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GET JACKED UP!

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Shoopman, Rusty Tardo and Jason Thornton



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# THERE'S NOTHING BETTER THAN MOM, A 14-FOOT JON BOAT AND FISH FOR SUPPER

**MY** mom didn't have an easy life. Most people born in 1919 didn't.

But in her nearly 90 years on this earth, I hardly ever saw Frances Haddox when she didn't find enjoyment in her toil, whatever it was on that day. I know she found enjoyment in eating because she was a great cook and did her best to help teach me that as well. She enjoyed her favorite drinks — sweet tea, her extra high carb double sugar lemonade and Dr. Pepper.

She would drink a Dr. Pepper just about anytime. She was not as structured as my dad, who would look at his watch when asked if he wanted one, making sure it was either 10, 2 or 4.

Mom loved to fish. She even loved it when I got to fish, because she also loved to eat fish. Mother's Day is May 8 and I often wish I could tell her "Happy Mother's Day" again or hear her whoop and holler when she caught a fish. It was even fun when she saw me bring home a mess of fish, responding with, "Whoooo. Look at those. Get the grease hot."

She didn't have a lot of material possessions, but she was always a lady and made the most of what she had. Even though she's been gone for years, I still smile on a regular basis thinking about what she would have said or done. She

lives on in our memories and it is so awesome to see a bit of her pop up in my daughter and granddaughters.

## LETTING HER HAIR DOWN

But hey, she did let her hair down, not worry about messing up her hair "permanent" and, as I mentioned, whooped and hollered on occasion. Rarely mind you, but on occasion. Most of those occasions were out in a 14-foot aluminum Duracraft fishing boat. As an only child, I spent many a day in the back of that boat, running the three-horse Evinrude with Mom in the middle and Dad up front with the custom wooden paddle he made himself in the woodshop class he taught. Mom had her own cane pole and nobody fished with it but her. If you did, somehow she knew. The Ouachita River. Lake D'Arbonne. Gassaway. Even Toledo Bend. They all got to see the show.

One day Mom and Dad were fishing at Toledo Bend with their boat tied to the same snag as another boat holding her friends, Nan and O.B. Copeland. They were fishing for white perch. We didn't know what a crappie was in those days and hadn't fished far enough south to catch a sac-a-lait. In those early days, you could tie up to one spot on Toledo and run out

of shiners catching big old white perch. Mom and O.B. both got a bite at about the same time. After a good fight they both pulled up their fish. The same fish. One fish. Two hooks in its mouth. Mom was notorious for not paying attention to her cork and apparently the fish hit her shiner, got hooked, swam around a minute and then hit O.B.'s. They caught the same fish. I can only imagine the "enjoyment" that was going on at that point. And no, I don't know who kept the fish, but I have a pretty good idea. If you had a couple more years to read, I'd share more.

## LEARNING THE HARD WAY

We had some learning experiences as well. Like the time we got caught on the wrong side of Lake D'Arbonne in that 14-foot aluminum boat and a storm came up. We were lucky that the white-caps didn't sink us. It was Mom who was the first to suggest, when our feet were planted securely on the bank, that we were going to need a bigger boat.



*Kinny Haddox has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 47 years. He and his wife, DiAnne, live in West Monroe.*





**OUTDOOR  
UPDATE**

# CADDO QUEENS

BOSSIER CITY GIRLS ARE TAKING IT TO THE HIGH SCHOOL BASSIN' WORLD

Alexis Virgillito, left, and Taylor Bacot, right, get help from their boat captain, Alexis' father, Bradley Virgillito, holding their five bass weighing 30 pounds, 3 ounces.

**T**wo Bossier City girls didn't have a weigh-in bag full of bragging-sized bass when they crossed the stage March 13 for the Louisiana Bass Federation High School State Championship weigh-in at Caddo Lake.

They had two full bags, Alexis Virgillito, 14, carrying one and Taylor Bacot, 15, hauling the other. Representing Parkway High School, Virgillito and Bacot were ready to shock the crowd and the nation in a mostly male-dominated sport.

"I felt like the top dog. I had a little spring to my step. When we were walking up everybody's eyes were as

big as basketballs," Taylor said later.

Their adult captain/coach, Alexis' father, Bradley Virgillito, who was with them on the water that memorable day, recalls that his eyes were very watery and said, "I was tearing up when they were walking across the stage with those fish."

And for good reason. Virgillito, a deputy with the Bossier Parish Sheriff's Department and School Resource Officer at Parkway High School, knew what caliber "hawgs" were finning around inside those bags.

The tale at the scale said it all. Those five bass distributed in two weigh-in bags combined for 30 pounds, 3 ounces, including a 7-pound, 3-ounce giant, best in a 109-boat field. The crowd was wowed.

"It was definitely one of the best days of my life," Alexis said.

## ANOTHER BIG WIN BUT HOLD ON, FOLKS

On March 26, they did it again. The two didn't catch quite as many fish, but they still caught more than anybody else to win their second title this month. This time it was the North Louisiana High School Bass tournament, once again on Caddo.

They weighed in three fish totaling 17.71 pounds and Alexis also won first place in the Big Bass category with a 9.61 lunker. Back-to-back victories on the lake was enough for them to earn the title "Caddo Queens" among some on social media. In winning that tournament, they became the first-ever all girl team to win an



event in the organization.

But back to that huge stringer and that first big bag and win.

Alexis, an eighth-grader at Elm Grove Middle School, and Taylor, a Parkway High School freshman, became the first all-girl team to win a TBF event in the nation and shattered the record for the largest five-bass stringer weighed during a TBF event in Louisiana.

It was only their third tournament together as a team.

Right behind the state champions were Calvary Baptist Academy's Noah and Mark Trant, runners-up with 28 pounds, 15 ounces. Captain Shreve High School's Brody Page and Stone Smith were third with 21 pounds, 8 ounces.

## BIG BASS

Taylor, the daughter of Kyle and Melissa Bacot, caught the biggest bass in the tournament. Like eight other keepers they hooked and boated, it bit on a black/chartreuse wooden crank bait painted by Todd Cloinger.

She was ready and set hook around 11:15 a.m. — a limit weighing 24.79 pounds already in the livewell — with a Dobyns spinning rod. She and Alexis both use Dobyns Rods, models DX703SF and DX743SF.

Crestfallen after losing a bass estimated at 8 pounds a few minutes earlier, Taylor handled that big bass like a seasoned bass angler.

"I was real excited about that. I'd already lost a big fish. I was kind of hoping. I cast out, hooked it and reeled it in. I was happy we got it. It was kind of overwhelming. I was at a loss for words, breath, everything," she said.

After Bacot hooked up with the 7-3, their captain weighed each bass in the livewell again.

"I told the girls, 'If you don't have 30, you're not going to miss it by much. This is a day for the memory books,'" Virgillito said, noting he was along for the unbelievable ride. "I'll put it to you this way, when they were catching fish, I was more excited than they were."

They were fishing a ditch in 3- to 4-foot depths, said Virgillito.

"It was nice. It was awesome. When we got the fish out of the livewell, I was shaking. I was nervous at the same time, too," Alexis said.

## SHARING THE CELEBRATION WITH FAMILY

Alexis' mother, Anne Kirspel, also of Bossier City, was at the weigh-in and excited for and proud of her daughter. Alexis' step-mother, Shari Virgillito, was also on hand to cheer the girls on, as was the Virgillitos' youngest child, Bradley Virgillito Jr., 5, who's already being groomed as a bass angler.

Also in the crowd was Gary Doolittle, Taylor's grandfather who has taken her bass fishing since she was four. Her older brother, Christopher Bacot, who also fishes for Parkway and has been another bass fishing mentor, joined in the celebration.

As a result of the win, Alexis and Taylor, who live in the same neighborhood and have been friends approximately three years, qualified for the 13th annual High School Fishing World Finals & National Championship in Florence, Alabama, on June 22-25 at nearby Pickwick Lake and Wilson Lake. The TBF's Student Angler Federation fishermen come from most states in the U.S. and other countries like Canada, Zimbabwe and South Africa. The event is billed as the granddaddy of all national high school events.

"If we have spots like we know fish are at, then, hopefully, we'll catch one fish," Taylor said. "That's our goal. Maybe two."

Perhaps, just perhaps, the Louisiana girls will treat the national scene with a déjà vu from Caddo Lake and the Sportsman's Paradise. ■

# Greater amberjack season to reopen May 1

**T** From News Reports

he recreational greater amberjack season will reopen in Louisiana and federal waters on May 1, 2022, and remain open through May 31, 2022. The reopening of greater amberjack overlaps with the currently open gray triggerfish season (March 1 through May 31).

The recreational season closure of June 1, 2022, through July 31, 2022, will remain in effect for greater amberjack. Following the fixed closed season, the recreational season for greater amberjack will reopen on August 1, 2022, and remain open until October 31, 2022, or until the annual quota is met or projected to be met. The recreational season for gray triggerfish will also reopen on August 1, 2022, through December 31, 2022, or until that quota is met or projected to be met. ■

# Red snapper season will open May 27

**T** From News Reports

he 2022 private recreational red snapper season will begin on May 27 in both state and federal waters. The season will run weekends only (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) with a daily bag limit of three fish per person and a 16-inch total length minimum size limit. The open season will also include the Monday of Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day. The Commission asked that LDWF take efforts to preserve quota for the Labor Day weekend.

The season will remain open until recreational landings approach or reach Louisiana's annual private recreational allocation of 809,316 pounds. Louisiana's ACL of 816,233 has been reduced by 6,918 pounds to cover Louisiana's overrun of landings during the 2021 season.

## RESIDENT AND NON-RESIDENT RECREATIONAL ANGLERS

- Must possess valid Louisiana Basic and Saltwater Recreational Fishing Licenses as well as a Recreational Offshore Landing Permit (free of charge) to fish for or possess red snapper, as well as other offshore species.
- Anglers get a ROLP via the ROLP website or smartphone application (Google Play or iTunes). Once you have registered, save an electronic copy on your mobile device or print a copy of your ROLP indicating your valid ROLP and carry it on your person along with applicable licenses while fishing offshore. ■

# B-52 BASS

HUGE 12-4 LUNKER  
FROM CROSS LAKE HAS  
RUDISILL FLYING HIGH

**N** By Kinny Haddox  
athaniel "Rudy" Rudisill is used  
to being around "big'uns" all  
day long.

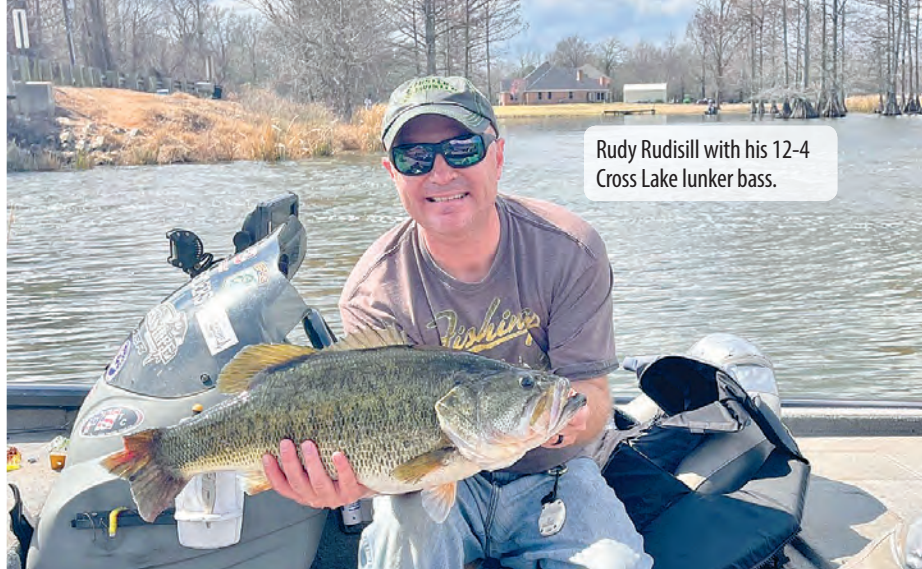
So nobody should have been surprised  
at his recent trophy largemouth catch  
out of Cross Lake on Sunday, March 6.  
Assigned to the Barksdale Air Force Base  
in Bossier, Rudisill spends his days on  
electrical maintenance of the huge B-52  
long-distance bombers stationed there.

But he spends as much of his free time  
fishing as he can. And the big bass he  
caught out of Cross Lake, the body of  
water that supplies Shreveport's drinking  
water, was his biggest reward to date.

The story actually started on Saturday,  
when Rudisill moved up in a protected  
pocket of the lake to get out of the wind  
and caught several good bass, including  
a 7-pound, 5-ounce bass on the beds. He  
found one bed that had several males  
around it and caught a couple of them.  
But he also spotted a "big dark spot" on  
the edge of the bed in about two feet of  
water that never moved the whole time  
he was there. It was getting dark, so he  
headed home.



Rudisill stretched out his big Cross Lake bass and it hung two inches over the end of his cull board.



Rudy Rudisill with his 12-4  
Cross Lake lunker bass.

"I went back Sunday and it was cloudy  
early, so I kept my distance," he said. "The  
sun didn't come out until 10:30, but when  
it did, I moved back to the bed and saw  
some big males there on the bed set  
up on the edge of some dead salvinia. I  
worked hard with several different lures to  
try and get one of the males to bite. I even  
moved my boat and tried from another  
angle. No luck."

## BIG MAMA

Patience is the key for spring bass fisher-  
men and Rudisill's paid off.

"I finally got one of the males to hit it,  
but he got off," Rudisill said. "I re-rigged my  
chartreuse Fluke worm, put some crawfish  
scent on it like I always do and tossed it  
back in there. Instead of a male hitting it,  
she came out of nowhere straight to the  
lure. I saw her gills flare and I set the hook.  
She took off right toward the boat."

He was fishing 50 pound braid, so he  
didn't worry about the line breaking, but  
when he caught up with the slack, he  
had to hit the thumb bar on his reel a  
couple of times to let her run. Then she

got wrapped around one of the talon  
anchors on the back. He calmly found the  
remote, lifted up the talon and freed her.  
She took off again. He started to go for  
the net, but decided he better go for the  
bass on his own.

"I just pulled her hard and got her to  
the boat where I could grab her," he said.  
"There was plenty of room in her mouth  
for my hand, that's for sure. I just sat there  
looking at her for a second, then turned  
on the aerator in the livewell, held her  
in the water until it filled up and tried to  
figure out what to do."

## A GOOD SEND-OFF

Rudisill called a buddy fishing on the  
lake to come look, but he couldn't stand  
the wait. He pulled out his small scale,  
got the bass out and it weighed 11-9.  
His previous personal best was 9.0. His  
friend arrived with a better scale and they  
weighed it at 12-4, a weight he confirmed  
on another scale a bit later. He held her up  
for a couple of pictures and then eased  
back into the cove and released the fish  
right where she came from. The fish was  
24 inches and hung over the end of his  
22-inch cull board. He wasn't able to get  
a girth measurement without traveling  
across the lake with the bass and risking  
her well being, he said.

"I timed that just right," the 38-year-old  
North Carolina native said. "I've been reas-  
signed for Edwards AFB in California in  
June, so I don't have much more time to  
fish here. It was a good going away pres-  
ent, that's for sure."

While he'll miss fishing Louisiana lakes  
and food, he's excited about trying out  
some of the big bass lakes in California. At  
least if he shows up AWOL out there, they  
will know where to start looking. ■

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**OUTDOOR  
UPDATE**

Buckeye Land-ling

Cole Moore of Anacoco caught this 10.27-pound bass on March 12 while fishing in an Outlaw Outdoors tournament with his father.



# TOLEDO BEND TRIPLETS

## THREE ANGLERS LAND THREE TEN POUND BASS IN FOUR DAYS

**C** By Dan Kibler  
all them the “Toledo Bend triplets” – three double-digit largemouth bass caught by Louisiana anglers in four days, all weighing within an ounce of each other.

Cole Moore of Anacoco got the fun started with the biggest of the three, a 10.27-pound bass that helped he and his father, Richard, win a tournament on Saturday, March 12.

Cody Vincent of Lake Charles came next with a 10.19-pound bass on Monday, March 14, and Charles Gullotta of Plaquemine fell right in line with a 10.18-pound lunker on Tuesday, March 15.

The fish were the 18th, 19th and 20th to qualify for the Toledo Bend Lunker Program since last May 1, when the 2021-22 season opened. They were the second qualifying fish of the year for Moore and Vincent, who weighed in 10-pound-plus fish in 2021.

## ALABAMA RIG SCORES FOR MOORE

Moore caught his big fish on March 12, fishing an Alabama rig in 15 feet of water in the mid-lake area.

“She hadn’t moved up yet. This is a staging area where the fish move up before they get on a spawning flat,” said Moore, whose fish was 27 inches long and 19 inches in girth. “It was about the third or fourth keeper we had.”

Moore and his father were fishing in an Outlaw Outdoors tournament when the fish struck around 10 a.m. He had the Alabama rig tied on a 7½-foot, heavy action Dobbins rod and a Shimano Curado reel spooled with Power Pro braid.

“She hit it pretty good. I knew from how heavy she felt she was good,” said Moore, who caught a 10.14-pound Toledo Bend lunker last June 17. The fight was nothing special, he said, noting that big fish don’t really fight. She just kept digging. By the time she came up, I had her beside the boat, and my dad lipped her.”

Their celebration was relatively mild, in part, Moore said, because they only had three keepers in the boat and were fishing in a tournament. By the 3 p.m. weigh-in, however, they had the field covered with 32 pounds including their big fish, two

7-pound fish and two more 4½-pound fish.

Moore entered the fish in the Lunker Program at Buckeye Land-ling, then the fish was released alive back into Toledo Bend.

## VINCENT’S SUPER SPOT

Vincent has a spot in Six Mile Creek he really likes. He caught a 10.88-pound fish there last Nov. 12 and he had caught a 7.04-pound bass there when he started fishing on March 14.

Three or four casts later, another big ‘un loaded up on the chartreuse 6th Sense crankbait he had tied on a Daiwa rod and Defender reel spooled with 16-pound Daiwa Samurai braid.

“I got out a little before daylight, and I was fishing 25 feet of water where it came up to 15,” he said. “I threw it out and set the hook and she was on there. She came up about 10 feet from the boat and jumped twice, then she came right to the boat, and I started reeling faster. She went under the boat, and I had to stick my rod under the boat. She came back out, came up, and I reached down and lipped her.”

Vincent said the fish came from the exact spot where the 7.04-pound fish came, and where his big fish last November hit.

“She was just on a ledge, close to the bank,” he said. “I didn’t see it on the LiveScope, but I could see a ball of bait in the area. I think



Cody Vincent of Lake Charles hooked this 10.19-pound bass at Toledo Bend on March 14.

she was just sitting on the ledge – in the same area where I caught the other big fish. People don't believe me when I tell them."

Fishing by himself, Vincent took the fish to Buckeye Landing to get it officially weighed and measured – 26¼ inches long, 19 inches in girth – and entered in the Lunker Program before releasing it.

## BLESS THAT NET MAN

Gulotta, from Plaquemine, said his fishing partner, Wayne Allemand, is "one of the best net men in the world" and that he proved it on Tuesday, March 15.

The two were fishing around 11 a.m., throwing up on a shallow, muddy flat, when a big bass grabbed Gulotta's watermelon red Zoom Brush Hog.

"We had two keepers and we were fishing about 2 feet deep," Gulotta said. "The deepest place was about 3 feet. It had rained, and it was real muddy. I told (Allemand) it was like fishing in the Spillway."

Gulotta made a cast with his 7-foot ProLite rod and reel combo spooled with 12-pound green Trilene.



Charles Gullotta of Plaquemine with his 10.18-pound lunker caught on a watermelon red Zoom Brush Hog on March 15.

"I saw the line going, and when I set the hook, it didn't move too much," he said. "I got a glimpse and knew it was a bass. My net man thought it was a carp. Then, she took off and went under the boat and came up on the other side. I had my rod in the water as far as it could go. Then, she came back to my side and we both saw her. We both said, 'Oh, my God,' and he grabbed the net and netted it."

When the big bass went under the boat, Gulotta said, "That scared both of us. All I could do was hold on and hope she came back. I was afraid she'd go around the front and get in the trolling motor, but she came back the same way she went."

## NOT QUITE FULL OF EGGS

A careful examination of the bass told Gulotta he might have been a day or two late catching her.

"She had probably been on the bed and had probably dropped some of her eggs," he said. "Her tail was all bloody. She still had a little bit of a belly, but she'd already dropped some eggs. I'll bet if she'd have been full of eggs, she'd have probably weighed another half-pound."

That didn't matter too much to the 73-year-old Gulotta. The duo only caught one more fish that day. They took the bass to Keith's Toledo Bend Bait & Tackle and had it officially weighed and measured – 10.18 pounds, 26 inches long and 18 inches in girth – and entered in the lunker program. ■

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**OUTDOOR  
UPDATE**

Buckeye Landing

Wayne Maxie of DeRidder hooked this 10.85-pound bass on March 19 with a watermelon red Zoom Brush Hog on a Carolina rig.



# NO "JUST BARELY'S"

TOLEDO BEND LUNKER PROGRAM ADDS THREE MORE CLASS MEMBERS

By Dan Kibler

The big-bass bite hit again at Toledo Bend on the Texas-Louisiana border, with three more double-digit large-mouths qualifying for the Toledo Bend Lunker Program – and none of them were "just barely's."

Ronnie Bland of Burkeville, Texas, got the parade started on Wednesday, March 16, with an 11.5 pound monster caught out of Mill Creek while he was "trying out" a relatively new Garmin LiveScope.



Ronnie Bland hooked this 11.5-pound bass on March 16 at Toledo Bend.

Wayne Maxie of DeRidder, La., scored on Saturday morning, March 19, with a 10.85-pound bruiser from the Negreet area and Daniel Clark of Singer checked in that afternoon with an 11.18-pound brute from Housen Creek.

## SCOPING HER OUT

Bland, who retired to Toledo Bend almost 20 years ago, had a LiveScope installed on his bass boat about two months ago, and he's been learning how to use it ever since, fishing a couple of hours most every day.

Practice certainly made perfect on March 16, when he pulled into a cove around 2:30 p.m. and scoped out a bunch of stumps in front of his boat. The stumps were in 20 to 25 feet of weather and when he scanned them, he saw one big sonar return that he took to be a bass, several feet above the stump. He had a half-ounce Strike King spinnerbait with a single, wil-low-leaf blade tied on and he chucked it next to the stump.

