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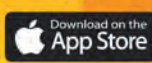
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**69**  
A MORE PERFECT UNION

**35**  
RIGS, REEFS AND WRECKS



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Jeff Samsel admires a red snapper he caught on light tackle while fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. (Photo by John N. Felsler) INSET: Christine Flores with a good catch of bream. (Photo by John Flores)



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# FIRST BASS SETS US ON A PATH TO RUIN; AND OFF TO THE STORE FOR MORE LURES!

**M**ost folks come to bass fishing in their younger years. Grandpas, dads, uncles, older brothers usually welcome both sexes to this undeniably addictive adventure.

Not here. Caught speckled trout, redfish, flounder and other saltier species long before that first largemouth surprised by inhaling a Mann's blackberry worm. Sure this pound-and-a-half barrel of fight was supposed to do that.

Heck, this worm smelled so good that you would swear it was the forerunner of the gummy worms our grandchildren beg for every time we check out after a meal at any Cracker Barrel. You know what I mean.

It was that day that led down a path to ruin. No dyed-in-the-wool bass fisherman ever tells anyone — certainly not his significant other — about how much they spend on the pursuit of this noble

sport (at least not if they desire for that significant other to remain significant for any extended period). Again, you know what I mean.

## IT COST HOW MUCH?

There's been a resistance to doggedly pursuing the latest and greatest rod, reel, line, et cetera, et cetera.

And, these days, what the heck can a \$14.95 crankbait do that the old Tennessee shad-colored Bagley's DB3 balsa crankbait can't do? Spent \$2.49 for them years ago, which, you'd have to guess, has ballooned to near 15 bucks now.

So now, we learned, that old Bagley's is worth much more than the original \$2.49, especially if you have it in the original package. And who on God's green Earth would have bought a Tennessee shad Balsa B crankbait and not used it? Not I said the first Little Pig, especially when casting for bass around the piers studding False River or fishing the old

highway roadbed at Toledo Bend.

Actually saw a guy catch two three pounders on that same lure on the same cast early one morning on The Bend.

Oh, and spinnerbaits! Check out those babies at the tackle shop lately?

Guy asked if I needed the Heimlich maneuver when I choked at that latest price tag, not after spending the handsome sum of 19 cents for the first H&H double spinner to stock that first freshwater tackle box. You know, it was the one that came with a double hook you needed to attach to the lure. And the first time you did it, you betcha you put it on the wrong way.



*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.*



The Classic Creek Chub Jointed Darter.  
 . . No, you can't get it for \$2.49 any-  
 more and no, you can't borrow it.

The most expensive lure purchased in those first bass-fishing days was a jointed Darter, a shad-colored one soon to be followed by the "Ice Cream" Darter and a yellow one with black and red polka dots, then an all black one. I have none of those left in the package, I guarantee!

Learned how to fish 'em and knew there wasn't a topwater plug to match it for catching big bass.

## THE ANSWER IS "NO"

So, when the Lake Palestine (Texas) guide drawn for a partner for an old Ford Dealers For Bass tournament on Toledo Bend, and he outlined his plan for the next morning, the Darter was the first choice over a submerged grassbed.

The guide threw something resembling the first buzzbait, and he asked, through a smirk, about what was I going to catch on that thing. (See, he'd never cast a Darter around a cypress tree in the Atchafalaya and had his heart darned near stop on the explosion).

After a half-hour when he had boated six not-too-large bass and has maybe seven pounds on his side of the livewell, and there were four lunkers weighing twice that on my side of the livewell, he asked, and quite sheepishly, "Do you have another one of those?" to receive a polite, "NO!"

That lure went for \$2.49, and it's still in the tackle box in the back room. It's been touched up several times and has had several hooks replaced, and sits ready to hit the water again.

And, the answer is still "NO!" ■

## NO NAMES, PLEASE

That leads to the first spinnerbait story: no names here because this dad has mended his ways. But years ago while fishing with beloved outdoor writer Mike Cook, we came upon a guy we knew fishing with his back-of-the-boat young son.

"How you doin' boy?" Mike asked.

"OK, but dad's catching all the fish," said the boy.

"What gives? Lemme see what you're throwin," said Mike.

So the kid shows the spinnerbait and it was the same color as his dad's, the same H&H double spinner.

"I'm getting hits, but I can't catch 'em," said the kid.

So Mike inspects the lure and finds it has no hooks, and the dad was caught.

"What?" Mike said. "That's low."

"Well, I didn't want to stop every other cast and get him unhung," said the dad.

Oh, and we knew there was a special place in fishing hell for this guy. The exchange sent the now red-faced dad into the tackle box for the double hook. And the kid caught a two pounder on the next to the next cast. Hurrah!

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OUTDOOR  
UPDATE

## RECORD TRIPLETAIL SWITCH FROM BULL REDS LEADS TO FISH OF A LIFETIME OUT OF VENICE

Brett Plummer landed this 31.6-pound tripletail that will be No. 8 in the state while on board with Capt. Rich McCloskey on April 25.

**C** By Sammy Romano  
apt. Rich McCloskey and his clients headed out fishing from Venice Marina on Friday, April 25, an almost daily routine for McCloskey, operator of the Blue Line Charter Service. This day would wind up being extraordinary though. One of McCloskey's clients for the day, Brett Plummer from North Carolina, would land the trophy of a lifetime that will be the eighth largest tripletail ever landed in Louisiana.

McCloskey is no stranger to large tripletail, having landed some giants in the past and regularly targeting them. On this particular day, his clients wanted bull redfish so they started the day off fishing for them instead.

Capt. McCloskey wasted no time and quickly had everyone on board hooked up to some bulls. They caught bull reds until they were exhausted, and then decided to mix it up by targeting big tripletail. McCloskey had been on a solid pattern, and he brought them to some shallow water wellheads just off of the mouth of the Mississippi River. The first string of wellheads yielded no fish, so McCloskey made a "half time adjustment" and relocated to a slightly different area that he was confident would produce better results. This would prove to be the right move.

### THE RIGHT CAST

The first well head in this area was unoccupied as well, so they headed to the next one. At McCloskey's direction, Plummer cast to the corner of the wellhead. His live shrimp suspended five feet under a Four Horseman Popping Cork drifted out from the rig. As it reached around 20 feet away from the platform he was about to reel in and recast when his cork went down. As soon as Plummer set the hook the fish swam away from the rig smoking the drag of his Daiwa BGMQ 500 spinning reel, and everyone on

board instantly knew it was a good one.

Plummer had the fish boatside three times only to have it make another run.

McCloskey said "We all knew it was a monster, and we were on the edge of our seats."

The fourth time Plummer brought the fish to the boat was the charm as McCloskey was able to net it and seal the deal for good.

McCloskey and Plummer had teamed up to land a 31.6 pound tripletail that will be No. 8 in the top 10 Louisiana State Fishing Records. This is a fish of a lifetime for most people, but it isn't the first time McCloskey has flirted with the record book. Last year one of McCloskey's clients landed what would have been a World Record tripletail (for artificial lures) had it been entered.

### TARGETING BIG TRIPLETAIL

I asked Capt. McCloskey for some tips for those wanting to try their luck fishing for big tripletail out of Venice. He said he usually targets shallow wellheads in 15-25 feet of water, although this fish came from a wellhead in 12.5 feet. He uses a Four Horseman popping cork with a 4.5-5 foot long leader of 60 pound fluorocarbon tied to a ½-ounce jig head. Interestingly enough, McCloskey said that although this long leader is hard to cast, it seems to work much better than a sliding cork setup.

A live shrimp is threaded onto the jig head through the back with the hook protruding from the tail. Obviously this setup works well for him!

Venice is a tough area to go at it on your own, so if you are interested in trying your hand catching these prehistoric looking giants, consider using a guide. Capt. McCloskey and his Blue Line Charter Service fleet, captained entirely by retired law enforcement officers, can be reached at (225) 276-5263 or [Bluelinecharterservice.com](http://Bluelinecharterservice.com). ■



# DON'T TELL ANYBODY...

## BATON ROUGE ANGLER SKIPS SCHOOL; CATCHES 12.63 BUSSEY BRUTE

**M** By Kinny Haddox  
onday, May 2, was a school day. But Parkview High junior Hunter Hamilton turned in his work early, got his parents' permission and stayed in north Louisiana an extra day even though it meant missing classes.

And man, is he glad he did. Hamilton fished the 2022 Louisiana Youth Bass Nation State Championship on the Ouachita River over the weekend and while he got off to a fast start, he didn't do as well as he hoped. He was kind of down, but he thought a day on Bussey Brake right up the road at Bastrop might turn things around.

It did. Not long into the morning, Hamilton flipped his bait into a thick piece of brush on the 2,200 acre Morehouse Parish lake and pulled out a 12.63-pound fish of a lifetime. He was flipping a Zematoma color Missile bait D-bomb with a Rougarou Tungsten Voodoo Series weight. He tossed the bait into the heavy cover, lifted it and let it fall. He repeated the action and the second lift, the huge fish nailed it.

"Before I knew it I felt something pulling back like I've never felt before," the 17-year-old member of the Parkview Bass Team said. "I had 65-pound braid and when I set the hook, the fish didn't even move. Oh my gosh. I thought I had a huge carp or something. Then it swam away, I could do nothing even with a heavy rod. I finally turned her. When she came up and we saw the fish's huge mouth, my fishing partner for the day, Justin Paul Bailey, said it was a 10-pounder. When he lipped her a few minutes later

and got her in the boat, we knew she was way bigger than that."

### BUSSEY BRAKE DELIVERS

They put the fish on the scales and she hit 12.63. They put it in the livewell to let it calm down a few minutes, while they did the same. "Oh, man, we were all just freaking out," he said, including his dad, Matthew, who was also in the boat. "It was a pretty memorable day for sure."

The day started out with Bailey catching a four pounder right after they stopped. Hamilton pitched in the same spot and caught one about two pounds. As he tossed it back in the lake, he thought to himself, "Well, I've caught a bass at Bussey Brake. I'm cool with that."

Needless to say, there was more "cool" to come. After the fish settled down, they took it out of the livewell, measured it, took a few pictures and let her swim right back into the same bush she came from. It was obvious from the fish's tail and her fairly flat belly that she had already spawned out. She could have weighed another pound or two just a week or so earlier.

### A WELCOME INVITATION

Bailey is part-owner of Rougarou Tackle and the elder Matthew Hamilton is on his Pro Staff staff. He had asked Bailey to go to Bussey with them and he was delighted.

"We started the morning with a bang," Bailey said. "We launched Hunter's boat, but he had forgotten to put the plug in so we had to handle that. He had a waypoint saved that a friend had given him. I looked at his phone and said let's go. Because it's the same place I would start. When we dropped the trolling motor, on my third flip I caught a four-plus and he caught the two. Things slowed down. It was about 30 minutes later when Hunter set the hook on the fish of a lifetime."

### THAT'S NOT FAIR

Hunter said he's going to be in a bit of trouble when he gets back to school. Not with his teachers, mind you. It will be with his fishing buddies.

"Oh man. I was texting them and sending pictures to them right after I caught it while they were at school," he said. "They were like 'that's not fair' and so I know I'll have to watch out when I get back. Some of the seniors just have a couple of days left and they were wanting to know right where I caught it."

Besides the Missile D-bomb and Rougaroo weight, Hamilton was fishing Power Pro line on a Shimano Curado reel and a Doby's Fury heavy action rod.

He and fellow bass friends had watched online much of the Major League Fishing pro bass tournament on Bussey earlier this spring and he had been wanting to fish those waters. Hamilton said it won't be his last trip up to the north Louisiana lake and next time, he'll probably have company. ■



Hunter Hamilton played hooky from school on May 2 and ended up catching this 12.63-pound bass at Bussey Brake.

# WIND-AIDED LUNKER

## HINTON WAS JUST LOOKING FOR A CALM SPOT AND FOUND AN 11.10 BUSSEY TOAD

**Y** By Kinny Haddox  
ou've heard of a "wind-aided" home run in baseball — one where the wind is blowing out and helps the ball carry over the fence?

Well, Jeremy Hinton of Bastrop has brought the term to bass fishing and hit a home run for his livewell. The 42-year-old was fishing Bussey Brake north of Bastrop on May 9 and he was catching some nice fish, he just had to get out of the stiff wind for a while.

He found a little pocket where he was protected from the wind. He tossed a June Bug tube style creature bait up into a thick bush in about six feet of water. It only fell about two feet when he felt a tell-tale tap.

"I set the hook and that thing pulled like crazy," Hinton said. "I just knew it was a grinnel. It tugged and tugged and pulled off line as it ran under the boat. Finally I got it turned around and when it came back out and rolled on the surface, I couldn't believe it. I have been fishing for a double-digit bass all my life and I just knew this was it."

It was. Hinton took the bass to the certified scales at the boat dock and it checked in at 11.10 pounds. He immediately put it back in the livewell and motored back to the very spot he caught her, turning her back in the same bush she came from.

Had the wind not been blowing and helped him make the decision to move, he might have never fished there.

"The strange thing about it is when I put her in the basket to weigh her, she was still oozing eggs," he said. "It was 85 degrees outside and this big bass was still spawning. It gave me a sense of urgency to get back in the lake."

Hinton said he's been after a fish like this for a long time and he didn't do anything special this time. He just cast the right bait in the right spot. And he was paying attention and did what he was supposed to. He normally would have netted that big of a fish, but he had left his net in a compartment and had to lip her.

"I mean, it was maybe the most exciting fishing moment I've ever had," he said. "I've probably been out there 30 times this year hoping for that moment and when I got the fish in the boat, I had to sit down for about five minutes because I was so excited I was shaking."

Hinton's next thought was to find somebody to take his picture with the fish. He found a nearby fisherman, who happened to be off-duty LDWF enforcement agent David Harrell trying to catch his own big fish. Harrell took his picture and they chatted for a while, then he went in and weighed the fish.

"I grew up and learned how to fish on Bussey, so that made it all the more special," he said. "I just wish my dad would have been with me. He's the one that taught me how to fish."

Hinton didn't waste any time getting his second double-digit bass out of Bussey, either. On Thursday, May 12, he landed a 10.87-pounder about 30 yards from the same spot that he caught the bigger fish using the same bait and technique.

Hinton said he always encourages people to return big fish to

Jeremy Hinton holds his 11.10-pound Bussey Brake lunker largemouth.



the water as quickly as possible. Those fish, he says, are something special and it's important to keep their genetics in the fish stock. Not just for us, but for future fishermen.

"I've got a 10-year-old son, Adyn, and he's getting into fishing," Hinton said. "I think it would be fantastic for him to get to catch that fish again some day."

If you fish Bussey, remember it is a WMA managed by the state and has special rules and limits to help develop the trophy lake. Make sure you know them before you go. ■

Jeremy Hinton with his second double-digit Bussey bass in one week, a 10.87-pounder.



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Shaston Isbell hooked this 10.26-pound bass on April 22 at Toledo Bend Reservoir.



# PHONE FOR BASS?

## IT WAS AN EASY TRADE-OFF FOR ISBELL AND HIS 10.26 TOLEDO LUNKER

**S** By Dan Kibler  
 Shaston Isbell lost his cell phone on April 22. He had it accidentally kicked into the waters of Toledo Bend Reservoir – and he didn't care. He had a 10.26-pound bass in the livewell that was a good trade-off.

"Once I got her in the boat, I was on top of the world. When we netted her, we knew she was a 10," said Isbell, 24, from Sugartown. "We headed to Fins & Feathers, and we picked up my wife, Sara, on the way. She accidentally kicked my cell phone in the water, and I told her I didn't care."

Isbell's family had been camping at Toledo Bend, and he had taken his 12-year-old son, Wyatt, and 9-year-old son, Luke, fishing with a buddy, Jakey Lewing. Fishing the lower end of the lake, they had caught only a few small fish and were fishing a main-lake point when Lewing decided it was time to make a move.

"I told him, 'One more cast, and we'll

go,'" Isbell said. "And that cast was the 10-pounder."

### THE GEAR USED

Isbell was fishing a Carolina rig with a watermelon seed Zoom speed worm, on 12-pound Trilene Big Game with a 14-inch leader of 12-pound fluorocarbon. He said the big fish came out of about 6 to 8 feet of water.

"I caught her on a Lew's baitcasting combo I had bought for my wife. I had just picked it up and thrown it in the boat," he said. "When she bit, I didn't feel the usual bass 'thump.' It was a big jerk. I knew right away I had a big fish. I could feel her power. But I was thinking that I might have had a big catfish. Then, she surfaced 50 or 60 feet from the boat. She didn't jump, and she went back down. She went around and around the boat – it felt like 10 minutes, but it was probably just a minute or two. Once Jakey netted her, my

legs were jelly. I could hardly stand up.

"My boys were shocked at the size of the fish. And when I hooked her, I had asked Luke to reel in his line. I wound up with a big pile of his line all wrapped around my rod tip."

Isbell and Lewing picked up Mrs. Isbell and the crew headed to Fins & Feathers, an official weigh station for the Toledo Bend Lunker Program. A set of scales Lewing had in the boat registered 10.53 when he weighed the fish. At Fins & Feathers, the official weight was 10.26. The fish was 25½ inches long and 18¾ inches in girth. The fish was the 32nd of the 2021-22 season to qualify for the Lunker Program.

"I don't think she was quite spawned out," Isbell said. "She had a bloody tail, and she still had a full belly. I think she was on a bed out in deeper water." ■

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# CHARTER BOAT CAPTAINS SEEK EQUAL FOOTING

**A** By Jeremy Alford  
St. Tammany Parish lawmaker is pushing legislation that would overturn a longstanding rule at the Department of Natural Resources to place charter fishing captains on equal footing with commercial fishermen.

Over the past two terms of state government, more attention has been given to how charter captains straddle the commercial and recreational worlds. The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, for example, already recognizes captains as commercial fishermen and next year a legislative proposal will be floated for the same shared designation at the Department of Revenue for tax purposes.

Right now, however, charter captains are fighting in the ongoing regular session to revamp a DNR rule so they can participate in a state-sponsored insurance fund that currently serves the commercial fishing industry.

HCR 55 by Robert Owen, R-Slidell, would add charter fishing guides to the definition of commercial fishermen in DNR's administrative rules — but only those verified as earning more than 50 percent of their income from guide services.

If passed, the rule change would grant charter captains access to the Fisherman's Gear Compensation Fund. Created in 1979, the fund offers financial assistance to commercial fishermen for vessel and gear expenses affiliated with hitting or snagging obstructions or hazards in the water.

"We're not trying to milk the system in any way," Owen told the House Natural Resources Committee this week. "We're not trying to get a leg up on commercial fishermen in any way, shape or form. We just want a level playing field."

## THE IMPACT

The real sticking point is just how much money charter captains would siphon from the fund. Lawmakers on the committee have requested a fiscal analysis of the proposal, and until that's finished and made public, no further votes will be taken.

Owen estimated the impact of adding charter captains to the fund could be anywhere from "just thousands" to "less than \$100,000." He and other supporters argue there's plenty enough money in the fund to go around.

The Fisherman's Gear Compensation Fund is supported by a \$1,000 fee that's charged against mineral lessees and right-of-way holders in the coastal zone, primary pipeline operators. The fees are typically assessed every three years or so, when the fund's balance reaches \$250,000 or less. When triggered, those fee bills on average bring in \$2.3 million for the fund.

Claims from commercial fishermen are filed with DNR, which then investigates them. Participants are allowed only three claims per year, with a maximum payout of \$5,000 per instance. Overall, there are roughly 120 claims filed with the DNR fund annually.

Richard Fischer of the Louisiana Charter Boat Association told lawmakers this week it's time to view his industry through a different lens. "Charter captains are simply the Uber or taxi service that takes customers from the dock to the fishing spots and back to the dock," he said.

## CHARTER CAPTAINS IN THE STATE

Fischer said there are currently 700 licensed charter captains in Louisiana. That number is down, he added. Prior to this recent string of hurricanes and the downturn in the economy, the number of captains fluctuated between 900 and 1,100. Of the 700 currently on the water today, Fischer said only 500 would qualify as full-time and be eligible for the fund.

"There's about 10,000 commercial fishermen in the state right now, so we're talking about adding no more than 5 percent to the total universe of who would be eligible for this fund," Fischer said.

During this week's initial debate, some lawmakers wondered why captains couldn't find private solutions to their challenges.

"Do these boats not have insurance?" asked Rep. Troy Romero, R-Jennings.

"Most charter boat captains have insurance," Fischer replied, "but when you're talking about getting claims paid out, they only get paid out a little bit compared to what they should get for these damages."

"Get a lawyer and sue the insurance company," Rep. Mack Cormier, D-Belle Chasse, later inserted into the debate.

"That takes money, that takes time," Fischer told Cormier. "That could take years."

"And it takes a lot of money to buy a boat, I like to joke, with three 300's or four 400's on the back of the boat," Cormier said. "Charter fishing has its little niche, but it's not like someone going out and, you know, fishing oysters and shrimp. In my mind, this fund is to protect them more."

## OPPOSITION TO THE BILL

Cormier's concerns were shared by others opposed to the bill, including the Louisiana Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association; Louisiana Oil and Gas Association; Louisiana Shrimpers Association; and Louisiana Oysters Dealers and Growers Association.

Bob Baumann, who represents the pipeline operators that pay into the DNR fund, pointed to a separate fund administered by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries that already supports charter captains. That charter fund collects \$385,000 to \$400,000 annually through a \$5 fee on every customer and an additional \$500 fee that out-of-state captains pay.

"This program was established for the harvesting of commercial fishermen, not recreational activities," said Baumann adding, "Why do we need to support those who can make it on their own." ■

*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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LDWF agents check hunters in the field to ensure they are following regulations and within legal limits.



Photo courtesy LDWF

# HOW MUCH IS A DOLPHIN WORTH?

## STATE GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT FINES FOR ILLEGAL GAME, FISH

**T** By Jeremy Alford

here's an old Boudreaux and Thibodeaux joke where Boudreaux gets picked up by a sheriff's deputy for the illegal taking of an eagle. When Boudreaux finally has his day in court, the judge asks why he shot an eagle, to which Boudreaux replies, "For food!"

The judge knew better to ask his next question, but couldn't stop himself: "What did it taste like?"

After pondering the question for a moment, Boudreaux said, "It tasted like pelican!"

Of course, this is no laughing matter to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Old Boudreaux, according to the department's administrative rules, would have been saddled

with \$4,351.49 in restitution for illegally taking that eagle. (And another \$4,351.49 for talking out of school about that pelican.)

You see, every animal and form of aquatic life has been assigned a value by the department. Lawmakers are learning all about these values during the ongoing regular session, especially since the department wants to make it easier for the state to collect such restitution fines.

SB 448 by Sen. Jay Luneau of Alexandria would allow judgments from administrative law judges, which the department uses for these cases, to be considered final for debt collection purposes. Right now, the department has to file a lawsuit in district court to enter into debt collections, and it's often a rather lengthy process.

The legislation is pending action on the House floor and is just one vote away from being sent to Gov. John Bel Edwards for consideration.

As the bill moved through the House and Senate, lawmakers spent a little time learning more about the department's detailed list of values for animals and aquatic life taken illegally by commercial and recreational means.

"How much is a dolphin worth?" Rep. Mack Cormier of Belle Chasse asked during one hearing. (Marine mammals have a non-game value of \$3,481.19.)

"Are menhaden on the list of fish?" asked Rep. Joe Orgeron of Larose. (They are, at 11 cents per pound.)

Rep. Dewith Carrier of Oakdale wanted to know what would happen if he shot an extra squirrel by accident. (One extra tail through your belt loop would be \$20.32.)

Over time, these restitution judgements add up. The department is currently sitting on more than 650 of these judgments, which have an outstanding and unpaid balance of \$850,000.

Cole Garrett, the department's general counsel, said the state has an obligation to chase down these dollars.

"When people take animal, fish or wildlife illegally, civil restitution is due to pay back the public trust resource," he told lawmakers this week.

The legislation would not be applied retroactively, meaning the streamlined path to debt collection status would only be used in future cases. Garrett also said the proposed change

is similar to revisions approved by the Legislature last year for minor wildlife violations.

"This maintains due process, but holds people accountable, creates judicial efficiencies and allows LDWF to actually collect judgments for civil restitution," he added.

Under the proposed legislation, if a final judgment is rendered and an individual refuses to cooperate, wildlife and fisheries officials can then contact the Office of Debt Collection in the state Department of Revenue.

"They have a procedure of notices and letters that have to be sent to anyone prior to us turning the file over to them," said Bryan McClinton, the undersecretary for finance at the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. "They are allowed to collect an amount greater than the debt to cover their overhead, but LDWF will receive the full amount of the judgement."

Without the extra collection steps outlined in the legislation, wildlife and fisheries officials said they would have to rely upon the suspension and revocation of hunting and fishing privileges, which isn't always enough. ■



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# GONE TO THE DOGS

NATCHEZ AREA HOSTS SPRING "GRAND" AND NEARLY 800 RETRIEVERS

**Y**ou could say that the Vidalia area went to the dogs the last weekend in April. But it was in a good way as top retrievers from around the country came to the area in hopes of obtaining the coveted Grand Hunting Retriever Champion status.

A total of 767 of the top retrievers along with 400 pro and amateur handlers in the US and Canada descended on the area to participate in the Hunting Retriever Club International Spring Grand April 25-29. The event was hosted in Vidalia and Natchez, Miss., by the Amite River Hunting Retriever Club of Baton Rouge.

"The Grand" is held each spring and fall in various locations across the United States. These dogs are elite and all have earned their Hunting Retriever Champion Title, which is required to enter. To get an idea of the level of talent, the HRCH title would be the equivalent to winning the Super Bowl. The GRHRCH title would be being chosen for the Pro Bowl.

## PASSING THE TEST

Brandon Menard of Cypress Bottom Retrievers found success in passing his 7-year-old Yellow Lab "Jacque." The two earned their first Started title at an Amite River test and came full circle with Jacque's career earning his GRHRCH at this Grand hosted by Amite River as well.

