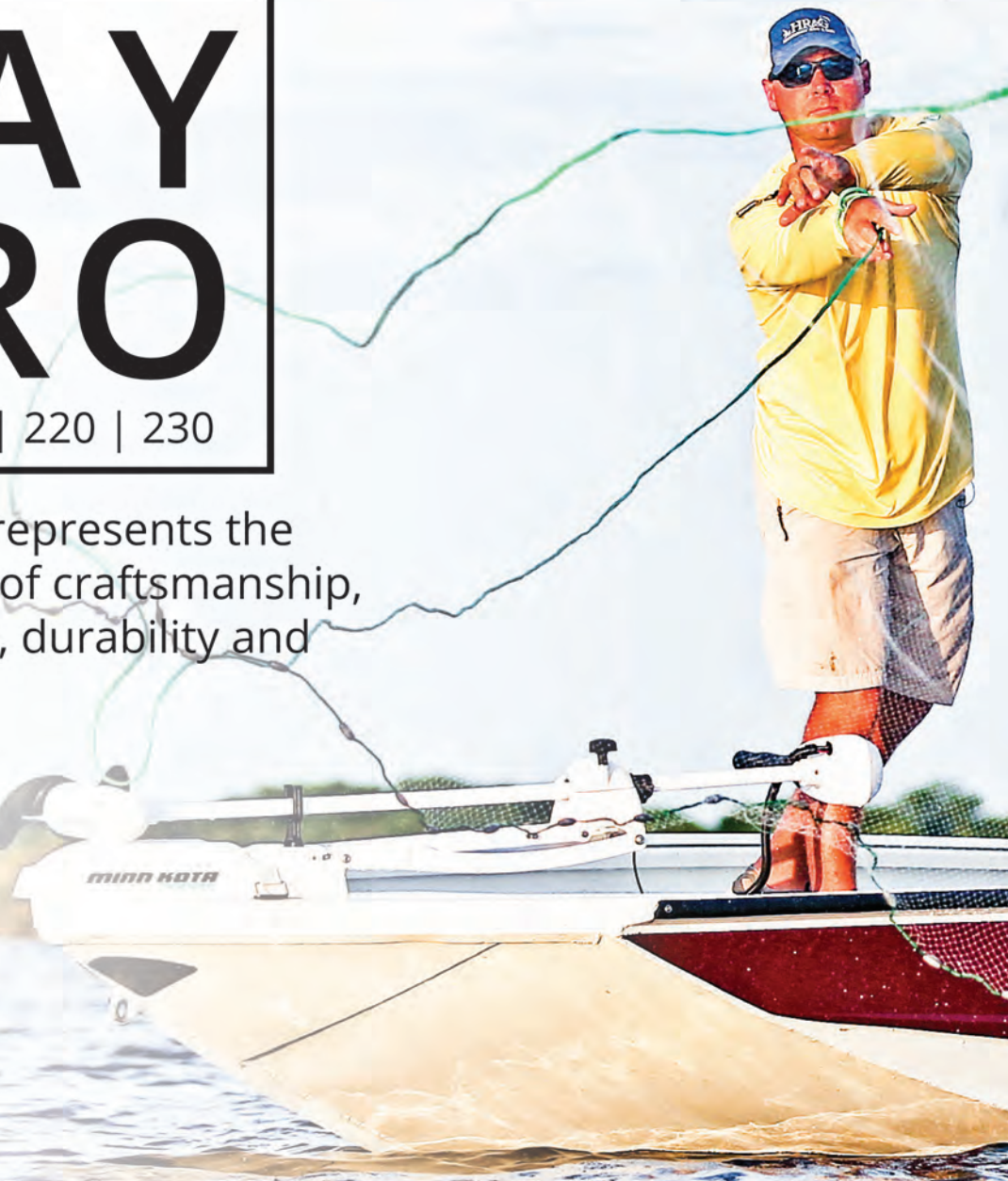
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