"I saw something off to the side of a stump and knew it was a fish and I threw the spinnerbait past it," Bland said. "It just came by at the same time the fish was there, and I saw this big flash on the screen, then I felt it."

Fishing a 7-foot-3 Kistler rod and ABU Revo reel spooled with 20-pound Trilene Big Game, he got the big fish in the boat, put it in the livewell, sat down and drank a cup of coffee to settle down. He weighed the big fish on a set of portable scales, and the lunker showed out at 11 pounds, 1 ounce. He cranked up and ran to Fins & Feathers Resort, where the bass was officially weighed at 11.5 pounds. It measured 25½ inches long and 19½ inches in girth, a fantastic pre-spawn bass.

"It was just a beautiful fish," said Bland. The fish was his third to qualify for the Lunker Program and the 21st of the 2021-22 season. Previously, he had fish that weighed 12.07 and 10.58 qualify for the program.

## FUN FISHING TURNS REALLY FUN

Wayne Maxie of DeRidder, La., hadn't made a trip to Toledo Bend Reser-voir this year before arriving on Friday, March 18. He was supposed to fish in a tournament the next morning, but he decided that not being familiar with conditions might put him at a big disadvantage.

"I decided I was just gonna get up and fish for fun," he said.

Talk about fun. Maxie slept in a little, got on the water around 8 a.m., and two hours later, he was still waiting for his first bite.

"I was in the Negreet area, fishing the bank in about 4 feet of water," he said. "I got my first bite on a (Zoom) Brush Hog, watermelon red, on a Carolina rig. I cast out and reeled up the slack, and she was on it, taking off. I set the hook, and I didn't know what I had, but I was sure it was a big fish."

Then, the fun began. Maxie was fishing by himself, so he tried to reach his landing net while keeping the fish under control.

"She came up, and I saw her, then she turned and went back down. She came up again and went back down," he said. "When she came up the third time, I was ready. I grabbed the net and got her."

"I weighed her on a set of scales I had and they read 10-11. I went back to camp and met a guy at the boat house and weighed her on his scales and she was 10-12. So I headed to Buckeye's Landing and got her weighed."

At Buckeye, Maxie's fish tipped the scales at 10.85 pounds, or 10 pounds, 13 ounces, qualifying for the Lunker Program as the 22nd bass of the 2021-22 season. The bass was 26½ inches long and 19¼ inches in girth.

"She was big and fat," Maxie said, believing that the fish had yet to go on the spawning bed. "Her tail was a little colored but not torn up. I couldn't see any beds that morning, but I saw a couple of bedding fish when I got back to fishing and I caught a couple of keepers."

## CLARK'S CATCH BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

Daniel Clark of Singer had the weekend of March 19-20 off, so he slept in. When he woke up at about 10 a.m., he asked his wife, Kaelin, if she wanted to go fishing at Toledo Bend, mentioning in passing a restaurant that might make a great stop for lunch.

She agreed, and the pair put their 2-year-old daughter and 4-year-old son in their car seats and headed to the Bend. They stopped at Fins & Feath-er's Resort so Clark could enter the Bass-CashBash, backed in the boat and headed to a spot in Housen Creek near Hurricane Bay.

"The wind was bad, so I came back into Housen and got on a northern shoreline," Clark said. "I caught a throwback, then two or three casts later, I had another bite, set the hook, and she came at me. I saw her when she came up and surfaced, and I said to my wife, 'Oh, babe, get the net.'"

Talk about a Chinese fire drill. Kaelin Clark corralled the two kids and tried to keep them out of the line of fire and got the landing net as her husband just hung on and prayed the hook would hold in the mouth of a big bass.

"I was fishing a medium-action, 7-foot Falcon rod, and I had 10-pound test," he said. "She ran 40 or 50 feet, pulling drag. She



Daniel Clark of Singer was fishing Toledo Bend on March 19 when he hooked this 11.18-pound beast in Housen Creek.

ran around the boat. My wife was jumping around, grabbing kids and getting them out of the way. The fish surfaced again, and we're both panicking. I'm trying to do everything I can to keep the fish on. She did a full circle, jumped one more time and came at the boat. I told my wife to get ready and try to net her when she came up again. She came up, on her side, and she netted her and threw her into the boat.

"It got hectic for a couple of minutes."

That was an understatement!

Clark hooked the fish at about 3:45 p.m. He put her in the livewell and dug out a set of hand scales he'd won at a tournament in February; they were still in the original package. He took off the wrapping material, got things working, and the fish weighed 11 pounds, 2 ounces.

"I'm still dreaming that this just happened," said Clark, who immediately headed back to Fins & Feathers, where the 25-inch-long fish officially weighed 11.18 pounds (11-3) and became the 23rd fish of the 2021-22 season to qualify for the Lunker Program.

"I've never had a fish mounted, and I told my wife, if I ever get one mount-ed, it will be a replica, because I don't want to kill the fish," he said. "I knew she was double-digit, but when I realized she was an extra pound, whew."

Clark said he was fishing his way back into a cove, sitting in 5 or 6 feet of water, making long casts toward the back of the cove, a good 300 yards away.

"I was throwing a Texas-rigged, Senko-style worm, watermelon red, with a split shot about 12 to 18 inches above the hook – a poor man's Carolina rig," he said. He was fishing with an the Falcon rod, an H2O Express reel and 10-pound Suffix Elite.

"I like that rod and light line," he said. ■

# PENNIES, WISHES & FISHES

## KLIEBERT CATCHES 12.45-POUND CANEY HAWG

**T** By Kinny Haddox  
here are lots of ways to catch giant bass in the spring. Ross Kliebert and Zane Zeringue of the Lafourche Parish Bassmasters may have come up with a new one.

"The day before the LHSAA tournament last weekend, Zane found two pennies. He kept one and gave one to me," Kliebert said. "He said throw it in the lake and make a wish. So I threw mine in and wished to catch a double-digit bass. He threw his in. I asked him what he wished for. He said his wish was just that we didn't zero out in the tournament."

Well, bass wishes do come true.

The next day, Saturday, March 19, the two didn't zero out. And Kliebert got his wish. The 10th grader from Hackberry who attends Thibodaux High caught his personal best 12.45-pound largemouth bass from Caney Lake. He also caught a 7-pounder and the duo ended the tournament in third place with five fish weighing 24.29 pounds.

"Oh my gosh, it was such a cool day," Kliebert said. "We started out slow, but started seeing more fish bedding. We found them along the edge of a cove and as we pulled up to one spot around a point, we saw a giant fish take off. We looked at each other with our mouths open and Zane said, 'was that like the giant stuffed bass you can get at Bass Pro?'"

The two had a good laugh, but knew they wanted a shot at that fish. They fished on down the cove, then came back again. When they did, Zeringue spotted the big momma and they spent an hour or more throwing every kind of bait they could think of. But the fish would not bite.



Ross Kliebert caught this huge 12.45-pound Caney luncker. His fishing partner Zane Zeringue lipped the bass and got him in the boat for the team.

## 6TH SENSE STROKER CRAW

"Our boat captain, Marcus Trosclair, suggested maybe we try a white bait, so we did," Kliebert said. "Zane tied on a white trick worm and tossed it in there. The big fish hit, but broke him off. We were like 'oh no... what just happened?' but I had a white 6-inch crawfish tied on so I threw it up in the bed."

As soon as he did, a smaller male bass shot over and ate the bait. After a brief battle, he landed the "small" 5-pound male. They again cast at the big fish, but she wouldn't bite again. Finally after about an hour of trying, Kliebert had cast a white 6-inch 6th Sense Stroker Craw sitting on

the bed. Zeringue tied a white chatterbait on and pulled it through the bed.

"When he did that, the big bass hit Zane's bait hard, but missed it," Kliebert said. "Then, it just turned and, just like that, ate mine. He was saying to me that the fish had his bait in its mouth and I said, 'you mean like this' and I set the hook. The fish went crazy. So did Zane."

After about a five minute battle, he finally got the fish close enough for Zeringue to lip it and he did. When they got it in the boat, they both went crazy.

"We were screaming and hollering and hugging. It was awesome," Kliebert said. "Marcus couldn't believe it and he was just sitting there smiling with his mouth open."

This is the very bait Kiebert caught his monster on, a Platinum White 6th Sense Stroker Craw. He's saving it to go with the mount.



## A VERY SUCCESSFUL TOURNAMENT

Trosclair said it was an absolute joy to watch the guys fish so hard and for him to serve as the boat captain.

"To watch them fish, man, that makes it worth all the effort," he said. "These guys fished so hard for those two big fish and they had so much fun. They kept tossing different baits at them and finally aggravated them into hitting that white crawfish. It was fun. This was my first trip back to Caney since the grass got back in it and it makes an enormous difference. If they keep the grass in there, this lake will just keep getting better."

The two get to talk about the experience quite often. They ride to school together and it's pretty much all they are talking about.

There were actually three double-digit bass caught during the tournament by the high school anglers. Baylen Guy and Brandt Babineaux of Tuerlings Catholic landed a 10.39 and Cullen Dickerson and Kanin Deal of South Beauregard landed an 11.28. The tournament was won by Tyler Covington and Brantley Tate of Walker High with five fish weighing 26.55, including a big fish of 8.77. Tournament runner-up Cade Walock and Brady Smith had five fish weighing 24.78 including a big fish of 9.61. ■

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# TOUGHING IT OUT

TWO ANGLERS BATTLE  
TOUGH CONDITIONS  
TO CONQUER  
TOLEDO TOADS

**T** By Dan Kibler  
he weather might not have been kind to Toledo Bend bass fishermen as spring arrived, but it didn't stop two of them from adding double-digit largemouths to the Toledo Bend Lunker Program.

Fishing in 20-mph winds, Jewel Hunt of Montgomery, Texas, landed a 10.69-pound monster on March 21. Five days later, Jimmie Box of DeRidder, La., pushed things up a notch by boating a 12.16-pound brute on a tough, bluebird day when it only took two fish to win a club tournament.

The two big bass pushed to 25 the number of double-digit lunkers that have qualified for the Toledo Lunker Program in the 2021-22 season, with about five weeks remaining.

## TOUGH, BUT WORTH THE TROUBLE

Box, who owns The Tackle Box, a sporting goods store in DeRidder, was fishing a Sportsman Bass Club tournament on March 26 with partner Michael Hickman. They fished all day for just two bites – and both of them came in a 10-minute period beginning at around 7:30 a.m.

"It was a tough day, a bluebird day with a tough bite," said Box. "We moved to our second spot at about 7:30, and I caught about a 2½-pounder right away, then about 10 minutes later, I got a second bite, and it was the big fish."

Box was fishing a Texas-rigged Zoom Brush Hog (watermelon red) on a 7-foot-3, medium-heavy action Hammer Rod and an ABU Iaconelli reel spooled with 16-pound Daiwa Samurai braid.

"We started shallow and moved to deeper water, went to a spot we hadn't fished at mid-lake," he said. "We were fishing on the ledge along a creek channel in about 10 feet of water where it dropped into 25 feet. I think there might have been a stump right on the drop. I caught the first fish, then, about 10 casts later, I caught the big fish. I felt her, set the hook and she ran to the left. I pulled her toward us, and she ran out past the boat into 25, 26 feet of water, then I brought her back around to the side we were on, and she dug deep again. I was able to keep tension on her and the drag set right and Michael got her in the boat."

"I knew it was a big bass when I set the hook. It felt like dead weight. When I first set the hook, she came up and I saw her. I couldn't believe it when I caught her. I'm still in denial."

"We fished another 20 minutes and realized it was way over 10 pounds after we weighed it in the boat, so we left and went to

Jimmie Box of DeRidder with the 12.16-pound bass he caught at Toledo Bend on March 26.



Buckeye Landing and weighed it. She was 27 inches long and 20¼ inches in girth."

The two fish, weighing close to 15 pounds and caught in the mid-lake area, were good enough to give Box and Hickman first place – and of course, big fish – in their club tournament.

"She was still full of eggs, no bloody tail or anything," said Box. "She was probably getting ready to make her move (to spawn). This is my biggest fish. I've caught some over 10, but never a 12. It's my first Lunker Program fish from Toledo Bend; I've gotten close before, but I've never broken 10."

Box was pleased with the huge fish for obvious reasons, but for another, less obvious one. He had elbow surgery in January, suffered through a couple of months of rehab, and had only been able to fish once – several weeks earlier – and he had to give it up because his elbow hurt too much to set the hook. The March 26 tournament was his real return to the water.

## THANK HEAVENS FOR FRIENDS

Jewel Hunt and fishing buddy Paul Gaylord have been sharing the same boat for the better part of 60 years – since they were 15 or 16 years old.

On March 21, they were in Gaylord's boat, fishing some of his spots at mid-lake on the Louisiana side of the lake, and Gaylord was having a pretty good day.

"He had probably caught four or five and I had caught two dinks," Hunt said, when the two pulled up to fish the end of a point at about 1 p.m. "We're old school. We go slow. You have to slow down to catch good fish, and Paul and I have been real patient to catch good fish."

"He was throwing into this little area, maybe six or seven times, and he started fanning a little more with his Carolina rig. I was messing with him, and he was messing with me. He had his rod tip up, and I threw up under his rod tip. We were horsing around, so I threw up under his line and let it sit on the bottom."

"I walked to the stern, and before I got there, I felt the strike. I set the hook while I was walking, and the fish came up and I saw it was a big fish. Paul said, 'That's a 6-pounder,' and I said, 'No, it's a



giant.' It went around the boat two times, and the second time, Paul saw it, and he threw his rod down in the boat. The fish went around one more time, and he reached down and grabbed it."

Jewel Hunt of Montgomery, Texas, caught this 10.69-pound bass on March 21 at Toledo Bend.

## CREATURE BAIT WAS THE TICKET

Hunt was fishing a creature bait, watermelon red with some areas dyed with a lure dye, Texas-rigged on an 1/8-ounce tungsten weight. He was fishing a Falcon rod and an ABU-Garcia reel spooled with 14-pound Berkley fluorocarbon.

The big bass, which came out of about 6 feet of water on the side of a long point, was 26 1/2 inches long and 19 3/4 inches in girth when it was weighed and measured at Buckeye Landing that afternoon.

The bass was Hunt's first to qualify for the Lunker Program, but not nearly his personal bass. He had previously caught an 11.8-pounder from Conroe and a 13.2 from the Lakes of Danbury. ■

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# TOLEDO BEND ENCORES

BASS ANGLERS LAND MORE LUNKERS IN WILDLY DIFFERENT WAYS

**T** By Dan Kibler  
 Toledo Bend anglers have landed four more double-digit bass in just a week, increasing to 29 the number of fish that have qualified for the Toledo Bend Lunker Program since last May.

And each of the most-recent big fish were caught in wildly different ways: one while an angler was stopped, talking to fishing buddies; one angler caught a monster after another boat left a spot; one landed a lunker fishing from the bank; and the fourth new lunker list entry came on the angler's fourth cast of the day.

## STOP FOR A CHAT

LeDaine Summers of Paulina was fishing a club tournament on March 31, when he ran up Coal Miner's Creek, then stopped and talked to several other club members



LeDaine Summers of Paulina was fishing a club tournament on March 31 when he caught this 11.65-pound bass at Toledo Bend.

who were fishing. He made a long cast with a watermelon red, Texas-rigged Senko off a point.

"I had stopped and talked with some other guys for a little while and I felt my line get tight," said Summers. "We'd been sitting there for a minute. I thought I'd hung a stump."

But the stump started to move and Sum-

mers, who was fishing with his son, Mitchell, set the hook.

"She took off to the left, came out of the water, and a buddy in the other boat said, 'That's a 10.' She ran under the boat, then came back out; I was shaking the whole time."

Summers finally got the big fish – 11.65 pounds – under control and got her aboard at around 3 p.m.

Summers, who was using a 13Fish-ing rod and a Lew's reel spooled with 15-pound

Red Label fluorocarbon, said he made an immediate mistake. He didn't check his line and retie. About 30 minutes later, using the same rod, reel and lure, he hooked another bass he estimated at 9 to 10 pounds, but it broke his line right beside the boat.

"My son was mad at me. We could have weighed in two huge fish," he said.

Summers wound up catching a 6-pound bass, to go with his big fish, and he and his son headed for Bridges Bay Resort for the weigh-in. He weighed in the smaller fish, kept the big fish in the livewell with the aerator running and headed to Keith's Toledo Bend Tackle to get it officially weighed and entered in the Toledo Bend Lunker Program.

"We go to Toledo Bend every year to fish a club tournament," Summers said. "I caught a 10.19-pound fish in 2021 on the first day we got here."

## SO SORRY YOU MOVED

Somewhere, there are two anglers who are really wondering what might have been on Saturday, April 2.

They watched Glenn Marcantel of Basile boat a 3 ½-pound bass in Toledo Bend's Six Mile Creek, picked up, looped around Marcantel and his wife, put their Power Pole down and started fishing again.

Marcantel kept working the same bank,



On April 2, Glenn Marcantel of Basile hooked and landed this 10.09-pound lunker.

and 10 minutes later, when he came to the spot the other boat left, he slung a ¾-ounce football-head jig – green with a green-glitter skirt and Yum crawfish trailer in watermelon seed – into 4 to 6 feet of water.

And he hooked and landed a 10.09-pound lunker – with the other guys watching.

“It was about 2 o’clock, and I’d caught six or seven fish, smaller fish, a pound or 2, and my wife, Melissa, and I had fished another two hours without getting another bite,” Marcantel said. “I figured, if I’m not getting bit, I’m going to try something else, so I tied on a football jig. Within 10 minutes, I caught that 3 ½-pounder. It was the first fish I’d ever caught on a jig. About 5 minutes after that, I caught the 10.”

“The first fish was next to a laydown and the second wasn’t far from it. There were two guys fishing not far away and when they saw me catch the first fish, they went around me, put their Power Pole down and started fishing again. I caught the big fish right where they’d been sitting. I was throwing into about 4 to 6 feet of water, but I could see the bottom. I was casting around stumps. I was just dragging that jig a little bit, real slow, and with braid, you feel everything. I felt a little tick, and when I pulled against it, the line started heading to deep water. I set the hook and it felt like I’d set into a stump.”

Marcantel eventually got the fish under control and to the side of the boat, where his wife slipped the net under it.

Marcantel was fishing a Denali Kovert series rod, 7-foot-4, heavy action, with a Lew’s reel spooled with 30-pound braid. He took

the fish to Fins and Feathers Resort to get it officially weighed and measured. It weighed 10.09 pounds, was 26 inches long and 17 inches in girth.

Marcantel said the fish appeared to have already spawned. It’s belly was flat and empty in the 66-degree water.

## **A GOOD FISH? YOU CAN BANK ON IT!**

Casey Smith of Florien was keeping an eye on Toledo Bend on Sunday, April 3. In fact, he’d seen three nice bass in the shallows near the U.S. Army Recreation Center. The sight was enough to send him back inside for his rod and reel.

“I saw one big fish, maybe it was a gar, maybe I was misjudging it, but I came up and told my dad and my son’s mom that I was gonna catch that fish,” Smith said around 1 p.m.

He grabbed a Lew’s rod and reel combo, the reel spooled with K-9 braid, tied on an underspin with a Lazy Man gold blade and a V&M High Tail shad in Silver Minnow.

“I could see the fish’s reflection in the water and I figured I’d try my luck,” he said. “I hadn’t bass fished in a while. I’ve been crappie fishing. But I could see the fish I was after.”

Smith started casting from the side of a dock to the fish, which was bedding in some patchy grass on a clay bottom.

“I threw it over there and bounced it along. On the fourth cast, I said to myself that I’d do it one more time, and I twitched it a little more, trying to make it more realistic.”



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Casey Smith of Florien holds the Toledo Bend lunger he caught on April 3. The 10.5-pound bass was 27 ½ inches long and had 18 inches in girth.

**TOLEDO BEND ENCORES** continued >

And out of nowhere, a fish Smith hadn't even seen, rushed from under a patch of grass and blasted the bait.

"That big girl came out, and it was on. She toe-tagged me. When I saw her open her mouth, I got so excited my knees got weak," he said. "She tried to get under the pier, but I knew what she was trying to do and stopped her. I was standing pretty close to the bank, and I took off running and jumped off the pier. I kept tension on her, and when I got her close to the bank – I was standing in the water – I saw how she was hooked. I thought if she rolled over, she was gone. But I got my hand in her mouth and I came unglued. I gave out a big, Ric Flair, 'Woooooo!'"

Smith climbed back up on the bank and put the fish in his son's little swimming pool and called a buddy, Zach Gagnard of Elite Guide Service, a crappie-fishing guide. When Gagnard arrived, they loaded the fish on his pontoon boat and headed to Fins and Feathers resort, where the fish officially weighed 10.5 pounds, was 27 ½ inches long and 18 inches in girth.

"She was completely spawned out," Smith said. "She had a sore on her side, and her tail – well, it hadn't been too long since she had spawned."

**A GREAT FIRST STOP**

Jesse Hyatt of Shreveport didn't get to fish very long when he put down his trolling motor at around 6:45 a.m. on Monday, April 4.

But don't feel sorry for him. On his fourth cast, at his first stop – a little south of mid-lake – he caught an 11.26-pound lunger that is



the 29th fish to qualify for the Toledo Lunger Program.

"It was still twilight out," Hyatt said. "It was my first fish of the day, on my fourth cast – just about as soon as I put my trolling motor in the water. My wife, DeAnna, was sitting in the back of the boat drinking coffee, not even fishing."

That's when he flung a ¾-ounce chartreuse/white spinnerbait with two gold, willow-leaf blades and no trailer to the side of a dock, fishing a baitcasting rod with an ABU Garcia SX reel spooled with 14-pound fluorocarbon. He slow-rolled the bait down to about 5 feet and he felt the bait stop before it should have. He set the hook.

"She was about 15 or 20 yards off the bank, on the side of the dock," Hyatt said.

"I was hollering at her, telling her to get the net," Hyatt said. "I was concerned when she first took off and started taking drag. When I got her off the bottom, she darted right back down. I thought she was gonna shake the hook. Then, when I got her to the surface where I could see her good, I just wanted to make sure she didn't jump. My wife handed me the net and I netted her."

"I filled up the livewell and put her in, then we ran across the lake to Fins and Feathers. I think we were the first people there. I went in and told 'em I had a 10-pounder and asked if they could weigh and measure it."

Hyatt seriously underestimated the 25-inch fish, which had a girth of 19 ¾ inches. It weighed 11.26 pounds.

"She hadn't spawned. She was still full of eggs," he said. "I think that's why I thought she was so much bigger when I had thought she was just a 10."