"It still really hasn't hit me that we got it done," Menard said. "Jacque is the first dog I've trained to compete and has started me on this path of being a professional trainer. We overcame quite a few obstacles, but never gave up. I couldn't be prouder and owe most of the credit to him."

The event took place over five days and had both land and water tests, then finished with an upland test. Tests are typical of what these dogs would see across the country in terms of terrain, cover and other factors. The dogs are not competing against each other, but are judged against a set of standards developed from hunting scenarios.

Tests consist of the dog and handler on "the line" where they will work from. Handlers shoot a shotgun loaded with blanks at three "marks" consecutively, which the dog can see. These are real ducks launched by a "winger" best described as a slingshot on steroids. Distances out to 200 yards on land and 150 yards on water are the norm.



Brandon Menard of Cypress Bottom Retrievers with "Tasso" and "Jacque" who earned their GRHRCH titles.

## TOUGH RETRIEVES

The dog must pick up all three marks and then run a "blind retrieve" where the handler knows the bird's location and directs the dog via voice, whistle and hand signals to it. They are judged by two judges and must be successful each day to run and make the upland test. That consists of quartering, flushing and being steady to shot. Should they succeed, a Grand pass is earned. It takes two grand passes to be titled a GRHRCH.

The standards being judged on are tougher and the dog and handler need to be nearly perfect to advance. Of the 754 entries, only 191 passed.

In talking to some handlers, they all agreed that the tests were very tough this year. The tests in the Natchez area involved hilly terrain where dogs faced elevation changes and a tough background. Conversely, the Vidalia area tests consisted of flat land and lots of cover. It really challenged the dogs' marking abilities along with their response to signals from their handlers.

Tracy Stubbs, overall Chairman of the event, agreed with the handlers on the challenge. He also remarked that a good time was had by all and wished to thank the local businesses, volunteers and government entities that went above and beyond to make the event a success. ■

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# BEST SEASON EVER

TURKEY HUNTERS IN LOUISIANA REPORT  
2,846 BIRDS HARVESTED

The author's son, Anders  
McGehee, with an opening  
morning gobbler.

**L** By Dusty McGehee  
ouisiana turkey season  
started with a bang this  
year (literally) for me.

Ten minutes into the youth  
turkey opener and my 10-year-  
old son, Anders, had one flop-  
ping at 32 yards. We hunted  
hard the rest of the season and  
were able to call up four more  
within gun range; two long-  
beards escaped, but two more  
got carried out on my back.

Over the course of time, tur-  
key hunters have noticed the  
decline in the turkey popula-  
tion in our area. But there is  
good news this year.

LDWF's Resident Small  
Game/Wild Turkey Program  
Coordinator, Cody Cedotal  
had some very encouraging  
news, reporting that the num-  
bers show this was the best  
season Louisiana has ever had  
since harvest reporting began  
in 2009.

Preliminary reports are show-  
ing hunters bagged 2,846  
birds this year. This total is up  
over 50% from 2021, when  
1,886 gobblers were reported.

Cedotal noted a few things  
that likely contributed to the  
record setting year.

First, many areas of the state  
had an above average poult  
production in 2020, which led  
to more adult gobblers for  
this season. Second, weather  
conditions were favorable for  
the first few weekends of the  
season. He is also optimistic  
that the season date change  
which began in 2018, is hav-  
ing a favorable impact on our  
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While this year's harvest statistics seem to point to a possible positive "turn in the road" for our turkey population, the state is also working to manage the long-term viability of our resources. It's good news to hear that the state is making turkey research a priority and putting forth resources to not just maintaining, but also increase the turkey population.

They have a major research program that has been going since 2014 where they are tagging birds and conducting nesting and demography studies. They are looking at turkey movements, nest success, brood survival, brood range, incubation ranges, etc. They are comparing different habitats and management practices in different areas of the state to gain crucial knowledge on making future decisions for the betterment of our population. They are also collecting blood samples for genetic and disease testing.

It should be noted that the turkey decline is not just a Louisiana problem, it's a problem all over the south.

Therefore, Cedotal and other state researchers are working hand in hand with other states, leading turkey biologists and professors throughout the nation to get a better handle on the downward trend. Cedotal and one of the leading professors and turkey researchers in the country, Dr. Bret Collier from LSU, are involved in ongoing research programs which should produce some very helpful data in the near future.

So, what can we as turkey hunters/land managers do to be a part of the solution to keep turkey success on the rise?

It's relatively simple, yet seems to be something landowners

have trouble doing — habitat improvement! Whether you own five acres or a 2,000-acre farm, if you can just make subtle changes to improve the habitat, it will make a difference, Cedotal said. Deer hunters spend countless hours to improve deer habitat, but it often isn't the same for many of the turkey hunters.

One of the easiest ways to improve habitat is through the use of prescribed burning. This will increase early succession vegetation, increase available food for turkeys, and improve viable nesting and brood areas for the hens. Fire seems to make everyone a little nervous and rightfully so, but Cedotal and the LDWF staff is more than willing to help out. Contact your local biologist and they would be happy to assist you whether it be with prescribed burns or any other ways to improve your land.

The LDWF and turkey hunters hope this positive trend will continue. So far this year, the weather has been conducive for good nesting/poult success, but you never know what Mother Nature has in store. LDWF will be out conducting surveys soon to measure actual results.

Hopefully, you were one of the lucky hunters that were included in the 2,846 birds that were taken this year. I've been chasing these wily birds since the mid-90s, and the feeling never changes. There is nothing like hearing that booming gobble reverberate through the woods, the spitting and drumming as he gets within gun range, and the shaking and shortness of breath that this causes. Every serious turkey hunter out there knows the feeling. ■



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**READER REPORT**

**DAD/DAUGHTER  
DEER DATE**

TRIP TO THE CAMP LEADS TO 13-POINT BUCK FOR COURTNEY LEMOINE

**I**t By Jody Lemoine had rained heavily the night before and the morning of Jan. 25, 2022. It was misting rain and the winds has changed out of the north.

I knew the deer may be on their feet and the rut was going on.

My daughter, Courtney, and I frequently go somewhere once a month as a dad/daughter date. That could be grabbing dinner, shopping or going hunting.

She texted about noon on the 25th and asked to go hunting. I said "let's go" and we headed north after lunch. We arrived at my camp just north of Clinton about 3 p.m. We got dressed and headed to a stand where I knew a buck had been working the area. Little did I know it was the buck of a lifetime for my 36-year-old daughter.

**DEER IN THE FIELD**

We got in the stand about 4 p.m. and I was handing her our gear when she turned and looked at me with those big brown eyes and said, "Dad there's a buck and a doe in the field".

I was thinking it was a 3-year-old 9-point that was in the area.

Her gun was still on the ground along with the heater. I grabbed my binoculars and looked in awe that it was a great buck. I told her to get my gun out the window and get ready.

I put my hand on her back and felt her heart beating rapidly and she was breathing erratically. I told her that we had time because he was with a doe and had no intention of going anywhere without her.

A small 4-point came out and the big 6-year-old ran him out. She said the big deer had then gone into the 4-foot high weeds, but shortly he came right back to the doe.

Her breathing settled and I asked her if she thought she could make the 176 yard shot. She said yes, that she thought so. I didn't want to compromise wounding an animal like this, but she was steady by then.

I put the gun on fire and told her to put it behind his shoulder. She did and she squeezed the trigger. The buck kicked and tucked his tail and rapidly exited the field into the tall grass headed to the pine thicket ahead. I knew she had hit him, I just wasn't sure she had hit the "boiler room" — the vital organs.



She asked, "What do we do now?" I replied let's give him a few minutes to expire.

**I GOT HIM!**

When we got out of the stand and began to walk that way, she naturally got ahead of me. All of a sudden, she ran back to me and jumped in my arms and shouted, "I got him!"

As I approached the deer, I realized she had no idea what she had shot.

We took a couple of pictures in the field and returned to camp to get the four wheeler to begin taking care of the 228-pound, 13-point monster buck.

I have been hunting for 45 years and have harvested some great bucks. However, I can say this by far was the best hunt I have ever been a part of. I was so proud of my girl that she had shot this great buck at 176 yards with a gun she had never shot and was able to put in through both lungs and harvest him without any problems.

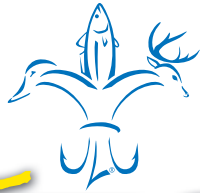
The deer ended up being a 6-year-old and scored 154 5/8. ■



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## LOUISIANA SPORTSMAN SHOW & FESTIVAL RETURNS JUNE 17-19

**T**he Louisiana Sportsman Show and Festival is back!

The 42nd annual show will be held Father's Day weekend, June 17-19, at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales. This year's show is presented by Shell.

The show features boats, fishing and hunting equipment, ATVs, tractors, RVs and outdoor power equipment, plus activities for the entire family.

Tickets for each day will be \$12 for adults, \$6 for kids ages 5-12 and kids under five are admitted free. Show hours are noon to

7 p.m. on Friday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

"We are thrilled to be able to bring the Louisiana Sportsman Show & Festival back after a two-year layoff. We are so glad to be back and we hope you and your family are planning to come," said Lisa Cuccia, President of Louisiana Publishing.

"Our vendors and exhibitors are working hard to ensure we bring the best show possible this year and give people the chance to come out and see all this great gear and equipment in one place. Plus, it's a great place to save lots of money on

outdoor purchases. It has been a struggle for many outdoor businesses the past year because they are still fighting supply chain issues. But we have all worked together to put together a great show for Louisiana and we are still picking up new exhibitors as we get closer to the show."

The Louisiana Sportsman Show includes a variety of family oriented events:

- Fetch & Fish, featuring a huge fish tank in which regular fishing seminars and retriever demonstrations will be conducted.
- Live music from Adam Pearce and Dominick Michael.

- A Kids Area featuring a casting pond.
  - The Sportsman Zone, brought to you by Bowie Outfitters, which houses everything fishing and more. Bowie's has bought truckloads of product just for this event, and huge discounts will be offered on many items.
  - Fishing and hunting outfitters from across the country.
  - A food court will be available for visitors to enjoy a variety of excellent foods from several vendors as well as other concessions.
- For the latest updates, check [www.louisianasportsmanshow.com](http://www.louisianasportsmanshow.com) or contact the show hotline at 866.238.5639. You can also email us at [showservices@louisianasportsmanshow.com](mailto:showservices@louisianasportsmanshow.com). ■



# FOOD BOOTHS



[MORE SHOW NEWS >](#)

# KIDS ZONE

Louisiana  
**SPORTSMAN  
SHOW** & festival

**JUNE 17-19**

**AT LAMAR-DIXON EXPO CENTER**



## ENTERTAINMENT, KIDS ZONE

GREAT MUSIC, KIDS ZONE AND FETCH-N-FISH ARE A BONUS FOR SHOW ATTENDEES

**T**he Louisiana Sportsman Show and Festival is a unique event, but there's more than just sporting goods and outdoor equipment. This year's show, June 17-19 at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales, has lots of

special treats for attendees.

### **FETCH-N-FISH IS BACK!**

One of the highlights of the show is the fabulous Fetch-N-Fish show, a fun family

run business that promotes hunting, fishing and educational seminars with high flying retrievers.

They will have exciting shows at 1 p.m., 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. on Friday and at 10 a.m., noon, 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. Saturday and 11

## LIVE MUSIC



# FETCH-N-FISH TUB RETURNS

a.m. and 3 p.m. Sunday. Come out and meet the stars of the show — Rio, Roxy, Boondock, and Jackpot!! Oh yes, Jason Reynolds, too. It's a blast for the whole family!!

Throughout the show, Reynolds will be featuring his high-flying dogs that will be jumping into his 41-foot-long bass tub and combining that with fishing seminars. The show invites audience participation, particularly from children who help mark the longest jumps — and might get wet in the process.

"Basically, what we do is a family fun program," Reynolds said. "We talk a little about obedience, then a little about dog training, and I mix it with some fun games and some dog tricks. And the ultimate of the show is when I have the dogs jump in the fish tank. This is not just dog training — this is entertainment. This is something the whole family can relate to. The kids love it."

But this show isn't all about dog jumping: the 4,000-gallon tank also is stocked with bass and is used to demonstrate fishing tactics throughout the day.

"It's a home run," Reynolds said of the combined dog and fishing shows.

## MUSICAL ACTS

For the first time, there will also be great musical entertainment as part of the price of admission.

Entertainment will be provided Saturday and Sunday. Adam Pearce will provide a solo acoustic show on Saturday from 1 - 4 p.m. and Dominick Michael will be providing a concert on Sunday from noon - 3 p.m.

Pearce is a national touring artist who fuses the best of Rock 'n Soul with a high energy one-man concert experience. He is from Bunkie and currently lives in New Orleans. He has been featured on NBC's "The Voice,"



landing a spot on Adam Levine's team and finishing in the Top 20 on Season 13 (as the "comeback kid").

Michael is from Baton Rouge and is a popular country music artist. He plays events all around the south. His top selling album, "I'll Get Mine" features several popular songs, including "You Asked Me To".

## KIDS ACTIVITIES

If you have kiddos, don't miss the special Kids Zone with activities just for them.

The Kids Zone will feature several fun activities for young folks, including popular inflatables. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is also bringing its casting pond for kids. Representatives from the LDWF will be on hand to help the kids and answer questions they may have about fishing.

For the latest updates on the show, check

the show's website, [www.louisianasportsmanshow.com](http://www.louisianasportsmanshow.com) or you can contact the show hotline at 866.238.5639 or email [showservices@louisianasportsmanshow.com](mailto:showservices@louisianasportsmanshow.com). ■

# BOWIE'S SUPER BOOTH

Louisiana  
**SPORTSMAN  
SHOW** & festival

**JUNE 17-19**

**AT LAMAR-DIXON EXPO CENTER**

## SPECIAL DEALS, CORPORATE SALES HIGHLIGHT LOCAL STORE'S BOOTH

**T**here will be loads of great booths and displays at the Louisiana Sportsman Show and Festival June 17-19 at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center. But one vendor puts on a show within the show — local sporting goods store Bowie Outfitters.

"We've been doing this show for a long time and when we first started, we brought a bunch of different things from the store to show folks from fishing to hunting to dog training, but we didn't have large quantities and we pretty well sold at the regular store price," said Lea Benoit of Bowie's Baton Rouge location. "But in recent years, we've planned for this show all year long. We've set up lots of corporate vendors to set up booths for them within our own store area. When we go to buyer's market, we make one order for the stores and another just for this show. It's something special."

Booths within Bowie's own exhibit this year include products from Abu Garcia, Penn, Daiwa, Costa Del Mar, Falcon, 13 Fishing, Shimano, Bubba and Grundens plus much, much more, Benoit said.

And the best thing about it all?

"We've got a big inventory on a lot of stuff and while we usually just focus on fishing stuff when the show is earlier in the year, we will also be including hunting items like decoys, cooking equipment, crawfish pots and turkey fryers," Benoit said. "And while everything has a good price, we'll have selected items that are just for the show anywhere from 25 - 75 percent off regular price."

Bowie's has two Louisiana locations, Baton Rouge and Lake

Charles, plus a store in Natchez, Miss. and one in the works in McComb, Miss.

"This is one of those shows that everybody loves to come to, not just for the products, but just to reconnect," he said. "We are all excited about getting back out there and taking another step toward getting back to normal. I have to tell you, inventory has been a struggle with the shutdowns in the industry, problems with shipping and just finding people to work. But we're catching up. We'll have a lot

of stuff at the show and frankly, the way things are, if you see something you have been wanting, you better grab it. We don't know when we'll get more." ■

**BOWIE**  
**OUTFITTERS**  
EVERYTHING OUTDOORS





**HIGH COST OF  
OFFSHORE TRIPS  
HAS ANGLERS  
MAXIMIZING  
SUMMER TRIPS.**

By John Felsher

# **RIGS, REEFS AND WRECKS**

John N. Felsher

## **FOR MANY PEOPLE,** red snapper season marks their entire offshore fishing experience for the year. As fuel prices skyrocket, anglers need to make the most of each minute offshore.

“Normally, we head out to fish for yellowfin tuna first and stop at some snapper spots on the way back,” explained Andrew Bateman with Hunter Caballero’s Paradise Outfitters (504-384-8118, [www.venicefishing.com](http://www.venicefishing.com)) in Venice. “Where we catch snapper depends upon where we go for tuna. We get some huge snapper. Some approach 30 pounds.”

Historically, most anglers head to petroleum platforms to catch snapper. However, in recent years, oil companies deactivated and removed many rigs along the Gulf Coast so anglers increasingly fish natural bottom features or artificial reefs. Companies cut the tops off some rigs deep enough so the structures don’t pose navigational hazards and left the rest in

Jeff Strane fights a big one while fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. When a bait goes down in the Gulf, one never knows what might bite. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Chris Pardue shows off a mangrove snapper he caught on a 6-inch swimbait thrown on light tackle and 12-pound test line. He caught the snapper while fishing near an oil platform about 40 miles south of Cocodrie.

the water as artificial reefs. Some structures have been in place for decades.

“We still have many offshore rigs in my part of Louisiana, but we’re seeing fewer of them,” said Joey Maciasz with Down the Bayou Charters (225-226-2781, [www.downthebayoucharters.com](http://www.downthebayoucharters.com)) in Fourchon. “People can see the rigs for miles so they get lots of pressure. We use electronics to find hard structure on the bottom. When we’re fishing natural bottom for snapper, we might catch about every species of grouper in the area, several snapper species, amberjack, almaco jack, blackfin tuna and a few other things.”

Besides reds, anglers bouncing baits off reefs might also catch mahogany, mutton, lane (also called candy snappers), vermilion snappers (also called beeliners) and other species. The catch might also include amberjack, triggerfish, spadefish and other species.

### **AFTER THE SNAPPER**

“After we catch our snapper limit, we often check out some other wrecks,” said Joseph Allen with Side Bet Sport Fishing Charters (228-366-0051, [www.sportfishingchartersbiloxi.com](http://www.sportfishingchartersbiloxi.com)) in Biloxi. “In deep water, we might try to catch some African pompano, grouper or scamps. If amberjack season overlaps with snapper season, we’ll try for amberjack and then come in to catch snapper, mangroves, cobia and other things.”

Many people consider mangroves the smartest and most challenging snappers. Notorious bait stealers, mangroves





John N. Felsher

eat almost anything that swims, but relish live baits. They occasionally hit flies, swimbaits, spoons, even an occasional popper.

"If we have live bait, we'll go catching mangrove snapper after we have our red snapper limit," Allen said. "Live pogies or croakers are great for catching mangroves. When we don't have live bait, we hide the hook in pogies and catch them like that. We use 20-pound test and a 3/0 circle hook for mangroves."

Mangroves generally hang higher in structure, but surround themselves with cover. Approach a rig from upwind and toss fish pieces into the water so the current carries the tidbits into the cover. Once mangroves get into a chum frenzy, use fluorocarbon leaders and no weight to drop a bait on the nose of a specific fish. When hooked, mangroves instantly run to the nearest barnacle-encrusted object to pop the line, so turn them away from the structure immediately if possible.

"Mangrove snapper fishing is really fun around the shallow rigs," Bateman said. "We catch them on pogies, but the best bait is a live croaker. We tie up to the rig and toss in some cut bait. We'll see them come up. Put the bait in front of the one you want to catch. There's no season in Louisiana on mangroves."

## CHUM NEVER HURTS >



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.

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## CHUM NEVER HURTS

While dropping baits to the bottom over a reef or near a rig, toss some chum in the water and set a drift line tipped with live bait. Without adding extra weight, simply toss the enticement behind the boat. Stick the rod into a holder and engage the reel clicker to sound the alert when something pulls the line. Depending upon the location and depth, a struggling live bait might attract king mackerel, dolphin (also called mahi), cobia, sharks, perhaps even wahoo, sailfish or marlin.

Some people dangle live baits from balloons to attract king mackerel and other fish. The balloon serves as a strike indicator.

"If we tie up to a rig to catch snappers, we'll set out a small hardtail on a drift line," Allen said. "We'll suspend the bait about six feet under a balloon for king mackerel. When fishing for snapper, we always look for cobia. Frequently, cobia follow snapper up from the bottom. They get curious about all the activity and come up to check out what is happening."

Cobia might pop up anywhere at any time. Also called lings or lemonfish, cobia love to eat hardhead catfish and just about

anything else. Cobia also relish eels. Keep a live bait rigged to toss at any cobia that materializes.

"Mangroves and cobia both like oil rigs," Maciasz said. "A little bit of chum gets everything fired up. We never know when a cobia will show up, so we have to be prepared. For cobia, I like using jigs. Sometimes, we'll free-line a sardine to a cobia. Normally, when we hook one, two or three others come up."

Cobia might eat just about anything, but sometimes, finicky fish won't touch anything. Pitch a jig sweetened with a soft-plastic curly-tailed chartreuse or white trailer in front of a cobia. Tease it until the fish can't stand it.

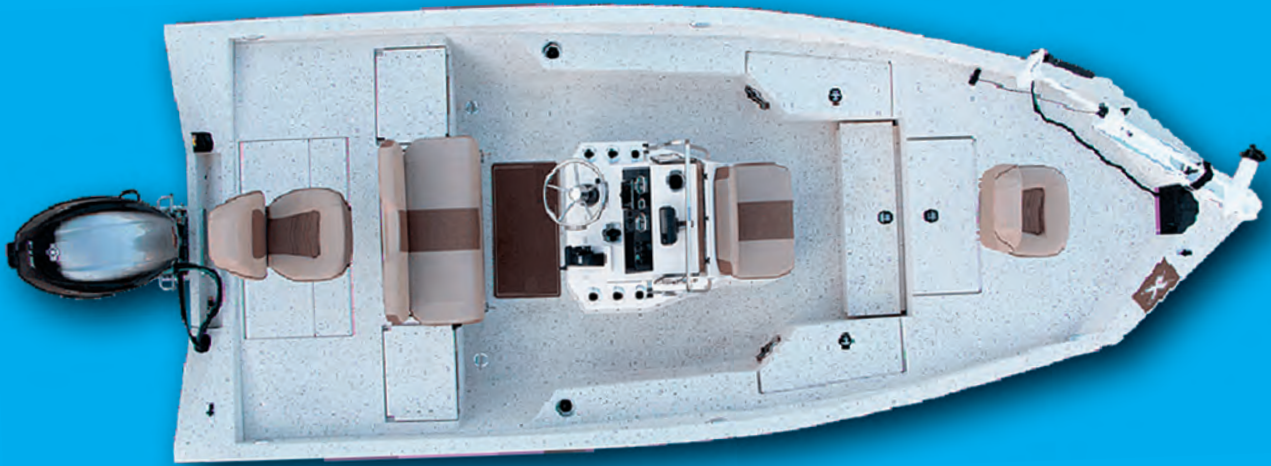
"Often, a cobia comes charging at a bait like it's going to nail it, but it will stop and just nose it," said Tommy Pellegrin of Custom Charters (985-851-3304, [www.Customchartersllc.com](http://www.Customchartersllc.com)) in Cocodrie. "Tease the cobia. Swim the bait away from it. When it comes to snip at it or sniff it, jerk the jig away from it. Keep teasing the fish until it gets so fired up that the angler won't be able to jerk it fast enough to escape it."

## INTENSE ACTION >



Will Fowler shows off a large cobia he caught in the Gulf of Mexico while fishing with Custom Charters of Cocodrie. Cobia make a good bonus to any day spent offshore.

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## INTENSE ACTION

The fertile gulf waters can provide intense action from a plethora of species from baitfish to billfish that anglers commonly catch besides snapper. Seasons and limits vary by species so always check the regulations before keeping anything.

“About 15 to 20 miles out of Northeast Pass, anglers can hit some rigs for snapper,” Bateman recommended. “Then, they can run another 15 to 20 miles farther south to fish for swordfish. For swords, we fish ledge drops in 1,100 to 1,600 feet of water. We drop a bait to about 200 feet off the bottom.”

When running from place to place, troll baits for king mackerel, large Spanish mackerel, dolphin, perhaps even huge snapper or amberjack. In blue water, the catch could include wahoo,

tuna and billfish. Keep an eye on the electronics for bottom features that hold reef fish.

“I don’t build a whole trip around snapper,” Maciasz said. “We start around 80 miles out for tuna and grouper and work our way back fishing for snapper. For tuna, we’ll fish with live bait and chum. We’ll also troll. Often in the summer, the rip will be close to where we catch snapper. We’ll troll all different kinds of lures for mahi and other fish.”

While running watch for tripletail, cobia and mahi around grass lines. Cobia and tripletail also habitually drift along with floating debris or objects like buoys. After spotting a fish under a floating object, approach cautiously from upwind. Stop far enough away to avoid spooking the fish and make long casts.

“Tripletails are a ‘now you see them, now you don’t’ fish,”

quipped Erik Rue of Calcasieu Charter Service (337-598-4700, [calcasieucharters.com](http://calcasieucharters.com)) in Lake Charles. “It’s almost like hunting. We have to see them before we can catch them. If we find a grass patch with lots of bait and activity, that’s where tripletail will be.”

## JUST FOR THE FIGHT!

Many critters low on the tablefare list top the charts for sporting qualities, such as barracuda, bluefish and sharks. Blue runners (also called hardtails or hardtail jacks), rainbow runners and other fish also provide outstanding sport. In some areas, the list might include tarpon.

Big-game anglers regularly use bonito for bait or chum. For pure reel-screaming excitement, take a bass-type rod with easily replaced lures and toss temptations to bonito chummed up to the surface. These extremely fast fish explode on topwater baits and might hit anything shiny. Sometimes, catching bait on light tackle becomes more fun than fighting larger species.

Probably nothing fights harder than a jack crevalle. Few people intentionally fish for jacks, but they can demolish tackle with lightning runs and sheer strength. Jacks terrorize baitfish schools and viciously smash topwater baits with shocking power.