"We went back out and fished a little longer, but not too long, maybe an hour before we went in." ■

Jesse Hyatt of Shreveport was fishing at Toledo Bend on April 4 when he caught this 11.26-pound lunger.





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# HELLO, DARLIN'

Cody Vincent of Lake Charles hooked this huge bass for the second time on April 6 at Toledo Bend.

## VINCENT ENJOYS LANDING TOLEDO BEND LUNKER BASS A SECOND TIME

**W**hen Cody Vincent of Lake Charles pulled a huge bass out of Toledo Bend Reservoir on April 6, a tag sticking out of the fish's back got him to take a closer look.

"My scales were off. The first time I weighed him, it said 9-8 (9 pounds, 8 ounces)," Vincent said. "But I saw the small tag and I said to myself, 'He's got to be bigger than that.'"

Vincent recognized the tag as the kind that double-digit bass receive when they are certified into the Toledo Bend Lunker Program, after they're weighed and measured and before they're released back into the lake. So he knew the fish had, at one point, weighed more than 10 pounds.

"I have a set of back-up scales, and I never use them except on big fish, so after I put her in the livewell to calm her down, I waited about 15 minutes, and the scales read 10.44 (pounds)," he said.

### PROOF POSITIVE

So Vincent headed to Buckeye Landing, where he weighed in a 10.88-pound fish last Nov. 12, and a 10.19-pound fish on March 14. Staff at Buckeye weighed this fish at 10.44, matching Vincent's scale reading.

"The guy who weighed my fish looked at the tag, and he checked his paperwork to see if he had tagged this fish," he said. "He said it was tag 0845, and he said I'd caught the same fish back in November.

"I didn't realize it was the same fish, because she didn't weigh as much, but I knew she had a tag."

So what are the chances that, on a 185,000-acre reservoir like Toledo Bend, an angler catches the same fish twice, almost five

months apart? What are the chances that fish is a 10-pounder?

If those odds sound long, consider this. Vincent caught the fish in November in Six Mile Creek about a 12-mile ride from Buckeye Landing. And he caught the fish in April about 200 yards from the spot where he caught it in November. In about 150 days, the fish had moved 12 miles back to familiar surroundings.

So much for bass acting like homing pigeons. Vincent's fish was the first among 30 that qualified for the Toledo Bend Lunker program during the 2021-22 season that had been caught and tagged before.

### A GOOD RUN

"This is the best run of big fish in my life," said Vincent, who caught the fish on a chartreuse, 6th Sense C15 crankbait. "In the last 6 months, I've caught those three big fish, a couple more 8-pounders, about 10 7-pounders, and I don't know how many 5s and 6s. On that same spot, I had caught three 5½-pounders right before that."

Vincent said the spot he was fishing was about 50 yards off the bank, around brush on the end of a flat where the water drops from 15 to 24 feet. He believes that the bass had already spawned out, which accounts for its drop in weight between the November and April landings.

"Its tail was red, and there were a couple of scratches on it," he said. "The belly was still big, but from the weight, I figure she had spawned out and was just starting to feed again."

The lunker program on Toledo Bend is having a good year, already surpassing the total of 25 entrants submitted for the 2020-21 season. ■

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# SUBCALIBER ADAPTERS EXPAND FIREARMS USAGE

**T** By: Ryan Arena

hey say necessity is the mother of invention, and George and Wendy Tatum might just agree with that statement – they know from experience.

About a year ago, the couple opened a machine shop on their Oxford farm, featuring subcaliber multicaliber adapters designed by George to allow the .303, .30-06, .308 and the 8 mm Lebel to use pistol rounds and maintain accuracy. The team of Tatums have turned that invention into success, with a wide range of customers finding varying uses for the product.

Chamber adapters use the rifling in a firearm to stabilize the bullet, making them excellent tools for target practice, downing small game and eliminating unnecessary meat destruction.

The idea spawned from an unlikely source: coyotes. Specifically, a few too many unwanted visits from them.

“We had a coyote problem here,” said Wendy. “If you have the long-range rifles like .303s and .30-06s, you can’t really use them in any kind of enclosed area. My husband has a .303, and the neighbors were pretty close. You want to be able to take out the coyotes with precision, but without affecting anyone’s home.”

The coyotes were a constant threat to the farm’s livestock, as well as the Tatums themselves and their neighbors. The bullets from a .303 travel too far to fire safely upon the intruders, though. An engineer, George got to work, making the first of what became several different subcaliber multicaliber adapters.

For the coyotes, it did the trick. But George explored a little more with the idea.

“Many folks who do military reenactments couldn’t get 9 mm blanks last year or blank adapters, so we made blank adapters,” Wendy said. “Someone else contacted us about a .30-06 with a kick. So, he made an adapter from an 8 mm Lebel to a 9 mm blank.”

Thus, the machine shop at OKT Farms, LLC was born, the product displayed on the OKT Farms website and selling via PayPal.

“It’s become something we do together. He makes the product,



and I do all the shipping and customer service,” Wendy said. “It’s interesting how we ended up. Both of us like farming, he likes the garden stuff and I like the animals. We were both tired of having his garden and my animals eaten up, and here we are.”

Said George, “We’re working toward expanding our gunline. Right now, we’re taking it nice and slow.”

It was never intended to be the business it became, only a shared hobby. But more and more people learned of the product and its many potential uses.

There are the small game hunters who have found that hunting game with a .327 federal magnum round out of their .303 helps out plenty because the bullet, while still supersonic, doesn’t damage the animal’s pelt.

There are also .303 aficionados that simply have a hard time getting ammo for it. With the adapter, one can always find ammo.

Then there are the veterans who collect old war guns and find their shoulders wearing down due to the kick from each shot. That group requested the Blackout rounds, which out of a .303 feels more like shooting a .32 as far as the kick goes.

It’s also a great way to teach marksmanship. With a .32, one can shoot all day long and do so accurately with the cost of ammunition significantly reduced.

“It doesn’t change the weapon at all. You can always load up a 30-06 behind an adapter, but teaching kids or folks new to shooting and being able to do it on a real weapon really makes the process a lot better,” George said.

Finally, others have found great use at the indoor range. “One had the idea to bring his H&R Magnums and shoot them in his .303,” George said. “They didn’t have a problem with it so long as it’s a pistol round. So, here he is at the pistol club, shooting at 75 feet. Of course, no one could beat him. You just can’t beat the accuracy of a .303.”

Those interested in learning more can reach the Tatums at 919-691-4333 or <https://tatumokfarm.wixsite.com/my-site-1>. ■

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# CCA LEADS EFFORT TO TAKE POGIE BATTLE BACK TO LEGISLATURE

By Jeremy Alford

The Coastal Conservation Association of Louisiana, the well-funded lobby for recreational fishermen, is undertaking the most aggressive government relations campaign members have seen in roughly two decades.

With at least 10 lobbyists currently registered for the regular session, CCA is targeting the menhaden fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. That's quite a large target; those commercial outfits that harvest pogies, or menhaden, are part the largest industrial fishery in Louisiana. (Pogies are great as bait, but they are primarily processed for a variety of other products.)

Recreational fishermen have argued for years that the massive nets used by the fishery are killing trout and redfish. Environmentalists also contend the fishery is eliminating an important food source for birds and other animals.

At the Capitol, meanwhile, the question of what to do has become a perennial issue. CCA-Louisiana CEO David Cresson said fishermen are losing patience with the inaction, which is why the association has enlisted help from Advanced Strategies, Pelican State Partners and a host of independent lobbyists.

"Our membership has identified this as an extremely important issue," Cresson told *Louisiana Sportsman*.

The CCA sent out a Legislative Alert to its members about HB 1033, stating the bill is "a very positive step forward toward proper management of this enormous fishery. Every year, hundreds of millions of pounds of this critical forage species are removed from Louisiana's territorial waters, often within a quarter mile of our beaches. At the same time, we have no understanding of how this size or style of industrialized harvest is impacting the ecosystem and the critical species that live there, like specks, reds, shrimp, nesting birds and sea mammals. HB 1033 would provide critical information on the harvest to Louisiana fisheries managers, while providing a basic level of protection for Louisiana's coastal resources."

CCA isn't alone. Francois Kuttel of Westbank Fishing in Empire, a company involved in harvesting pogies, said his industry is likewise spending more money on government relations.

"Since last year we have had to increase our expenditure in that area," said Kuttel, who has contracted with former Rep. Chris Leopold of Belle Chasse for representation. (Another big player, Omega Protein, has long had Harris, DeVille and Associates in its corner.)

Aside from hiring its own lobbyists, the menhaden industry has taken a somewhat different approach toward legislative relations,

relying on family members of workers and operators to make contact with representatives and senators.

Legislation last year to push the menhaden industry further offshore was stalled by opponents and replaced by a task force charged with studying the matter. With the limited findings from the task force in hand, the House and Senate natural resources committees are now advancing bills again to tackle the topic.

House Bill 1033 by Rep. Joe Orgeron, R-Larose, is on the move in the lower chamber and has some sections that are opposed by members of the menhaden industry. Orgeron, who authored last year's related legislation, is pushing for weekly reporting by the industry during its next season (this year's season opened April 18) and new catch limits administered through a tiered system based on the distance from the shore.

The full Senate will also soon vote on Senate Bill 447 by Senate Natural Resources Chair Bob Hengens, R-Abbeville. This legislation is part of an ongoing compromise between the industry and CCA that's being overseen by Hengens. So far, there is only one point of agreement — weekly reporting of data to Wildlife and Fisheries.

That's the only provision in the bill approved by the Senate Natural Resources Committee, but talks are ongoing and the legislation is expected to grow as more agreements are struck.

"By the time this gets out of the House, more will be added to the bill," said Hengens. ■

*Jeremy Alford is the publisher and editor of Louisiana's oldest political trade publication. Learn more at [www.LaPoliticsWeekly.com](http://www.LaPoliticsWeekly.com).*





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# GIVE 'EM BIG BITES

INTENTIONALLY TARGET  
BIG SPECKLED TROUT AND  
THAT'S WHAT YOU'LL GET!

■ By John N. Felsler

**D**oing the piscatorial version of “the wave,” thousands of terrified pogies desperately leaped from the water in a futile effort to escape the ravaging predators slashing at them at the edge of the light.

On a dock protruding into Calcasieu Lake near Lake Charles, La., we quickly tied on large shad-colored lipless crankbaits and tossed them just in front of the leading edge of the “wave” as it arched back and forth around the dock tip. The heavy rattling temptations barely touched the water before large fish inhaled them. For hours, we landed speckled trout in the 6 to 9-pound range, plus large redfish.

I offer myself as proof that anyone can catch a trophy trout if that person happens upon the right spot at the right time with the right bait. I will probably never again experience such incredible fishing as that night.

People who consistently catch giant specks intentionally fish for them.

For even for the best anglers, targeting trophy trout takes time, determination, perseverance, skill and more than a smidgen of luck. Targeting big trout also requires a plan beginning even before the boat leaves the dock. Anglers specifically fishing for monster specks might spend long hours casting hundreds of times while hoping for one or two bites while ignoring people in nearby boats landing limits of small specks.

**ONE BIG BITE >**

## ONE BIG BITE

“Someone who wants to catch big trout consistently has to fish for one big bite,” commented Kirk Stansel of Hackberry Rod and Gun (888-762-3391, Hackberryrodandgun.com) on Calcasieu Lake, locally called Big Lake. “Before we leave the dock, we have to decide to target big fish or a lot of small fish. Sometimes, fishing for giant speckled trout is about as exciting as watching ice melt. It can be pretty slow when looking for that one big strike — until one hits!”

Simply put, few trout ever grow to true trophy classes. One large female speck might produce millions of eggs in a year, but only a small percentage live to spawn. A 3-year-old female speck might measure about 17 inches long. Not many trout make it past three years. Any trout exceeding eight pounds makes an incredibly rare trophy, even more so for a double-digit wall hanger.

Places that traditionally hold giant specks share certain traits. Trout need clean, salty water, abundant bait and access to deep water. Access to deep water doesn't mean trout spend all their time in the depths. They drop into deep water to escape fishing pressure, boat traffic and temperature extremes, but frequently feed on shallow flats or around reefs.

“The best advice I can give to anyone who wants to catch big trout is to look for shallow water, bait and areas with high salinity levels,” advised Nash Roberts IV with Fishhunter Guide Service (504-650-1918, fishhunter-guideservice.com) who fishes the Port Sulphur, La., area. “We catch our bigger trout usually in

water less than three feet deep. We find many big trout feeding on fish above oyster reefs.”

Specks require salinity levels of at least 17 parts per thousand to spawn. Before spawning, trout reach their largest sizes. Specks typically start spawning in April and might spawn multiple times until early fall. The peak occurs from mid-May through June with a smaller peak in August.

In many ways, giant specks often act more like redfish or largemouth bass than small trout. Habitual loners, they lurk around cover such as oyster reefs, rock piles, sunken boats, jet-ties, petroleum wells or other hard structures where they can ambush baitfish rather than running down prey in the open.

## A BIG GULP

Any trout will slurp a shrimp that passes temptingly close, but monster trout don't feed very often and characteristically want one big meal they can grab without expending too much energy to catch it. That means a fish meal instead of a bite-size shrimp. A 5-pound trout can easily swallow a 12-inch mullet. Imagine what a 10-pound trout might gulp!

“Big trout eat much bigger baits than most people realize,” explained Ronnie Daniels of Fisher-Man Guide Services (228-323-1115, msfisher-man.com) in Pass Christian, Miss. “The tenacity of these fish is impressive. I've caught small trout with a bait almost as long as the speck. If they think they can swallow it, they're going to try. We pull big fish out of trout bellies all the time when cleaning them. Almost every trout we clean in the summer, unless we catch them under birds, have pogies in them.”

Catching this monster speck would leave any angler smiling big. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Big baits also often catch all sizes of trout and this one was no exception.



Photo courtesy Hackberry Rod and Gun



John N. Felsher

The biggest trout primarily feed upon mullets, croakers, pinfish, large pogies, also called menhaden, and other baitfish. Big trout won't school with smaller specks attacking shrimp, but they might hover under the school waiting to pick off small trout. When big trout gather, they do so with other similar-sized trout and even redfish.

"I've caught many trout exceeding seven pounds around redfish schools," Stansel recalled. "When redfish are schooling along the shorelines, big trout hang on the outside edges of those fish. They are feeding on the same bait."

Anglers commonly see mullets and other baitfish swimming near the surface. Mulletts regularly thrust their noses above the water. Therefore, large topwater baits make excellent temptations for the biggest trout.

"Large topwaters are some of the best baits for catching big trout," Stansel said. "Finfish imitations, like mullet or pogies, attract the biggest fish. My favorite topwater bait is a Super Spook in gold with an orange belly and black back. I also like suspending jerkbaits. A MirrOdine suspending twitchbait is another good one for big trout. I also like the Corky Fat Boy, which is one my favorites."



John N. Felsher is a professional freelance writer and photographer with more than 1,700 articles in more than 117 magazines to his credit. You can contact him at [JohnNFelsher.com](http://JohnNFelsher.com).

**LARGE PROFILES >**



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## LARGE PROFILES

Big topwaters create large profiles and considerable commotion on the surface. Anglers throwing topwaters probably won't land as many fish, but they'll likely catch bigger ones than people throwing jigheads tipped with soft plastics or those fishing with live shrimp. "Walk-the-dog" baits mimic injured mullets with a scintillating side-to-side motion. Giant trout can't resist inhaling a large wounded baitfish.

Anglers can also catch big trout on jigheads tipped with large plastic trailers or swimbaits. Some swimbaits even look like natural prey trout would eat. Spinnerbaits, spoons and crankbaits can also work on big trout.

"When I'm targeting something big, I use a Matrix Mega Shad, which is a big soft-plastic bait, on a 1/4-ounce jighead," Roberts said. "In cleaner water, I use subtle, natural colors. In dirty water, I like black and chartreuse. For really big trout, I also like Mike Herrmann's Donkey Bay Swimbaits. These are all hand-painted. Some look identical to a pogie or a mullet and work great for big trout and other species. Work it almost like a walk-the-dog bait, but underwater so they glide from side to side. Just twitch it and fish come up to grab it."

If large trout savor big baitfish, give them what they want. Mulletts, croakers and pogies make excellent live baits. Fish them on a free line with no weight, under a popping cork or on bottom with a Carolina rig. Offer trout various live temptations at different depths.



John N. Felsler

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"I like pogies up to about four inches long," Nash said. "I hook the baitfish through its dorsal fin or nose and fish it on a free line with no weight. We use 20-pound braid with 36 inches of 20-pound fluorocarbon leader. We'll use croakers occasionally, but I've had better success with pogies. A pogie gives off oil and it's a natural prey for trout."

Daniels fishes croakers with something called a "chatter weight." The plastic weight comes with internal beads that rattle. Tie the main line to one end of a chatter weight and a fluorocarbon leader to the other. Add a 3/0 or 4/0 Kahle hook when using large croakers or a 1/0 to 2/0 Kahle hook with smaller baits.

"When fishing grass beds, I like to use lighter tackle," Daniels said. "A chatter weight is just heavy enough to get the croaker below the surface so seagulls won't grab it, but it doesn't pin the bait

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Live croakers make excellent bait for many saltwater species. They work particularly good for enticing giant speckled trout. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Jen Carroll and Capt. Erik Rue of Calcasieu Charter Service show off a speckled trout she caught on a topwater bait while fishing at Calcasieu Lake south of Lake Charles.



John N. Felsher

to the bottom. Water clarity determines my leader. In relatively clear water, I use an 18-inch 20-pound-test fluorocarbon leader. Sometimes, I use 30-pound monofilament.”

When fishing live baits, most people instinctively set the hook as soon as they feel a bite. After attacking a fish, a trout must position it in its mouth to swallow it head first so the fins fold down. Fish with a slack line to allow the trout to get the bait. When it takes the slack out of the line and starts swimming off, use a low, sweeping motion to set the hook.

Whether fishing artificial or natural baits, keep quiet when targeting spooky giant trout. Shut down the outboard well away from the fishing spot. If possible, drift into the honey hole. Use the trolling motor sparingly for directional control. Make the longest casts possible. For even stealthier operations, many anglers prefer wading where possible to make a low profile on the surface.

Catching trophy trout takes extreme perseverance waiting for one big strike. However, any strike could produce the trout of a lifetime! ■

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## LARGER, DEEPER LAKES HOLD LOUISIANA'S BIGGEST TROUT

For the best success, anglers need to fish waters known for producing larger than average specks. Calcasieu Lake probably leads Louisiana for the number of 7-to-11-pound trout it produced.

"We've caught a lot of big trout here over the years," reported Kirk Stansel who guides on Calcasieu Lake. "The reason Calcasieu Lake is so good is because the ship channel runs right next to it and it's only five miles from the Gulf of Mexico. Hundreds of thousands of acres of marsh surrounds the lake, creating nursery grounds for shrimp, fish and all kinds of creatures. During May and June, big trout come into Calcasieu Lake to spawn. I like to fish within five days ahead of a full moon or new moon."

Just to the west, Sabine Lake straddles the Louisiana-Texas line and produces quality trout. Louisiana anglers can also catch big trout around Grand Isle, the Lake Pontchartrain-Lake Borgne area

and the Mississippi River delta. Accessible from southeastern Louisiana or the Mississippi Coast, the 50-mile-long Chandeleur Islands traditionally produce giant trout.

"The Chandeleur Islands have always been a big trout destination," Ronnie Daniels said. "That's one of my favorite places to wade and throw big topwater baits. I've done well around those islands fishing a topwater even at midday. Around the Chandeleur Islands, I'll also use a 4-to-6-inch croaker if I can get my hands on one." ■

### MARSH MAN MASSON ➤

Going a little deeper and with a big bite offering rewarded this angler with a trophy speckled trout.

Photo courtesy/Hackberry Rod and Gun



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# MARSH MAN MASSON

Todd Masson

Figuring out the right bait may not be as important as finding fish, but it's certainly not an insignificant portion of the equation.



Photos by Todd Masson

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**WE** all know anglers who are lure junkies. These guys obsess over seemingly insignificant details of artificial offerings, their confidence boosted by black stripes or red dots that, in their minds, will turn apathetic fish into aggressive gluttons.

You can find these fellas in tackle-store aisles, perusing the newest offerings in a desperate quest for the magic bullet, that one lure that will make fish abandon all logic and reason and attack whenever they see it.

These guys are less concerned with productive techniques or fish migration patterns than they are with what color a buddy used on a recent trip.

I've got nothing against lure junkies. Every angler is always on a mission for a dopamine hit, and for many, catching fish on a new lure tied to your line for the first time is the absolute ultimate adrenaline rush.

I say, more power to those guys. I've just never been one. In fact, I'm often oblivious to what lures are out there.

### LIKE DYNAMITE

My son, who has lure-junkie tendencies, will often be amazed I didn't know TNT Lure Co. just came out with a new Exploding Mullet that is so effective, it's like fishing with dynamite.

Lures, in my view, are merely harvest tools. To me, getting excited about a new lure is like a farmer telling his buddies all about a new sickle he just picked up at Tractor Supply.

But that doesn't mean I lack fishing-related obsessions. Far from it. In fact, I'm a borderline lunatic when it comes to figuring out patterns.

What I really enjoy in fishing is going to new areas and mixing current conditions like wind, tide and water clarity into what I know about fish-migration patterns to attempt to determine where the fish should be holding that day.

To me, that's far more important than lure selection. I've always felt if I can find fish, I'll figure out something they'll hit, but if I can't find fish, it doesn't matter what I throw. I'm not going to catch any.

A mediocre lure in the right location is far more effective than a great lure in a bad location.

That mindset causes me to deemphasize lure selection, but every now and then, the fish gods laugh at my stubborn self and kick me toward the lure-junkie camp.

### NOWHERE ELSE TO GO

That happened last month during a trip when I was actually targeting bass and redfish in a brackish-water South



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

Louisiana marsh. With water levels really low, I had threaded a lure I like — a Pro's Choice soft stickbait in crab boil color (clear with red, black and silver flake) — on a ¼-ounce Deathgrip Jighead. I planned to concentrate on deep bends of bayous, figuring bass and reds would be stacked up there since they really had nowhere else to go.

What I discovered, however, was that speckled trout had filled those bends, and they treated my stickbait like it stole something. They were absolutely tagging it, providing those rod-jarring hits we all live for.

The strikes were so ferocious, I naturally assumed the specks would hit anything I offered them, but something remarkable happened. It confounded me, but also put a smile on my face as I pondered how cool these creatures are.

When I switched lures, I continued to get bites in the deep bends, but they all came from bass and redfish. If I wanted a trout, I HAD to throw that Pro's Choice stickbait.

Now, I don't know what in the water looks like that lure. In fact, I'm certain nothing does. No possible way I was matching any kind of hatch. But that lure that day was what the fish wanted, and they just weren't going to hit anything else.

I went to bed that night pondering how many times I was casting the wrong bait to giant schools of fish that would have kept me entertained for hours if I'd only offered them what they wanted.

I wouldn't say I'm now a lure junkie, but I have noticed myself spending a little more time in my tackle shed. ■

On a recent trip, speckled trout attacked this lure like it stole something.



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Bryan Chauvin with a Delacroix speck caught on live shrimp.



# READY TO EXPLODE

## Trout fishing at Delacroix should be best in years

**C** By Rusty Tardo  
 Charter Captain Ron Broadus, aka, "Captain Ahab," (504-914-6063), said this is shaping up to be the best May Delacroix Island has seen in years.

"The trout actually showed up early this spring," he said. "The water temperatures warmed up so quick, we were catching trout with eggs in them back in March! We've had some really good days in both March and April, and judging by that, May should be outstanding."

Could it be that all the conditions are finally coming together to make May phenomenal?

"It's looking very positive," he said. "The river, which has been very high each spring and a huge negative factor for us for years, has been lower and falling. That means we get a break from that muddy river water. What we now need is a break from these blustery winds and a quiet tropical season, and the trout action will explode."

I just recently was able to jump aboard Capt. Broadus's boat when he took Bryan Chauvin and his 11-year-old son, Seth, out on a fishing trip. The plan was to fish the outside bays where the fish are stacking up, but the winds that morning were already fierce and building steam. We poked our head out into Bay Lafourche and tried a couple spots, but the winds had so stirred up the bottom there was no clear water to be found, and thus, no trout either.

Broadus said any of the big outer bays should be productive this month.

"Oak River Bay, Lake Campo, Bay Lafourche, Bay Gardene, Bakers Bay, and it's not too early to start trying places like Iron Banks and Stone Island," he said.

### CONSISTENT STRATEGY

Broadus follows a consistent strategy when fishing those big bays.

"The first thing I do is look for birds diving, specifically I look for seagulls. I know some anglers ignore the birds because the fish are often smaller under them, but I can generally find plenty enough keeper size fish under them to make the effort worthwhile," he said. "I throw plastics only, either tightlined or under a cork and I'll often throw tandem rigged plastics and reel in two fish at a time. It's great when you're catching trout, but not so much when it's catfish."

When that action slows down, he changes tactics.

"My next step is to fish off a point where I find clean water and moving water, and hopefully some bait activity," he said.

"Live shrimp fished about 2 1/2 feet under a H&H popping cork is always the best bet, but plastics in shrimp colors like white or chartreuse should pay off also."

Meanwhile, Broadus set us up on the lee side of a nearby bay where he found clearer water, and we started catching some nice-sized trout and reds. The trout were extra finicky, eating only frisky live shrimp.

Plastics were ignored, as were the shrimp that died and hung lifeless on our hooks. But over the course of the morning, and moving several times from point to point, we gathered up a very respectable box of fish, released two bull reds in the 15-pound class, and quit when we used the last live shrimp.

Broadus suggests you choose a Delacroix destination this month. He convinced me. ■

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This beautiful redbreast sunfish could not resist the temptation to eat a shrimp slider cast just in front of his nose.

## MAY FLIES

Sabine success depends on water clarity, sunlight and wind speed

**T** By Capt. Adam Jaynes

he southerly winds have really beat us up through March and April. When you mix in decent cool fronts here and there with a strong north wind your hands are really tied on where you are able to fish.

As we get on in to May and the mercury continues to climb on the thermometer, we will see those calmer, more fisherman-friendly days more frequently.

If you have spent much time on the front of a poling skiff with a fly rod in your hands you will be elated to have some calm days to fish. Likewise, if you are the one responsible for push-poling a skiff you may be doubly appreciative of calmer days on the water!

On multiple occasions I have mentioned my fondness for fishing the Sabine National Wildlife Refuge. Early spring is my choice as it has been undisturbed for several months, but also due to the amazing water clarity during this time period.

As a self proclaimed sight-fishing fanatic there are three main pieces of the puzzle that greatly influence your chances of success with the buggy whip. In no particular order they are: water clarity, sunlight and wind speed.

To have a successful trip, you really need at least two of the

three to cooperate. When all three pieces of the puzzle line up, well then, I hope you brought your lunch. It will be a while before we are heading back to the dock.

I credit my dad for getting me into fly fishing.

His dad, my PaPaw, used to paddle him around in a jon boat around Bluebirds off of the Sabine River to catch bass and bream when he was younger. Dad later introduced me to fly fishing and then we bought a Yellowfin 17' poling skiff together. The memories we have chasing redbreast sunfish in that boat are irreplaceable! He also taught me how to tie my own flies. Catching a redbreast sunfish that you sight casted to with your own fly that you tied brings the gratification to another level.

My favorite fly to catch those tailing redbreast sunfish on is a shrimp slider. I prefer to tie mine weightless for a couple of reasons. By tying weightless it helps me to keep the fly out of the grass that is just beneath the surface while simultaneously allowing me to fish it slower.

It also provides for some impressive "eats" right on the surface or near the surface by some hungry redbreast sunfish. If you enjoy bow hunting or you are ready to take your fishing to the next level, then I would highly recommend giving fly fishing a shot. ■

**A**bout 45 miles south of Cocodrie, La. the live fish 300 feet down in the water began a jittery twitching, making the rod tip dance. Moments later, the nervous twitching stopped, replaced by the broom-stick stout rod bending down almost to the surface of the cobalt-clear waters with the reel screaming as the angler battled one of the most powerful fish in the sea.

“To practice fighting a big amberjack, get on the roof of a house with a broomstick, a short length of rope and a refrigerator,” expressed Tommy Pellegrin of Custom Charters (985-851-3304, [www.customchartersllc.com](http://www.customchartersllc.com)) in Cocodrie. “Tie the rope to the end of the broomstick and to the refrigerator. Hold the broomstick and kick the refrigerator off the roof. Anyone who can stop that refrigerator from hitting the ground can fight an amberjack!”

The giant fish don't make lightning runs like tuna. They just head for cover and dare anglers to pull them to the surface. The world record weighed more than 163 pounds. The Louisiana

record weighed 140 pounds, caught near the Horseshoe Lump salt dome. The Mississippi record, a 126-pounder, also came off a salt dome.

Nicknamed “reef donkeys” for their size and power, amberjack like to stay around any hard structure in water at least 150 feet deep. Unless a larger goliath grouper shows up, amberjack dominate reefs, shipwrecks and other hard spots. Voracious predators, amberjack eat practically anything they can ambush from their lairs including fish, squid and crustaceans.

“People call AJs ‘reef donkeys’ because they're harder to pry off a reef than a donkey off a mountain!” said Ben Allen with Jerry McClure's Biloxi Blue Water Charters (228-243-5365, [www.biloxibluewater.com](http://www.biloxibluewater.com)) in Biloxi, Miss. “Amberjack fishing off the Mississippi Coast is pretty good with many fish ranging from 40 pounds up to more than 100 pounds. If we're going specifically for amberjack, we run a minimum of 50 miles south of Biloxi to get into at least 200 feet of water.”

**BIG GAME GEAR** ➤



STUBBURN AND STOUT,  
AMBERJACK EARN THEIR  
'REEF DONKEY' REPUTATION.

# GET JACKED UP!

■ By John N. Felsher



John N. Felsher

## BIG GAME GEAR

Catching a big amberjack requires tough big game equipment. When hooked, they quickly run to the sharpest, most gnarly, barnacle-encrusted structure where they can break the line by rubbing it against objects. Divers around reefs and petroleum platforms report seeing massive AJs with several hooks hanging out of their mouths.

“The biggest mistake people make when fishing for amberjack is underestimating their power,” Pellegrin said. “It’s not like fighting a tuna or marlin by letting it run in the open. An amberjack runs straight to the structure to cut the line. If people struggle to catch a 40-pound amberjack, think how much trouble they’d have fighting a 100-pounder!”

For pulling monster amberjack from cover, use big-game reels with strong drags and loaded with at least 80-pound test line. Many people use tough braid for the main line. Attach that to an unlimited class rod. Secure it in a strong rod holder and crank the horses.

“Tighten up the drag so the fish can’t run back into the structure,” said Gray Long with Go Long Charters (225) 252-5315, [www.golongcharters.com](http://www.golongcharters.com)) in Venice, La. “If we get a big one on, we’ll pull it away from the structure with the motors so we can

fight it in the open.”

With abundant steel supports, petroleum platforms can hold large fish concentrations. The oldest platforms typically offer the best fishing. Anglers can spot a big platform miles away so everyone fishes it. Sometimes, the biggest fish stay 40 to 50 yards away from the rigs, especially heavily pressured ones.

“Louisiana lost many good rigs in recent years, but some remain,” Pellegrin said. “We also fish hard bottom areas. Whenever running the boat, I pay attention to the sonar. I look for any kind of discrepancy, like a bottom rise. If I find something interesting, I’ll stop to investigate. I’ve found a lot of hard bottoms and fish like that over the years.”

## TRY THE SALT DOMES

Natural formations like salt domes and reefs attract big AJs. Even a small rock pile in deep water could hold a few giants. Small natural structures in deep water might receive considerably less fishing pressure than highly visible platforms. In addition, both Louisiana and Mississippi established many artificial reefs over the years. For Louisiana artificial reef locations, see [www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/artificial-reefs](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/artificial-reefs). For Mississippi, visit [dmr.ms.gov/artificial-reef](http://dmr.ms.gov/artificial-reef).

“We don’t have many close rigs off the Mississippi Coast,” Allen

Jeff Strane fights a big one while fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. Delicious and powerful, amberjack make excellent sport fish. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Grace O’Brien and Mallory O’Brien Talley hooked these amberjacks out of Port Fourchon.





Photo courtesy Mallory O'Brien Talley

said. “We don’t really start encountering offshore rigs until we’re out about 50 miles. As the crow flies, the rigs we fish are closer to Venice, La., but we don’t have to run the Mississippi River. Many people from both Louisiana and Mississippi fish several salt domes and some natural hard-bottom formations off the Mississippi River delta.”

As visible structures like platforms disappear, a good electronics unit becomes even more imperative for locating amberjack. Use electronics to search all around any structure to locate fish. In current, AJs normally hover on the upstream side facing into the flow. With quality electronics, anglers should be able to determine where fish want to stay.

“A good electronics unit is a must to find amberjack, especially bigger fish,” Pellegrin said. “Always keep an eye on what’s going on beneath the boat. We want to be looking at fish on the finder before sending any lines down or we’re just wasting bait on so many other things that can eat it.”

To catch big jacks, most anglers simply drop a live bait to the bottom or the proper depth. Amberjack might grab a squid, cut bait or a fish strip undulating in the current, but most AJs like squirming meat. Hardtail jacks, or blue runners, about eight to 12 inches long make excellent jack baits. Mulletts, croakers, pogies, also called menhaden, ruby lips, also known as tomtate, squirrelfish, hornbellies (also called Atlantic bumper) and other baitfish can also bring on mighty bites. A bruiser amberjack can engulf a sizable fish. Larger baits also keep smaller nibblers like triggerfish from stealing.

**GIVE ‘EM A BIG BITE >**

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## GIVE 'EM A BIG BITE

“People can never use a bait too big for an amberjack,” Long said. “They can eat a substantial hunk of meat. I like hard-tails the best, but we also use live pogies and big hornbellies. Sometimes, we catch AJs on dead pogies or cut bait, but any live bait would be better than dead bait. In the Venice area, we always have current, so we use 20-24 ounce lead weights with 12/0 to 13/0 circle hooks on 200-300 pound leaders.”

Rig live baits on a Carolina rig so the fish can swim more naturally. The more active it stays, the more likely it will attract attention. Use just enough weight to get the bait to the bottom or the proper depth. Clip the tail fin so the fish struggles to swim, sending vibrations radiating through the water. Anglers can hook baitfish many ways, but through the jaw sends it down head first fast.

My favorite way to fish for amberjack is with a large, live bait. The bigger the better,” Allen said. “Anglers can hook live baitfish

in the tail, through the lips or through the eyes. Personally, I prefer to hook them through the back end, but we’ve caught them every way we could hook them.”

Although considered a deep-water fish, big amberjack don’t always hang right at the bottom. Sometimes, they hover about halfway down. Use electronics to determine the depth they like best and drop baits just above them.

“We don’t drop a live bait all the way to the bottom,” Long said. “We might drop the bait halfway down. Sometimes, they hang right on the bottom, but most of the time, they suspend in the water column. Amberjack come up to grab a bait.”

Amberjack might hit artificials. For suspended jacks, drop heavy jigs to them. Metal jigs mimic baitfish as they flutter down and tiny nibblers won’t tear them apart. Anglers could tip a jig with natural bait for flavor and scent.

“Mark the depth where the fish want to stay,” Pellegrin said. “Send the jig deeper than the fish. Then, speed it up through the depth where the fish are. Don’t bring it all the way to the



John N. Felsher



John N. Felsher

Rob Dupont uses a sabiki rig to catch baitfish, such as these small jacks. Amberjack eat many things, but prefer live baitfish such as hardtail jacks and other fish. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Dupont gaffs an amberjack caught by Jen Carroll and brings it aboard while fishing in the Gulf of Mexico south of Cocodrie.

surface. Keep sending it down and jiggling it up through the fish. Usually, it doesn't take more than once or twice for them to hit it if they are feeding."

Even fish near the bottom might rise to eat something enticing. Sometimes, jacks respond to chumming activity on the surface. Rig a drift line with live bait and toss it into the chum slick. A drift line might also attract grouper, big snapper, cobia, mackerel or wahoo — perhaps even tuna or sailfish. Fly rod enthusiasts occasionally cast for jacks in chum slicks.

Anglers could catch colossal jacks while trolling live baits, diving plugs, squid or feather baits. Amberjack might hit anything that would interest a wahoo, tuna, sailfish or marlin. Some anglers troll when moving from one reef or platform to another. A bonus monster amberjack rising to take a trolled temptation would make a welcome addition to any fish box! ■



**John N. Felsher** is a professional freelance writer and photographer with more than 1,700 articles in more than 117 magazines to his credit. You can contact him at [JohnNFelsher.com](http://JohnNFelsher.com).

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GET JACKED UP!

# THERE'S MORE THAN ONE TYPE OF AMBERJACK

When people say "amberjack" they generally mean greater amberjack, the largest and most abundant of four closely related species. The list also includes lesser amberjack, almaco jack and banded rudderfish.

Lesser amberjack look very similar to juvenile greater, but with proportionately larger eyes and deeper bodies. Lesser amberjack seldom weigh more than 10 pounds. The world record Almaco weighed 136 pounds. Rudderfish top out at about five pounds.

John N. Felsher



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Daniel Felsher shows off an amberjack he caught. These fish always give anglers a good fight.

"It is a little difficult to tell a greater from a lesser amberjack," explained Dr. Bob Shipp, (bobshipp.com) a renowned marine biologist and author of Dr. Bob Shipp's Guide to Fishes of the Gulf of Mexico. "A greater amberjack is a more elongate fish, about four times longer than it is deep."

To differentiate between a banded rudderfish and an Almaco jack, note the anal fins. On a rudderfish, the anal fin is only about half as long as its dorsal fin. In the other three, the anal fin is about three-quarters the length of its dorsal fin.

State and federal regulations, season dates if any, as well as size and creel limits could differ for each of these species. Therefore, always check the regulations before keeping any kind of a fish. ■



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– *Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser*





**LOUISIANA'S  
STATE PARKS**

■ By Kinny Haddox



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Louisiana's State Park system is vast and varied like the Sportsman's Paradise itself. This is one installment in a Louisiana Sportsman series showcasing their facilities and appeal. Learn more at <https://www.lastateparks.com>.

# WAKE UP THE SWAMP

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**THIS MONTH'S  
FEATURED STOPS:**  
SAM HOUSTON JONES AND  
PALMETTO ISLAND

**Y**ou often hear of them referred to as “Happy Places.” Places where people can go in their minds to a simpler life with no worries and no distractions. When you need refreshing, go to your Happy Place.

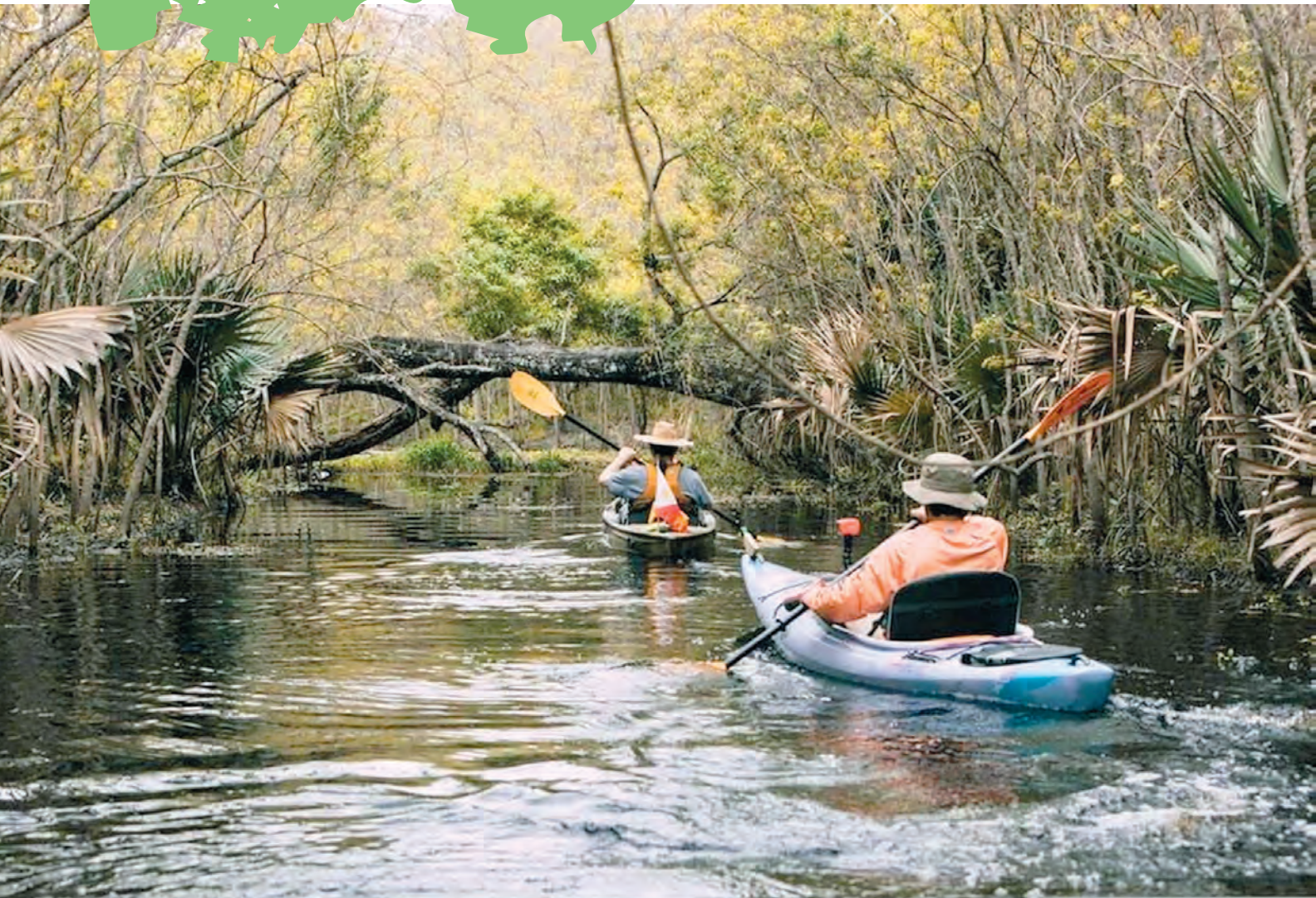
Fortunately here in Louisiana, we have places that actually exist where we can do that without a long trip or spending an armored car load of money. Palmetto Island State Park in Abbeville and Sam Houston Jones State Park outside of Lake Charles are two of those places. They feature just about any activity you'd like to pursue in the outdoors and there is no better time to visit than in the spring.

And like the popular old movie, a river runs through them both.

## PALMETTO ISLAND STATE PARK

Located on the Vermilion River, Palmetto Island State Park offers a real south Louisiana outdoors experience. A boat launch provides access to the river for fishing and boating, while the interior lagoons allow canoe and kayak lovers an up-close look at the native plant and animal life.

The park covers 1,299 acres and, not surprisingly, is noted for its abundance of palmettos which form a dense understory in the coastal bottomland hardwood forest that predominates here. Palmetto Island State Park has a visitor's center which houses a multi-purpose room that can be rented for meetings, weddings and other social events. A water playground is located nearby. Guests may stay at one of six two-bedroom cabins nestled in the woods or use any of the park's 95 campsites. There are four picnic pavilions and strategically placed picnic sites for visitors. An aquatic pavilion overlooks the Vermilion River.



“Camping is the biggest draw to the park and we get a lot of repeat campers who are local to this area,” said park manager Marcelle Guidry. “The campground is full of trees and is shady. The natural plants give a separation between campsites. But there are a few areas where, if a group is camping together, they can get set up to be close together.

Guidry said the park gives an illusion of being far away from civilization deep in the south Louisiana swamp, but it’s just a few minutes to Abbeville in case campers need something. Fishing in the river is also an attraction and there are ponds and a canoe trail as well.

“It’s beautiful here all the time, but especially in the spring,” she said. “It’s still kind of cool and the greenery is already lush.”

One attraction that the whole family can enjoy and learn from is the visitor center complex. It will definitely be a “must do” for the day-use visitor, with a water playground and bathhouse. The ever-present palmetto plants are echoed in many of the architectural elements around the park.

Palmetto Island State Park is a recent addition to the Louisiana State Park system. The new state park is located south of Abbeville, Louisiana in Vermilion Parish. The state of Louisiana acquired the property for the park in 1981 but did



## PALMETTO ISLAND STATE PARK

19501 Pleasant Road  
Abbeville, LA  
Phone: 337-893-3930  
Email: palmettoisland@crt.la.gov

## SAM HOUSTON STATE PARK

107 Sutherland Road  
Lake Charles, LA  
Phone: 337-855-2665  
Email: samhouston@crt.la.gov

not begin construction on it with the intent of public use until 2002. State budget constraints and other concerns delayed the park’s opening until October 28, 2010.