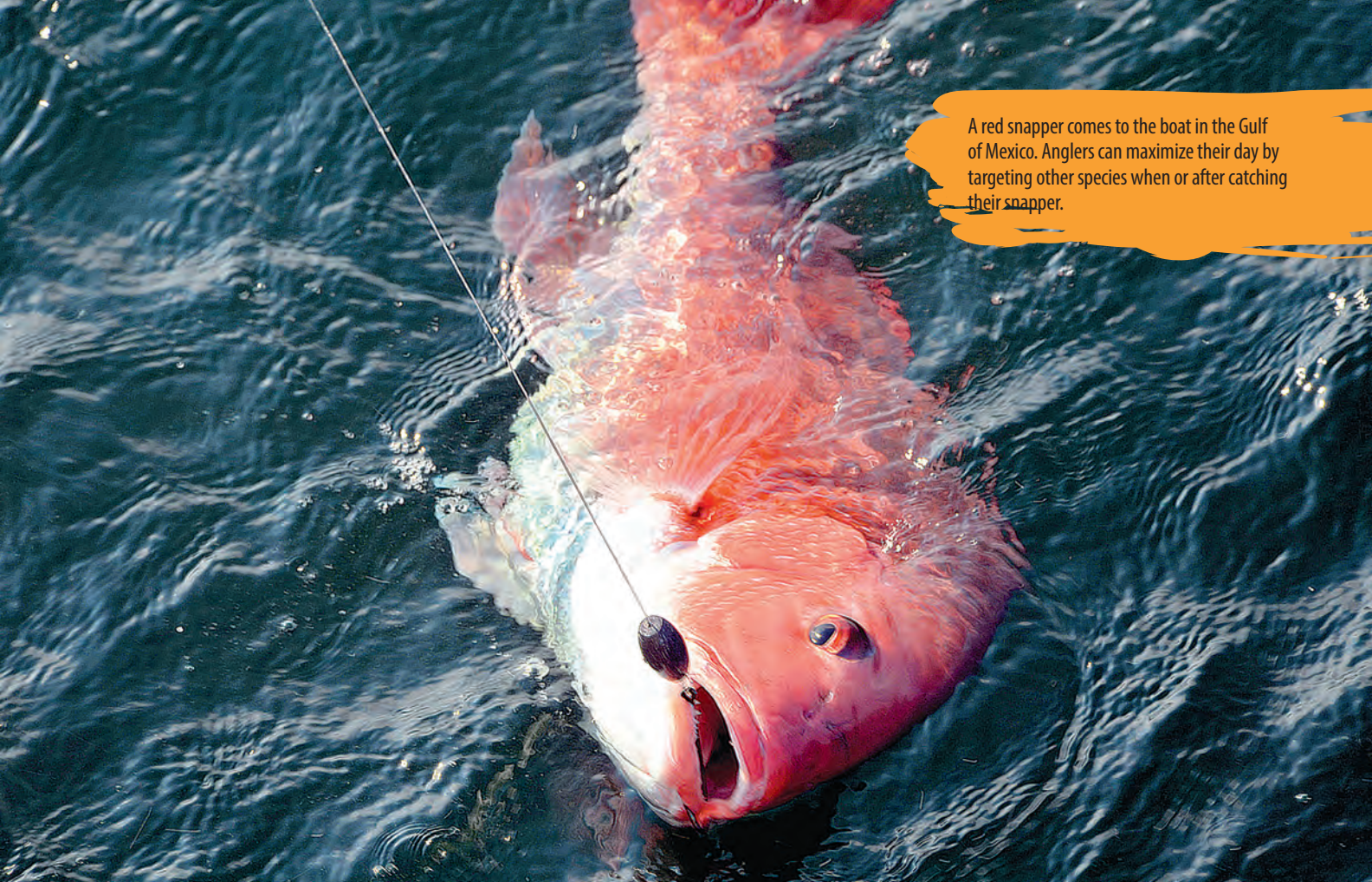
“We catch many different species offshore,” Allen said. “We might catch jack crevalle or get on a big school of bull reds by the islands. Sometimes, we’ll go trout fishing in the Chandeleurs and fish for cobia the whole way home. The beauty of our fishery is we catch so many different species in so many different ways.”

Most people only rarely venture offshore, so maximize the experience by staying prepared and flexible. Try different things. One never knows what might pull on the other end of a line. Any time a bait hits the water could turn into a lifetime moment! ■



With a mouthful of teeth, the business end of a big barracuda can do some damage. Often ignored by anglers, barracuda and other species can provide great sport.

John N. Felsher



A red snapper comes to the boat in the Gulf of Mexico. Anglers can maximize their day by targeting other species when or after catching their snapper.

John N. Felsher

# RED SNAPPER SEASON

The 2022 private recreational red snapper season will begin on Friday, 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. ■

— Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

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# SNAPPER SCRAPBOOK

**Mitchell Prokasy**



Mitchell Prokasy holds a red snapper and a mangrove snapper.

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

**Beckett Gaspard**



Beckett Gaspard with a beautiful red snapper caught while fishing out of Grand Isle.

**Daniel Kopsco**



Daniel Kopsco with a red snapper caught out of Port Fourchon.

**Grace O'Brien**



Grace O'Brien holds a red snapper caught out of Port Fourchon.



**Charles Williams**

Charles Williams poses with red snapper after a very successful trip.



**Missy Statum**

This red snapper was caught by Missy Statum of Moss Bluff while fishing live bait.



**Cyril Sider**

Cyril Sider with a two man limit of red snapper caught on cut pogies around 65 feet of water out of Campo's Marina.



**Beau Bergeron**

Beau Bergeron caught his first ever red snapper fishing with his dad and his cousin, Capt. Michael Bergeron.



**John Henry Stefanski**

This red snapper was caught by John Henry Stefanski out of Pecan Island.

**SPECIES SPOTLIGHT** ➤



## **SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: BLUE MARLIN**

**T**he blue marlin (*Makaira nigricans*) is one of the most highly sought after gamefish on the planet. They are prized catches for both commercial and recreational anglers. They can reach great size, and their meat is excellent as table fare.

With its spear-like bill, long body, giant tail fin and prominent dorsal fin, the blue marlin is fast and sleek, can leap high above the water's surface, and change colors quickly when feeding or otherwise excited.

These large fish are most often blue-black on top with a white or silver underbelly. Its largest dorsal fin is usually dark blue or black with no dots or marks. Their sides have about 15 rows of cobalt-colored stripes which often fade quickly when caught. Their bodies are covered in thick, long scales. When swimming at their fastest speeds, their dorsal fins often fold flat against their bodies.

Blue marlin use their bills to slash at prey, injuring smaller fish then circling

back to eat them. They eat any number of fish, including mahi, tuna, mackerel and squid.

Questions remain on whether blue marlin in the Atlantic Ocean are a separate species from blue marlin found in the Pacific Ocean. Most fisheries biologists think of them as the same species, however, others classify them as different.

Blue marlin travel extensively, with tagged fish caught up to 10,000 miles away. Tagged marlin have often been caught years after being tagged, within close proximity of their initial tagging spot. This leads scientists to believe blue marlins return to the same waters year after year.

### **1 000+ POUNDERS = "GRANDERS"**

Female blue marlin grow up to four times the size of males. Males rarely reach 350 pounds. Females, however, can reportedly grow up to 1,800 pounds and 16 feet in length.

The largest concentrations of blue marlin at any time during the year are in waters right around 75 degrees. They travel the globe looking for waters in that temperature range.

They reach sexual maturity between 2 and 4 years of age, and spawn throughout the summer and fall. Females can release up to seven million eggs at once, and can spawn four times per year. Very few eggs result in fish that reach sexual maturity.

When young, blue marlin are highly susceptible to predation by every other fish in the ocean. Once grown, they have few predators, with killer whales, pelagic sharks and man being their only threats.

Blue marlin are closely related to striped marlin, black marlin and white



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

marlin, and are sometimes misidentified as those species. Nicknames include Man in the Blue Suit, blue one, line burner, ocean gar and sulisuli. Those reaching 1,000+ pounds are known as “granders.”

The Louisiana state record blue marlin weighed 1,018 pounds and was caught by Linda Koerner in July 1977.

The Mississippi state record weighed 1,054 pounds, 9.6 ounces. It was caught in June 2002 by Barry Carr. The world record stands at 1,402 pounds and was caught by Paulo Amorim out of Vitoria, Brazil in February 1992. ■



Photo courtesy Big Rock Blue Marlin Tournament

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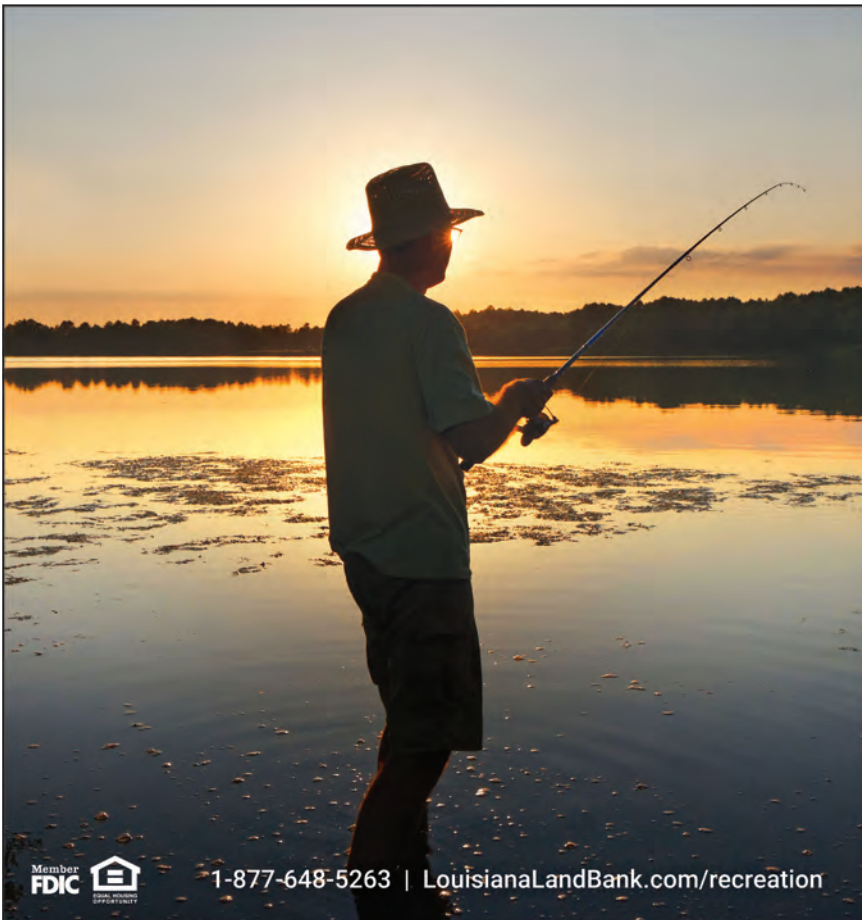
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■ By Don Shoopman

**DELCAMBRE NATIVE  
DOESN'T WAIT FOR THE  
FISH TO COME TO HIM.**

# SPOT TO SPOT





ne veteran saltwater fisherman goes to lots of spots he's learned over the years to reel in a mess of "spots" close to Vermilion Bay. He proved his approach works again several weeks ago.

Eddie Toups of New Iberia doesn't fish spots like so many others do. Never has. Probably never will. He doesn't have to as he catches redfish big, small and in-between.

Toups' fishing buddy picked up on the difference in the plan of attack pretty quickly. Fishing from Toups 22-foot long Carolina Skiff, he noticed the glaring absence of a trolling motor on the bow of the boat soon after they launched at Quintana Canal Boat Landing out of Cypremort Point. The boat had Power Poles in the back and what looked like a seldom-used anchor on the bow.

There's a good reason. He works over likely hotspots in the shallows rather than gliding to and from along the shoreline with a trolling motor.

"I spot fish," Toups said while two to three foot seas pounded the boat and drenched its two occupants while crossing Vermilion Bay to Bayou Blanc on the east end of Marsh Island. "All day long. Spot to spot."

## PLAN B

The 66-year-old retired shaft worker who spent 44 years at the Cargill Salt Mine on Avery Island, planned to fish his favorite spots where the Gulf of Mexico meets the southern shoreline of Marsh Island. Muddy water, thanks to spring Atchafalaya River discharge at the Calumet Cut and Atchafalaya Bay, and high northerly winds foiled his plans to hook redfish on Carolina-rigged shrimp or shrimp under a Four Horsemen Popping Cork on either side of Mound Point.

On this trip, his tried and true spots were unfishable, extremely low and muddy, despite his best efforts for a few hours after sunrise. The Delcambre native learned how to fish waters in and around Vermilion Bay as a boy with some of

Acadiana's top saltwater fishermen — his father, the late Jay Toups, Barry Semar and Charlie Myers.

And Toups learned much more on his own as he grew older. He fished around Boston in Vermilion Parish, where his father's camp and boat landing were obliterated by Hurricane Rita in 2005, Marsh Island and Southwest Pass.

"I had a 13-foot Boston Whaler," he said. "I could go anywhere with that. That's how you learn."

What he and so many other Acadiana saltwater fishermen realize right away is they are behind the 8-ball much of the year because of freshwater runoff from the Atchafalaya River. Each spring the swollen river delivers muddy water to what otherwise are prime fishing grounds, er, water.

"It's not the same for the guys in the east," Toups said. "We've got the Basin to deal with. They've got good water to stay on. It's hard to stay on fish half the time when you can't get on them.

"The boys to the east got it easy. We've got to fish bad water all the time."

Toups, who eschews targeting speckled trout in favor of redfish, knows how good the redfish fishing is to the east. At a Bridge Side Marina Rodeo years ago, Toups and his wife, Liz, finished first and second in the redfish division with 44- and 40-pound redfish, and first and second in the drum division while fishing Coup Abel Pass. His in-laws had a boat slip at Pirate's Cove. That 44-pounder remains his PB. They still fish the Grand Isle area often.

On this trip, Toups soon had had enough of fighting north winds, which blew the water out of Marsh Island, and muddy water at mid-morning.

## INSIDE RETREAT >



New Iberian Eddie Toups has confidence even in muddy water with a Carolina-rigged shrimp or, even, a shrimp under a popping cork. Here he's fishing a C-rig on a windy, bluebird day along the south shoreline of Southwest Pass between Vermilion Bay and the Gulf of Mexico.



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## INSIDE RETREAT

After retreating inside the island to fish drains along Bayou Blanc, then parts of the north shoreline of Lake Tom to no avail, he said, “You got time? We’re going to Southwest Pass. I’m going to my bread-and-butter.”

The bumpy ride across the bayside length of Marsh Island ended when he stopped just past the point on the north side of Southwest Pass. While Toups waited for the tide to come in he coaxed a line-burner redfish. It was the first of the day at around noon and he got him to bite a headless, tailless shrimp, his peculiar way of hooking them.


He released it and said, “He hit it good. Real good.”

About 30 minutes and as many casts later he left for another spot he hoped would offer greener, and grassier, pastures as the water rose. He motored to where he, his wife and grandson, teenager Maverick Broussard, won a Southcentral Fishing Association regular-season tournament with two “slots” weighing 15.95 pounds in May 2021.

Toups started his milk run around midday on the south shoreline of Southwest Pass. He stayed long enough at the first stop along the broken marsh to boat the day’s second redfish on shrimp under a popping cork at 12:41 p.m. About 45 minutes later, a 24 ½-inch redfish made the mistake of mouthing and moving off with the shrimp. Toups’ hookset interrupted its travel. “She’s fat, she’s heavy. That sucker was in that (grass),” Toups said.

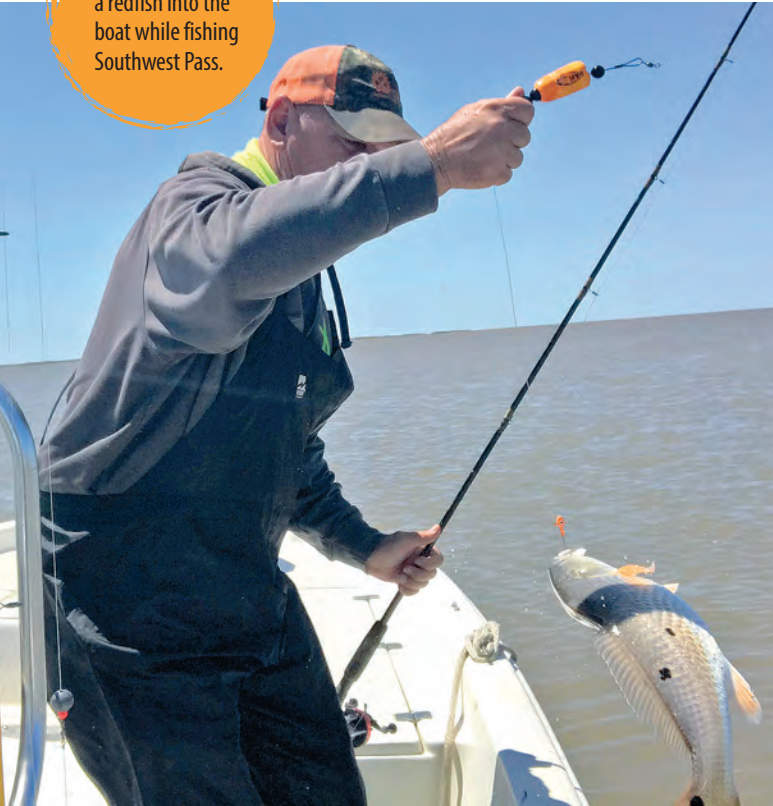
Six minutes later, he boated an 18-incher on the C-rigged shrimp on a straight shank hook under a ¾-ounce weight. He fishes with a 7-foot-4 Lew’s fishing rod with 20-pound test Trilene Big Game monofilament line spooled on an Ambassador baitcasting reel and a 1 ½-foot long leader on 60-pound test monofilament line.

His former bass fishing days, which included wins in bass club and other tournaments, showed as he fished the C-rig. After a cast, he retrieved the shrimp through and 10 to 15 feet past the cover like it was a plastic worm, shaking it through the strands of grass in the water.



Toups doesn’t use a trolling motor to get from spot to spot that he’s learned over five decades. He’s idling here several weeks ago to a likely looking grass clump that might hold redfish as he fishes Southwest Pass.

Eddie Toups flips a redfish into the boat while fishing Southwest Pass.



## AVOID THE HARDHEADS

“Another thing, if you fish the grass, if you throw it (shrimp behind the weight) in the grass where you’re supposed to throw it, you’ll never catch a hardhead (catfish),” he said. “If you cast in front of the grass, you’ll (often) catch a hardhead.”

His hookset is a powerful one and always to one side.

“I feel the weight go through the grass,” he said. “When I get to an open spot, I stop it. They just pick it up. You can feel it. In that grass you’ve got to let them take it good, you know?”

“I like to feel the weight of the fish before I hit on it. I want him to load up. I tell my wife and grandchildren you never want the tip to be between you and the fish. Let it bend the rod.”

Toups’ average stay at each spot was approximately 10-15 minutes, depending on the action, or lack thereof.

“If I don’t catch more than two or three fish in the grass (a particular grass bed). I move on. I don’t sit down there and wait until another little school moves in. I go hit the next one,” he said after depositing a 20-inch long redfish in the boat’s ice chest on the C-rigged shrimp, then idling to a grassy area nearby.



**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.

## TOURNAMENT FISH ➤

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## TOURNAMENT FISH

The next spot was a golden grass bed. At 2:15 p.m., Toups cast and within a minute he swung the fishing rod to set the hook on what proved to be an almost perfect "slot" redfish – a 26 ½-incher. That really fired him up and he kept jumping to spots.

"Oh, talk about a tournament fish. That sucker hit it good. He jumped on it," he said after measuring it. Eligible "slot" redfish are 16 to 27 inches in SFA tournaments.

He devoted more time to that underwater grass in front of a well-defined point of grass. His next cast was the most rewarding of the day.

Before Toups went on point again, lowering the fishing rod's tip and taking up slack, he said, in anticipation of what was about to unfold, "Uh-oh. Uh-oh."

And he set the hook hard. The hooked redfish took off as he played it.

"I've got another one, boy. Look, it's going all the way to the end over there. Look at where it's at way over there," he said as the redfish took off.

He deftly worked the redfish to the boat, where it met the net. He admired the 29-incher, too long for a "slot" redfish but a beautiful specimen.

"That's another good one. Oh, yeah. I had him good. Thank you, Lord," he said.

A good measuring board is necessary to keep up with slot fish like this one for redfish tournaments that Toups likes to fish.



Toups hooked and reeled in another keeper redfish at another grass clump near the one that gave up the two nice redfish minutes earlier. That was it. He called it a day, satisfied redfish were still in their spots for upcoming SFA tournaments and fun fishing trips as well. ■

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# CAUGHT ON SIGHT!

## It's a great time to see fish, catch fish trolling Sabine Pass

Monster redfish like these offer a good pull along the Sabine jetties!

**I**t's time to turn up the heat and the winds to lay down. The weather may be hot, but so is the fishing. That makes for perfect conditions for trolling up and down the Louisiana jetties out of Sabine Pass.

I am a self-admitted sight fishing addict, so I prefer to troll up tight to the rocks so I can search for fish the entire time. Keeping the sun behind your back, of course, is the preferred method to help aid with spotting fish just beneath the surface. If possible, I will let the wind and current make my drift and only use the trolling motor to keep the boat off of the rocks. Fishing in this manner will be the least disturbing to the fish and increase your chances of getting bit.

Sight casting to speckled trout is not something we get to do around here on a regular basis. However, with a little time, patience and luck it can happen. I like tossing soft plastics rigged on an 1/8-ounce jighead. A 4-inch Sea Shad from Bass Assassin in colors Opening Night or Crystal Shad are a couple of definite must-haves in the lineup. I know there are a lot of other anglers that really prefer to bump a swimming image off the rocks with a lot of success as well, but I prefer the soft plastic in this scenario.

### GIVE IT A SHOT

You are more likely to spot redfish, sheepshead and drum than you are a speckled trout but if you are up for a challenge, I'd give it a shot.

The best area to fish along the rocks is anywhere the water is able to pass through from the gulf to the channel and vice versa

depending on the tide. These areas create a more turbulent flow acting as somewhat of a funnel, giving predatory fish a prime opportunity to feed on their prey. Other prime locations used to be much more difficult to find but with the electronics that are available nowadays, it's a cinch if you know how to use them.

Once you are able to locate the bottom structure you should target the down current side, this is where the gamefish will be staged. Fishing this sort of structure will require a heavier jighead. Depending on how quickly the current is moving anywhere from a 1/4 to a 1-ounce may be required to fish the structure effectively.

### DEEP WATER, TOO

The same soft plastics will work in this deep water application, but if targeting redfish I would switch to a 4-inch Gulp Swimming Mullet.

Every summer I look forward to the opportunity to fish the jetties on calm days, especially when the water clears. I really enjoy the opportunity to catch additional near shore species that we don't typically catch in the lake such as Spanish mackerel, triple tail and jack crevalle.

You may need to bring some wire leaders if the mackerel and the sharks get thick, or be ready to make a trip to your local tackle store! ■

*Capt. Adam Jaynes can be reached at (409) 988-3901 and on Facebook at Just Fish Guide Service.*



# COASTAL



■ By John Felsher

**RICH WATERS  
AROUND BILOXI BAY  
OFFER SOMETHING  
FOR EVERYONE.**

# CORNUCOPIA

**When French settlers established Fort Maurepas in present-day Ocean Springs in 1699, they found rich estuaries teeming with fish. While the area switched hands several times since then and the coastal skyline changed radically, the waters around Biloxi STILL OFFER ABUNDANT FISHING OPPORTUNITIES.**

Biloxi, Miss., straddles a peninsula with Biloxi Bay, also known as Back Bay, on the northern side and Mississippi Sound to the south. The Tchoutacabouffa and Biloxi rivers create a rich marshy delta in the western part of Biloxi Bay. Old Fort Bayou feeds marshes at the eastern end of the bay. The bay connects to Mississippi Sound through a pass between Biloxi and Ocean Springs. Throughout the entire estuary and adjacent waters, anglers often find excellent fishing for several species. It's a popular area for Louisiana and Mississippi fishermen.

"Fishing in June around Biloxi is really awesome," said Robert Brodie of Team Brodie Charters (228-697-7707, teambrodiecharters.com) in Biloxi. "People can fish in the Gulf of Mexico, the rivers, around the islands, off the beaches and in the bays for many different species."

## SPECKLED TROUT

To spawn, speckled trout require high salinity levels. As summer approaches, trout leave brackish bays, marshes and head to the Mississippi Sound for spawning. Spawning peaks from

mid-May to June with a smaller peak in August.

"Some trout stay in the bay, but I mainly fish Mississippi Sound in the summer," said Mike Adams with Goin' Coastal Charters (228-697-4808, goincoastalcharters.com) in Ocean Springs, Miss. "For trout, I focus on the islands and look for shell beds. The state put out quite a few artificial reefs that hold trout. Many people fish Katrina Reef for trout in the summer."

Mississippi established numerous inshore, nearshore and offshore artificial reefs, frequently using hurricane debris. For instance, Katrina Reef sits just outside the bay in about nine feet of water. The state used old bridge spans to build the mile-long reef. The top protrudes from the water not far from Deer Island. Some days, anglers might land 10 or 12 species while fishing the reefs.

"Katrina Reef is good for trout during the summer," Brodie said. "Many people throw popping corks baited with live shrimp close to the rocks. For big trout, fishermen mainly use live croakers around Deer Island. We've caught trout up to seven pounds."



A soft-plastic shrimp imitation makes an excellent bait for redfish like this one, speckled trout, flounder and other salty species. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Steven Felsher shows off a speckled trout he caught while fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. During the summer, trout head to deeper, saltier waters to spawn.