*Kinny Haddox has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 47 years. He and his wife, DiAnne, live in West Monroe.*

## SAM HOUSTON JONES STATE PARK >

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Fishermen can hit the river, but kayak and canoe enthusiasts can find backwater trails like this to explore Palmetto Island State Park.



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## SAM HOUSTON JONES STATE PARK

Unfortunately, this park suffered severe damage during Hurricane Ida and was already in need of repairs and had to be closed. But the good news is, the park is scheduled to reopen this month. Before you plan a trip, check to make sure. And the really good news is that even though the park is isolated, everything will be like new.

“The entire campground area has been updated and improved with camper spots extended and widened,” said Park Manager Tracie Ramey. “We’ve got 10 brand new riverfront cabins with screened in porches that also include TV and fireplaces.”

Fishing is also fine here in the spring. Two boat launches are conveniently located on the West Fork of the Calcasieu River,

providing access to Calcasieu Lake, about 20 miles away.

“You can put in right on the Calcasieu River and head out into the lake or even run all the way to the Gulf if you have a mind too,” she said. “We have a mix of freshwater fish and on further south as the water gets more brackish, there’s a mix of some saltwater species, too.”

Sam Houston Jones State Park was given its current name in honor of the state’s 46th governor, Sam Houston Jones, who was instrumental in setting aside this tract of land for the public to enjoy for both day-use and overnight visitors. The caretakers of this 1,087-acre park have worked to keep the land in its natural state, abundant wildlife inhabits the area. Tree-filled lagoons and a mixed pine and hardwood forest combine to create a unique natural environment. The park is located just north of the most productive birding region of Louisiana. The bird watching is always excellent, but at certain times of year,



Even if the fish don't bite on the river, this Sam Houston State Park angler looks like he is in his Happy Place.

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Camping, bike riding and exploring of all kinds bring spring visitors to soak in the fun and beauty at Louisiana's State Parks.



nearly 200 species of birds can be seen at or within 30 miles of the site.

Sam Houston Jones State Park is home to more than 70 acres of longleaf pines, the oldest living southern pine species. They were once one of the most abundant tree species in the United States, stretching across 90 million acres from Virginia to Texas. Over time, land-use practices such as logging, farming, development, urban encroachment, and fire exclusion have diminished the longleaf pine, leaving less than 4 million acres of longleaf forest and less than 10 percent of their original presence in Louisiana.

The three hiking trails winding through this beautiful park make strolling or serious hiking, pleasurable. Particularly interesting is the old stagecoach road, which hikers may travel to explore the park and the banks of the various tributaries to the Calcasieu River. ■

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POPULARITY OF THE SPORT IS  
MAKING FISHERMEN ADJUST  
FOR WARY SLABS. ■ By Kinny Haddox

# HIGH PRESSURE CRAPPIE



## Nobody knows more about the ten-fold increase in fishing pressure on crappie than

# THE CRAPPIE THEMSELVES.

Angler after angler is quick to point out that crappie can no longer be caught day in and day out by simply dropping a bait close to them anytime, anywhere. The crappie have become fairly aware that they are on someone's radar.

This time of year, they've already taken a "beating" watching lure after lure come swimming or bouncing by. The little ones that gobble up anything that catches their fancy have already been caught.

The mid-sized ones are wary, but the big ones that qualify as real slabs, well that is a different story. They are really wary and you better do everything you can to entice them to bite your bait. To say the least, they are skittish. That's a term normally relegated to horses, but it fits crappie that are excitable or easily scared as well. Crappie have become leery of baits, trolling motor noises, even footsteps in a boat. Anglers can see it on this new-fangled live radar. The boat approaches and for no apparent reason, a big slab swims off screen or sinks to the bottom.

Whether you fish one of the state's big reservoirs or one of the smaller lakes and rivers, you can find that where there might have been a couple dozen anglers after crappie 10 years ago, now there are hundreds. And they fish all year long.

### QUIET, PLEASE

This increase in fishing pressure has changed the way crappie

react to noises, lures and changed the way some fishermen fish. The new electronics have played a huge part in fishermen understanding how crappie act. And that knowledge can help you catch more fish, whether you have one of the high priced units or not.

Here's what you can do about it. First, admit that this is a real thing, said crappie angler Steve Adams of Farmerville. Then, pay close attention to what you are doing and adjust.

"What's happening is that when fish feel the pressure, they often move off the structure they have been holding on," Adams said. "The smaller ones will pull in tight to structure, but the really big ones will scatter out. I've seen them be up on a ridge or a high spot, then a lot of fishing pressure hits and they just back off several hundred yards and suspend. The big ones don't hang out in bunches. They are loners, especially when the pressure is on."

What Adams said works best is just put your foot on the trolling motor and cover water.

"You just have to search for them," he said. "Obviously it's better if you have live sonar, but if you don't, just get your baits in the water and move around. I have started looking as far out in front of the boat as I can, sometimes 40 to 50 feet on the sonar. When I see one, I just let the boat drift up slowly. If you get too close, it's over unless the bite is really on."





There have been some pretty dramatic developments because of this, especially among competitive anglers. Special poles up to 20 feet long have hit the market, but they are a handful especially over a course of several hours. Some anglers are also putting remote control trolling motors on the back of their rigs so they can stop and hold the boat without the trolling motor being close to the fish. Anglers are also using their drift paddles only when they have to just to keep from disturbing fish, Adams said.



**Kinny Haddox** has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 47 years. He and his wife, DiAnne, live in West Monroe.

**SINKING CRAPPIE >**

Steve Adams with a good crappie caught by finding an area that didn't have as much fishing pressure. **BELOW:** When crappie gang up, so do fishermen. Using a few subtle tricks helps some fishermen catch more than others, especially big slabs.



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## SINKING CRAPPIE

“We never realized this until we had live sonar, but big crappie will sink right down to the bottom when they feel pressured,” he said. “We’ve caught them in 20 foot of water right on the bottom and even after we reel them up, they’ve got mud on their bellies. Isn’t that something? Some folks are getting good and making them bite on the bottom, but that takes a lot of practice and there isn’t a lot of sharing information on how they do that.”

When fish are biting in certain areas, sometimes you just have to go there with everybody else. It’s a choice fishermen have to make on a regular basis.

“Look, there’s no doubt that if you see 30 boats all piled up in a certain area, they are usually catching fish,” he said. “There are some exceptions. A couple of folks might be fishing, then a couple of more come up and see what they are doing. Next thing you know, there are two dozen boats all in the same area thinking somebody must be catching them. That’s pretty funny, but it happens. But seriously, most of the time they are catching or they wouldn’t stay there.”

Adams said he has learned to pile right in there with them if it’s the spot to be. The thing you have to do is concentrate on what you are doing and not what everybody else is doing.



When crappie get skittish, try something unique like this Jenko Whirly Bird spinner jig. BELOW: A variety of lures catch crappie. When the pressure is on, try them all to see which one will get the slabs to bite.




“You can’t catch fish trying to watch somebody else,” he said. “And normally when there is a big crowd, it is smaller fish they are catching. Most weekend anglers are just out for a good time and a good mess of fish. They aren’t interested in the two and three pounders if it takes all day to catch one.”

Baits can make a difference. Adams said when in doubt, shiners never hurt as your main bait or as a trailer. There are times the fish like smaller hair jigs and others when the big plastic baits work best. There’s no right or wrong for every situation. You just have to try and find out what the fish want to bite that day. It varies with water color, weather and wind conditions.

And no matter what you do, there are times when you can find a secluded spot, look at the sonar and see 30 fish gathered up on a bush. But before you get too excited, you have to get a bait in there and see if they will bite. Sometimes they won’t and no matter how good you think you are, you can’t make them.


“It’s frustrating to see fish there and not be able to get a bite, but don’t lose hope,” he said. “Go try some other spots and come back in an hour or two. Sometimes they’ll just turn on and you can catch a mess in a hurry. You never know when Mother Nature’s alarm clock is going to go off. That’s what makes fishing so challenging — and fun when they do bite.” ■

**PLAY PITCH AND CATCH >**



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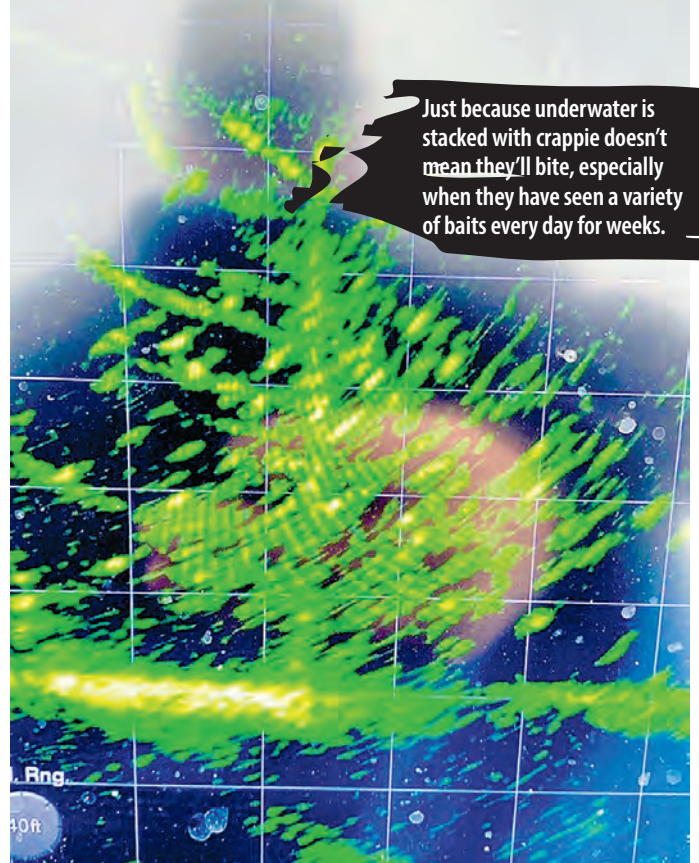
# PLAY PITCH AND CATCH WITH SKITTISH CRAPPIE

When it seems like the crappie are playing hide and seek with anglers, Adams said there's a new popular technique that can help. When crappie get spooky, anglers resort to a technique that sounds more like baseball. It's called "pitch and catch."

Because fish can hear the slightest sounds and especially the whirring of the trolling motor, don't fish right on top of the fish. Spot them on your electronics or fish brushpiles that you know the location of by stopping the boat, then pitching the bait out 10-15 feet out in front of the boat. Then just let it sink right down to where you see fish or the depth you know they are hanging out.

That allows you to get the bait to them before they see or hear you coming. It's especially effective in the more shallow water.

"If you get right up on top of them and they are feeling pressure even in the slightest, they are going to either get up so tight in the brush you can't get to them, or they'll sink to the bottom," Adams said. "The key with pitching and catching is that you have to get that bait right in front of the fish for as long as you can to entice a bite."



Just because underwater is stacked with crappie doesn't mean they'll bite, especially when they have seen a variety of baits every day for weeks.

If you make the right pitch, fishermen that can, hit the home run! If you don't, you'll strike out for sure. ■

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## CATFISH PICCATA

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**C**atfish...the other white meat! Louisiana is home to a plethora of catfish with a variety of different species. Catfish can be caught throughout the year in Louisiana, but the best time is typically the spring. Some of my fondest memories growing up involved afternoons catfishing in Bayou Teche. On bountiful evenings, we would clean our catch and have a fish fry. Not only are catfish fun and relatively easy to catch, but they also make for excellent table fare.

With a mild flavor and flaky texture, catfish is a great fish to use for a multitude of recipes. Fried catfish will always hold a special place in my heart and stomach, but elevating this Bayou King into a show stopping dish is something I've wanted to do for a long time. So, get out this afternoon, sink a line, catch a mess of catfish and try out this awesome Catfish Piccata recipe!

Happy Fishing,  
– Recreational Chef



### INGREDIENTS:

4 Catfish Fillets	4 Tablespoons Butter	2 Tablespoons Capers
1/2 Cup Flour	1 Juiced Lemon	1/8 Cup of White Wine
1 Teaspoon Salt	2 Tablespoons Capers	1/8 Cup of Vegetable Stock
1 Teaspoon Pepper	2 Tablespoons Minced Garlic	
2 Tablespoons Olive Oil	1 Tablespoon Parsley	

### PREPARATION: Serves 4

1. Season the catfish fillets with salt and pepper on each side. Once seasoned, dredge the catfish in the flour and shake off any excess. The catfish should have a light coating of flour.

2. Heat a 9-inch cast iron pan to medium-high heat and add 2 tablespoons of olive oil and 2 tablespoons of butter. When the butter and olive oil are melted and bubbly, add the catfish fillets and cook for 2-3 minutes on each side until browned.

3. In the same pan, once the fish is cooked and removed, add the minced garlic. Cook for 1-2 minutes or until softened.

4. Once the garlic is softened, add the white

wine, lemon juice, caper juice, capers and stock. Cook for approximately 5-10 minutes until the liquid reduces by half.

5. Once the liquid is reduced by half, remove from heat and add the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter and 1 tablespoon of parsley. Stir until the butter is incorporated into the sauce.

6. Place the fish on a plate and drench in the piccata sauce.

### TIP!

I usually like to accompany the piccata with something green like sautéed spinach or asparagus.



**Nathan Justice** is a wild game food blogger who lives in Baton Rouge. An environmental scientist by day, Nathan has a great appreciation of wildlife, conservation and sustainable harvesting. He can be found at [Raisedonwild.com](http://Raisedonwild.com).

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and an overbuilt handle are nice touches. The frame eliminates the need to sit against a tree.

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TODD RISINGER DOES  
IT TO BRING BIG MAY  
BASS OUT OF THEIR  
HIDING PLACES.

# MOW THE GRASS

■ By Kinny Haddox

## Late spring bass and aquatic grass go together like pine trees and pollen –

# EXCEPT, IN A GOOD WAY.

And catching bass in the grass won't make you sneeze. Unfortunately, this time of year you are probably already having to spend a lot of time mowing your real yard when you could be fishing. But don't get down on grass too much. Because when you go to the lake, "mowing the grass" will help you mow down the bass.

This is the time of year when fishing the grass beds in your favorite lake can bring bass out of their hiding places and into your livewell. Or you can just catch them and turn them loose to fight another day. The good news is fishing grass can give you a choice.

"When there isn't a lot of grass in a lake, you can count on bass being almost anywhere you can find the grass, especially if the baitfish is nearby and the water depth isn't too shallow," said tournament fisherman Todd Risinger of West Monroe. "When there is a lot of grass in the lake, it's best to look for areas with breaks in the grass, holes in the grass or fish the edges of the

grass. There are all kinds of grass, but for me hydrilla is the most productive. It allows bass to lay up under the cover and have protection, but also be able to see enough to ambush bait."

### ISOLATED GRASS PATCHES

Risinger said to really look for the isolated patches of grass. Some of them are way out on long points that go into deeper water. Because the grass isn't visible from the surface, many anglers miss it. But the bass don't. That's a prime place for them to lay up, he said. You can find that grass by throwing a lure along the point and hitting it with your bait or you can see it on your electronics. Shallow water tree lines also often have good grass beds growing along with the small trees and bushes. That's a good area to fish.

Even when bass are in the grass, unless it is just solid, you can still use electronics to scan areas you want to fish and you can find grassbeds that are holding fish.



Todd Risinger with a chunky largemouth caught from around grass on the edge of a brushline. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** This is what an isolated grassbed looks like on a modern depth finder screen. You may not be able to see fish that are hiding in the grass, but this is a good spot to start fishing for them.

“You can definitely tell the big bass from the smaller ones on today’s units, especially with a little practice,” he said. “Frankly, a lot of people after big bass today spend more time idling around the lake than they do fishing. You spend your time marking fish or grass, then when you do actually fish, you are in the prime spots, not just casting and hoping.”

Another way to find grassbeds that are holding fish is to keep your eyes open for activity on the water. If you see baitfish jumping or swirls up in the grass, there are fish there.

Unless a lake is just overpopulated with fish (and those are rare), Risinger is all about catch and release. He loves catching big fish and those are a prize.

“Bass can’t grow to be 8, 10, 12 pounds overnight,” he said. “They have to have some age on them, no matter how much food they are getting or how great the lake is. Practice catch and release. It goes back to the principle that hunters use for big deer. Hunters that expect to kill massive 10- and 12-pointers don’t also shoot their young 6- and 8-pointers. That just won’t work.”

There are hundreds of baits on the market for bass fishing and fishing grass is one time you can put a whole lot of different ones to use. Just pick the type you like to fish with.

### BASS LIKE CHATTER >



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## BASS LIKE CHATTER

Risinger said the most productive are chatterbaits (bladed jigs), lipless crankbaits, jigs with craw trailers and soft plastic creature baits. When there is open water with grass barely under the surface, popper-type topwaters will also work.

Bladed jigs are easier to fish in the grass than regular ones and the motion they make attracts bass. They are good for fishing in thicker grass and around the edges of isolated patches of grass. The lipless crankbaits do the same thing. You can cast them out and run them right by the grass, enticing a bass to hit.

One advantage of the lipless crankbaits is that many of them also have sound chambers which give off vibration and most of the time when they nick grass and get caught, you can jerk your rod and rip the bait free. That sudden change in speed and trajectory also triggers impulse and reaction strikes.

Regular jigs are best for fishing around the edges of big areas of grass and you can even force them down into the grass

because of the size and weight. A plastic trailer is a must this time of year.

As for plastics, they can also be used in any of those areas. Fishing the lures by casting them into holes in grassbeds and letting them sink is a popular way to do it. You can also ease the



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A white Blue Wave fishing boat is shown on a body of water. Two people are standing on the boat, one holding a fishing rod. The boat has a canopy and several fishing rods mounted on the back. The background shows a bridge and a shoreline with trees.

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**OPPOSITE PAGE:** A lot of baits will catch bass around grass, but some of Risinger's favorites (from left) are chatterbaits, soft plastics, lipless crankbaits and jigs with plastic trailers.

worm or creature bait along the grass and then let it fall off the edge for fish that are hiding on the outside of the grass line.

Wacky rigged worms, Senkos and other slow sinking plastics also work well because they stay in the strike zone a long time.

"The types of lures and areas you fish vary because of a lot of conditions, but the major one is the sunlight. When it's bright and sunny, bass back up in the grass to hide," Risinger said. "The grass does for them what sunglasses do for us. Then, on cloudy days, the fish will move closer to the top or the edges and they even wander away from the grass in search of food."

Be prepared to change tactics and lures when the conditions change. And always pay attention to how and where the fish are biting to develop a good pattern, he said.

"The more time you spend fishing a bait the fish want instead of what you want to throw, the more fish you will catch," Risinger said. "That's just common sense." ■



*Kinny Haddox has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 47 years. He and his wife, DiAnne, live in West Monroe.*

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# THE ONE-TWO PUNCH

**PRO CLIFF CROCHET USES IT TO KNOCK OUT BUNCHES OF BASS BITES.**

■ By Don Shoopman

# CLIFF CROCHET WAS GETTING HIS JABS IN,

sticking bass here and there on Lake Fork during the first two rounds of the Major League Fishing Bass Pro Tour event in February in Texas.

And just when he needed it, Crochet's one-two punch gave him a few extra bass to send him on to the Knockout Round. These angling tactics are used instinctively by some bass anglers, but those who don't may want to try out one-two punches and see for themselves.

The Pierre Part pro bass angler was getting bites flippin' an area with stumps, deadfalls and branches with a NetBait B Bug under a ¼-ounce worm weight. The soft plastic creature bait glided in the water, more or less glancing off the wood.

When the bite slacked off on that lure, Crochet switched to a heavier ¾-ounce worm weight (½-ounce also works in this scenario) because it gives a different presentation.

"Flippin' a ¼-ounce weight glides more," Crochet said. "A bigger weight, like a ¼-ounce or ¾-ounce, sticks more, gives more of a vertical presentation. It falls different, hops different, stays in contact with the bottom. You get more hits on a piece of cover.

"When I'd go to a heavier weight, I'd drop it again so it hops

over a branch or root, dropping the rod tip to give it slack so it will not pendulum."

## EXTRA BITES

The technique is simple. He yo-yo'd the soft plastic under a heavier weight with the rod tip at 10 o'clock, lifted it to 1 or 2 o'clock to get it over cover, then quickly lowered the rod tip to 7 o'clock to avoid lure swinging away from the cover.

"That got the extra bites to put me into the Knockout Round," he said. Those are also the kind of "extra bites" that can make the difference in a poor and a good everyday fishing trip.

That one-two punch paid off. It had more to do with terminal tackle, while his other changeups center around artificial lures or approaches. They can be as subtle as exchanging a crankbait from round to flat-sided, or changing the retrieve on a square-billed crankbait, such as a Bill Lewis SB-57, from steady to stop-and-go, or covering water already fished from a different angle and direction to double your coverage.

Mostly, Crochet confided, it's coming back through an area known to have bass with a different artificial lure. He has plenty



Crochet practices his one-two punch in his favorite type of water with cypress trees and laydowns. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** The results of using the proper combination of lures — bass in the boat.

of examples of one-two punches that work for him.

One of his first successful one-two punch techniques has helped him for many years. One he remembers well is in the late 1990's when he was fishing a local Friday evening tournament out of Bayside Tackle at Lake Verret. He was buzz baiting the last 20-40 minutes as another competitor worked his way from the opposite direction, also chunking a buzz bait.

"I knew the fish already saw a buzz bait," he said. "Just a couple minutes later, I caught on a spinnerbait."

Crochet has been sold on that strategy ever since, all the while finding good combinations.

"I think every good fisherman does it," he said about swinging some variation of a one-two punch.

"The whole deal is you have to have a backup plan to get a bite. It's always one-two ... What's next in line to give me a bite or two, to extend this pattern? I'm not trying to rewrite the book. I'm trying to change it up a bit to get one more bite," he added, noting it's all about boosting confidence as well.

He emphasized the tactic is for "once you find the deal," i.e., find bass.

## THE BAIT AND SWITCH

"Whatever the pattern is, there's always a spinoff off it," Crochet said. It helps to get the most out of an area the bass angler has found bass.

"The big deal around home, everywhere, really, especially around the house, like switching from a Stanley Ribbit to a Zoom Horny Toad," he said. "Like you're catching good on a Ribbit, then they're not biting as good. Come back with a Horny Toad with its different feet and get a few more bites off it.

"You know what else is good, too? Like catching on a Rogue. They quit biting that ... then throw a NetBait Spike." ■



Photo courtesy Cliff Crochet

## GIVING BASS ANOTHER LOOK ➤



**Don Shoopman** fishes for freshwater and saltwater species mostly in and around the Atchafalaya Basin and Vermilion Bay. He and his wife June live in New Iberia. They have two grown sons.

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A Louisiana standby, the Rat-L-Trap is on the punch list for Crochet's bass fishing.

# GIVING BASS ANOTHER LOOK

There are all kinds of combination and every angler has his favorites. Some are formed by success over the years. Others are formed just out of a thought that maybe something else will work. Here are some of Crochet's go-to combos:

- Crusher Lures 3/8-ounce Pro Buzz buzz bait to a 3/8-ounce Crusher Lures Cliff Crochet Petite Spinnerbait.
- From froggin' to flippin' ... "I'm talking about open water, cypress trees," he said. "If bass stop hitting the plastic frog, get out of the topwater mode, and flip a NetBait B Bug or NetBait Poc-A-Craw. Drop it on their face, they'll eat it."

• "A chatterbait's a big deal," Crochet said. "Here's when you one-two punch. It works really well in two-day tournaments, a one-day tournament or just fishing. Say you're throwing a spinnerbait. First pass down the bank, and say you catch six. They all crushed it. Down in their mouth. Say the next pass they get off it a little bit. Don't drill it. A chatterbait gives the fish a different look."

Crochet said to come back with something different, like a Crusher Lures Grass Assassin Jig, fished like a swim jig to trigger bass after a spinnerbait.



Photo courtesy Cliff Crochet

• "I will tell you this, I've seen this, especially at home in the Atchafalaya Basin or Lake Verret," he said. "Anytime you're shallow water fishing - 4-foot or less - going down the bank with a spinnerbait, that deal like a 1/4-ounce Rat-L-Trap is a mop-up behind all of that. You can throw it and get reaction bites"

Crochet did just that in late April 2018 during a Bassmaster Elite Series tournament at Grand Lake of the Cherokees to finish 12th with 58 pounds, 5 ounces. He was catching on a spinnerbait the first few days and ended up catching on a 1/4-ounce Trap.

Bass anglers can mix and match their own one-two punch tactics to boat more bass, according to Crochet. ■

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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).

# URBAN KAYAK OASIS

"BOATS ON THE BAYOU" SHINES LIGHT ON DOWNTOWN NEW ORLEANS BASS

**If** you're looking for some freshwater kayak fishing fun in the middle of New Orleans, give Bayou St. John a try. This historic urban waterway was once a major trade route from Lake Pontchartrain to downtown New Orleans. Now, the peaceful waterway is lined with large homes and is mostly used by recreational paddlers. However, the fishing is good and kayak access is easy.

The Big Bass Rodeo in New Orleans' famed City Park is the oldest freshwater fishing rodeo in the country. This is a bank-fishing only contest which recently held their 73rd annual event. The lagoons in City Park are home to many big bass and other freshwater species. However, the park's lagoons allow bank fishing only and are not open to kayaks.

Several years ago the rodeo added a separate kayak fishing division dubbed "Boats on the Bayou" where anglers can fish in Bayou St. John which lies just across the street from the park. Fishing in the bayou is allowed year-round, but power boats are not allowed. Bayou St. John is fairly protected from wind by the surrounding neighborhoods and areas of tree-lined shore. With no motorboat traffic, it is a great, safe place for new and experienced kayak anglers alike.

**HEALTHY BASS POPULATIONS >**



Robyn Bordelon caught this nice bass in Bayou St. John near the bridge on Filmore Avenue. This great urban fishery sits in the heart of New Orleans and provides a welcome respite from city life.

## HEALTHY BASS POPULATIONS

This urban waterway is typically underfished, although recent fish shocking samples by LDWF showed healthy populations of bass with some big bass in the sample. The 2022 winner of the Boats on the Bayou event was Luke Beslin with a 4.19 pound bass.

Bayou St. John offers a variety of fishing structure. Mixed shorelines of trees, grass edges, concrete rip-rap and submerged aquatic vegetation provide great places for kayak anglers to try their luck. Additionally, small docks and piers are common along the areas with houses and the multiple bridges, and concrete embankments provide additional fish-holding habitat. The water is up to 11 feet deep in some areas and the bottom is relatively flat. However, some deep holes, ledges, and drop-offs can be easily located with a depth finder.

There are no designated launch areas along the miles of shoreline, but access is fairly easy with roadside parking and clear bank areas to slide the kayaks into the bayou. All of the bridges are passable underneath with kayaks, but you'll need to lay your rods down and may have to duck your head a bit if the water is up. On the northern-most end of the bayou near Allen Toussaint Blvd, (formerly Robert E. Lee Blvd) there is a low structure that is virtually impassable. However, this only cuts out access to a small section of the bayou that leads out to Lake Pontchartrain.



This chunky bass couldn't resist a white spinnerbait slow-rolled along the concrete pad that lines the shoreline in this area of Bayou St. John.

There is a flood control structure near the lake that is closed to prevent storm surges from entering the bayou, but is also used to regulate and improve the exchange of water between the lake and Bayou St. John. This has improved the water quality of the bayou over the last several years. The bayou hosts a full range of freshwater species, but speckled trout and redfish

are occasionally caught in the northern areas of the bayou due to the close proximity to the lake.

## BEST BASS BAITS

Typical bass lures do the trick, with spinnerbaits, Rat-L-Traps and plastic worms being amongst some of the more popular lures. Average bass caught are usually under two pounds, but larger fish are also regularly caught. The water is generally clear, but does cloud up after heavy rains.

The bayou also has healthy populations of bream, which are regularly caught on small spinners, live worms and crickets. Rio Grande Cichlids are also regularly caught. With fairly clean shorelines and wide-open water behind you, the bayou is a great place for using the fly rod out of the kayak. Small popping bugs and various insect imitations work well.

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## 2022 LOUISIANA FISHING REGULATIONS

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

### SALTWATER

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

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

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

### FRESHWATER

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

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

Often overlooked is the catfish population. Blue and channel cats are often incidentally caught by anglers targeting bass. However, specifically targeting catfish with large nightcrawlers or other natural baits such as cut shad or mullet can lead to a nice mess of cats.

Bayou St. John is also a great place to take the kids along. With no rough water or having to worry about powerboats swamping you, it makes for a peaceful, safe day on the water with easy opportunities for the kids to catch fish.

As with any waterbody, fish are not going to just jump in the kayak. It takes a bit of patience and learning to find the better areas and patterns for fishing Bayou St. John. If you commit to making several trips, you can figure out what works best for you and surely put some nice fish in the 'yak. ■

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Don Shoopman



## B BUGS ARE BACK

NETBAIT BROUGHT ITS BEAVER-STYLE BAIT BACK  
JUST LIKE IT WAS

Photos courtesy NetBait

**S**ometimes you don't miss something until it's gone. But NetBait B Bugs were at least one Bassmaster Elite Series pro's favorite soft plastic before the beaver-style bait was cut from the lineup and they've been his go-to soft plastic since being reintroduced in 2021.

Now he's glad they are back.

"Well, actually, I used it a lot before it was discontinued. I finished fourth in a Toyota Series championship a long time ago, flippin' it," Scott Canterbury said. "I still use it. It doesn't have to be just around vegetation. Wood, too, even docks. I'm happy they brought it back. I think the B Bug is my favorite so far. It's just a good bait, a little more durable than other baits out there, a little more buoyant. I've had great success on it."

The 45-year-old Canterbury who lives

in St. Clair County, Alabama, just east of Birmingham, said he keeps it in his tournament lure lineup.

"I'll use it some, for sure," he said. "I carry all those baits. Yes. I will be using it some, for sure."

Walt Roberts, 55, of Ocean Springs, Mississippi, also knows how effective they are. Roberts has been in the fishing tackle industry a dozen years, the past three years with American Baitworks as brand manager for NetBaits and Halo Fishing Rods.

Roberts said NetBait's original owner, Braxton McNaughton of Greenville, Alabama, created B Bugs that were well-received by bass anglers across the U.S. McNaughton started the precursor to NetBait in the mid-1970s. His son, Kent McNaughton, started NetBait in 1998.

B Bugs were discontinued from the

NetBait lineup several years ago, Roberts said, because of the proliferation of beaver-style soft plastics. Times changed and various issues impacted delivery of artificial lures and everything else.

### IT'S BACK

"We introduced it back last year. We saw the need for a Beaver-style bait," Roberts said, adding coronavirus-related issues disrupted the supply chain, prompting bass anglers to clamor for soft plastics that were hard to get.

"So we introduced our beaver-style



**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.

bait," he said. "We came back with the original design. We thought that was as good as it could get based on its earlier popularity."

"It has been doing really well," Canterbury said. "It's become one of the top-selling baits. I think the design of it moves a little more water than the original Beaver (Sweet Beaver). I've used it for a jig trailer and for flipping bites. The way the ribs are made it really moves a lot of water. It has really deep ribs in it."

When he fishes it Texas-rigged, he puts it on a 4/0 straight shank flipping hook under a 1/4- or 3/8-ounce weight and ties it to 15- or 20-pound test P-Line flouro-carbon. He uses a heavier weight depending on the type of grass he's fishing. In heavy vegetation he'll switch to 65-pound P-Line XTCCB 9 Braided Fishing Line.

Canterbury and Roberts both said the NetBait B Bug is sought after by bass fishing pros, bass club anglers and weekenders. The bass pro believes it will help everybody catch more bass.



## PICK A COLOR

NetBait B Bugs are available in 15 colors, foremost among them pumpkin and black/blue. Other colors gaining popularity are "swirl colors" such as Alabama Swirl, Hemotoma Swirl (black/blue), Green pumpkin/Texas Red Swirl, Natural Craw Swirl and Sun Gill Swirl.

NetBait's B Bugs have a leg, or tail, up on other beaver-style soft plastics, Roberts said. They are more buoyant than similar products in part because they are made with anise oil rather than additives like salt that cause them to sink.

However, NetBait B Bugs will be rolling off the assembly line soon with BaitFuel, a fish attractant water-based liquid which will cause those models to lose their buoyancy. The non-Bait-Fuel soft plastics still will have high-floating capability.

Roberts said NetBait B Bugs with BaitFuel will be a "game-changer."

Canterbury can attest to that. NetBait's Flat Sided Shad were responsible for the bulk of the bass he weighed during the Elites' swing to the Northeast on Lake Champlain and at the St. Lawrence River.

"I thought it was just the shape of the bait," he said. "I had no idea about the new scent. I thought it was just the bait."

He can't wait to try a BaitFueled NetBait B Bug, too.

For more information about the NetBait B Bug and other American Baitworks products, call (844) 466-5738 or go to [americanbaitworks.com](http://americanbaitworks.com). ■

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# LSU SENIOR HEATH PINELL MAKES OFF WITH BASS LIKE A "BANDIT"

**H** By Don Shoopman  
 eath Pinell and Bandit 200 Series crankbaits go way, way back. He'd be lost without them. They are big difference makers for the Plaquemine bass angler who relies on them to catch bass everywhere he goes, from the nearby Atchafalaya Basin to Chickamauga Lake in Tennessee.

He fishes all those places these days as a veteran member of the LSU Bass Fishing Team. But he has fished since he was a diapered toddler in a boat with his father, Lewis Pinell, and grandfather, the late Rusty Pinell.

A red Bandit has been like gold recently for the LSU senior who graduated from University High, where he played on two state championship football teams. Pinell and teammate Taylor Knowles of Shreveport used a red Bandit during the MLF College Fishing tournament in October 2021 at Chickamauga Lake in Tennessee to finish 24th and qualify for the MLF College Fishing National Championship held in March at Fort Gibson Lake in Oklahoma.

Again, Pinell depended on the lure in a college tournament in February at Chickamauga Lake in Tennessee. The red Bandit crankbait helped Pinell and partner Bryan Bergeron of Port Allen finish fourth in a 280-boat field to punch their ticket to the 2023 MLF College Fishing National Championship.

"So we qualified for this year and next year already," Pinell said about qualifying for the national stage twice in his last two years at LSU.



LSU Fishing Team member Heath Pinell holds two sizeable bass he caught while fishing out of Doiron's Landing in Stephenville.



Plaquemine's Heath Pinell caught this "hawg" while "fun fishing" with his older brother, Hayden Pinell, at Pickwick Lake in 2018.

"We've been up to 'The Chick' a lot," he said. "It finally wasn't mean to us."

They found one area that had fish, a pipe that was gushing muddy water.

They went there Day 1 and culled to a 15-pound, 2-ounce limit and returned the second day with a drone live streaming the two bass anglers in his 20-foot long red Bullet bass boat and got 13-1 for a two-day total of 28 pounds, 3 ounces. It was quite the showcase for his go-to bait.

Bandit 200 Series crankbaits are his favorite artificial lures, anywhere. His favorite color is the Mistake, while his dad's is Baby Bass.

## BANDIT UH-OH

Bandits haven't always been good to him.

When he was younger, Pinell actually got banned from throwing the bait. He and his brother, Hayden, were fishing with his dad when he whipped out a cast and imbedded a Bandit's treble hooks in the back of his dad's neck while fishing in the Spillway. Uh-oh. The Pinell boys couldn't get it out so his dad drove back to the boat launch with the treble hooks protruding from the nape of his neck.

"That's the kind of stuff you remember," Pinell said, ruefully.

Eventually, the ban was lifted and the rest is history.

The popular crankbait isn't Pinell's only top fishing lure, though. Two others are the black/blue Z-Man Jackhammer and a 1/2-ounce Rumba Doll.

When he isn't working or on the road fishing a tournament, he enjoys tying on his go-to artificial lures in the Spillway out of Bayou Pigeon Boat Landing or Bayou Sorrel Boat Landing around Grand Lake.

Pinell also has a major tournament to fish later this month at The Boat U.S. Collegiate Bass Fishing Championship on May 26-27 at Alabama's Pickwick Lake. Then in June, he plans to fish the 2022 Louisiana B.A.S.S. Nation College State Championship out of Doiron's Landing in Stephenville.

Bryan Bergeron, foreground, gets ready to net a bass hooked by LSU team-mate Heath Pinell in February at Chickamauga Lake for the Abu Garcia College Fishing Presented by Yeti Open. They finished fourth in a 280-boat field.



After he graduates, Pinell is hopeful of fishing Louisiana B.A.S.S. Nation tournaments as a Boater. His goal is to follow in the footsteps of bass angler Blake Sylvester, who hails from his hometown of Plaquemine.

## FINDING TIME TO FISH

Pinell, who is majoring in construction management, didn't fish competitively in high school, despite trying to start a team his sophomore year with another sophomore. It never got off the ground as both student/athletes were two-sport players.

He did fish evening bass tournaments with his father out of Jack Miller's Landing in Plaquemine at the Grand River. And he entered as many local weekend tournaments as he could.

LSU had an established bass fishing team with a lofty reputation when he got there, so he joined. This season there are 13 bass anglers on the LSU Fishing Team. There are no scholarship bass anglers at LSU like there are at some schools. One, the University of Montevallo, has 60 anglers on scholarship and the fishing

team is sponsored by Mossy Oak, which has a total of 90 student/athletes on the Outdoors Scholars Program.

Pinell and Knowles also claim the title in the 2021 AFTCO Collegiate Bass Open at Lake Dardenelle in Arkansas. He also previously fished with Jordan Davenport of Baton Rouge to win the 2020 Louisiana B.A.S.S. Nation College State Championship held out of Berwick Landing. ■

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# BASS IN THE BUSHLEY

'Hidden' jewels like this one can be a bonanza for spring bass

**As** By Tim Johnston  
May rolls around every year, you will find Harrisonburg native Jacob Cater putting away his turkey gear with the anticipation of getting back on the water to chase some post-spawn bass.

In his spare time, when the Agricultural Specialist at Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry isn't spending time with his wife and newborn son or working on the family farm, you can usually find him on nearby Bushley Bayou. This almost hidden lake can be found just south of Harrisonburg and north of Jonesville as an oxbow off the Ouachita River in Catahoula Parish. The lake has somewhat of a limited access. However, you can launch from a public ramp on Wright Rd, just off state Hwy 923.

Over the last five years this lake has seen its share of pressure, but that doesn't deter Cater. There are still plenty of bass and now is a good time to catch them.

"I fish Bushley a lot, mainly because I can leave the house and have the boat in the water within 10 minutes," Cater said. "Bushley Bayou is more of a quantity lake than a quality lake. You won't find much grass on the lake and that seems to be one of the downfalls, but the cypress trees are plentiful along with boat docks and the occasional rock pile."

While the bayou used to be free flowing, it is now dammed off from the Ouachita River, but it still maintains flow into Little River. In fact, the northern end of the bayou from the dam down is the most heavily fished area.

When targeting these post-spawn bass, Cater likes to start off the early morning around the shallow cypress trees throwing a black buzz bait.

"The black buzz bait is my go-to bait during the low light conditions," he said. "As the day progresses, I will switch to a chartreuse and white spinner bait to cover more water. I like to fish the 3 to 7 foot depth range. Once I start locating fish, I'll slow down and throw a Brush



Jacob Cater, right, and fishing partner Tyler Pere with four big Bushley Bayou bass.

Hog. Fishing a Brush Hog is my passion. I like to pair it with a 5/16 ounce weight, Texas rigged."

Among his arsenal of baits, his favorite Brush Hog colors include black/red flake, June bug, and watermelon red. Cater likes throwing the darker colors due to the stained water that usually has an 8- to 10-inch visibility.

If the bite slows down, Cater has found a favorite stretch of bank about 150 yards long where he's been able to put together a few bites and go back and forth and fish it slow.

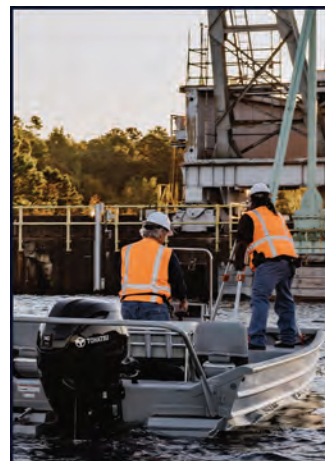
"It's all about the presentation," he said.

When the opportunity presents itself, Cater likes to throw a white or chartreuse crankbait around some of the main lake points.

"If I'm looking for a quality bite, I'll locate a sandy point and try to pick it apart with a crankbait and hopefully find a solid bite, he said. "The lake is very good about maintaining a steady water level. There is an over flow weir that helps keep the water at a sustainable level.

"Even after a 3-inch rain, the water is back to its original level within just a few days."

Cater also adds that It can be very difficult to fish after a large rain accumulation, but it doesn't take long for the lake to return to its normal stained conditions. ■



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John Dean III caught this 3-pound bass on a Neko-rigged Senko recently while fishing at Toledo Bend with his father, John Dean.

## TOLEDO TIP

### Don't abandon the shallows just yet; it's still spring!

**O**ne of the biggest misconceptions of late spring on Toledo Bend is that because the bass might have spawned over half or more of the lake, it's time to avoid the shallows where those fish were spawning.

That's not correct.

From my experience and that of so many others here for several decades, it's time to work those shallows even harder in May. Sure, bass may have just left their spawning areas, but guess what? Bream are moving into those same shallows to spawn as the water warms even more. And bass follow them to eat considering the rigors of their own spawn.

You know what that means? It's plastic frog and top-water time! It's hard to beat those artificial lures when the bream are on their beds and the bass are right on their heels.

Many spawners still will provide plenty of highlights for bass anglers in the lower end of the lake, say from the Indian Mounds area to the dam. It's a safe assumption all the bass down there haven't hit the beds yet. Bass on that end historically spawn later than those in the upper part of the lake because the deep, clear waters down there that are the last to heat up.

## IT'S STILL SPRING

Many people have the mindset that spring and spring patterns are over in May. I still say Carolina-rigged soft plastics and Neko-rigged soft plastics, as well as Flukes, finesse worms, trick worms and wacky worms, will trigger a majority of the bites this month. And, of course, it's big time frog time and I always reach for a Stanley Top Toad.

And there's something else. There's another soft plastic that quietly is making more of a splash — caused by a fighting bass, big or small. It produced a 4-pound class bass and others the last week of March in my Skeeter.

I channeled my inner Guido Hibdon and his close friend Shaw Grigsby and broke out a tube jig. It was one of many I still have from my days on pro bass tournament trails. Hibdon, who died in March 2018, and Grigsby were tube jig masters and I learned a lot when paired once with the latter for a tournament in Florida.

Grigsby won tournaments on a tube jig with a special secret he kept to himself. He shared the reason he didn't get snagged with a tube jig was because of a special hook, an Eagle Claw Shaw Grigsby HP Hook. It allowed him to make the tube jig weedless by skin hooking it thanks to a tiny stainless steel wire on the



eyelet that clamps on the tube jig. If you find you have fewer hookups than you should with that hook, switch the tiny wire clamp to your favorite EWG.

## TUBES ARE DEADLY

As they proved countless times, tube jigs are deadly on bedding bass. I played with it recently and it conjured up good memories as well as bass.

The Toledo Bend level has remained low. At the beginning of last month, it was still around 170.50. Average water temperatures finally are on the rise with warmer nights to go along with some extra warm days.

As I wrote earlier, this is a time to stay shallow because of the bream spawn. I'll do some of that, sure, but I'll try to get away from the crowd and fish Carolina-rigged soft plastics around ridges and humps just offshore in the main lake. There are plenty of them outside major creeks.

I believe 90 percent of the bass caught in my boat this month will be on C-rigs, followed by Neko-rigged soft plastics and Stanley Top Toads.

Bladed jigs such as Delta Lures Thunder Jigs, plus Rat-L-Traps, will catch their share of bass in May. Traps aren't done by any means.

I've been guiding on this lake most of my life and you're welcome in my boat. May should offer good bass fishing. Give me a call at (936) 404-2688. ■

**LAKE VERRET BASS ➤**



Terrebonne Parish President Gordon Dove (right) tours the Ducks Unlimited Island Road marsh terracing project on LL&E land with ConocoPhillips Coastal Wetlands Director John Harrington.

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# VISIT LAKE VERRET

Come early and let the birds help you find the bass

**A** By Don Shoopman  
veteran angler from the Bassmaster Opens pro circuit knows where the “early bird” can get the bass near his Gonzales home during the month of May. And he’s glad to share.

The key words are “early” and “bird” when Logan Latuso goes to Lake Verret, a lake he has been fishing since he was a boy. He began fishing there with his father, former Bassmaster Elite Series angler Robbie Latuso, also of Gonzales.