## REDFISH AND FLOUNDER

Flounder and redfish like the same habitat, mostly hard structure and marshy shorelines. They commonly feed on the same forage, such as shrimp and small fish. The Old Fort Bayou and river deltas of Biloxi Bay attract good numbers of both species. Also fish the Graveline Bayou, Heron Bayou and Davis Bayou areas. In many places, anglers catch large-mouth bass, redfish, flounder and other species in the same places on the same baits.

“Redfish start biting really well in June,” Adams said. “Flounder are coming back. For flounder, I look for any areas that have old pilings. Marshy banks with shells on the bottom are also good places to catch flounder.”

Dangle live shrimp or minnows under popping corks so the bait suspends just above the bottom. Plastic shrimp or minnow imitations fished under popping corks also entice action. Toss the rig so it drifts along a weedy bank or structure. Fish typically face into the flow to look for food.

People also catch redfish off the beaches and around old docks and pilings. The bridge pilings hold good redfish. These structures attract mullets and other baitfish attempting to hide from predators so that’s where redfish hunt.

“For redfish, I fish under piers in the summer,” Brodie said. “I try to find piers that hold more bait than others. Redfish like the shade under the piers. Older pilings loaded with barnacles and oysters on them attract more fish. I anchor up the current and fish back toward the piers with live shrimp.”

Around the islands, anglers might tempt giant bull reds with cut fish or live baits. The catch might also include large trout, flounder, black drum, bluefish, sharks, Spanish mackerel and other species. At night, many people walk the beaches with lanterns gigging flounder.

**BLACK DRUM >**



John N. Felsner

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## BLACK DRUM

Largely ignored by anglers, black drum provide tackle-busting big-game action without needing to go miles offshore. Enormous drum hang around where bull reds like to feed and regularly eat the same forage. Smaller “puppy” drum taste very similar to redfish and put up great fights on light tackle.

“Drum are great fighting fish and easy to catch,” said Kyle Johnson with Coastal Waters Outfitters (228-669-3553, [www.fishcoastalwaters.com](http://www.fishcoastalwaters.com)) in Biloxi. “People can catch really big fish in inshore waters or even off the dock. They are great for children. Catching a huge drum is something a child will never forget.”

Big drum might hit anything that would interest redfish. Anglers sometimes catch drum on jigs tipped with soft-plastic shrimp tails, spoons, spinnerbaits or Berkley Gulp! baits. Made of natural foods, Berkley Gulp! baits give off a scent that drum follow.

Drum normally scour the bottom looking for clams, crabs

or shrimp. Drum might also hit squid, live minnows, pogies or cut bait, but prefer crustaceans. A cracked crab makes an excellent temptation for bull reds and monster drum. Keep the top shell attached, but crack it to let succulent juices ooze into the water. Drum and reds also devour crab halves and small live blue crabs hooked through the back near the rounded swimmer fins.

“Black drum hang around any type of structure, like concrete or wood docks and bridge pilings,” Johnson said. “The piers behind the Palace Casino in Biloxi is a good place to catch big drum. The Highway 90 bridge, Katrina Reef and the rocks outside the Beau Rivage are also super spots for big drum. At night, people usually have a better chance of catching big drum.”



**John N. Felsher** is a professional freelance writer and photographer with more than 1,700 articles in more than 117 magazines to his credit. He currently co-hosts a weekly outdoors radio show on WNSP 105.5 FM in Mobile, Ala. You can contact him at [JohnNFelsher.com](mailto:JohnNFelsher.com).

Sonny Schindler of Shore Thing Fishing Charters and Steve Perrigin show off a large black drum they caught off a dock in Ocean Springs, Miss. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Steven Felsher shows off a sheepshead he caught. Sheepshead love hard structure full of barnacles.





John N. Felsher

## SHEEPSHEAD

Abundant, easy to catch and powerful fighters, sheephead make exceptional sport for young or novice anglers. Built for power, not speed, sheephead rely upon brute strength. They hunker down in entangling structure refusing to budge and daring anyone to pull them up.

Sheepshead love barnacles, shrimp and small crabs. For centuries, numerous storms scattered debris all over Biloxi Bay. In addition, thousands of dock and bridge pilings, artificial reefs or other barnacle-encrusted structures dot the bay and sound. Any of these structures could hold sheephead. The bridge connecting Biloxi to Ocean Springs always produces good sheephead action as well as the nearby railroad trestle.

“The bay is full of structures,” Brodie noted. “Wherever anglers find an old pier or pilings encrusted with barnacles, that’s a good place to fish. We catch some sheephead around the bayou mouths, especially ones with oyster reefs, ledges or other nearby structure. Crabs make outstanding sheephead baits. We pull the top shell off and break a blue crab in half or quarter it. For big crabs, we cut each half into three or four pieces. Fiddler crabs are like sheephead candy.”

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## OTHER FISHING OPPORTUNITIES

On any given day, anglers fishing Biloxi Bay or nearby waters could catch more than a dozen species. Many anglers love to catch tasty ground mullet, also called channel mullet, southern kingfish or whiting. Anglers also catch plentiful white trout, smaller cousins to specks. White trout might grab anything specks would hit.

“In late spring or early summer, the bay is full of white trout, ground mullet, drum and sheepshead,” Brodie said. “Personally, I think a white trout tastes better than a speckled trout. Ground mullet and white trout are fun to catch. Small hooks with small pieces of cut bait or squid is the ticket to catching them.”

Most people only consider croakers as bait for redfish and giant speckled trout, but the noisy, golden fish put up superb fights on light tackle. In the summer, look for croakers in deep holes and around structures like bridges.

Large schools of Spanish mackerel and bluefish cruise the coastline attacking baitfish. They slash at spoons or other shiny lures that mimic fish. Use wire leaders to keep these vicious toothy predators from biting through fishing line.

Jack crevalle schools also terrorize baitfish. Not considered great food fish, jacks outfight just about anything. When they move through an area, they churn the surface. Toss a large top-water bait ahead of the school. Twitch it a little and watch for massive blow-ups.

“Big jack crevalle and big bull redfish come in about the first week of June,” said Bill “Wild Bill” Hancock of Reel Outlaw Charters (601-807-5811, reeloutlawcharters.com) in Gulfport, Miss. “They crush bait all along the beaches and the islands. Jacks are looked down at by many people, but they are incredibly fun fish to catch.”

In Mississippi Sound, tripletail and cobia like to hover near



John N. Felsher

any floating objects such as crab trap buoys and channel markers. Look for fish while running to new areas or returning to port. After spotting a fish, approach quietly and toss a bait to it.

Summer action doesn't stop at sunset. Many anglers avoid the blistering heat by fishing around harbor and dock lights after dark. These lights attract an entire food chain. Fly rod enthusiasts could enjoy outstanding action at close range.

For area information, see [www.gulfcoast.org](http://www.gulfcoast.org). For artificial reef locations, see [dmr.ms.gov/artificial-reef](http://dmr.ms.gov/artificial-reef). ■

## PADDLES 'N PUDDLES ➤



Live croakers make excellent bait for many saltwater species. They work particularly well for enticing giant speckled trout. **ABOVE:** A Carolina rig baited with half of a crab makes a great temptation for catching redfish, large black drum and other species.

# WORK HARD, PLAY HARD



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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).

# KILLER COMBINATION

LIVE SHRIMP, KAYAKS AND SPECKLED TROUT

**S**ummer is fast approaching and speckled trout fishing continues to be hot. With the remaining spawning cycles associated with the full moons of June, July, and August, kayak anglers have the opportunity to catch their personal best sow trout. While there are thousands of artificial lures to trick a trout, live shrimp makes it easier than anything. However, carrying shrimp in a kayak takes a little planning to keep them alive and kicking throughout the day's fishing.

While they can be caught in a cast net, most anglers buy their shrimp at the local marina or bait shop. Like everything these days, the cost of live shrimp is high and may be going up, primarily due to the price of gasoline and diesel the bait boats use to trawl for shrimp. Therefore, at prices of 35 to 50 cents a piece, kayak anglers need to enact best practices to keep them alive until they can be threaded onto a hook.

The most basic container is a floating bait bucket. These do an okay job at keeping shrimp alive, but have some drawbacks. To keep water flowing through the container, they must be kept outside the yak. This causes a lot of drag when paddling or pedaling from one spot to the next. It is best to bring the bucket inside the kayak when moving to different spots. While these buckets promote an exchange of water, they float on the surface which holds the warmest water. On a hot summer day, this can easily stress the shrimp and cause them to die.

## MAKE YOUR OWN OPTION

Powerboat live wells are usually large and aerated with powerful pumps to keep shrimp alive for a day's fishing. These wells often use a combination of water exchange pumps as well as aeration bubblers. However, kayaks generally have limited space and can only hold a much smaller container. A quick YouTube search reveals plenty of options to build homemade livewells that use small battery operated aerators or bilge pumps to keep the water fresh and aerated.

Some kayak companies also make livewells that intake/discharge water through the scupper holes and have built-in rechargeable batteries. These work well, but are generally expensive and take up a dedicated space in the kayak's tank well.

The most convenient and effective live well containers are the small cooler types made by companies such as Frabill and Engel. These come in a variety of sizes.





With a small live well made from a plastic ammo can and a battery-powered aerator, this angler carried enough live shrimp in his kayak for a great day of catching speckled trout.


These rectangle containers are insulated and have small battery operated pumps that send air through bubbler stones to keep the water aerated. Another feature that is great for live shrimp is their removable soft mesh basket that gives the shrimp something to cling to so that they are not sloshed around or having to expend energy constantly swimming. These containers are portable and can be moved about your kayak to where they fit best and are easily accessible.

One of the worst things for keeping live shrimp healthy is overcrowding. You are much better off with fewer active shrimp than many lifeless ones. One trick to stretching your shrimp on the way to a limit of trout is by alternating artificial lures into the mix. Keep a rod handy with a good plastic shrimp rigged and ready. As you catch a few trout on the live ones, quickly switch to the artificial lure. Catch one or two more and then switch back. This literal bait and switch keeps the bite going and helps ensure you'll have enough live shrimp to make it through your trip.

## **VERSATILE APPROACHES**

Live shrimp are versatile and are fished in a variety of ways in the water column. One of the easiest and most popular is under a popping cork. While many simply hook them on a jighead under the cork, the weight of the jighead limits the shrimp's movement and somewhat defeats the purpose of using live shrimp. Try using a small treble or live bait hook with a small split-shot placed about a foot up the leader. The shrimp can swim freely while dangling under the cork and are much more enticing. Fished in this method, oftentimes the shrimp will be seen frantically jumping out of the water all around the cork. Get ready, as it is about to go down.

Freelining a shrimp with only a small bait hook is also another great way to attract trout. This takes a little patience and practice for detecting strikes. It is hard to keep a tight line as the shrimp may be swimming towards you. Watch your line at all times for sudden twitches or changes of angle that can



Trout cannot resist live shrimp. This one inhaled a big shrimp that was freelined on a light wire live bait hook.

This stringer of trout was caught fishing live shrimp under a popping cork. This is one of the most popular and effective methods of catching trout in south Louisiana.



## TIPS FOR KEEPING SHRIMP ALIVE IN THE KAYAK

1. Don't overcrowd the live well.
2. Use a small dip net to retrieve the shrimp.
3. Keep the water cool. On extremely hot days, place a small frozen bottle of water in your live well.
4. Change or add water regularly. Dip the water down as deep as possible to avoid adding hot surface water.
5. Keep fresh batteries in your pump/bubbler to ensure maximum aeration.

indicate a fish has taken the shrimp. The low angle of sitting in the kayak makes line watching easier. Polarized sunglasses also help cut the glare and keep a good watch on the line.

Of course, Carolina rigs or standard bottom rigs also work great when the fish are feeding deeper in the water column. Again, keep your weights and hooks to a minimum in order to allow the shrimp as much movement as possible.

Just because you are fishing from a kayak doesn't mean you have to forego one of the most popular baits for catching speckled trout. Buy or build a quality live well that best suits you and your kayak and you can take along a healthy supply of live shrimp for some great trout fishing action.

P.S. If you happen to have a few good shrimp left over. Place them in your cooler and cook them up with your fish. ■

**MARSH MAN  
MASSON**

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Photos by Todd Masson

# THE LEGENDARY CHANDELEUR ISLANDS

OVERNIGHT STAY MAKES SPECKLED TROUT TRIPS EVEN BETTER

**E**very fishing trip is a puzzle that must be solved, and it sure helps when you can put a bunch of the pieces together the day before.

That was the case not long ago when Capt. Justin Bowles, national television show host Kevin Ford and I made a trip to the legendary Chandeleur Islands rimming the Southeast Louisiana coast.

To shorten our over-water commute, we launched on the Mississippi coast and tucked into the backside of the rim of islands, searching for sea grass, clean water and baitfish. We caught some fish out of the boat and made an unproductive wade attempt or two before locating an area with all the ingredients we were looking for.

The tide was falling by that time in the afternoon, so the setup wasn't ideal, but we walked a large flat and put some speckled trout on our stringers. The evidence was there that this would be THE

spot in the morning on a rising tide.

## MULTIPLE DAYS

Fortunately, that was doable for us because we'd made arrangements to sleep on the Chandeleur Islander, a jack-up barge that serves as a remote hostel for anglers wanting to enjoy the incomparable island chain for multi-day stretches.

We tied off to the Islander's dock close to dusk and ambled up to the galley to enjoy a feast prepared by Islander owner Erin Hellyer. With full bellies, we slept like bricks until the ringing of our alarms awoke us in the predawn hours. Moments later, fueled by coffee and a big breakfast, we piled into Bowles' Skeeter and pointed it toward the flat we'd discovered the afternoon before.

After getting the anchor set, the laconic Bowles slipped into the inky-black water, its clarity not yet evident in the low light. I soon followed, and we cast topwater lures as we shuffled toward the grass flat.

We didn't even make it all the way before Bowles' Spit-N Image drew an explosion and his rod doubled from the pull of a protesting speckled trout. Within seconds, my Matrix Mullet was treated the same way.

For the next three hours, we enjoyed almost nonstop action from hungry summertime speckled trout.

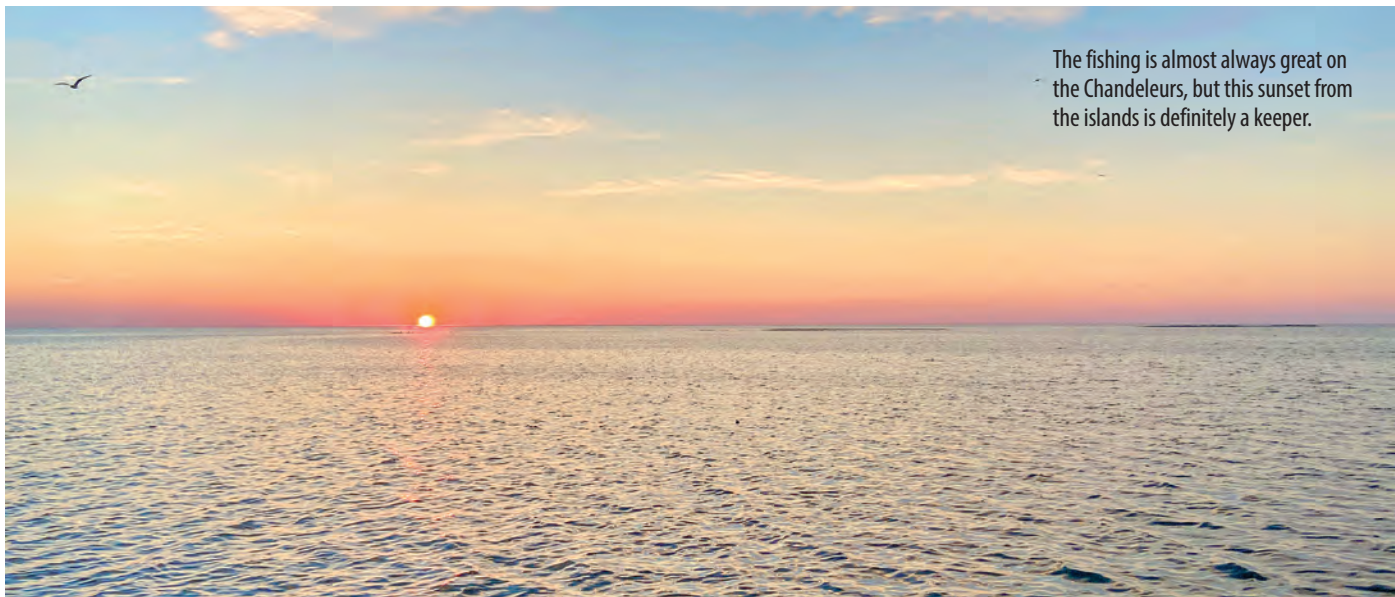
I've had a long, storied career in which I've been privileged to do so many diverse activities in the outdoors, but that day ranks in the top five for sure. It was simply magical.

## WADE RIGHT IN

Wade fishing isn't something I do



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



The fishing is almost always great on the Chandeleurs, but this sunset from the islands is definitely a keeper.


a whole lot because the marshes where I spend most of my time are as wadeable as a giant bowl of chocolate pudding. But that doesn't mean I don't enjoy it. There's just something special about being in the water with the fish, not to mention the fact you're entirely stealthy and even the most wary speckled trout has no idea you're there.


That day would not have been possible if we hadn't stayed the night before at the Islander. If we had launched in the morning and made the journey across the sound, it might have taken us hours to find the right area to wade, and by that time, the sun would have been high and the fish wouldn't likely have been so aggressive.

Being on site and knowing where to go first thing in the morning was essential to having such an incredible experience. The Chandeleur Islands are borderline mythical, and every speckled trout lover should fish them.


But don't pass up a stay at the Islander, if you can afford it. You can thank me later. ■

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**GRAND ISLE TROUT >**

# TROUT IN GOOD NUMBERS

## Grand Isle's bounce back is great news for speckled trout anglers

By Rusty Tardo

The good news is Grand Isle is bouncing back! And the speckled trout have shown up in good numbers and great sizes, according to Capt. Keith "Herk" Bergeron of Pair-A-Dice Charters (985-860-7855).

"I have to admit we've had some tough challenges to bounce back from. If Covid wasn't bad enough, Hurricane Ida stomped all over us and did its best to erase Grand Isle from the map," he said. "But this is a resilient bunch down here, and the rebuild is more visible every day. Bridgeside Marina is open and they have live shrimp and fuel. The motel is taking summer reservations. Cabins and camps are coming back up for rentals so, it's happening."

More good news, Bergeron said he's fishing almost every day, and hasn't seen any debris in the water on either side of the island.

"Debris in the water has been a major concern for boaters, but I've run all around the island and haven't seen or bumped anything," he said. "Whatever debris that floated, floated away, and the heavy stuff sank in deep water so I'm confident running around."

And the trout have been cooperative.

"The biggest challenge has been the winds," Bergeron said.

"When they lay down, you can fish anywhere in the Bay on the north side of the Island and find trout. I've pulled some really nice specks off the new reef at Independence Island and also around Hotel Sid. I know there's fish at Manilla Village and around the rigs on the north end of Barataria Bay."

### HACKBERRY CAUTION

Bergeron said the one place you do have to be careful is Hackberry Bay.



Deanna Blanchard, Capt. Herk's girlfriend, holds a 3-pound speckled trout caught on live shrimp.

"Everything out there got tore up real bad and the oil companies pulled most everything out," he said. "But there's a lot of obstructions and hazards they left behind out there, so run it very cautiously. If you do choose to fish out there, your best bet is to follow the crab traps, because the crabbers are out there running their traps every day and that will be a clear path."

Bergeron said the surf side should definitely hold some big trout right now, so try it when the winds give you a window. Live shrimp under a popping cork is always the best bet. Or try a live shrimp, minnow or croaker on a sliding sinker rig if you're fishing the beach, and plastics will produce under the birds.

"The fish under the birds might not all be keepers but you should find plenty that'll be legal size," he said.

The fishing season got interrupted last year by the hurricane, so there wasn't the usual summer pressure on the trout.

"That means we should have an abundance of bigger fish this year and a whole lot of new crop out there," Bergeron said. "I really think it's going to be a great summer, and it's already shaping up to be the best we've seen in years." ■

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# A MORE PERFECT **UNION**

**BLEND OF BREAM ACTION  
IS DEFINITELY THE PURSUIT  
OF HAPPINESS.** ■ By John Flores

## One of the goals of the U.S. Constitution was to “FORM A MORE PERFECT UNION.”

Pretty heady stuff when you think about it. And it is something much smarter men than me were able to put in writing so we all can enjoy certain liberties and freedoms. Like fishing bream for example.

But when it comes to a more perfect union, I tend to think of simpler things. Like the Union Oilfield Canals located east of Lake Palourde and southeast of Grassy Lake. What's more, fishing those canals for bluegills, redear sunfish (aka Chinquapins) and longear sunfish. Now that's as perfect as it gets come late spring and early summer around these parts.

The first time I fished the Union Oilfield Canals, I was with a local tournament bass angler by the name of Gerald Foulcard. Foulcard is a lifelong resident of St. Mary Parish who grew up in Franklin and now lives in Patterson.

There's not a bass angler locally who doesn't know him and probably far more homeowners. Up until his recent retirement in 2021, Foulcard was a lineman supervisor for CLECO Power Company for over 32 years.

Gerald and I had been bass fishing one Saturday in June sev-

eral years back and weren't having much luck. We were in the Bluebird Canal below the Intracoastal Canal south of Gibson for much of the morning. Not to be denied, on our way back to the R.J. Marcell Memorial Boat Ramp (Amelia Boat Landing) under the LA 182 Bridge, Gerald wanted to make a quick diversion.

### BASS AND BREAM

We passed up the landing and headed north towards Lake Palourde. Unlike me, Gerald is a bass angler first, where I prefer fishing for bream. The first thing I noticed when we got in the canals, was how many guys were perch-jerking.

It wasn't long before we were trolling and tossing spinnerbaits in one of the oilfield canals when we started catching bass. It appeared the region had what fish biologists refer to as having proper “trophic levels” of nutrition. In other words, the fact there were plenty of bass meant there was plenty of food, with shad and bream at the top of their prey list.

When I questioned Foulcard about it he nonchalantly said, “Yeah, I've caught plenty of bream, sac-a-lait, goggle eyes, and



A bluegill with a mouth full of worms.  
OPPOSITE PAGE: A chinquapin that goes halfway up your forearm shows the potential of the Union Oilfield Canals.



chinquapins in this area.”

That was all I needed to see and hear, where annually the Union Oilfield Canals is now one of my go-to locations.

Recently, my wife and I made a Saturday morning trip to the Union Oilfield. The first canal we came to, was a dead-end canal. I made a quick assessment looking for shallow water 2 to 5 feet in depth, clear to stained in color, and something that had cover for protection.

It’s a dog-eat-dog world out there and bream are near the bottom of the food web. Close cover is an absolute must for them to survive. I noticed a tree had fallen out into the water about 40 feet. Its branches provided perfect cover in the shallow water. Yes, we got hung up a time or two but, it was worth it.

Cover can be in the form of logs and storm blowdowns that provide structure for them to escape predators. In many places subaquatic vegetation (various grasses) is the predominant cover.

Just north of the Union Oilfield Canals in places like Grassy Lake, sometimes grass grows so thick there is no navigating it with a standard outboard, plus it’s difficult to fish. When this is the case, anglers will usually fish the outer edges of the grassy cover or look for a hole in it.



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

**CHECK THE SMALL DRAINS** >

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## CHECK THE SMALL DRAINS

Other important cover to consider are small drains.

Foulcard said, “I look for little drains and ditches that empty into a main bayou or canal. Usually, fish will congregate near these openings. I’ll also occasionally fish rip-rap used to plug pipeline drains. For some reason panfish will hang around the edges of this kind of structure.”

I have a 7-inch rule for my boat. No matter what species of bream we’re fishing, red-eared sunfish or bluegills, they must be at least 7 inches long. But, I guess some rules are sometimes made to be broken for the right reasons. A few 6-inch fish wound up in the box at my spouse’s insistence, where she noted that they were plenty chunky enough.

When it comes right down to it, it’s more or less a cleaning thing for me. I know that I can get a reasonable size fillet to fry out of a 6-inch to 8-inch fish. Most of the bream we caught easily fit into that self-imposed slot.

There are two methods to bream fishing. One is using artificial baits. And the other is keeping it simple by using live bait. Foulcard is someone who prefers to fish bream using small lures.

Foulcard said, “I use grub-type beetle spins without the split tail, and I mostly use the H&H beetle spins with the smallest blades they make. The colors I use are yellow with black dots, chartreuse with the black lines, orange, crawfish and my favorite, black with chartreuse lines.”