“In May, I really like Lake Verret because the shad spawn starts in May,” the younger Latuso said. “It’s some of the funnest bites you’ll get all year.”

Unlike others in the region, Latuso generally writes off the Bayou Black area and stays clear of the Atchafalaya Basin, which often is unfishable due to high water.

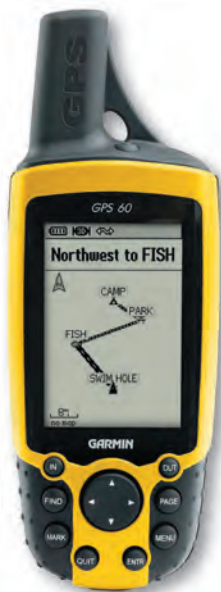
Lake Verret fits the bill for catching bass now. Latuso details his approach to putting bass in the boat.

“The biggest thing is to keep an eye out for birds,” he said. “I ride around till I find the birds. Find birds and you find shad. If



Logan Latuso of Gonzales has a good grip on a chunky bass he caught while fishing the spring shad spawn in Lake Verret.

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- Port Sulphur
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- Calcasieu Lake
- Myrtle Grove-Lake Hermitage
- Empire to Buras
- Pearl River WMA
- Lafitte
- The Rigolets
- Vermillion Bay
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they've got a bird on point, in a tree or on a laydown, they'll have shad there. If you see a cypress tree with three or four birds, there are a lot of shad.”

What also makes May bass fishing so productive in and around Lake Verret, he said, is that this time of year bream are spawning, too. In other words, bass can snack on as many shad as they want early, then gulp down a full meal later by inhaling a bream.

### EARLIER THE BETTER

How early is early enough? The key to catching Lake Verret's bass is getting your lure wet at or just before sunrise.

“The earlier you get out there the better,” Latuso said. “It’s a morning bite. Shad spawn overnight. The first couple hours of the morning if you’re on the right stretch you can catch a lot and big bass. They’ll be in a mile-long stretch or

be in a 100- to 200-yard stretch. You'll know you're around them. You'll see shad everywhere. Bass are spittin' up shad (after you catch them). You can even feel shad ticking the spinnerbait, biting the blade."

Shad hang around anything green in the water, from the leaves of a cypress tree or deadfall or lily pads, he said. He'll also target bass around docks and bulkheads in the Shell Beach area of Lake Verret.

The bite doesn't last throughout the morning, however. Then it's time to switch tactics.

"After 9 or 10 o'clock, I'll start dragging a Missile Baits D Bomb or a Missile Baits 48 around," the bass pro said. "You've just got to slow way down. When it (the bite) dies off, I go try to find hyacinth mats to punch with the Missile Baits D Bomb to find a big one or something."

## PLAY THE WIND

Latuso, 28, who assists with fire and water mitigation for his dad's company, ServiceMaster Restoration & Cleaning Specialists, has a game plan that works at Lake Verret on a windy day and a different one that triggers bites on a calm day.

"If there's wind, I'll throw a 3/8-ounce Delta Lures spinnerbait, Delta Shad color with silver double willow leaf blades," he said. "If it's calm, I'll throw a Delta Lures swim bait in the same color with a 3.5-inch Missile Baits Shock Wave, something more subtle if it's not real windy."

However, he said, "The No. 1 bait I always start with is a 1/4-ounce Delta Lures buzz bait with a silver blade and a white skirt."

He prefers that model and profile because the shad are pretty small.

Another artificial lure to keep tied on, ready to swing into action, is a Black Label Ricochet Jr. crankbait made by bass pro Cliff Pace of Petal, Mississippi. He likes to bounce the squarebill off cypress trees and knees to ignite reaction bites.

Where does one go to find bass this month in the huge, cypress tree-lined lake north of Grassy Lake? North? South? East? West?

"I like the east side more. They're coming out of The



Logan Latuso's go-to baits while fishing in May at Lake Verret. (Left to right) A white 1/4-ounce Delta Lures buzz bait, a shad-colored Delta Lures swim bait and a 3/8-ounce shad-colored Delta Lures spinnerbait.

Crackerhead, leaving those spawning canals," he said, noting when they do they'll come out eating, so those cypress trees in that northeast part of the lake usually pay off. ■

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## HUNTER OF THE MONTH

### Hagan Michael Hay

Hagan Michael Hay, 8, killed his first turkey in Claiborne Parish on a hunt with his father, Mark Hay, on March 26, 2022. It was the opening evening of youth turkey season. Hagan shot the gobbler at 30 yards with a 20 gauge using #9 TSS. The turkey had a 9-inch beard, 1-inch spurs and weighed 21 pounds.

## ANGLER OF THE MONTH

### Piers Picou

Piers Picou brought in his personal best bass weighing 5.66 pounds on Caney Creek Reservoir during the Louisiana Youth Bass Nation Tournament on March 19. Piers is a 4th grader at Central Catholic. He and his partner placed 4th out of 22 junior teams.





# BLOOD SPLASH

RARE OCCURRENCE IN  
DOWNED DEER WORTH  
LEARNING MORE ABOUT.

■ By Terry L. Jones

**This past deer season was the worst I have experienced in several decades. Deer were as scarce as honest politicians, and I was only able to harvest**

# ONE SMALL BUCK.

That particular cool morning in December found me hunting near Dugdemona River in Winn Parish. The deer stopped about 60 yards away, and I made a head shot through an opening in the bushes with my 30-06.

I quickly field dressed the deer, loaded it up and called my cousin Clay Scoggin, who wanted some deer meat. We had it butchered within two hours and he headed home happy.

A few days later, Scoggin called and said, "I had to throw away most of that deer meat because the shoulders and hams were full of little blood spots. It looked like it had been shot with bird shot. When I cut into it, I discovered the spots were small areas of ruptured blood vessels throughout the quarters."

Scoggin is an inquisitive sort of guy, so he started looking into what had happened to the meat. After talking to some biologists, veterinarians and other professionals, he learned that it was a rare, little-known phenomenon called "blood splash."

I got in touch with Rusty Berry, assistant state wildlife veterinarian, and Brian Miller, assistant director of the Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry, to learn more about the weird occurrence.

## VERY FEW CASES

Berry informed me that he only sees three or four cases of blood splash per deer season. "They are all head shots, usually from less than 75 yards, with high-powered rifles."

As Berry explained, "The cause of blood splash is still under investigation, but most likely it's caused by a quick and unusually large rise in blood pressure which results in the rupture of blood vessels."

Miller does not come into contact with deer carcasses in his job, but he does know of similar blood splash cases in hogs and cattle. He believes blood splash may be related to blood remaining in the muscle tissue because of improper bleeding.

Depending on bullet placement, a head shot may destroy the brain but not rupture the major arteries and vessels in the lower skull, and, thus, bleed very little. That apparently is what happened with my deer.

My research also led me to Hein Nell, a veterinarian manager for the Agency of Food Safety and Quality in South Africa. He agreed that a spike in blood pressure is behind the blood splash





Food Safety Agency (Pty) Ltd South Africa

Meat with blood splash often appears to have been shot with bird shot. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Many hunters who make head shots on deer never encounter blood splash because it is such a rare occurrence.

phenomenon.

“We very rarely encounter blood splash in African wild game animals, but from the little that we know, we have seen that it is most often associated with increased stress levels during hunting,” he said. “In other words, if animals are excessively chased during the hunt, they do tend to show more blood splash in the muscles.”

Nell added, “In South Africa we only allow head shots, for food safety reasons, during what is called ‘wild game harvesting’ for meat for export to the European Union. But then the throat bleeding cut or heart stick preferably needs to be performed within sixty seconds after the shot. This is probably why we do not see much blood splash at all. I suggest you bleed the carcass as soon as possible to avoid this.”

## LONG INTERVAL



A native of Winn Parish, Terry L. Jones has enjoyed hunting and fishing North Louisiana's woods and water for 50 years. He lives in West Monroe with his wife, Carol.



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## LONG INTERVAL

Miller tends to agree. "I lean more towards the blood remaining in the muscle tissue due to improper bleeding. A long interval between kill and exsanguination can leave a carcass with more blood in the tissue."

"Perhaps the reason why hunters experience this more often with head shots is that a shot to the neck or body is more likely to bleed profusely, giving a quicker start on the complete bleeding out process."

Miller does not believe the caliber of the rifle or distance of the shot causes blood splash other than the hole it creates to facilitate bleeding. "If the cause really is some final stress shock to the system by the brain that causes the heart to pump hard enough to burst the capillaries, then I would want to see a lot more examples to be able to draw any reliable conclusions."

Cousin Clay Scoggin only found evidence of blood splash in the four quarters, but that is not always the case.

According to Berry, "We see blood shot cases that are in certain muscle groups and other cases that are in all muscle groups. There's no real explanation but it may be the degree and/or length of the high blood pressure spike."

Miller speculated why the blood splash only affected my

deer's quarters.

"My guess is that they are large muscles that take longer to bleed out," he said. "If the effect is due to burst capillaries from a final brain or heart response, then it may be related to a more intense pressure from the flexing of those larger muscles at the moment of death."

## DON'T EAT THE MEAT

Regardless of what causes blood splash, both Berry and Miller recommend not eating the meat.

"We follow the 'when in doubt, throw it out' rule," Miller said. "Without an expert disposition, you're better off tossing it. There are possible pathogenic causes that I would not risk my health or the health of my family over in order to save a couple of quarters. Ecchymosis, Hemorrhagic Diathesis and the like could be symptoms of any number of viral diseases that may be harmful to humans. If the blood splash is pervasive throughout a large part of the carcass, skin or involving any organs or lymph nodes, I wouldn't even consider keeping the meat as it raises the likelihood that it is due to widespread infection."

So, there you have it.

If you ever find small blood spots scattered through the meat of your deer or hog, play it safe and get rid of it. ■

## BONUS SEASON >

Blood splash like this can occur in venison, beef, hogs and many kinds of meat.



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# LOUISIANA'S BONUS SEASON

## FOUR TIPS TO HELP YOU SCORE MORE SPRINGTIME SQUIRRELS

**L** By Brian Cope  
ouisiana's main squirrel season ended Feb. 28, but hunters still have a shot for bushytails in a special spring season. Squirrel season runs May 7-29 in Louisiana this year.

Make sure you check all the dates and regulations for the area you want to hunt. The spring season is closed on the sprawling Kisatchie National Forest, some federal wildlife refuges and some state WMAs. The spring limit is also three squirrels per hunt with a possession limit of nine during the spring.

Springtime bushytails aren't always easy to shoot. They are frisky, on the move and hunters are faced with the greening of the forest, often making squirrels hard to spot. But here's some advice to help you kill your share.

### CAMO UP, FROM HEAD TO TOE

Many deer hunters complain about all the squirrels they see when they're hunting bucks. And many of those same hunters are baffled at how few squirrels they see when actually targeting them. The reason is very often because those same hunters, who wear full camouflage when deer hunting, hit the woods in blue jeans and t-shirts of various colors. Keep the camo on and you'll kill more squirrels.

### KEEP THE SUN AT YOUR BACK

This is especially true early in the morning and late in the day. If you're facing the sun, you have a harder time seeing what's in the trees. But with the sun at your back, you'll see it all clearly. And the squirrels have to look into the sun to see you, which is difficult for them because of the glare.

It's kind of like taking a photograph: getting your crosshairs on a squirrel that's perfectly sunlit is quite easy. Doing it when you're facing the sun and the squirrel is backlit is much more difficult.

### CHOOSE THE RIGHT GUN

This depends on your situation. If you're hunting around a lot of trees that are already full of leaves, a shotgun is probably your best bet. That's because you'll often only get a look at part of your target squirrel. They'll use every leaf to their advantage, but those hiding places are no match for a shotgun with a full choke.

If your squirrel woods are still barren of leaves, it's time to break out the .22 rifle. While keeping the sun at your back as



Brian Cope

mentioned before, you can spot a squirrel well within range, see it clearly in your iron sights or scope, then pop a head shot before the squirrel knows you're even around.

A good air gun is also a great choice, especially when you see multiple squirrels. Even a .22 or .17 caliber conventional rifle is much louder than an air gun. And today's air guns are plenty powerful and much quieter. You can shoot multiple squirrels within close proximity of each other because the air gun isn't loud enough to make the rest of them scamper. Actually, when one squirrel sees his buddy fall or slide down a tree for no apparent reason, they'll often freeze completely while trying to make sense of it, giving you time for another head shot.

### CARRY TWO QUARTERS

Having two quarters in your pocket is all you need to trick a wary squirrel that's hiding on the other side of the tree into showing itself. Whether they're hiding after a shot, or because they sense your presence, they'll often hold still for a lot longer than you'd think their memory is. And if you try walking around the tree, they'll just ease around the tree trunk themselves, staying hidden the whole time.

When this happens, it's best to stay put, hold the two quarters in one hand, keeping them slightly separated with the thumb, index and middle fingers, then snap the coins together. It sounds like a squirrel cracking an acorn. That will put the hiding squirrel at ease and they'll usually scurry right around to your side of the tree, craning its neck to see who is munching down.

Squirrel hunting is a lot of fun, and it's a great way to spend a day in the woods after deer season is over. But there's more to it than just carrying a gun through the woods and expecting the tree rats to offer themselves up. Try these tips on your next squirrel hunt and you'll get a limit in no time. ■

# RECREATIONAL LAND SALES OUTLOOK IN 2022

**If** By Tom Smith  
you're looking to buy recreational property in Mississippi or Louisiana this year, it's important to know how the rural real estate market is doing, and how that might impact your purchase.

As we look to the year ahead, all signs point to continued strength in recreational real estate, both in the South and around the country. That's backed up by PotlatchDeltic's annual survey of its Preferred Broker Network, which handles sales of recreational properties in six states, including Mississippi and Louisiana. As a group, the brokers expect 2022 sales to match or exceed last year's levels.

The pandemic only intensified demand from recreational land buyers who want to get away from it all, whether it's to have a home base for hunting, to own a place for family activities, or to build a second home. At our brokerage, Tom Smith Land and Homes, we are expecting a 15% year-over-year increase in rural land sales this year.

So what does this mean for buyers? Here are five big takeaways from the PotlatchDeltic survey, along with what each trend means for recreational land buyers in Mississippi and Louisiana:

## **1. Desirable rural land continues to sell quickly, tied to a shortage of quality properties for sale.**

If you find a recreational property for sale that fits your needs and is priced fairly, odds are that it won't be available long. So it's important to work with an experienced recreational land broker who will know when desirable tracts are becoming available, so you can be ready to move quickly when opportunity strikes.

## **2. More rural land buyers are looking to buy with home-sites in mind, as opposed to only buying for a hunting spot or a place to camp.**

If you're thinking about a second home now, or want to keep your options open for the future, be sure that the property you're buying has a good spot for a home, along with access to water and utilities.

## **3. Recreational land buyers are using money from home**

## **sales, home equity lines and stock sales to buy rural properties, along with funding from loans.**

Buyers are finding a variety of ways to get money for purchasing recreational properties, and many buyers are taking advantage of rising property values to tap into cash for all-cash purchases or for down payments on loans. Mortgage rates continue to be favorable on land loans, making those transactions even more of a value.

## **4. The recreational real estate market includes a significant number of first-time buyers.**

A number of trends are bringing first-time recreational land buyers into the market. Some want a legacy property to pass along to their children. Others want a rural home where they can work remotely. And some want to have a home base for all their recreational activities. Many of the aspects of buying a rural property are new to people who've only bought homes in the past, so getting advice and help from rural real estate experts is a key to success.

## **5. Even though rural land buyers want to get out in the woods, they also want modern conveniences.**

For many buyers, it's important to have access to good cell service, quality internet and power, even if a rural tract is a bit off the main road. Again, it's important to work with a real estate broker who knows the geographic area you're focusing on, so getting answers to those questions will be simple and easy.

As we start to think about summer vacations for the kids or fall hunting season, it's a good time to start the process of finding the right recreational property to buy. As you do, make sure you do your homework, and get advice from experts. This will ensure that you are happy with your purchase for years to come. ■

*Tom Smith is a Principal Broker and Owner of Tom Smith Land & Homes, one of the top recreational land brokers in Mississippi and Louisiana, and a member of the PotlatchDeltic Preferred Broker Network. Find out more at 601-898-2772 | [www.tomsmithland.com](http://www.tomsmithland.com).*

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is one in a series honoring the six most recent inductees into the Louisiana Chapter Legends of the Outdoors Hall of Fame.

# WARREN COCO

## GO-DEVIL INVENTOR GIVES BACK TO LOUISIANA'S OUTDOORS.

It would be hard to find another duck hunter in America who was a better example of achieving the American Dream than Warren Coco of Baton Rouge.

In 1977 as a 22-year-old, the Baton Rouge resident began a company destined to become one of the most important and influential members of the waterfowl industry — GO-DEVIL Manufacturers of Louisiana.

The first version of the GO-DEVIL motor weighed nearly 300 pounds, but worked like nothing Coco had ever seen. For the next three years he put in 18-hour days without a paycheck, founding the company with about \$1,000 capital and a handful of garage equipment. Today, he has more than 30 full-time employees with more than 52,000 square feet of high-tech buildings turning out at least 1,800 engines per year. The company has come from a dream in a garage to an important and influential member of the waterfowl industry.

"I have been blessed to be born in Louisiana and even though my family nor I ever had a lot of money, I've been able to pursue my dream and turn my love for old engines and outboard motors into what I have today. It just goes to prove that in this great country of opportunity, anything is possible."

Because of his contributions to the Louisiana Outdoors and his legacy in the waterfowl industry and waterfowl conservation, the south Louisiana businessman and hunter was recently inducted into the Louisiana Chapter Outdoor Legends Hall of Fame.

### IT DID WORK!

Like many American success stories, Coco's GO-DEVIL started out with a laugh and a "that will never work" reaction. But the concept did work and now the company has an entire line of some of the most used waterfowl equipment in the world.

Coco has been able to turn his passion for duck hunting into his full-time job and livelihood. Prior to the construction of the first GO-DEVIL motor, Coco had built several versions of inboard mud boats. Each of his creations had limitations. Knowing Coco's abilities, a buddy of his told him about a "funny looking motor" he had seen that might just work.

Upon seeing the motor, Coco literally fell to the ground with laughter, and stated boldly, "That thing will never work!"



The motor was constructed from a 40-year-old Briggs & Stratton cast iron engine, a universal joint, a drive shaft with a rubber hose for a bearing, and a bronze prop, mounted on a 1960 Evinrude transom bracket. The concept for the engine was brought back from Vietnam, where motoring shallow water is a life necessity.

After examining the motor closely and considering the possibilities, Coco could not sleep! An avid duck hunter, Coco wanted to build a motor to give duck hunters easier access to shallow water areas that were prime for duck hunting, but almost impossible to reach without treacherous and dangerous wading for long distances.

But after that first thought about the possibilities, it didn't take Coco long to get going. In three weeks, Coco found a 10-horsepower Kohler engine and enough scrap metal to build the first GO-DEVIL.

His friends laughed when they saw the metal monster. They laughed even harder when Coco told them he was planning to go into business manufacturing engines. Coco took a risk and quit his \$5-an-hour job and went to work on his dream. It's a dream that has come true for him and for waterfowlers that depend on using his equipment.

## WATERFOWL CONSERVATION

Coco is most famous for his company. However, his greatest contributions to waterfowl and those who enjoy hunting them have come through his steadfast support of wetlands conservation.

One of those projects is the RESTORE The Mississippi River Delta. He was featured in an ad for that group, saying "I'm a duck hunter and fisherman. I've owned GO-DEVIL Manufacturing for 43 years and I've been a landowner and land manager for 23 years. My property includes 1,600 acres of coastal wetlands with a conservation easement and wetland restoration project. I feel the Mid-Barataria project is a must-have and many more behind it."

Ducks Unlimited honored Warren at a tribute event in his honor in 2015 with more than 300 friends and family attending. They raised funds and celebrated a conservation project on Dewey W. Wills Wildlife Management Area near Alexandria that will be dedicated to him and his wife, Donna. The project restored 3,000 acres of forested wetlands to improve habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife. The couple is a DU Heritage Sponsor and Warren was named an honorary trustee on DU's Board of Directors.

The engine products have come a long way since the days shown in a photo with this article, where Coco is driving a 52 HP Air-Cooled Diesel Longtail creation that he custom built for a customer in Venice in 1979.

Today, the three most popular products sold are Longtail motors, Surface Drive Motor and the GO-DEVIL boat. The GO-DEVIL Longtail motor isn't just for duck hunting and has been sold in every state and province of North America. It runs in conditions such as heavy vegetation, mud trenches, cypress swamp and rock-laden river and has been called "The Four-Wheel Drive" of marine engines. The Surface Drive is designed for durability in the thickest muck and nastiest environments known to man. GO-DEVIL boats come in rounded and tapered chine models for every condition.

You can learn more about those products at <https://www.godevil.com/> ■

*The Legends Hall of Fame was founded by Garry Mason of Springville, Tennessee. The Louisiana Chapter is managed by Peyton McKinnie of Marion. You can find out more about the groups on Facebook.*



**Kinny Haddox** has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 47 years. He and his wife, DiAnne, live in West Monroe.



**MUDDY PAWS** ➤

## MUDDY PAWS

Bryan Beatty

After several retrieves, this young lab is focused on the next. OPPOSITE PAGE: It takes a lot of equipment to properly train a retriever, luckily most of it is a one-time purchase.

# THE REAL WORK BEGINS

DEVELOPING YOUR DOG'S LOVE OF WATER AND COMFORT AROUND GUNFIRE

Photos by Bryan Beatty

**Y**ou brought your pup home at around seven weeks. It has settled in and is progressing nicely with the basics such as sit, stay and come and is learning that you're the boss. You've started retrieves and given them a nose full of what ducks smell like. Now the pup is around four months and things are going to get more advanced and the real work begins.

We're going to get to the training in depth, but before that I'd like to cover a couple of very important points. Two fundamental things your retriever must have, which if they don't, you're basically sunk, are a love of water and being comfortable around gunfire. It's called water-fowl hunting and I've yet to run across a suppressed shotgun.

Retrievers were bred to work in water. Others do just fine also. Yours should take to it easily, but you can stack the deck in your favor by finding a pond with a gentle grade that gradually deepens. This lets the pup ease in without suddenly getting in above its head. A spot with no aquatic grass is best since a pup might think that it is land, try to walk on

it and end up submerged, which can be scary to them. I've seen it happen. If you can, wade out and encourage it to follow you but stay where its feet can still touch.