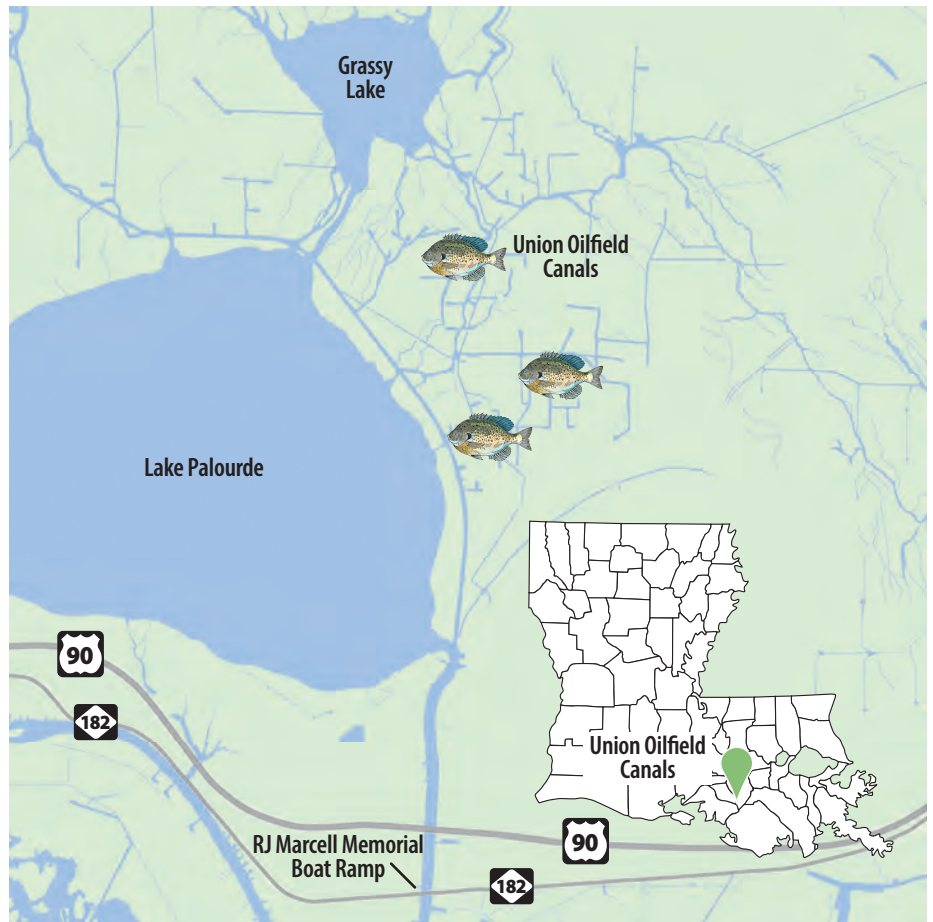
Foulcard said he also likes to use beetle spins without the blades by pitching them into cover and jiggling them.

“Now you get hung up a lot with this method,” said Foulcard, “but you can reap the benefits with a bountiful catch. Also, a lot of people don’t do this, but I do. Sometimes I’ll cast that beetle in the middle of canals and let it fall. I’ll reel it in slowly keeping it as close to the bottom as possible. Without the blade, it works great.”

By contrast, nothing works better than live bait when it comes to bream, with red worms and crickets being the most widely used baits. If there are bluegills and chinquapins around, they’re going to eat wiggly creatures.



The author with a good goggle eye caught with a tube jig.



## KEEP IT SMALL

Bream fishing is also pretty much a small hook, small bobber, and small weight thing. I like to use a Thill balsa float and No. 6 perch hook, with a single split shot fixed 6 to 8 inches above the hook.

As far as weight, use just enough to keep the float perfectly vertical. When it's right you can see and feel the slightest touch by even the most finicky bluegill.

When young kids are involved, I attach the cheap round plastic bobbers. Kid's will get hung up and more likely than not you're going to lose some tackle in the tree limbs when it's all said and done. So, be prepared to re-rig quite often when children are bream fishing with you and just take it all in stride.

Usually around mid-April, when the water temperature reaches 68 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit, spawning begins for bluegills. What's more, it's not uncommon for bluegills to spawn as many as three times, as water temperatures remain warm from April on into early fall.

When it comes to eating, fresh bream is hard to beat. Some people like to gut, behead, scale, and score their fish and fry them on the bone. I prefer filleting all my fish.

Typically what happens at the Flores house is when I'm picking up gear and washing down the boat, my wife is usually frying our fish for supper. She usually uses Louisiana Seasoned Crispy Fish Fry or Zatarain's New Orleans Style products, but you can also use regular cornmeal too and simply season it to



It's good to have a few plastic bobbers when teaching youngsters how to fish bream.

your taste.

One of the nice things about the Union Oilfield canals is they're not far off the beaten path. They're also 10 minutes give or take from the Amelia Boat Launch. When it comes to a more perfect union, nothing could be more perfect than fishing bream in this area. ■

**BAYOU BLACK >**

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# IT'S TIME!

## Wait was worth it for Bayou Black bream, sac-a-lait and catfish

**Y**ou can't rush a good fishin' hole. Just give it time. Bill McCarty knows that better than anyone, but still checked some of his favorite fishin' holes in the Bayou Black area last month looking for some good fishing spots in the coming months. The combination of green stuff — grass, milfoil, hyacinths, etc. — was looking real good at the time, but the main ingredients for a fish fry weren't available yet. The Morgan City outdoorsman, a bona fide specialist at catching panfish and catfish in the area he has called home his entire life, knows the right time will be now in June. And now's when he will be out to catch them in the sixth month of the year in places like Bayou Copasaw, Minor's Canal, Trapper's Canal and off Turtle Bayou Pipeline. June is the month it will be best. And the wait has been worth it.

Panfish and catfish pour into those canals when the marsh surrounding them starts baking in the heat of early summer, he said. "It'll be getting hot and getting too warm in there, so they'll be coming out", he said, speaking of the canals.

Julie McCarty of Morgan City holds a chunky slab she caught while fishing the Bayou Black area in early summer with her husband, panfish maestro Bill McCarty.



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"It's a good place to get the main ingredients," he said about catching bream, goggle-eye, sac-a-lait and catfish.

A "decent day," he said, would be 25-50 fish, a mixed bag. On a really good day, he said with a knowing chuckle, an angler can feed a family and neighbors. Even on a bad day, you can catch enough for the family to eat.

Coming from the west, as he does most of the time, he'll put in at the public boat landing at Amelia. Coming from the east, a convenient access point would be Bob's Bayou Black Marina in Gibson.

## CLEAR WATER

McCarty looks for water with 18 to 24 inches of clarity. He doesn't want the water crystal clear.

"Scattered grass or milfoil is a bonus, even hyacinths," he said.

His go-to bait is a blue/black/chartreuse jig, either tube or hair, on a 1/16-ounce lead head tipped with a chartreuse Berkley Powerbait Crappie Nibble. He's seen plenty of fish caught on blue/white, chartreuse/red and brown/orange tube or hair jigs, too, he said.

"I think it's more of a fisherman's preference. I personally like blue/black/chartreuse," he said. And you can't go wrong with that combo.

McCarty, who owns WHM Services LLC, also uses the smallest cork he can get away with. Large corks are a no-no in his book.

"You're not catching redfish, pal. I want to see any movement. I want to have an idea what's going on," he said.

He spools 6-pound monofilament line on a Zebco Delta



Bill McCarty's go-to bait to trigger enough bites for a fish fry in June when he fishes the Bayou Black area.

spincast reel mounted on a 5 1/2-foot casting rod. It's a lethal combination, as he's proven over the decades.

He fishes the tube jig or hair jig anywhere from 18 to 30 inches under the cork.

And one final tip. The fish usually bite better on a falling tide, he said. ■



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## HUNTER OF THE MONTH

### Erica Baham

This Louisiana longbeard was harvested by Erica Baham on April 3, 2022. She was hunting on private land in Tangipahoa Parish with her husband Ricky. The turkey came in strutting and gobbled all the way from 500 yards away. Erica harvested this bird at 20 yards around 4:30 p.m. with a Franchi 20 gauge with federal TSS.

## ANGLER OF THE MONTH

### Linda Duhon

Linda Duhon caught and released this 65-pound beast out of Intracoastal City on rod and reel.





# SHADOW BASS

■ By Keith Lusher

**LOGAN GAUTREAUX SHINES  
LIGHT ON THESE BOGUE FALAYA  
CREEK FISH.**

# IT'S NO SECRET THAT LOUISIANA IS HOME TO A WIDE VARIETY OF FISH.

It's location provides access to a diverse assortment of aquatic habitat including saltwater lagoons, brackish bayous, and freshwater swamps, lakes and rivers. From amberjack to alligator gar, there's not many fish that anglers in this state haven't come across.

Logan Gautreaux was born in Bourg and has been fishing the waters of south Louisiana since he was 8 years old. He now resides in Folsom and throughout the years has had the opportunity to catch over 60 different types of fish that call the bayou state home.

"Darters, spotted gar, paddlefish, pirate perch, chinquapin — there's not many fish that I haven't caught throughout my life," Gautreaux said.

That all changed this summer. Gautreaux was fishing the Bogue Falaya Creek just north of Covington for the usual suspects; sunfish, catfish and bass.

"Believe it or not that creek holds some quality fish, especially in the deep holes," he said.

## WHAT IS IT?

Gautreaux was wading in the creek and came upon a deep

drop-off that spanned 20 feet along the shoreline. Using a small tube jig, he cast across the deep water to a heavily eroded bank with an exposed root system protruding from it. He let the jig sink down and then noticed his line change direction, suddenly moving upstream. Gautreaux immediately set the hook and reeled in his catch. As he went to unhook the fish, his mind couldn't quite process what he was looking at.

"At first it looked like a goggle-eye, but then I thought maybe it was a rock bass," he said.

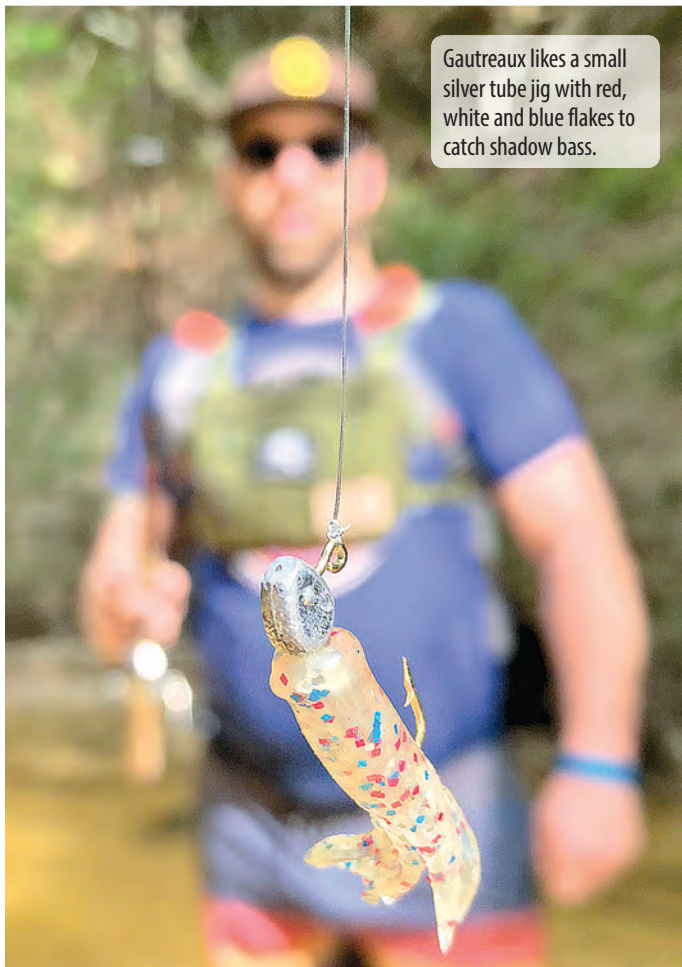
Gautreaux was familiar with rock bass from a period of time spent working in Pennsylvania. But this one was different. The puzzled angler took a few pictures with his phone and released the fish back into the clear running water.

After arriving home, he pulled up the USGS website to report the fish as an invasive species, being that rock bass weren't native to Louisiana. He then grabbed his Peterson Field Guide and after flipping to the freshwater section, was able to match the fish to an identification photo.

What Gautreaux caught was something called a shadow bass. The next day a biologist with the USGS replied to his query and confirmed that it was indeed a shadow bass.



Logan Gautreaux with a pair of Long Ear Sunfish caught in the Bogue Falaya Creek.



Gautreaux likes a small silver tube jig with red, white and blue flakes to catch shadow bass.

## MORE ABOUT SHADOW BASS

For Gautreaux, finding out the species of fish he caught was just the tip of the iceberg. The angler dedicated himself to extensive research to learn more about the fish that had somehow eluded him for 39 years of his life.

“Oh, I geek out on this stuff for sure,” he said.

Gautreaux learned that the “bass” are actually in the family of sunfish. They are native to Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, and Florida but interestingly enough, their numbers decrease significantly to the north.

“Tennessee seems to be the dividing line where shadow bass disappear according to my research,” he said. While these fish get harder to catch as one travels north, it seems that rock bass become more plentiful, showing a clear distinction in climate preference.”

As he continued to study the fish, he came upon a piece of information that made his story come full circle. It turns out that the shadow bass was officially given a separate species description and declared a newly discovered species in 1936 by freshwater biologist Peter Viosca. Viosca then listed the type location as the Bogue Falaya Creek.

“The same exact place I caught my shadow bass,” Gautreaux said.



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

### SEARCHING THE SHADOWS >

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## SEARCHING THE SHADOWS

Since his first bass, Gautreaux has since fine tuned his technique when targeting shadow bass. He specifically fishes for them in sandy bottom streams with clean running water.

"I haven't caught any in the larger rivers where there is a muddy bottom made of silt," he said.

As far as his set up, he uses an ultralight rod and reel with 8-pound fluorocarbon. Gautreaux stresses the importance of using fluorocarbon.

"It makes a huge difference when fishing in these creeks," he said. "I've taken a glass of tap water and lowered a piece of monofilament line next to a piece of fluorocarbon and was amazed at the difference. The fluorocarbon is almost invisible."

Since Gautreaux fishes in shallow streams, he finds it easier to walk the river rather than try to operate a boat. The Folsom angler stuffs his equipment including tackle and snacks into a backpack and sometimes ends up walking miles in one day.

"I look like a ghostbuster out there with that big knapsack on my back," he joked.

As he makes his way downstream he looks for dark water that indicates greater depth. This is where the action happens. Not

only has he pulled numerous types of fish out of these holes with a fishing pole, but he has actually used diving equipment to witness large bass and catfish hiding in the depths. Another thing he's witnessed are a multitude of darter's which are small goby-like fish that scurry along the sandy bottom. The fish are light brown with iridescent red and blue specks. It's these fish that Gautreaux imitates with his choice of lure.

## BANK HUGGERS

"I've been catching most of the shadow bass on small silver tube jigs with red, white and blue flakes," he said. I find that they hug tight to structure like a root system that's intertwined in the bank."

Gautreaux threads the tube jig on a 1/32-ounce head and casts up against the shoreline.

While Gautreaux admits the shadow bass ranks the highest on his list of discoveries, the determined angler's not quite done with catching various types of sunfish.

"This fish is special but it's just a stepping stone to my ultimate goal of catching every type of sunfish that exists," he said. ■



Dark, shallow spots along the bank, like this one Gautreaux is working, are prime hide-outs for shadow bass.

# SO THAT'S A SHADOW BASS



Shadow bass are really members of the sunfish family. They don't grow large, but their color markings are unmistakable.

The shadow bass isn't a bass at all, but is a member of the sunfish family.

It has a deep, compressed body with light and dark brown irregular marbling on the light green or silver-gray side of the body. Colors can vary by region, but the differences between them and other sunfish is obvious. The eyes are large and red, and there are between five and seven anal spines. This species has a large mouth that extends under the pupil of eye. The shadow bass can be found in vegetated pools of creeks and

small to medium rivers.

The range for these fish is limited, but there are good populations of the fish across the south.

The diet of shadow bass consists mostly of small invertebrates like crawfish when the fish are small. As they grow, the fish feed on all kinds of minnows and small fish in addition to crawfish due to their large mouths. ■

**LEGENDS OF THE OUTDOORS >**

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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.

# JOE MACALUSO

HUMBLE BATON ROUGE WRITER HAS SEEN,  
LIVED LOUISIANA OUTDOORS.

**Y**ou don't have to look far to discover the contributions outdoor writer Joe Macaluso has made to the great outdoors of Louisiana. And you don't have to look hard to see the impact it has made on others through promoting our great outdoor people and resources.

But Joe Macaluso doesn't take credit for all that.

"All of us who write about the outdoors are here today because we followed in the giant footsteps of people who have gone before, who have blazed the trails and set the standards high," Macaluso said.

For his accomplishments and his passionate effort to promote others in our outdoors, the Baton Rouge writer was recently inducted into the Louisiana Chapter Outdoor Legends Hall of Fame.

Macaluso is most widely known as the veteran outdoors editor of the Baton Rouge Morning Advocate. He has won numerous awards including the Louisiana Governor's Conservationist of the Year in the Communicator category and the Arthur Van Pelt Lifetime Achievement Award from the Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association. In 2014, Joe was also presented the Distinguished Service Award in Sports Journalism by the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame.

You'll also find his writing right here in *Louisiana Sportsman* magazine in his monthly "Down on the Dock" column, a mix of humorous stories and entertaining views on our outdoors.

Besides writing, editing and publishing two full pages of outdoors in the newspaper for years, Macaluso also freelanced in several publications such as BASSMaster magazine and Louisiana Sportsman. One of the state's most respected and admired outdoors writers, Macaluso has also covered a wide array of sports beats, served as a TV show host and correspondent, and has been the longtime official scorer for LSU baseball.

His first byline story came in March 1970 in the Baton Rouge Advocate covering LSU baseball.

He has been awarded/recognized more than 90 times (as a top three finisher) for stories in state, regional and national organizations — notably AP National honors for a series, then the game story on Eddie Robinson breaking Bear Bryant's career win record; and a series of stories on the devastating effects of Hurricane Andrew on the Atchafalaya Basin and surrounding waters. He also wrote the Louisiana section of the World Encyclopedia of Fishing.

Macaluso conceived the idea, then was director/co-host for the award-winning "Paradise Louisiana," a groundbreaking



one-hour outdoors magazine TV show (airing on Louisiana cable systems).

Working in the hub of one of Louisiana's largest outdoor areas, Macaluso has always said he felt it was a privilege to cover the people and resources of our state's outdoors. But even more important than his writing, he was also involved in many conservation efforts that impacted thousands in the state, one of which he is most proud.

In 1994, Joe was one of a group of local hunters who gathered to discuss sharing the game and fish they harvested each year with the needy in the Greater Baton Rouge area. The hunters contacted the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the donations that first year were given to their dining hall. Thereafter, the response from hunters was so great that the dining room's storage was soon pushed to the limits, and help was enlisted from the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank.

Since then, "Hunters For The Hungry" has increased awareness of their program throughout the state by partnering with all 5 major food banks in Louisiana. By conducting multiple

programs such as the Clean Out Your Freezer Day and Freshly Harvested Game and Fish Programs, the organization is providing thousands of meals for Louisiana families. They have gone from collecting 4,800 pounds of fish and game to more than 200,000 pounds annually and seen to it that laws were passed to protect hunters and fishermen who donated to the cause.

“There are so many people who have helped me do what I do that I can’t name them all,” Macaluso told the audience at the Legends banquet. “But I want to give a special thanks to Mike Cook, the former Outdoor Editor for our paper for many, many years. Mike gave me the chance to start a fishing column in the State Times newspaper and that is where it began.”

Macaluso has always had a passion for writing and for helping uncover issues that needed attention in the state’s outdoors, even if it wasn’t popular.

“For me this has always been a passion,” he said. “I’ve always had a passion for fishing and I developed a passion for duck hunting. But seeing the passion others had for what they did, it made me want to ensure we covered the outdoors. It’s important that others follow that same trail we did. Look, in 1991 when I first became the Baton Rouge paper’s outdoor editor, there were nine full-time outdoor writers in the state. Today, there are none. That should tell everyone the challenge we face in communicating the outdoors.”

Macaluso also thanked his wife Cheryl for allowing him to do what he did. Outdoor writing meant he was gone many times, including parts or all of weekends for most of the year. A strong Christian man, Macaluso also gave thanks to be living in America where we are free to worship and pursue what we want to do.

“My grandfather came over from Sicily some 115 years ago,” he said. “He always made sure we understand that no other country in the world allows an opportunity to do what we want to do and if we work hard at it, to make money at it. It’s a privilege. It’s a privilege we better make sure our children and our grandchildren understand.”

Macaluso also leaves us with one other thought.

“Believe it or not, there are people in this country, in this state, that do not want us to hunt or to fish,” he said. “It’s important for us to responsibly take care of and promote our outdoors and protect it from those people and groups. ■

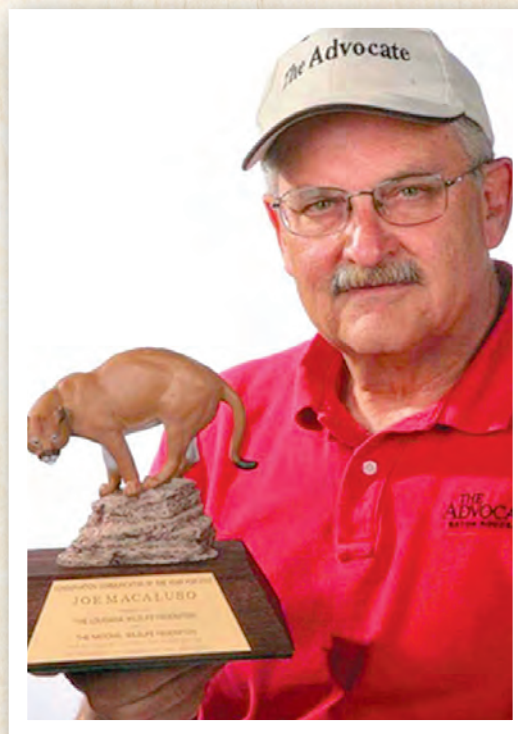
*The Legends Hall of Fame was founded by Gerry Mason of Springville, Tennessee, in 2002. The Louisiana Chapter is headed up by Peyton McKinnie of Marion. You can find out more about the groups on Facebook.*



**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.



“” *For me this has always been a passion. I’ve always had a passion for fishing and I developed a passion for duck hunting. But seeing the passion others had for what they did, it made me want to ensure we covered the outdoors.*



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come with handling wild game.

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The SPRO Flappin' Frog 65 features a hollow body and large kicker legs. Its weedless design allows anglers to buzz it through even the heaviest cover without snagging. The kicking legs act similar to buzzbait blades, calling in bass for explosive hits. But unlike buzzbaits, this lure is right at home in lily pads and other surface weeds or debris.

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weight allows for long casts. Heavy weed patches hold elusive bass, but most lures don't stand a chance in such areas. Don't pass up those sure-fire honey holes — make a cast with the Flappin' Frog and get ready to set the hook.

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



**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>.

## LOUISIANA'S STATE PARKS

■ By Kinny Haddox

# HEATING UP PARKS IN THE HEART OF LOUISIANA OFFER LOADS OF SUMMER FAMILY FUN

**THIS MONTH'S  
FEATURED STOPS:  
JIMMIE DAVIS  
AND CHICOT**

## JIMMIE DAVIS STATE PARK

Summer is here and there's no better time for Louisiana's State Parks to shine. And the action is heating up at two of the best facilities located in the heart of the state, Jimmie Davis State Park in Chatham and Chicot State Park in Ville Platte.

Variety is the spice of life and these two parks offer just that. Jimmie Davis is located on beautiful Caney Lake, home of six of the top 10 largest largemouth bass ever caught in the state. It's piney woods camping spots and appealing summer beach brings folks from all around. At Chicot, there is also good fishing on the lake the park is named after, but the camping spots are in hardwood forests and the kayak trails and nature walks take you through giant cypress swamps with mystery around every turn.

Not many state parks leave visitors humming a tune, but those that visit here and know their history do just that. The park is named after two term Louisiana Governor Jimmie Davis, who was also a country-western singer who sold millions of records. His biggest hit? "You Are My Sunshine," which has been recorded by more than 350 artists, translated into 30 languages, and is the official state song.

But today, Jimmie Davis brings to mind fishing, swimming, camping and just chillin'. That's because the Jackson Parish park on the northern banks of 5,000 acre Caney Creek Lake is a haven for outdoor activity.

There is no better place in the state to land a 10 pound bass. The lake also has huge chinquapin and bluegill bream and an ever-present population of big crappie. The park offers two boat launches and a fishing pier that cater to the fishermen. Waterskiing is another way to enjoy the clear waters of the lake.

There's even a beach, a playground for kids and biking treks that can take you through the hills of North Central Louisiana.

Did somebody say "beautiful"? How about this view off one of the State Park docks at sunset.





Mention Caney Lake to any bass anglers and they'll think of this — huge largemouth bass! And since the lake now has healthy vegetation back in it, the fishing has never been better.



**JIMMIE DAVIS STATE PARK**

1209 State Park Road  
Chatham, LA 71226  
318-249-2595  
jimmiedavis@crt.la.gov

**CHICOT STATE PARK**

3469 Chicot Park Road  
Ville Platte, LA 70586  
337-363-2403  
chicot@crt.la.gov

*If there is any park that is “all things Louisiana,” Chicot State Park at Ville Platte just might be it. The big park contains 6,400 acres of everything from rolling hills to swampy cypress bottoms. And with the varied terrain comes a variety of activities.*

Staying is easy. Much of the park had to be rebuilt after a devastating tornado a few years back, but everything is in working order now with beautiful camper sites overlooking the lake, cabins for rent and plenty of tent camping spots as well as a few choice glamping spots.

For large groups, a group camp — including four dormitories and a dining hall — is available, with its own playground and fishing pier. RV campers have several scenic sites to choose from, for a closer visit with nature.

The closest major highway to Jimmie Davis State Park is I-20 to the north and I-49 to the south and west. The park is located near Chatham and is easy to reach through a series of state roads.

**CHICOT STATE PARK >**

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## CHICOT STATE PARK

If there is any park that is “all things Louisiana,” Chicot State Park at Ville Platte just might be it.

The big park contains 6,400 acres of everything from rolling hills to swampy cypress bottoms. And with the varied terrain comes a variety of activities. The timing couldn’t be better to go to the cool, clear waters of Lake Chicot to catch largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill and chinquapin bream. There’s a boat-house, three boat launches and boat rental facilities to make it easier to get on the water.

An extensive hiking/backpacking trail completely encircles Lake Chicot and includes several primitive campsites along the way. The hiking trails allow visitors to experience and enjoy the park’s natural landscape, its bottomland hardwood forest and the lake itself. For visitors who enjoy a quicker pace, much of the trail is geared toward mountain bikers, and all cyclists are welcome to ride the roadways throughout the park.