## THE PUP'S PACE

It might take a few tries but it will start to swim, clumsily at first with its head up and front feet slapping the water progressing to a steady, even stroke. Keep in mind, one way to really screw this up is to throw a bumper in deep water or to push it into deeper water to force it to swim. It can be a setback. Let the pup go at its own pace. It'll come, it just might take a few tries.

Gun shyness is an absolute deal breaker, so it's better to avoid a problem than try to solve one. Use a cap gun or something similar and shoot it a couple of times at feeding time. They learn the loud noise means a good thing is about to happen. It will progress into retrieves later. If your dog shows a tendency for gun shyness, get help from a pro or someone who has worked through it before.

My second Lab seemed fine at first, but got a case of gun shyness at about

eight months. We cured it by having her leashed at heel next to me while someone fired a gun from a distance and then moved her closer as she got more relaxed. I completely ignored her while doing this. Reason being, consoling the dog only reinforces that it's okay to be afraid. Being stern or fussing at them just makes things worse. As she got more confident, we added retrieves and same as with feeding time, she associated the gunfire with something good. The retrieve is the reward for everything the dog learns and will do in the field. Praise for a job well done goes a long way, too, especially with young dogs.

As for training, be prepared to do it year-round, not just a couple of months before the season starts. Why? A: you want your dog to stay sharp, B: it keeps it in peak condition and C: they love it



Bryan Beatty is a native of New Roads and is an avid hunter and fisherman. He resides in Baton Rouge with his black lab, Molly Bee.

and hopefully so will you. Disclaimer: you will want to pull your hair out on occasion. I still do at times so take it with a grain of salt.

## A GOOD START

What will you need to get started in terms of equipment? The items listed below are a good start.

- Whistle (One that blows outward, its louder and directs the blast away from your ears)
- Duck Call
- Bumpers (12 black/white, 12 orange)
- Dummies (ATBs, Dokkens)
- Leash/Lead
- Check Cord
- Collars (Flat, Pinch, Electronic)
- Ducks/Wings/Scent
- Blanks/Poppers (Semi autos won't cycle them so a pump works best)
- Gun Stand
- White Poles (Teaching Blind Retrieves)
- Rubber Mat/Platform (Teaching "Place" where the dog will work from)
- Shell Bucket (Where you will shoot and handle from)

## TOOLS, NOT TOYS

Gun Dog Supply ([www.gundogsupply.com](http://www.gundogsupply.com)) carries anything you would need, as well as other vendors and sporting goods stores. One important thing: things the dog fetches while training are "tools," not "toys" so don't let your dog play with one when not training. They will think it belongs to them and want to keep it or destroy it. Only using them while training gets



them excited and ready to work.

So at this point, keep up the basics, especially obedience, and start to work on retrieves with the dog coming straight back to you with no chasing or victory laps. Now it's transitioning from a game when they were very young to a job where they must do what you want. They will make mistakes. You will too, but nothing the two of you can't overcome. Keep the enthusiasm and know when to quit, leaving them wanting more. You're on your way at this point. ■

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SCAN HERE

[convergenthunting.com](http://convergenthunting.com)



Photo courtesy LDWF

# PERIL ON THE WATER IS A CONSTANT

## HEED THE CALL FOR BOATING SAFETY!

**T**his news item didn't make headlines, not amidst skyrocketing fuel and grocery prices, the pandemic, the invasion of Ukraine and the dramatic increase in crime.

But that it didn't make big news didn't lessen the grief a family and friends felt when a man drowned on Toledo Bend.

It was like this: two long-time fishing buddies decided it was a good day to spend fishing. Apparently an approaching, late-winter weather system wasn't considered a factor. Anyone who's fished The Bend knows it's open-water big with darned few places to escape a front's violent winds.

The result was tragic. So now, a family is left to its sorrow and all because of some bravado most of us men have that pushes us to do things we shouldn't. Heck, if you've checked out cable TV lately, there are hundreds of folks making lots of money from the antics of testosterone-filled homo sapiens.

### CHECK THE WEATHER

But, c'mon man (borrowed from NFL broadcasts), CHECK THE WEATHER. There are enough apps to install on your portable communications device to stay current on life-threatening atmospheric conditions, some with radar to be used spring, summer, fall and winter. Never take it for granted.

At the risk of getting preachy, the report on the rescue of one and the recovery of a body preceded another rescue of three more fishermen from The Bend a week later on another passing cold front. It happens far too often. Compounding the problem is the peril unwise boaters place on the rescuers, and we'd all best be thankful there are folks willing to put their lives on the line to spend hours in sometimes foul conditions to save any and all.

Furthermore, please take time to heed this whether you're in a 15-foot bateau or

a 55-foot offshore cruiser.

Peril on the water is a constant. You know it. You've dodged lightning-filled thunderstorms, rough and bruising seas, waterspouts and winds strong enough to topple trees — and all in this down-to-the-sea urge to chase fish, a noble, but sometime oh-so-risky venture. And, hunters, don't think you have a pass, because duck and deer hunters have been rescued countless times in more dangerous wintry conditions.

### THINGS YOU CAN DO

There are things you can do to enhance your safety on the water.

The Department of Wildlife and



*Joe Macaluso is a native of New Orleans, but has lived most of his life in Baton Rouge with his wife Cheryl. He is a well-known outdoor editor and writer.*

## SETTING THE RIGHT COURSE



"We encourage every boater to take a boater education course. However, if you were born after January 1, 1984, you must successfully complete an LDWF-approved boater education course to operate a motorboat over 10 horsepower, unless you are accompanied by someone over age 18 who has a successfully completed an LDWF-approved boater education course, if required.

In addition, if you were born after January 1, 1984, you must successfully complete an approved boater education course to operate a personal watercraft. You must also be age 16 or older to operate a personal watercraft.

Individuals must carry their certification of course completion while on the motorboat or personal watercraft.

If you are a U.S. Coast Guard licensed captain, you are not required to take this course to operate a motorboat or personal watercraft.

Youth younger than age 10 may take a boater education course but are not eligible to be certified. They must retake the course to be certified when they reach 10 years of age or older." ■

– Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Fisheries' website ([www.wlf.louisiana.gov](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov)) lists equipment requirements for various boat lengths, and spells out other regulations for those of the age needing to take and complete a Safe Boating Course.

Make sure you have signaling devices, lights and other items in a waterproof container. And PLEASE, please, pretty please with sugar on top, WEAR A LIFE JACKET! Darned near all the drownings in boating incidents come when the victim was not wearing a personal flotation device.

Next, fully charge your cell phone before heading out. This can be a life saver.

Then, for your family, file a Float Plan.

It's simple to let someone know where you're going and what time to expect you to return — things like where you're launching and your likely fish location; your boat's make, length and color; a description of your towing vehicle and license-plate number; and, your cellphone number;

Add the numbers for local Sheriff's Flotilla, Wildlife and Fisheries' regional offices in Minden, Monroe, Pineville, Lafayette, Lake Charles, Thibodaux, Baton Rouge and New Orleans, and the LDWF's 24-hour hotline 800-442-2511. It takes very little time and could save your life, or the life of someone else.

We've come through April's Safe Boating Month, but safe boating and saving lives takes more than April's 30 days. Heed the call for boating safety.

See you on the water, and . . . hopefully, not in it. ■

**LIMITED QUANTITIES  
WHEN THEY'RE GONE,  
THEY'RE GONE!**

*Louisiana*  
**SPORTSMAN**  
**BACK ISSUES**

[shop.sportsmannetwork.com/collections/louisiana-sportsman](http://shop.sportsmannetwork.com/collections/louisiana-sportsman)



**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, a 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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 #2: **Same as #1, plus App...** \$28.95 (plus \$6 s&h).  
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2022 MAY	BEST DAYS				VALUE
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCEL	
Sun 1	██	██	██	██	71
Mon 2	██	██	██	██	62
Tue 3	██	██	██	██	54
Wed 4	██	██	██	██	49
Thu 5	██	██	██	██	51
Fri 6	██	██	██	██	51
Sat 7	██	██	██	██	56

Sun 8	██	██	██	██	65
Mon 9	██	██	██	██	55
Tue 10	██	██	██	██	48
Wed 11	██	██	██	██	46
Thu 12	██	██	██	██	54
Fri 13	██	██	██	██	61
Sat 14	██	██	██	██	71

Sun 15	██	██	██	██	75
Mon 16	██	██	██	██	63
Tue 17	██	██	██	██	53
Wed 18	██	██	██	██	41
Thu 19	██	██	██	██	35
Fri 20	██	██	██	██	35
Sat 21	██	██	██	██	40

Sun 22	██	██	██	██	52
Mon 23	██	██	██	██	43
Tue 24	██	██	██	██	40
Wed 25	██	██	██	██	43
Thu 26	██	██	██	██	45
Fri 27	██	██	██	██	57
Sat 28	██	██	██	██	69

Sun 29	██	██	██	██	80
Mon 30	██	██	██	██	86
Tue 31	██	██	██	██	77
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		
6:50 am	12:13 pm - 3:29 pm	☀	9:02 pm	12:01 am - 3:01 am	☾	☉
7:22 am	12:53 pm - 4:23 pm		10:02 pm	12:38 am - 3:54 am		☉
7:59 am	1:37 pm - 5:17 pm		11:00 pm	1:18 am - 4:48 am		☉
8:41 am	2:26 pm - 6:08 pm		11:56 pm	2:02 am - 5:42 am		☉
9:29 am	3:15 pm - 7:01 pm			2:51 am - 6:33 am		☉ HIGH & APOGEE
10:22 am	4:07 pm - 7:49 pm		12:46 am	3:40 am - 7:26 am		☉
11:19 am	5:02 pm - 8:34 pm	☾	1:31 am	4:32 am - 8:14 am	☀	☉
12:18 pm	5:54 pm - 9:16 pm	☾	2:10 am	5:27 am - 8:59 am	☀	☉ Half
1:19 pm	6:49 pm - 9:55 pm	☾	2:45 am	6:19 am - 9:41 am	☀	☉
2:20 pm	7:42 pm - 10:32 pm		3:16 am	7:14 am - 10:20 am		☉
3:23 pm	8:37 pm - 11:07 pm		3:44 am	8:07 am - 10:57 am		☉
4:27 pm	9:34 pm - 11:42 pm		4:12 am	9:02 am - 11:32 am		☉
5:33 pm	10:33 pm - 12:19 am		4:40 am	9:59 am - 12:07 pm		☉
6:43 pm	11:34 pm - Midnight		5:10 am	10:58 am - 12:44 pm		☉
7:56 pm	Midnight - 1:00 am		5:43 am	11:59 am - 1:25 pm	☀	☉ Full
9:12 pm	12:40 am - 1:46 am		6:22 am	1:05 pm - 2:11 pm	☀	☉
10:26 pm	1:47 am - 2:39 am		7:10 am	2:12 pm - 3:04 pm		☉ Perigee
11:35 pm	2:57 am - 3:39 am		8:07 am	3:22 pm - 4:04 pm		☉
	4:02 am - 4:44 am		9:12 am	4:27 pm - 5:09 pm		☉ Low
12:34 am	5:03 am - 5:51 am		10:23 am	5:28 pm - 6:16 pm		☉
1:23 am	5:57 am - 6:55 am	☀	11:35 am	6:22 pm - 7:20 pm	☾	☉
2:03 am	6:42 am - 7:58 am	☀	12:44 pm	7:07 pm - 8:23 pm	☾	☉ Half
2:36 am	7:23 am - 8:55 am	☀	1:50 pm	7:48 pm - 9:20 pm	☾	☉
3:05 am	7:59 am - 9:51 am		2:53 pm	8:24 pm - 10:16 pm		☉
3:32 am	8:33 am - 10:45 am		3:54 pm	8:58 pm - 11:10 pm		☉
3:58 am	9:05 am - 11:37 am		4:54 pm	9:30 pm - 12:02 am		☉
4:24 am	9:38 am - 12:30 pm		5:53 pm	10:03 pm - 12:55 am		☉
4:52 am	10:13 am - 1:23 pm	☀	6:53 pm	10:38 pm - 1:48 am	☀	☉
5:23 am	10:53 am - 2:15 pm	☀	7:53 pm	11:18 pm - 2:40 am		☉
5:58 am	11:34 am - 3:10 pm	☀	8:52 pm	11:59 pm - Midnight		☉ New
6:38 am	12:21 pm - 4:03 pm		9:48 pm	Midnight - 3:35 am		☉

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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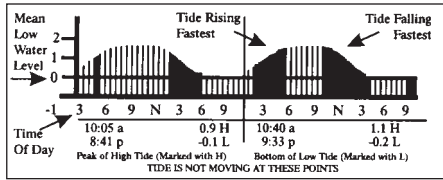
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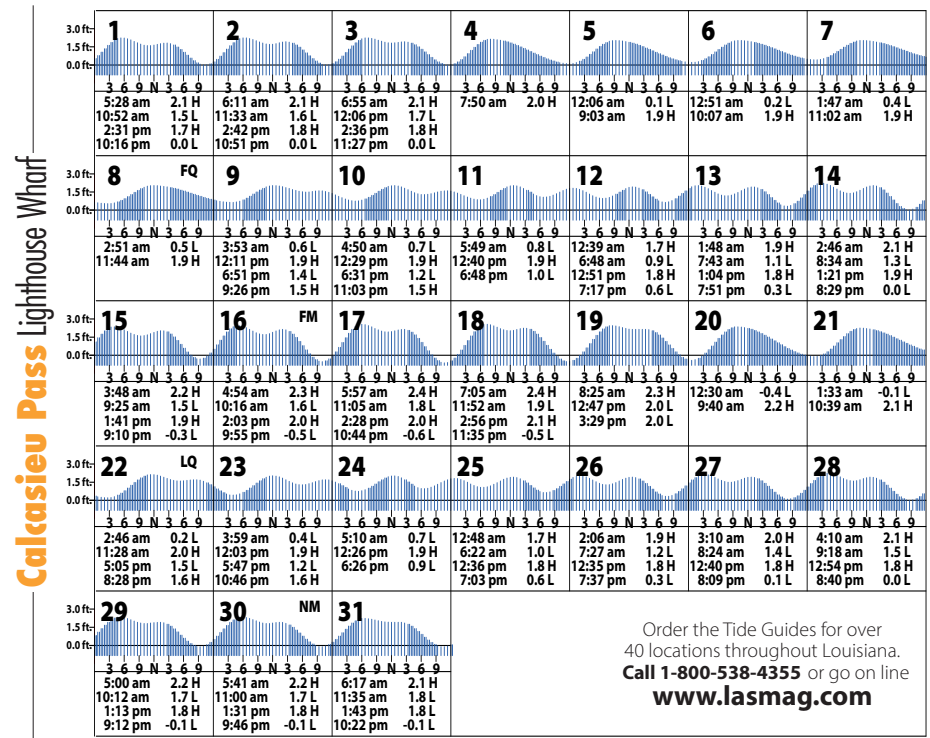
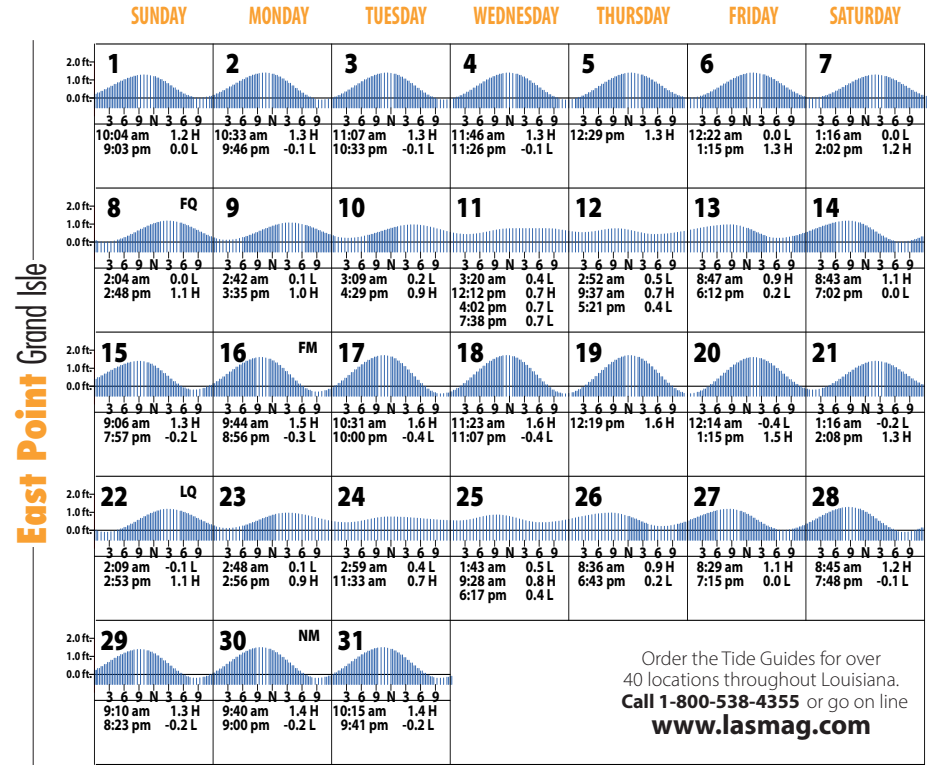
Tide Corrections

**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





# 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.



**Christian Tinkler**

Thirteen-year-old Christian Tinkler caught this beauty in Clinton the day after Christmas with his new rod and reel.



**Bradyn Dautz**

Bradyn Dautz with the 190-pound 8-point buck he killed on a youth lottery hunt at Tensas River NWR.



**Mimi Thomas**

Mimi Thomas, 14, of Abbeville holds up her 42-inch, 43-pound bull red caught in Vermilion Bay in September.



**Tanner Sisung**

On Dec. 3, 2021, Tanner Sisung and his dad launched at the Rigolets Marina and set their course to the east side of the Biloxi Marsh. This big girl bit Tanner's Voodoo Shrimp under a Four Horseman Cork. After a 10 minute back and forth battle, they brought her in for a quick photo op and she was released to fight another day.



**Darrin Cooley**

Sulphur's Darrin Cooley took this 175-pound boar in Washington Parish.



**Annabelle Saurage**

Six-year-old Annabelle Saurage connected with her first shot on this Alabama spike buck while hunting with her paw paw and brother.



**Rhylinn Stelly**

Ten-year-old Rhylinn Stelly killed her first racked buck, a 9-point that weighed 195 pounds, on family property in St. Landry Parish. She was hunting with her father, Spencer, and brother, Graham.



**Finn Bates**

Finn Bates with a deer he took in Nebo on Dec. 7, 2020.



# HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



**Dalton Willis**

Dalton Willis, 10, took his first deer, this 9-point, while hunting with his dad in West Baton Rouge Parish.



**Landyn Caskey**

Landyn Caskey, 15, of Winn Parish got his first rack buck, this 8-point with an 18 5/8-inch spread, on Dec. 20, 2020.



**Allie Simoneaux**

On the evening of Nov. 6, 2021, Allie Simoneaux harvested her very first deer, a 100-pound doe, while hunting with her mom at a private lease in Ville Platte.



**Austin Dabdoub**

Austin Dabdoub shot this big doe with a WSSM .270 on Halloween morning.



**Beau Thomas**

Beau Thomas of Abbeville caught this giant speckled trout back in September on Vermilion Bay.



**Seth Chauvin**

Eleven-year-old Seth Chauvin caught this 15-pound redfish on a live shrimp.



**Gavin Vincent**

Gavin Vincent of Lafayette after a successful Chauvin hunting trip.



**Andrew Sullivan**

Andrew Sullivan (right), former USMC, shot this 9-point on family land in West Feliciana on Dec. 19. He is pictured with his grandfather, Dr. Herschel Dean.



**Connor Campbell**

Connor Campbell shot his first buck in Kansas with his Savage Youth Model 7mm-08. The 11-point weighed 220 pounds, had an 18 1/2-inch inside spread and scored 143.

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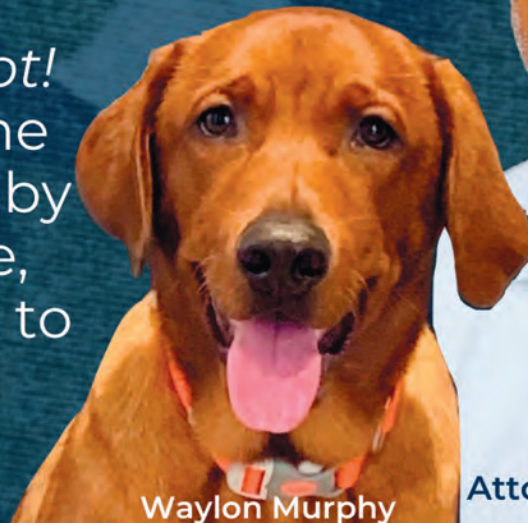
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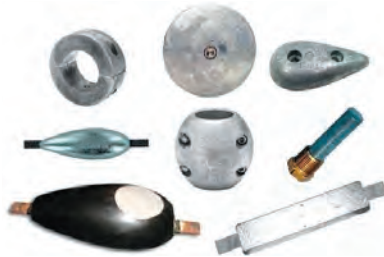
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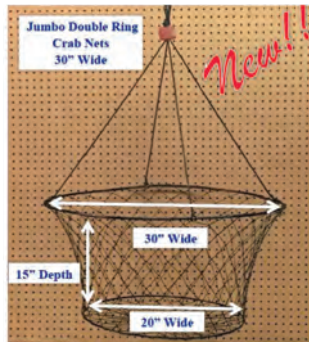
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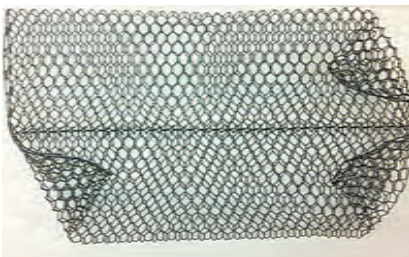
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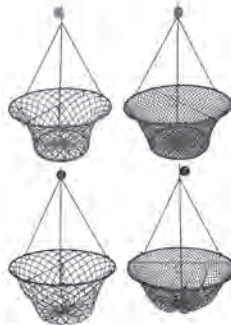
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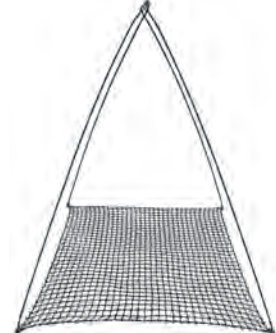
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