Chicot State Park is home to the Louisiana State Arboretum.

This beech-magnolia forest covers 300 acres, with diverse topography that allows the Arboretum to house many of Louisiana’s indigenous plant species. It was the first such area in the south and the first state-supported arboretum in the United States. The Louisiana State Arboretum is large — more than 600 acres of natural growth, embellished with additional plantings of species that are indigenous to the state. A Visitor Center is dedicated to the memory of J.D. “Prof” LaFleur, an outdoor enthusiast instrumental in establishing the Arboretum.

Nature trails take you deep into the wooded areas and longer trails take you along Walker Branch or Ferguson’s Gully where several of the footpaths converge. The area is great for backpacking, birding, watching wildlife and taking in the rich beauty of the swamp.

The park has three main areas. The South Landing includes cabins, a group camp, picnic areas and playground, a water playground, a boat launch, a fishing pier and a dock with rental boats. A scenic road links the South Landing with the North Landing.

Kayaking through the maze of flooded cypress is fun and an adventure.





## Explore the outdoors at Louisiana State Parks

“Whether you enjoy hiking the trails at Fontainebleau, kayaking at Chicot, cycling and horseback riding at Bogue Chitto, Louisiana State Parks has something for you. Go to [www.LaStateParks.com](http://www.LaStateParks.com), to start planning your Louisiana Staycation today.”

– *Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser*



## STATE PARKS: JIMMIE DAVIS, CHICOT

The crappie fishing is excellent at Chicot State Park. Anglers can also catch bass, bream and catfish.

The North Landing features campsites, a boat launch, a dock, a 400 foot fishing pier and a primitive group-camping area. Lodges also are located in this area.

The East Landing is accessible from LA 106. It is less developed than the other two areas. It includes a boat launch, a dock, a meeting room and a barbecue pavilion, which makes this area ideal for day visitors.

Chicot sits halfway between Alexandria and Lafayette, just a short trip from Ville Platte. The park is between two major routes, US Hwy. 167 and I-49. The park has several entrances, but the one on the east side off of LA- 3042 is by far the most RV- and trailer-friendly.

As for the lake that anchors the park, it is a 2,000-acre manmade lake that has offered some of the largest bass caught in Evangeline Parish. ■



**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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# PUT THE VUDU ON THEM

## You need to know one thing for Chef Pass bass: fish the grass

Andre Thomas finds bass stacked up in the deeper bayous around Chef Pass this month.

**T** By Joel Masson  
he bass fishing around Chef Pass has exploded in the past few years, and avid angler Andre Thomas targets them a lot this month. Although the fish are not big, they are very plentiful, especially on a certain tidal movement.

"If the tide is falling, you can find fish," he said. "They're more congregated around the grass.

"The falling tide concentrates the fish. The bait comes to the fish. The fish fall to the drainages and to the hard grasslines. Even if there is no drainage, they'll be on the drop off in the bend of a bayou."

To target these bass, Thomas likes to look for deeper areas in the marsh.

"I look for bayous that have deeper water," he said. "The 3-5- feet of depth is key because there are a lot of bayous that don't maintain that depth.

"You can fish them up to 7 or 8 feet, and that's even better. The more drainages a bayou has in it and the more hard grasslines, the better."

### GO WEEDLESS

Thomas likes one bait in particular for fishing these deeper, grassier areas.

"If I'm fishing the heavy vegetation, I'm looking at a weedless Vudu Shrimp," he said.

The Vudu shrimp comes with a weedless hook, but Thomas

prefers to swap it out to a Z-Man Texas Eye ¼-ounce jighead. The jighead features a free-swinging hook, where the lead isn't directly on the head of the hook. This gives fish less leverage to throw the bait, and it also hosts another advantage, according to Thomas.

"The bait swims well when I fish it," he said.

Thomas likes to experiment with how he fishes the bait. The fish seem to like that, too. Figure out what they want and that's the way to fish it.

"Sometimes I'll throw it up in the grass and work it out to the edge," he said. "If there is a little lane on the inside of the grass, I'll fish the inside of the lane.

"Most of the time, because I'm usually chasing them on the falling tide, they'll be on the outside of the grass."

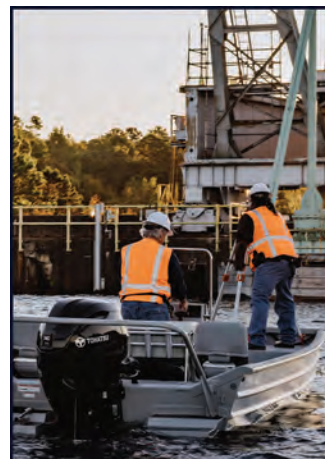
These weedless setups are imperative because Thomas focuses his efforts around grass.

"The grass holds the bait. It's an ideal ambush spot and it gets the fish out of the direct sunlight," Thomas said.

In many parts of the state, the bass will only bite early in the morning or late in the evening when the heat of June arrives, but Thomas said the marsh bass are not that way.

"It's not as bad as the lake fishing because of the tidal flow," he said. "The angler tries to avoid the heat more than the bass are affected by the heat." ■

Nick Terry of Stillwell, Kansas, has a firm grip on a 3-pound bass he caught on a Neko-rigged Senko on April 10 at Toledo Bend while fishing with John Dean.



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## THE POST-SPAWN AT TOLEDO BEND

Weather giving bass and anglers  
what they've been needing

**W** By John Dean  
atching The Weather Channel  
has given me hope for bassin'  
the rest of the spring and early summer at  
Toledo Bend.





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**TOLEDO BEND POST-SPAWN** continued >

The repetitive frontal systems that gave us such a hard time during the height of the spawn may be a godsend down the stretch of spring and into the start of summer. Jim Cantore, veteran meteorologist, predicted that we would continue to have cold fronts roll in through May and possibly into June. That may sound counterproductive to fishing, but in the long run, it's important.

Those systems should do two things. First, they drop badly needed rain in the region and everybody knows we need that in Toledo Bend. And second, with cool nights, it helps keep the water temperature in the 70s, at least for a while.

I like that.

**WHAT WE'VE NEEDED**

That's what we need in what is considered the post-spawn era. Toledo Bend's pool stage was 171.21 toward the end of spring. We're finally getting the water we wanted. It's been staying up thanks to rainfall associated with frontal systems for the past month or so. That level sure gives us more cover to target plus make this sprawling border lake look so beautiful at less than a foot below full pool.

It's going to be fun. It's a good time in late May and June. The shallow-water thing is the status quo until late June and July, when we'll see summertime patterns start to dominate.

Target the shallows, as shallow as 1½ -2 feet deep on out to 3-5 feet deep because the bream are spawning in those depths. It still pays off in June. The water color is fair to good pretty much anywhere as of now and should stay that way, even improving barring torrential rainfalls.

I'm not going to change my game plan one bit. In fact, I'll double up my activity with plastic frogs. It's a perfect setup for those and other topwaters, Senkos, Neko-rigged Senkos, suspending jerkbaits, spinnerbaits and bladed jigs. They should all trigger their share of bites.

It sure would be nice to see peppergrass emerge like it did two years ago. That'd be sweet.

**LILY PADS REAPPEAR**

I am seeing lily pad growth, which we didn't see last year. That's cover. Lily pads are starting to get a grip in scattered areas, including Housen Bay.

For sure, it's bluegill time. That's T-bone steak for bass. Bream factor into May and early June, as long as the conditions remain. That's why bream-colored baits are king this time of year.

Stanley Ribbits and Stanley Top Toads in bream hues have been a staple in late spring and early summer for many years.

My No.1 color for spinnerbaits and bladed jigs is golden bream (#305 and #205 in Stanley colors). As for Senkos and other soft plastics, you can't beat watermelon, watermelon/red, green pumpkin/purple or green pumpkin/red.

Suspending jerkbaits such as the Rick Clunn STX gold/orange model also show out in late May and June. I've been catching on it consistently through the spring and expect to get bit on it through June.

Catching bass on jerkbaits tells me there are migratory fish still moving up late spring.

Crappie have moved out to the brush-tops in 20-foot or more depths and are being caught on shiners and artificial jigs.

I've been guiding on this lake most of my life. June should be a prime time to catch bass on topwaters. Give me a call at (936) 404-2688. ■

**BAYOU BARTHOLOMEW BASS** >



Stanley Top Toad

Keeping your boat looking great is easy when you know the basics. Those basics include four common types of stains that can be frustrating if you don't know how to remove them. This handy *Stains 101 Guide* will help you properly identify and remove each of the four basic stains, and keep your boat looking like new.

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## ACID TECHNOLOGY

### STAIN

Orange stains on the hull or deck.

### SCIENCE

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### SOLUTION

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## SURFACTANT TECHNOLOGY

### STAIN

Grime, dirt, gunk, muck, fish blood, food, drinks

### SCIENCE

Surfactants lift dirt from the surface. Textured surfaces need specialty cleaners with more lifting action.

### SOLUTION

Use Boat Wash for most surfaces; Non-skid Deck Cleaner for non-skid; Vinyl Clean for vinyl.



# STAINS 101

## THE SCIENCE of STAINS MADE SIMPLE



## ABRASION TECHNOLOGY

### STAIN

Black shoe marks, rub rail and bumper scuffs, marks left from dragging equipment.

### SCIENCE

Scuff marks—or "transfer stains"—happen when material is transferred onto a surface. Abrasives are needed to remove.

### SOLUTION

Try a Star brite Ultimate Magic Sponge to erase most marks easily.

## BLEACHING TECHNOLOGY

### STAIN

Mold and mildew stains.

### SCIENCE

Organic stains need oxygen in a bleach to break them up and removes any discoloration.

### SOLUTION

Use marine-tested Star brite Mildew Stain Remover to attack the stain without harming the surface.

# “CUTOFF” BASS

Summer is the best time to give Bayou Bartholomew Lake a try

**B**y Tim Johnston  
 Bayou Bartholomew Lake, the area commonly called “The Cutoff” by locals near Sterlington and in other parts of Morehouse Parish, isn’t one of the big-name fishing spots in north Louisiana. But this time of year, if you are chasing largemouth bass, it can be as good as any other.

Bayou Bartholomew itself is the world’s longest running bayou, making an almost 360 mile trek from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, all the way where it spills out into the Ouachita River above Monroe. Bayou Bartholomew Lake is a portion of the old bayou that has been cut off from the original waterway situated on the Ouachita and Morehouse Parish Line.

The waterway was dammed off on both ends of the oxbow creating a lake that offers everything a bass enthusiast looks for. Welcome to “The “Cutoff.”

Nathan Pilgreen’s fishing partner, Bobby Semmes, with a nice “Cutoff” largemouth bass.



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Cypress trees are littered across the entire lake along with plentiful grass, boat docks, and steep bluff banks. Its got every type of structure that a bass angler could want in the summertime.

Lifelong Union Parish native and ardent fisherman Nathan Pilgreen loves to fish this lake and gives us get a better grasp on what the bass are doing in the early summer months on the Cutoff.

## BREAM BRING BASS

“I like to fish The Cutoff in early June because that’s when the bream are on the beds and the shad are beginning to spawn”, Pilgreen said. “That gives the bass plenty of bait to feed on during these post-spawn months.”

With the bass being more on the move this time of year, Pilgreen likes to cover a lot of water and throw baits that

mimic a bluegill or shad.

"I'll fish trees and grass in the four foot range and throw a Smithwick Rogue in the black and gold color, a Zoom Fluke in watermelon red or watermelon pearl color because those baits mostly resemble a bream."

Technique matters this time of the year, too.

"I'll work those baits in a medium speed retrieve and that tends to yield the most bites," Pilgreen said.

Pilgreen also points out that a watermelon red Senko rigged wacky style with no O ring can generally pick up a few bites.

"I like to throw the Senko on a 7 foot medium action rod paired with a spincast reel," he said. "That allows me to skip it under tree limbs if I'm fishing cypress trees."

## MORE OPTIONS

Pilgreen also adds that a blue herring colored spinnerbait works well when the water has some clarity to it. Often when there is not a lot of rain, the water clears up in the lake.

"There is a channel that runs the entire length of the lake and when the shallow bite wears off, I'll usually try to graph bass hanging on the edge of the flats where the channel makes a bend," he said.

Getting into the thick cover is important, especially on up in the day. Pilgreen likes to pick up a Texas rigged Baby Brush Hog, also in watermelon red, and target those bass that are set up on the edge of the channel.

The lake has a solid population of largemouth and there are numerous fish in the 6-8 pound range.

Access to the lake can be found in two places. The most convenient choice is Barrett's launch, located on Barrett's Boat Dock Road just off of Highway 165. For a small fee you can launch your boat and be right in the middle of the lake for easy navigating. The other choice is located on the far north end of the lake on Levee Rd. This is the only free

public boat launch on The Cutoff.

If you are unfamiliar with the lake, be careful running it. The channel can be deceptive as it winds from one end to the other and there is not a lot of other open water. ■

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Don Shoopman



**If** bass anglers are in a funk over lack of bites, it might be time to turn to Funkbuster Baits made in Bossier City.

Paul Funk, 52, and his family make one of the most popular bladed jigs on the market, the Wesley Warbird. In a world filled with bait manufacturers, Funkbuster Baits has found its niche with spinnerbaits, buzz baits and bladed jigs.

Funk, who also directs the Funkbuster Team Trail, has come a long way to be a Louisianan and get in the lure business. He was born in Bishop, California, and moved with his father, Wesley Funk, to Tahoe, California. He joined the U.S. Air Force in 1988 and was stationed at Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota, then eventually transferred to Barksdale AFB in Bossier Parish.

After 24 years, he retired as a master sergeant E7 in 2012 and stayed here, growing to love bass fishing in northwest Louisiana. The decision to stay was fueled by a “joint decision” with his wife, Brenda, to buy “Old Blue,” a 2004 Ranger bass boat.

## A GOOD POINT

Brenda Funk soon noticed and raised a point or two about the number of spinnerbaits purchased and used by Funk, who fished every chance he got. So he started making his own artificials and, well, the rest is history.

Funkbuster’s Wesley Warbird line of bladed jigs comes in six different models

# END THE FUNK

FUNKBUSTER FOUND NICHE WITH SPINNERBAITS, BUZZ BAITS AND BLADED JIGS

and are named after his father. Building things is nothing new to these two. The elder Funk, an adventurer with skills to match his dreams, built an Experimental Aircraft Association bi-plane and flew it in 1969.

Taking that into consideration so many years later, his son christened one of the company’s newest baits the Wesley Warbird.

Wesley Warbirds and other products are now popular from Louisiana to Minnesota, West Coast to East Coast.

How did they get to Minnesota? The North Star State’s many kayakers have been hooked for quite a while on Wesley Warbirds and other Funkbuster Baits. The artificial lure maker responded with an annual special for kayakers up there and this year 74 orders poured in during one week in April.

The Wesley Warbird 1.0 was introduced in 2019. Two years later, Funk’s friend, Josh Whitt, a serviceman stationed in England, made a surprise visit and the two celebrated by fishing a “fruit jar” tour-

nement in which the visitor caught an 11-pounder on a WW 1.0 at Caddo Lake.

One of the most ardent proponents of the Wesley Warbird 1.0 is accomplished pro bass tournament angler Allen Stewart of Lakeview, Arkansas. Stewart finished ninth in the Bassmaster Central Open in 2021 on Alabama’s Lewis Smith Lake.

What’s so appealing about the Wesley Warbird 1.0?

“It’s unique because with the football jig head, as the blade’s coming through the water, the blade hits the head on both sides,” Funk said, adding it has a “unique swim” to it.

“That’s the one that’s won the most money locally and nationally. I’ve converted a lot of Jackhammers (users) to the Wesley Warbird,” he said, proudly.



**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.

## SIX VERSIONS

There are six models to choose: WW 1.0; WW 2.0, a bullet swim jighead; WW 3.0, a regular swim jig head; WW 4.0, a free-swinging worm hook; WW 5.0, a free swinging frog hook favored by Bradley Virgilitto of Bossier City, whose daughter and her friend gained instant notoriety a few months ago with a 30-pound, 3-ounce catch in a high school tournament at Caddo Laske, and WW 6.0, an Arky jig style.

The WW 1.0's football head is made of standard lead molded onto a Gamakatzu hook, usually a 5.0. The blade can be silver, gold, copper or whatever is desired.

"We can modify it any way the customer wants. We can make ¼ to 1 ¼-ounce Wesley Warbirds," Funk said.

The custom made part includes color combinations for the silicone skirts that have a rubber collar and are wire-tied to keep the skirt attached even if the rubber band wears out. You name the colors, he'll rig them up.

"How many strands of chartreuse do you want? How many strands of white do you want? They're all customizable. Feel free to make custom orders. If you send a picture we'll match it. Your imagination is our only limitation. We can do 1,000 variations," he said.

The bladed jig also features a built-in trailer keeper.

When Funk says we, he means it's a family-run business. His brother Frank Funk, who moved to the area earlier this year from Placerville, Calif., pours the lead. His wife, Brenda, and his stepdaughter, Amanda Kraft, assemble the artificial lures per order after the latter paints them.

Funk said bass anglers from novices to veterans can appreciate the Funkbuster Baits motto: "Quality Baits at a Weekend Anglers Price."

For more information about the Wesley Warbird 1.0 and other Funkbuster Baits products, go to [www.funkbusterbaits.com](http://www.funkbusterbaits.com) or call (318) 553-7360. ■

**BABY SNAKE >**

The Wesley Warbird 1.0 gets attached to many a bass' mouth, bass anglers soon discover when throwing the model created by Paul Funk of Bossier City.





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Photo courtesy Major League Fishing

# BABY SNAKE

## SIMPLE WOBBLEHEAD LURE HAS ENDURED TIME AS STEADY BASS CATCHER

By Kinny Haddox  
I still remember the first time I tossed a red wobblehead lure with a natural earthworm colored Creme worm trailer out into the grassy waters of Bayou Bartholomew and brought it back on a slow retrieve. As I watched it just under the water's surface get closer to the boat, I didn't know whether to reel it on in or swat it with the boat paddle.

I mean, it looked just like a baby snake swimming right up to the edge of the boat. That "baby snake" swimming action has made this lure a go-to for big summer largemouths for more than 50 years.

But it's a lot more than that.

"The Wobblehead works great in the heat of summer, but there's a common misconception among anglers about when to use it," said Jim Dillard, pro bass fisherman and owner of the company. "Let me clear up something here. The Wobblehead is what I call a "58 to 58" bass killer. By that, I mean it's good from when the water warms to 58 degrees in the spring all the way until the water cools below 58 degrees in the fall. Most people don't know that."

Because the water has warmed up and the activity level of snakes is high, this is the time that many anglers that know about this long-lived bait pull it out and put it to work. But keep Dillard's tip in mind for the rest of the year.

### CASHING CHECKS

Dillard is a nine-year veteran of the bass pro tour and he is known by fans and anglers for his consistency and versatility on a number of different bodies of water. The Louisiana pro has five top-10 finishes at the sport's top level and has qualified for the Forrest Wood Cup twice in his career.

Some of his best catches have come on the Wobblehead. In fact, a few years back, Dillard bought the company. Today he cashes checks with the lures in two ways — by selling them to other anglers and by using them to pick up checks at bass tournaments.

While the lure is an old standby, a couple of changes that Dillard and the Cheniere Lake Tackle Company made to the lure are huge, he said.

The new Pro Series Wobblehead has two major improvements. First, there's a new

hook that Dillard designed himself to fit the bait better. And second, the bait now has a keeper on it where the attached worm won't slide off when fishing.

Fishing the Wobblehead is simple, but there are a few tips that make a huge difference in the success ratio.

First of all, use an O-ring ring on the lure. It gives it more action and prevents line twisting from the mega-wobble the lure gives off. Second, when you cast the lure out and it hits the water, give it a quick move to get the wobble going, then let it sink slowly on the retrieve to get to the desired depth. The lure doesn't have much weight, so anglers must be attentive to not pull the lure too shallow. However, this time of year, when fishing grass beds, pads and other shallow structure where bass seek bait and shade, anglers usually fish it shallow.

When fishing cypress trees or stumps, swim the lure slowly up to the cover, then pause it and let it flutter a second, then resume the retrieve. Even if a fish isn't hungry, he can't resist that action.

## DON'T LIMIT YOURSELF

The bait is mostly fished around trees and grass in its home area, but Dillard catches fish around docks and rocks as well. Don't limit yourself to old ideas about the bait, he said. You can fish it everywhere. In the summer, he recommends skipping it up under the docks where the shade keeps the water cooler. The worm won't slip with the new design.

Another interesting item about the lure is that while lures get hot, then not, the Wobblehead seems to be a lure the fish never get used to. It works as good today as it did decades ago.

When you feel a bass tap the worm on the retrieve, don't immediately set the hook. If you do, you'll take it away from him. Wait until you feel the fish pull, then use your rod to set the hook with a firm, but not powerful, sweeping hook set. Because it is a single hook lure, it is usually hard for a fish to throw, much like with a plastic worm.

The lure is simply a slender curved slab of metal with a single hook fastened on it. The curly metal head gives the bait an amazing wobble, which gives it the name. The best trailer is a plain straight tail 6-inch plastic worm. Best colors are earthworm, black and purple with a red tail, all old favorites that have survived a generation of fishing.

The lure comes in a variety of colors like red, black, orange and purple. You can pick up the lures at your local tackle store or find out more about them and place an order at <https://wobbleheadlures.com/> then give them a try. ■

Dillard gives the audience at an MLF tournament a look at his favorite lure.



Photo courtesy Major League Fishing

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BASS CLASS >

# AN EYE FOR BASS

STERLINGTON'S IAN CARTER IS WISE BEYOND HIS YEARS ON THE BASS TRAIL

By Don Shoopman

Ian Carter, wise beyond his 17 years about bass and how to catch them, demonstrated that last year while pre-fishing for a Northeast Louisiana High School Anglers regular-season tournament at Lake Claiborne.

It was a great, although painful, experience for one of the state's most accomplished high school bass fishermen.

The son of John and Ashley Carter, Carter was on the water with his father after a freeze iced over the shallows. Spawning bass were difficult to find despite thawing conditions.

The Sterlington High School junior had a hunch the freeze came before bass in the grass had time to escape to deeper water, so they stayed put. He was right on. The bass anglers stopped and fished a grass bed on their way out of the creek.

His dad hooked a monster, perhaps a double-digit bass in matted grass, on a ½-ounce swim jig. The "hawg" spit out the swim jig with its lead head, which flew like a bullet and smashed the younger angler's tooth.

"It kind of happened so quick it didn't hurt. My dad asked, 'Are you OK?'. I fished for three more hours," Carter said, noting blood covered his mouth and lower face.

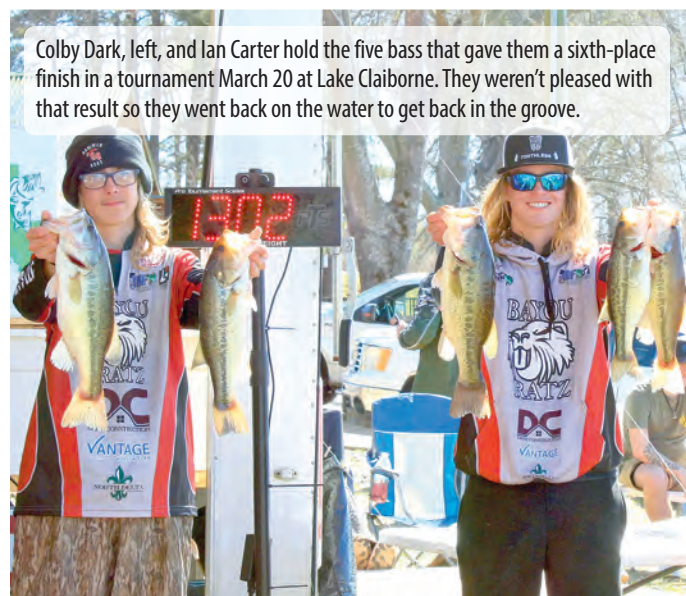
## TOUGHING IT OUT

The tooth's roots were damaged and he had to have surgery the next day on Friday. On Saturday, he fished and won the tournament in those grass beds.

A few weeks later, Carter got his hands on his personal best bass, a 9.20-pounder, while scouting before a state championship tournament on the Red River. The "hawg" slammed a 6-inch golden bream 6th Sense Divine Swim Jig.

He's proud of that big bass but, he said, "I wish I could have caught her that day of the tournament. I did get a 7."

Carter began fishing bass tournaments as a seventh-grader. He



Colby Dark, left, and Ian Carter hold the five bass that gave them a sixth-place finish in a tournament March 20 at Lake Claiborne. They weren't pleased with that result so they went back on the water to get back in the groove.

Ian Carter, a junior, has emerged as one of the most consistent bass anglers in the Sportsman's Paradise.



started fishing at age 3, he said, with his dad, mostly targeting crappie.

When he was old enough and the family was living along Bayou D'Arbonne, he'd fish for bass along the bank or take the boat from the boat slip and use the trolling motor.

"I was just steadily working on getting better. Like when I first started fishing, I couldn't even throw a baitcaster. I'd backlash every time. I was just practicing, steadily, to get better. Really, right before I started fishing tournaments, something about it made me want to fish more and more," he said.

## IT ALL PAID OFF

His practice and savvy paid off. As a sophomore, Carter and Cameron Trichel, a junior, won the NLHSA's AOY. The Sterlington team qualified for nationals that year and the previous year in Major League Fishing/The Bass Federation's Student Angler Federation.

Going into his junior year, Carter decided to fish with Colby Dark of West Monroe High School's Bayou Ratz. Carter and Dark haven't skipped a beat. On Jan. 24, they finished second in an MLF High School Fishing tournament at Toledo Bend with 14 pounds, 12 ounces, to qualify for the MLF High School Fishing National Championship coming up June 22-25 at Pickwick and Wilson lakes in Florence, Alabama. He and his partners have finished in the top 20 in 14 different high school events and even won and placed high in some open tournaments in the area along with qualifying for nationals three years in a row.

Carter's favorite body of water to fish around home in June is Bayou Bartholomew Lake.

"I've learned how to catch them pretty good," he said, then talked about how to fish it this month. "That's when everything's getting hotter and the fish pull into deeper water. The fish get out in the brushtops, normally in 10 to 15 feet of water. You have to have Panoptix (live imaging). It really gives them away," he said, noting he targets the midlake area. "If not, go down the bank with a Sidescan and mark a bunch of them, then go back and fish them. Fishing those brushtops, normally

Paired on the front deck of a bass boat, Ian Carter and Colby Dark are a team to be reckoned with on any body of water, in any tournament.

I throw a 10-inch Zoom Ol' Monster, a dark color like black, South African, even watermelon or green pumpkin, depending on the water color down there."

## DON'T FORGET DADOO

Carter said his sponsors include Rougarou Tackle, Hammer Fishing Rods, Dark Construction, Benoit Ford and "I can't ever forget 'Dadoo Inc.'" The latter is special, the elder Carter said, because that's his son's maternal grandfather, Jimmy McCain.

"We just call him that (Dadoo Inc.)," John Carter said.

McCain furnishes "all kinds of stuff," including an RV, and follows them on the road, including a tournament last year in South Carolina ... after finding a dialysis center for his treatment.

John Carter, 52, who works in maintenance for the U.S. Postal Service, has been his son's boat captain until this year. This year's boat captain is Kegan Bretton of Sterlington, John Carter's close friend.

John Carter has time to help his wife run the NLHSA. She has been director since starting the organization.

Bretton said, "I enjoy going out with the kids. We're doing good. We've got two very talented kids – Colby and Ian. His partner last year (Trichel) was, too. They've got a good future. They make us all proud."

Carter's future includes, hopefully, he said, fishing as a collegiate bass angler and, perhaps, later, in the Bassmaster Opens or an MLF circuit. ■



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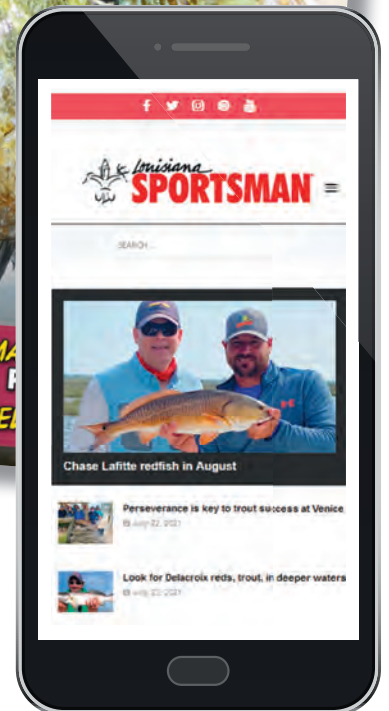
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# UNBEARABLE

**LOUISIANA'S BLACK BEAR STORY INCLUDES CONCERN OVER WILDLIFE HABITAT, SAFETY AND DAMAGE.**

■ By Kinny Haddox

**Louisiana outdoor writers, including this one, probably never thought they would be writing about this topic in our state:**

# BLACK BEARS.

Oh, maybe we would recall the days of President Teddy Roosevelt's famous hunt in Louisiana. Or maybe relay a story of bears crossing an open field on a federal refuge.

But here we are, talking bears. And here they are, too, becoming the center of a growing controversy over crowding other wildlife out of their habitat, property destruction and growing interactions with humans, including up-close encounters between bears and hunters and other safety concerns.

There are lots of opinions and self-proclaimed experts on the subject, maybe as many as there are bears. There is no accurate, official count of either.

Through 2019, population monitoring and estimates were focused on studies of only four bear subpopulations, Lower Atchafalaya Basin (LAB), Upper Atchafalaya Basin (UAB), Three Rivers Corridor (TRC) and Tensas River Basin (TRB)) that exist in the Mississippi alluvial valley (MAV), according to the

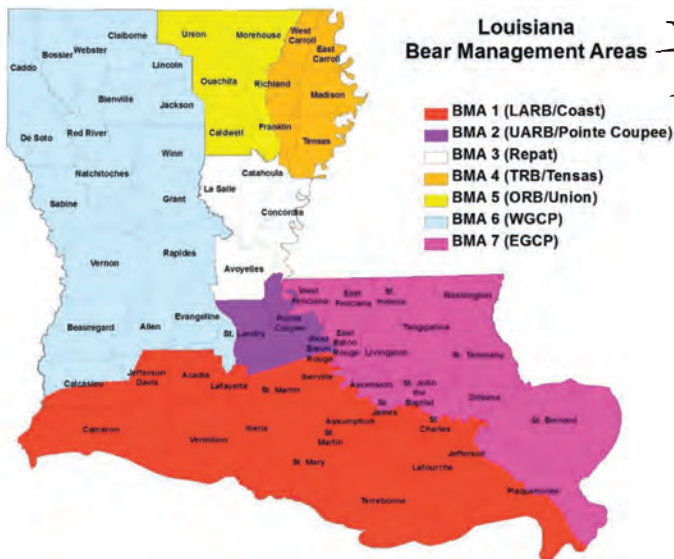
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Their most recent LDWF estimate for those four subpopulations is ~500-600 bears. The latest published U.S. Fish and Wildlife estimates are 500-750.

While they won't go on the record as such, members of both organizations have said privately they believe the numbers are much higher. Although it's being worked on now, the last official LDWF Louisiana Black Bear Management Plan is dated January, 2015.

Beginning in 2020, the LDWF began efforts to estimate bear numbers at a larger scale, or by Bear Management Area (BMA), and expanded study into seven BMAs. LDWF's first efforts to estimate bears at this scale were completed in summers of 2020 and 2021 for BMAs 2, 3 and 4. As results of this work are finalized and analyzed, they expect to be able to determine best methods to more accurately estimate statewide numbers.



Sightings and contact with big black bears like this one have become far too common in some areas of the state, especially among hunters and those that regularly spend time outdoors.



Louisiana's Bear Management areas as shown in the latest printed version of the LDWF Black Bear Management Plan from January 2015.

go in the woods alone. The reason? A serious and real concern over black bears. The bears have no fear of humans. They walk up to camps and go on the carports and porches. They follow hunters in the woods. And on occasion, they approach downed deer to try and claim them before hunters even get to them.

Mabry said he believed free-roaming bears are having a serious impact on deer populations and the habitat needed for other wildlife. It was his opinion that the unmanaged black bears pose a real threat to deer numbers in the state. He felt true concern about black bear interactions with humans and the destruction of property and equipment, threatening the ecological system that was already in place well before the re-introduction of lots more black bears.

Tragically, Mabry recently passed away suddenly this spring after speaking openly about the situation. But the concerns he had continue with a growing list of others.

## CONCERNS ARE GROWING

One thing cannot be denied. Growing populations of bears are becoming a public nuisance in some areas.

Bears have no natural predators in Louisiana and there is currently no hunting season. The issue has reached into the daily lives of thousands of Louisiana residents, farmers, property owners and hunters.

Pat Mabry managed and hunted his family land in Tensas Parish for decades. The family and their hunting club members are leaders when it comes to being good stewards of wildlife and the land. They appreciate Mother Nature's bounty as much as anyone. Seeing a bear in the woods isn't a problem. But seeing them by the dozens, seeing the growing damage they cause and seeing a decline in habitat for other wildlife, including lower numbers of whitetail deer, amplifies their concern.

A veteran outdoorsman, Mabry wouldn't even go into the woods the last several years without carrying a pistol for personal protection in case of a close encounter that might go bad. He said he no longer felt comfortable letting his young grandchildren

## ANXIETY OVER SAFETY ➤

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## ANXIETY OVER SAFETY

While there are no documented cases of bears attacking humans in Louisiana, there are numerous reports from other states where this has happened. Outdoorsmen fear it is just a matter of time. There are already reports of bears breaking into camps, cars and other structures in search of food.

This past season, deer hunter Dedria Brashear had a hair-raising experience when she attempted to recover a big 12-point buck she shot with her bow and arrow. She went back to camp for a while to give the buck time to expire. When she returned, her flashlight shined on the white belly of her deer. As she approached, she saw a large portion of one hindquarter had been eaten. She heard movement in the nearby thicket, shone her light in that direction and there was a big black bear. Alone in the dark with the bear, she could only wave her arms and shout repeatedly. She finally convinced the bear to leave, saying when it did, it sounded like a big bulldozer crashing through the woods in the dark.

There are many other similar stories. Stories of black bears climbing trees and deer stands with hunters in them. Stories of destructive acts in the woods, around camps and with deer stands and feeders.



Damage like this to deer stands in bear country is becoming a regular occurrence.

Farmers report heightening concern with annual losses to crops, especially corn fields. Bears will become comfortable in an area and set up shop inside a corn field where they are not visible except from the air. They'll camp there, sit and eat up to two or three acres of corn in a 100 acre field and just bed down. This will be repeated in numerous fields, especially near wooded areas. Sugar cane farmers also face significant damage from bears looking for easy meals.

Beekeepers in areas with bears report losing their entire sets of hives. The list continues to grow, including bears congregating at rural trash dumpsters and occasionally roaming residential neighborhoods.

Interest of this issue is so high that a group of concerned outdoorsmen started a Louisiana Black Bear Report Facebook page late last year to get more accurate reports of black bear numbers, their locations and anxiety about contacts. The page quickly had more than 10,000 followers and to date, counts a half million views. Reports and photos of black bears have come in from across the state from people who actually witness the problem in real life.

While LDWF reports the largest number of bears today roam the lower Atchafalaya, upper Atchafalaya and Tensas River areas, a large group of bears now inhabit Union, Morehouse and surrounding north central parishes. Authorities say these rapidly increasing number of bears are migrating down river systems from Arkansas and traveling to and some up from the Tensas corridor. Nobody knows how many are in this area.

Attempted progress to manage the situation has been met by opposition from protectionist groups that use the court systems to interfere with efforts of the LDWF or USFWS to properly manage bear populations. The main fear of those groups appears to be a legal bear season, which actual research has shown would be a viable tool.

## THE DELISTING

The USFWS first proposed to delist the Louisiana black bear in May 2015, after determining the recovery criteria, as defined in the 1995 Louisiana Black Bear Recovery Plan, had been met and threats to the bear were reduced or eliminated. In March of 2016, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell came to the state and announced that the Louisiana Black Bear would be delisted under provisions of the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

In 1992, there were as few as 150 bears existing in three known breeding subpopulations that were confined to the bottomland hardwood forests of Louisiana in the Tensas and Atchafalaya River basins.

Patience is wearing thin among groups that seek relief from this issue. Legislation to give the LDWF authority to properly manage bear numbers by holding a bear hunting season in some areas of the state was filed in the 2022 Louisiana Legislature. Senator Stewart Cathey led the effort.

"I have just heard from so many farmers, hunters, landowners and other citizens who have had countless issues with personal property damage and crop damage caused by the

“The woods are already stressed to the max with hogs, whitetail deer and now bears, all competing for the same food sources and habitat. Add in turkeys and small game. Something’s going to lose, and I’m afraid it is going to be the whitetail deer.”

This bear broke into a deer camp, caused damage to the inside and left with a full jar of fish fry mix.



## MOST WORRISOME OF ALL

Perhaps the most worrisome part of this story to hunters and conservationists like Greg Hicks is what growing numbers of unmanaged bears are doing in the already crowded woodland habitat of the state.

“The woods are already stressed to the max with hogs, whitetail deer and now bears, all competing for the same food sources and habitat. Add in turkeys and small game,” Hicks said. “Something’s going to lose, and I’m afraid it is going to be the whitetail deer. It is already impacting the number of people who hunt and the money they spend. The amount of money it is costing hunters because of the damage is extremely frustrating. That means it is costing the state tax dollars, too. That doesn’t even begin to tell what farmers are up against. We just don’t want the bear problem to get like the feral hog problem and be out of control before people in charge realize how significant it is and do something about it.”



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.

## BLACK BEARS IN LOUISIANA >

growing number of bears,” Sen. Cathey said. “The bears have become a real nuisance and have turned into a safety issue on both sides. It’s getting so a lot of fathers and grandfathers don’t feel safe taking their children and grandchildren in the woods because of encounters with bears. We already face enough challenges passing the legacy of hunting and enjoying the outdoors to our youth. Bears have no natural predators in Louisiana and they have little fear of human contact. They are growing in size and numbers. It’s not a healthy situation.”

Because of the changing nature of legislation, legal actions and updates in the law, interested parties will have to follow timely news reports for the latest information on the issue.

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# LDWF SHARES HISTORY INSIGHT INTO BLACK BEARS IN LOUISIANA

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other groups have done extensive research on black bears in Louisiana. LDWF answered these questions from the Louisiana Sportsman to provide a better insight into that.

**Question:** Is there an accurate estimate available of the numbers of black bears believed to be in Louisiana today?

**Answer:** Through 2019, population monitoring and estimates were focused on studies of four subpopulations (Lower Atchafalaya Basin (LAB), Upper Atchafalaya Basin (UAB), Three Rivers Corridor (TRC), and Tensas River Basin (TRB) that exist in the Mississippi alluvial valley (MAV). The most recent estimate for the study areas we have monitored within those four subpopulations is ~500-600 bears. Beginning in 2020, we began efforts to estimate bear numbers at a larger scale or by Bear Management Area (BMA; Louisiana has 7 BMAs established in its Bear Management Plan. Our first efforts to estimate bears at this scale were completed in summers 2020 and 2021 for BMAs 2, 3 and 4. As results of this work are finalized and analyzed, we may be able to determine best methods to estimate statewide populations.

**Question:** How was that number derived?

**Answer:** Bear populations are estimated by Capture Mark Recapture (CMR) methods. This is done by deploying a number of hair snares for a given amount of time across the landscape that allow bears to be individually “captured and marked” by leaving a DNA signature. In a subsequent time period, the same process is repeated allowing “marked bears” to be “recaptured” and potentially more unmarked bears to be encountered. Mathematical formulas utilizing these numbers and ratios as well as telemetry data that model capture probability allow statistically valid estimates of populations.

**Question:** Is it growing or declining each year?

**Answer:** The population is stable to slightly increasing where adequate to good habitat exists. The most recent study area population growth data indicates stable to 1% growth.

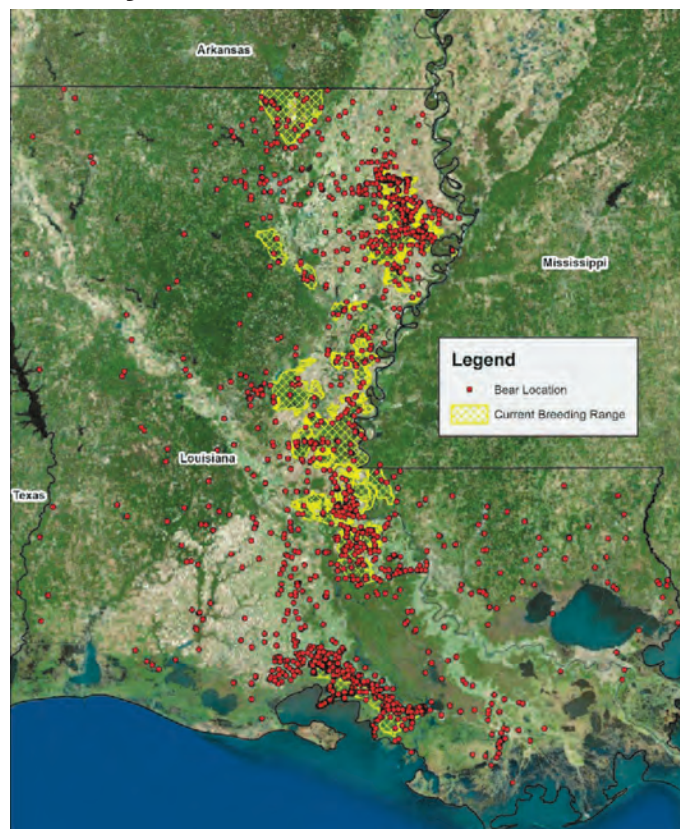
**Question:** Do you feel the information collected through hours of research, agency coordination and expert study that led to the delisting of the black bear in Louisiana is still valid?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** How does the LDWF work together with the USF&WS to work on management programs for black bears, count bears or establish programs around black bear work?

**Answer:** Bear population monitoring, conflict and management are primarily state responsibilities. The USFWS has been an important partner in de-listing black bears, and in providing cooperative PDM reports on the habitat components of the 5 year PDM period. They are also critical partners in managing some of the best and most important core area habitats at Tensas River, Bayou Cocardie and Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs).

Black bear locations and breeding grounds in Louisiana from the last printed version of the LDWF Black Bear Management Plan from January 2015. The LDWF is currently updating the plan information.



**Question:** The natural corridors that are normally part of bear discussions do not include the Union/Morehouse parish areas, but these areas seem to have more bears in them than some others. Where did the bears in those areas mentioned come from?

**Answer:** Union and Morehouse parishes are part of BMA 5. Bears in this BMA are likely coming from the Arkansas population as well as some from Tensas.

**Question:** What progress has been made to deal with black bear issues in the past 5-6 years since the state and federal wildlife authorities agreed it was proper to delist the black bear from the endangered species list?

**Answer:** Bear conflict is addressed by LDWF regional and programmatic efforts to educate the public encountering bears. BearWise (<https://bearwise.org/>) is a national effort in which LDWF has been heavily involved with to provide the public with information to avoid, or minimize conflicts with bears. The single most numerous cause of conflict with bears is providing them a source of food. This can be in the form of a deer feeder or an exposed garbage can/dumpster. Simply removing these food sources reduces or alleviates most sources of non-agricultural conflict. We will continue our efforts to educate the public in understanding and living with bears, where appropriate.

**Question:** Obviously wildlife like deer, ducks and turkeys have a huge economic impact on Louisiana with hunters spending millions of dollars and generating huge amounts of tax revenue. Does the black bear bring any type of actual revenue or economic value to the state like other wildlife?

**Answer:** One of the greatest economic benefits of black bears to people in Louisiana has been the protection, restoration and conservation of bottomland hardwoods within the MAV. The occurrence or potential occurrence of black bears on lands within the MAV has provided higher conservation rankings among candidate tracts for enrollment in the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Protecting and conserving critical black bear habitats has increased land values for recreational and conservation minded landowners. These same habitats provide incredibly important ecosystem values and services to all people, such as ground water recharge, flood control, water storage, water quality improvements, carbon sequestration, and habitat for migratory waterfowl, songbirds, furbearers, white-tailed deer, small game and many other wildlife species. Black bears are a large predator/omnivore that are a part of our natural history and they have important ecological functions, such as seed dispersal and scavenging. Seeing one in the wild can be a special occasion for many. Bears bring a level of wildness to our state that other species may not inspire.

**Question:** Thirty-five states have open black bear seasons. Why do you think, with Louisiana's heritage of management of wildlife and hunting, is it an issue to have a season in Louisiana?

**Answer:** Black bears in Louisiana were only delisted 6 years ago. Additionally the USFWS has had legal action taken against it twice over the delisting decision. Working through this process with our conservation partners has required some patience. Additionally, Louisiana will never have the kind of robust population of bears compared to most states that have bear seasons, so

we must be prudent in this consideration. LDWF management of the black bear will be focused on sustainability of the species within suitable habitat areas of the state.

**Question:** If the data supports a season to help manage populations of bears, using the same criteria and goals as for any other type of wildlife resource, will the LDWF support a season within proper management guidelines that can be set by the department?

**Answer:** Yes, LDWF does intend to establish hunting season rules and regulations for harvest of bears when and where we have adequate data to suggest it is appropriate and sustainable.

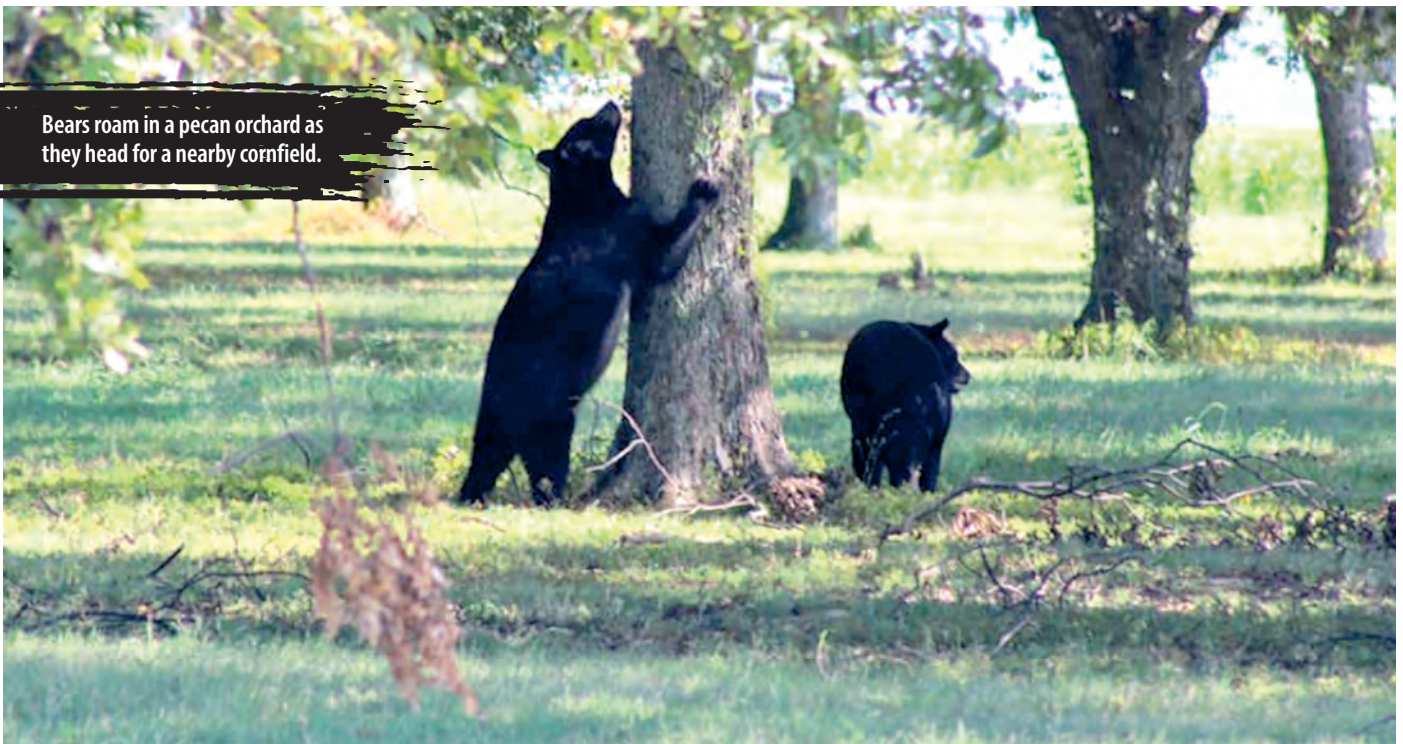
**Question:** Are there other means of managing black bear populations without a hunting season? Possibly relocations to other areas?

**Answer:** Teaching people how to live with bears is our first priority. LDWF moves bears when appropriate and there is a purpose to do so. However, the biological condition of bears must be weighed in these decisions, as it is often the driver on whether or not the animal will venture to return to the area from which it was removed.

**Question:** Is there anything else that you would like to share or add about bear population and management going forward in Louisiana?

**Answer:** Yes, LDWF strives to enrich and sustain all the natural wildlife and fisheries resources associated with the Sportsman's Paradise. The black bear is another mega fauna species that we have been successful in restoring to the landscape, much due to the great collaboration of partners from USFWS, USDA/NRCS, NGOs and private landowners. Providing opportunities for harvest of bears in Louisiana will bring additional value to the animal, as well as these partners that have provided the resources for success of black bear restoration in Louisiana. ■

Bears roam in a pecan orchard as they head for a nearby cornfield.



# SWEET AND SOUR WILD PORK

PUT WILD PIG MEAT  
TO GOOD USE

The problems surrounding wild pigs in Louisiana is nothing new to those of us trying to manage a deer herd. We have all had our fill of trying to regulate them either through trapping, the use of dogs, or even the occasional kill from a deer stand.

Don't let anyone fool you, these problematic four-legged critters can be quite the treat around the dinner table. Here's one good way to help put them to use.

**TIP!**

The wild pork can be substituted with chunks of wild turkey breast for another treat provided by the outdoors.



**INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 cup corn starch
- 2 ½ cups canola oil
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds
- 1 cup cooked rice

**MARINADE:**

- 1 lb pork loin cubed into bite size pieces
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 1 medium egg

**SAUCE:**

- 2 teaspoons canola oil
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- ½ chopped red bell pepper
- ½ chopped green bell pepper
- 2/3 cup chopped pineapple
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup rice wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons ketchup

**PREPARATION:** Serves 2

1. In a bowl, combine all marinade ingredients with the cubed pork. Cover and leave in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.
2. Place the corn starch in a large bowl and toss the marinated pork chunks until thoroughly coated.
3. Heat oil to 350°F in a medium sized sauce pan.
4. Fry the pork for roughly four minutes until the coating is golden brown and the pork is cooked throughout.
5. Set the pork aside.
6. Heat canola oil in pan and sauté the

- garlic until fragrant, then fry the peppers until tender.
7. Add the pineapple and warm throughout.
8. Add sugar, vinegar, and ketchup. Stir until incorporated. Bring the mixture to soft boil.
9. Add the pork to the frying pan and coat everything evenly with the sauce.
10. Serve over cooked rice.
11. Sprinkle sesame seeds on top to garnish.



*Jason Thornton was born and raised hunting, fishing, trapping, foraging and gardening in south Louisiana. His personal belief is that all of nature's ingredients are better if you have to work for them. He can be found at EdibleOutdoorsCook.com.*

Camp potatoes are done and the steaks have hit the Disc. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Blackened New York Strips are done and resting on the versatile and portable FIREDISC.



# COOK WHERE YOU ARE!

NEW VERSATILE, PORTABLE COOKING SYSTEM WILL LET YOU DO THAT EASILY

**If** By Kinny Haddox  
you are like most woods and waters lovers, your two favorite places to cook are indoors and outdoors. And that includes anywhere you want to go. That pretty well covers it, right? And ever since fire was invented, man has looked for creative new ways to cook.

Using a disc cooker isn't necessarily new, but a couple of brothers out in Texas have come up with the new FIREDISC cooking system that is as versatile as it is portable. It's a grill, wok, fryer and steamer all in one. And it folds up small enough to fit behind the seat in your pickup truck, including the fuel source.

The disc's design includes three cooking areas — a hot center, medium middle ring and an outside segment that just keeps food warm. The FIREDISC is great for fixing something like stir fry. It's perfect for grilling a steak, frying up pork chops and even cooking

a big camp breakfast. Try a stir fry with a pound of big shrimp, some chopped cabbage, purple onion, some red peppers and asparagus tips and a few pre-cooked noodles (which, by the way, I have). Every ingredient needs a different cooking time so you can cook one ingredient at a time, then stir it all together — in the same "pan." When it's done and plated with a sliced avocado, as Guy Fieri would say, "You are riding the bus to Flavortown."

It also has the power to allow you to fill it up with oil and fry fish and French fries.

The most attractive thing about the FIREDISC, besides how it cooks, is that it is so portable. You can be power cooking with a one-pound canister of propane for on-the-go cooking, or you can hook up to a 20-pound bottle on your back porch or outdoor kitchen. The cooking disc itself comes off, the legs fold up and it stores in a fairly small space. The stainless steel disc is heavy and durable. It also comes with an array of options and accessories.



Texan brothers Hunter and Griff Jaggard were frustrated with finding the right cooking setup for their hobbies like hunting, fishing, camping and tailgating, plus having a versatile tool for use at home. The brothers reimagined what cooking outside could be and combined that with the traditional disc type cooking that is popular in their region. They began their project in 2010 and it took a while. By 2017, they had it where they wanted it and they both left commercial real estate careers to focus on their passion.

## HUNTING CAMP STEAKS

One of my favorite meals so far on the FIREDISC was a meal of blackened steak and camp potatoes on the outdoor porch at deer camp this past season. We peeled and chopped up three large baking potatoes, a big onion, a bell pepper and three gloves of garlic, gave it a good shake of Cajun seasoning and sautéed it all together in a quarter cup of olive oil in the FIREDISC. Then we slid the potatoes to the warming area when they were browned and tender.

Next we tossed some marinated New York Strip steaks on the hot center and blackened them on both sides, let them rest about five minutes and gobbled it up. The whole process from grill setup to prep to cooking to eating took about 25 minutes. And cleanup consisted of letting the disc cool, wiping it down good with a damp cloth, then a quick rub of oil on the cooking surface to prevent rusting. You need to store the disc in a dry area where dampness won't cause the stainless steel surface to rust where it isn't seasoned.

You can learn all about the FireDisc cookers, how to use them and all the accessories at [www.firediscscookers.com](http://www.firediscscookers.com). ■

### 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, & Bluefin 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 (Gaspargou)	12" TL	25/day
Channel Catfish	11" TL*	***
Blue Catfish	12" TL*	***
Bowfin	16" TL	None
Flathead Catfish	14" TL*	***
Crawfish	None	150 lbs./day
Paddlefish	30" max LJFL	2*
Shad	None	50 lbs./day
Black Bass (largemouth & spotted)	None*	10/day*
Striped Bass/ Hybrid Striped Bass	**	5/day*
Sturgeon	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
White Bass	None	50/day*
Yellow Bass	None	50/day*
Bluegill (Bream)	None	None*

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



**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 when a Primary period overlaps a major solar period (eg: Dawn, High-Noon, and Dusk). The secondary periods of Moonrise and Moonset last about one hour each... 30 minutes before and after the listed time. (See key at bottom of each month for more detail.)

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

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

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2022 JUN	BEST DAYS				VALUE
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCEL	
Wed 1	██	██	██	██	68
Thu 2	██	██	██	██	59
Fri 3	██	██	██	██	54
Sat 4	██	██	██	██	54
Sun 5	██	██	██	██	53
Mon 6	██	██	██	██	56
Tue 7	██	██	██	██	64
Wed 8	██	██	██	██	52
Thu 9	██	██	██	██	45
Fri 10	██	██	██	██	44
Sat 11	██	██	██	██	52
Sun 12	██	██	██	██	60
Mon 13	██	██	██	██	70
Tue 14	██	██	██	██	75
Wed 15	██	██	██	██	64
Thu 16	██	██	██	██	53
Fri 17	██	██	██	██	45
Sat 18	██	██	██	██	41
Sun 19	██	██	██	██	47
Mon 20	██	██	██	██	59
Tue 21	██	██	██	██	52
Wed 22	██	██	██	██	49
Thu 23	██	██	██	██	50
Fri 24	██	██	██	██	53
Sat 25	██	██	██	██	63
Sun 26	██	██	██	██	74
Mon 27	██	██	██	██	84
Tue 28	██	██	██	██	89
Wed 29	██	██	██	██	79
Thu 30	██	██	██	██	69
25 50 75 AVERAGE					

LUNAR PERIODS					TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED	
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT			
7:24 am	1:09 pm - 4:55 pm	10:41 pm	12:46 am - 4:28 am	☉	☾	
8:15 am	2:02 pm - 5:44 pm	11:28 pm	1:34 am - 5:20 am	☉	☾	
9:11 am	2:55 pm - 6:31 pm	no period	2:27 am - 6:09 am	☉	☾	
10:09 am	3:47 pm - 7:13 pm	12:09 am	3:20 am - 6:56 am	☉	☾	
11:09 am	4:40 pm - 7:52 pm	12:44 am	4:12 am - 7:38 am	☉	☾	
12:08 pm	5:33 pm - 8:29 pm	1:16 am	5:05 am - 8:17 am	☉	☾	
1:09 pm	6:25 pm - 9:05 pm	1:45 am	5:58 am - 8:54 am	☉	☾	
2:10 pm	7:21 pm - 9:37 pm	2:12 am	6:50 am - 9:30 am	☉	☾	
3:13 pm	8:16 pm - 10:12 pm	2:39 am	7:46 am - 10:02 am	☉	☾	
4:19 pm	9:15 pm - 10:51 pm	3:06 am	8:41 am - 10:37 am	☉	☾	
5:30 pm	10:17 pm - 11:33 pm	3:37 am	9:40 am - 11:16 am	☉	☾	
6:44 pm	11:24 pm - Midnight	4:13 am	10:42 am - 11:58 am	☉	☾	
8:00 pm	Midnight - 12:22 am	4:56 am	11:49 am - 12:47 pm	☉	☾	
9:14 pm	12:33 am - 1:19 am	5:49 am	12:58 pm - 1:44 pm	☉	☾	
10:20 pm	1:42 am - 2:24 am	6:51 am	2:07 pm - 2:42 pm	☉	☾	
11:15 pm	2:47 am - 3:33 am	8:02 am	3:12 pm - 3:58 pm	☉	☾	
11:59 pm	3:45 am - 4:41 am	9:17 am	4:10 pm - 5:06 pm	☉	☾	
no period	4:37 am - 5:45 am	10:30 am	5:02 pm - 6:10 pm	☉	☾	
12:36 am	5:21 am - 6:47 am	11:40 am	5:46 pm - 7:12 pm	☉	☾	
1:08 am	5:59 am - 7:45 am	12:45 pm	6:24 pm - 8:10 pm	☉	☾	
1:36 am	6:33 am - 8:41 am	1:48 pm	6:58 pm - 9:06 pm	☉	☾	
2:02 am	7:06 am - 9:36 am	2:48 pm	7:31 pm - 10:01 pm	☉	☾	
2:28 am	7:41 am - 10:27 am	3:48 pm	8:06 pm - 10:52 pm	☉	☾	
2:56 am	8:14 am - 11:20 am	4:47 pm	8:39 pm - 11:45 pm	☉	☾	
3:25 am	8:52 am - 12:12 pm	5:47 pm	9:17 pm - 12:37 am	☉	☾	
3:59 am	9:33 am - 1:05 pm	6:46 pm	9:58 pm - 1:30 am	☉	☾	
4:37 am	10:18 am - 1:58 pm	7:43 pm	10:43 pm - 2:23 am	☉	☾	
5:21 am	11:07 am - 2:49 pm	8:36 pm	11:32 pm - Midnight	☉	☾	
6:11 am	11:58 am - 3:40 pm	9:25 pm	Midnight - 3:14 am	☉	☾	
7:05 am	12:49 pm - 4:29 pm	10:08 pm	12:23 am - 4:05 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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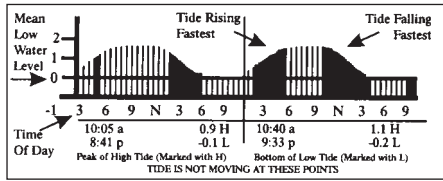
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How to use the **SPORTSMAN** Tide Guide



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

Tide Corrections

**East Point, Grand Isle** HIGH LOW

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

**Calcasieu Pass, Lighthouse Wharf** HIGH LOW

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

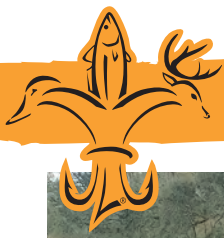
SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

**East Point Grand Isle**

			2.0ft. 1.0ft. 0.0ft.	1	2	3	4	
				3 6 9 N 3 6 9 10:53 am 1.4 H 10:24 pm -0.2 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 11:31 am 1.4 H 11:07 pm -0.1 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:10 pm 1.3 H 11:48 pm -0.1 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:46 pm 1.3 H	
2.0ft. 1.0ft. 0.0ft.	5	6	7	FQ	8	9	10	11
	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:23 am -0.1 L 1:18 pm 1.2 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:50 am 0.0 L 1:43 pm 1.0 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:04 am 0.2 L 1:38 pm 0.9 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:55 am 0.3 L 10:20 am 0.7 H 11:37 pm 0.5 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 8:14 am 0.8 H 5:36 pm 0.3 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 7:36 am 1.0 H 5:46 pm 0.1 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 7:40 am 1.2 H 6:24 pm -0.2 L	
2.0ft. 1.0ft. 0.0ft.	12	13	14	FM	15	16	17	18
	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 8:08 am 1.4 H 7:12 pm -0.3 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 8:50 am 1.5 H 8:07 pm -0.5 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 9:40 am 1.6 H 9:06 pm -0.5 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 10:34 am 1.6 H 10:07 pm -0.5 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 11:29 am 1.6 H 11:07 pm -0.5 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:22 pm 1.5 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:01 am -0.3 L 1:09 pm 1.3 H	
2.0ft. 1.0ft. 0.0ft.	19	20	LQ	21	22	23	24	25
	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:46 am -0.1 L 1:41 pm 1.1 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:12 am 0.1 L 1:16 pm 0.8 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:55 am 0.3 L 9:48 am 0.7 H 9:02 pm 0.5 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 7:54 am 0.8 H 5:53 pm 0.3 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 7:18 am 1.0 H 6:06 pm 0.1 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 7:23 am 1.1 H 6:34 pm -0.1 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 7:45 am 1.2 H 7:06 pm -0.2 L	
2.0ft. 1.0ft. 0.0ft.	26	27	28	NM	29	30	Order the Tide Guides for over 40 locations throughout Louisiana. Call 1-800-538-4355 or go on line www.lasmag.com	
	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 8:16 am 1.3 H 7:42 pm -0.2 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 8:53 am 1.3 H 8:19 pm -0.3 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 9:31 am 1.3 H 8:58 pm -0.2 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 10:10 am 1.4 H 9:36 pm -0.2 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 10:47 am 1.3 H 10:12 pm -0.2 L			

**Calcasieu Pass Lighthouse Wharf**

			3.0ft. 1.5ft. 0.0ft.	1	2	3	4	
				3 6 9 N 3 6 9 6:53 am 2.1 H 10:59 pm 0.0 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 7:38 am 2.0 H 11:38 pm 0.1 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 8:34 am 2.0 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:19 am 0.2 L 9:23 am 1.9 H	
3.0ft. 1.5ft. 0.0ft.	5	6	7	FQ	8	9	10	11
	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:04 am 0.4 L 9:58 am 1.9 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:58 am 0.5 L 10:23 am 1.9 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 2:59 am 0.7 L 10:41 am 1.9 H 5:11 pm 1.2 L 9:33 pm 1.4 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:00 am 0.9 L 10:53 am 1.9 H 5:30 pm 0.9 L 11:30 pm 1.5 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 5:03 am 1.1 L 11:06 am 1.8 H 6:02 pm 0.5 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:13 am 1.7 H 6:16 am 1.3 L 11:24 am 1.8 H 6:39 pm 0.2 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 2:14 am 2.0 H 7:24 am 1.5 L 11:47 am 1.9 H 7:20 pm -0.2 L	
3.0ft. 1.5ft. 0.0ft.	12	13	14	FM	15	16	17	18
	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:11 am 2.2 H 12:16 pm 1.9 H 8:03 pm -0.5 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:12 am 2.3 H 12:50 pm 2.0 H 8:49 pm -0.7 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 5:12 am 2.4 H 10:01 am 1.8 L 1:27 pm 2.1 H 9:38 pm -0.8 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 6:08 am 2.4 H 10:47 am 1.9 H 2:08 pm 2.1 L 10:30 pm -0.7 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 7:05 am 2.3 H 11:32 am 1.9 L 2:52 pm 2.1 H 11:22 pm -0.6 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 8:07 am 2.2 H 12:24 pm 1.8 L 3:49 pm 2.0 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:16 am -0.3 L 9:03 am 2.1 H 1:44 pm 1.7 L 5:09 pm 1.8 H	
3.0ft. 1.5ft. 0.0ft.	19	20	LQ	21	22	23	24	25
	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:15 am 0.0 L 9:45 am 2.0 H 3:19 pm 1.4 L 6:49 pm 1.6 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 2:23 am 0.4 L 10:17 am 1.9 H 4:18 pm 1.1 L 9:26 pm 1.5 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:38 am 0.8 L 10:38 am 1.8 H 5:05 pm 0.8 L 11:40 pm 1.6 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:53 am 1.1 L 10:48 am 1.8 H 5:48 pm 0.5 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:22 am 1.8 H 6:14 am 1.3 L 10:53 am 1.7 H 6:28 pm 0.2 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 2:30 am 1.9 H 7:29 am 1.5 L 11:05 am 1.7 H 7:04 pm 0.0 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:29 am 2.0 H 8:30 am 1.6 L 11:24 am 1.7 H 7:39 pm -0.1 L	
3.0ft. 1.5ft. 0.0ft.	26	27	28	NM	29	30	Order the Tide Guides for over 40 locations throughout Louisiana. Call 1-800-538-4355 or go on line www.lasmag.com	
	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:23 am 2.1 H 9:27 am 1.7 L 11:50 am 1.8 H 8:12 pm -0.2 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 5:07 am 2.1 H 10:19 am 1.7 L 12:21 pm 1.8 H 8:47 pm -0.2 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 5:41 am 2.1 H 9:23 pm -0.2 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 6:11 am 2.0 H 11:07 am 1.8 L 1:20 pm 1.8 L 10:00 pm -0.2 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 6:39 am 2.0 H 11:02 am 1.8 L 1:44 pm 1.8 L 10:37 pm -0.1 L			



## HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



**Leah Englehart**

Leah Englehart, 17, of Mandeville on her first quail hunt with her dog Yaya. The hunt took place in Husser.



**Jake Morello**

Jake Morello, 9, had a great time on his first duck hunt during the youth weekend near Chauvin with guide Anthony Kyzar.



**Jennifer Langlinois**

Jennifer Langlinois of Mouton Cove caught this redfish at Cheniere Au Tigre on Sept. 25.



**Kohen Baumgardner**

This redfish was caught by Kohen Baumgardner of Mouton Cove while fishing at Cheniere Au Tigre.



**Lenny Hayes**

On Jan. 12, Lenny Hayes of Montz decided to defy the "experts" who all slept in, claiming that "with 70 degrees and 18 mph winds at 6 a.m. deer wouldn't be moving." Instead, Lenny got on his stand and scored big-time.



**Allen Swisher**

Allen Swisher caught this nice bass fishing for brim with his dad on private property in Jefferson Davis Parish.



**Landon Bingham**

Landon Bingham with RiverCity Outdoors caught this sac-a-lait from Poverty Point Reservoir in Delhi, La.



# NO LIONS, NO TIGERS, BUT YES – LOUISIANA HAS BEAUCOUP BEARS, OH MY!

I know. It's fishing season. But bear with me...

My oldest grandson tapped me on the knee and said, "Poppa, there are some squirrels out in the shooting lane!" They were scampering around in a little area where we had strewn some corn to attract a little wildlife action.

He was facing one way out of my 4 by 8 foot Tiger Bend deer wooden box stand down an old woods road and I was in a chair facing the other way. I told him if he saw anything, just tap me on the knee, tell me what he saw and I'd turn around and look. I told him if it was a deer, to tell me quietly and not to move. I don't do heights any more and my stands are only four feet off the ground.

About 30 minutes later, he tapped me again. Two turkeys. Nice. But they didn't stay long. A few minutes later, he stood up, hit me on the shoulder like the Karate Kid trying to break a wooden block and exclaimed, "Poppa! There's a huge black bear looking at us and it's not far from the stand!"

I turned around, saw the big black clump of hair staring at us from about 40 yards away and eased my grandson back

behind me as I moved to the door of the stand. The bear, which was bigger than me, rambled a little bit closer. I reached out the window on the door and beat on the side of the stand. He just looked at us. Then I hollered "Hey Bear" loudly. Twice. Maybe thrice. I think I saw John Candy do that on the "Great Outdoors" movie. Anyway, the bear changed course and sauntered off into the piney woods.

I texted my son about 200 yards away in another stand and told him and my middle grandson to be on the lookout for a bear headed their way. It was two hours till dark, but in a few minutes he texted back and said he didn't feel comfortable walking through the woods after dark with the kids knowing that thing was out there. I understood.

## MORE BEARS THAN DEER

That was several years ago. It was my first encounter with a black bear in the deer woods. It wasn't my last. A couple of years ago, I gave up that hunting area in Union Parish because I had trail camera pictures of seven different black bears from a huge boar to moderately sized

cubs where my stands were. I had pictures of only five deer.

This past season, 107 miles away in Tensas Parish, my middle grandson hunted patiently the entire year to make sure his first deer was a good one. The final weekend of the season, it paid off. A big 8-point walked out 70 yards away in a food plot and he dropped him while hunting with his dad. They agreed to wait a few minutes to make sure he was down for good.

In the meantime, here comes a big black bear out of the thicket, moving in to take the downed deer like somebody had called his number at Arby's. It took quite a bit of commotion and noise to make the bear leave. As it began to get dark, it was a harrowing experience loading the deer onto the ATV and getting out of the woods, knowing the bear was peeved about missing supper.



*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.*

No big deal, right? Wrong. There are a growing number of human/bear contacts and conflicts which are becoming more scary each year. We cover the basics of that in a feature article in this month's magazine.

The intention of this "Today's a Good Day" column was to keep it as entertaining as possible, telling old stories and adding a bit of humor to the serious side of outdoor pursuits.

This month is an exception to bring to the forefront the need to address the situation. It doesn't affect everyone. But it is affecting more people every day.

## NOT AN EXPERT

I'm not an expert. I'm just a guy that loves to spend time in the woods, wants Louisiana's outdoor legacy preserved for his kids and grandkids and isn't afraid to say, "Hey, wait a minute, something needs to be done here."

Today's a good day to do that.

Black bears are a part of Louisiana history. Because of previous endangered species status, bears have been shielded from action and even shunned in most wildlife management and political discussions. Their numbers and range appear to be growing faster than anybody wants to admit. Six years ago, the state worked diligently with federal wildlife experts to take steps delisting the black bear so populations could be managed, not sheltered. They were delisted from being endangered species, and rightfully so.

Here's what I do know from my boots on the ground in the woods experience. It's time to address the elephant in the room and admit it is the black bear.

## THEY'RE NOT TEDDY BEARS

Of course, as always, there's another side to this story. It's the story of people and groups that want to protect them. All of them. No matter how many of them they are. It seems the dividing line is those that actually spend a lot of time outdoors and those that don't. There are real concerns there, too. But please don't say, "Oh, how cute. Leave them alone. They were here first."

No. No they weren't here first. Dinosaurs were actually here first. When bears conflict with people and cause damage on a regular basis, it's a dilemma. And no, these are not cute little Teddy Bears. They aren't just sparsely populated in hardwood bottom forests and bayous. They are in areas that don't have the habitat to sustain them and other wildlife, too.

Then there is the legal system. Protectionist groups have filed suits to stop management efforts, swooning at the mere thought of a hunting season for bears. I understand caring about bears. It's cool to see a bear. Occasionally. The black bear is the official mammal of Louisiana. Of course, there isn't much competition other than the Big Brown Bat, the West Indian Manatee and the Long-Tailed Weasel.

Hopefully courts will allow biologists and wildlife managers to do their job. Now.

The purpose of this month's coverage of the black bear is to help bring attention to this problem. It's an emotional issue. It's a divisive issue. But there are solutions and we have to come out of hibernation, find them and get them implemented. ■

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Peyton Murphy  
Trial Attorney

# Alario Bros

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## Trailer Supplies



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Large Selection in Stock



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## Fishing & Alligator Hooks



## Anodes



## Fishing Leads



## Knife Sharpeners



## Fishing Line



## Crab Knife



### Hard Hat Lights



### Briggs & Stratton Engines



### Crab Tongs



### Crab Claw Crackers



### Pots, Burners, Regulators, Hoses & Paddles



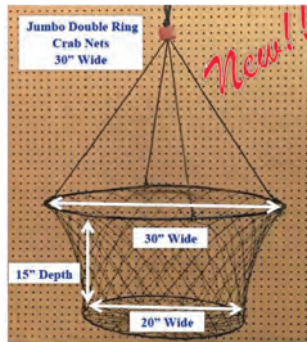
### Cast Nets



### Crab & Bait Holding Cages



### NEW 30" Crab Nets! Made In-house



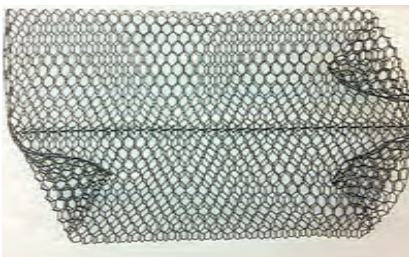
### Crab Traps



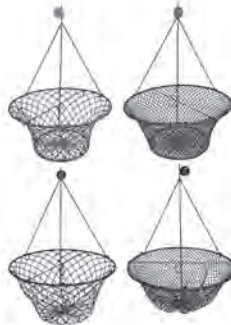
### Trawls



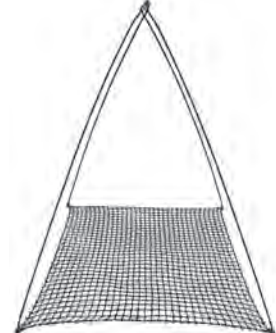
### Crawfish Pillow Traps



### Large & Small Crab Nets Made In-house



### Crawfish Nets Made In-house



**Alario Bros**  
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OUR STANDARD .160 THICK ALUMINUM HULLS, MAKE OUR BAY PRO MODELS THE TOUGHEST TODAY.



SCAN ME

# EXCEL

BOATS



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.

## Strong Collaboration. Effective Conservation.

Through our subsidiary, The Louisiana Land and Exploration Company LLC (LL&E), ConocoPhillips is the largest private wetlands owner in Louisiana. Together with our partners, we advance innovative solutions to coastal restoration that enhance habitats, support levee systems and protect communities.

### Collaboration and Innovation Bring Results:

- Through our partnership with Ducks Unlimited, we have donated more than \$10 million since 2012 to enhance more than 20,000 acres of Louisiana wetlands. Our most recent project at Island Road will benefit approximately 375 acres through marsh terracing.
- We actively work with parishes to support project opportunities that enhance habitats and resiliency in Louisiana's coastal zone.
- Our vast wetlands are ideal for coastal restoration research. We partner with Louisiana State University, University of South Alabama and Mississippi State University to support studies on marsh terraces, bird habitats and a variety of other environmental and ecological research projects.

To learn more, visit [conocophillips.com/louisianalegacy](https://conocophillips.com/louisianalegacy)

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**YAMAHA**

FOR OVER  
**41**  
YEARS

# Tims Marine

MODELS  
AVAILABLE FROM  
**20-26'**

## SPECIFICATIONS

Beam.....	8 ft 6 in
Deadrise.....	16 deg
Draft.....	13 in
Fuel capacity.....	.67 gal
LOA.....	24 ft 09 in
Maximum HP.....	350 hp
Weight (approx. w/ engine) .	3,500 lbs (w/ F300)



# PATHFINDER

## 2500 HYBRID

The most comprehensive family of bay boats on the planet perfect balance of performance, stability, shallow water capability, and comfort. All the models are designed for the family angler that wants to retain shallow water capabilities but does not want sacrifice ride quality.



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The Bay Series is all-aluminum and all-welded. These models feature wide, deep hulls, exceptional handling and top-end performance, and all of the fishing features that anglers have come to expect from G3 and Yamaha.



### SPORTSMAN

The Masters Series Bay Boats have the perfect balance of performance, stability, shallow water capability, and comfort. All the models are designed for the family angler that wants to retain shallow water capabilities but does not want sacrifice ride quality.



### Triton BOATS

Countless options available on models from 22 to 26'.

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