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**55**

**FUN FOR RENT**



**74**

**SIX WAYS TO SUNDAY**



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# THE Rhythm OF LOUISIANA

For Shell, being a responsible neighbor means understanding the communities where we operate. And with thousands of Shell employees living and working in communities all across the state, understanding the beauty and culture of Louisiana comes naturally to us. Shell's people know that conservation and environmental responsibility are the foundation of a bright future for Louisiana. That's why we're working to ensure that Louisiana will remain a *sportsman's paradise* for generations to come!

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# LA. HWY 593 TO BUSSEY BRAKE

THE ROAD TO A WHOLE LOT OF MY LIFE

**R**ays of quiet emotions broke through with daylight as I made the drive up Bonner Ferry Road, across the Bayou Bartholomew Bridge past fields of sunflowers and soybeans into the oak and pine canopy tunnel overlapping the roadway.

The road to Bussey Brake. Officially, La. Hwy. 593 North.

After crossing the scenic Bayou Bartholomew bridge, to the left was the man-made lake levee; to the right, the God-made twisting tree-lined bayou. Folks say this road that winds through quiet, moss draped woods is the most scenic and peaceful in the state. I concur.

“You rode down this road to a whole lot of your life,” my emotions whispered to me on this recent trip. The second anniversary of the re-opening of my childhood “home away from home,” Bussey Brake Reservoir near Bastrop, is this month. Not many old lakes get to live again. Bussey does.

Trips back to the lake rekindle all kinds of memories. Passing the pumps that feed life’s water to the lake, I saw the

turnstile entry where an old friend and I often parked his speedy Pontiac GTO, unloaded our gear and caught bass off the rocky banks.

## BUCKETS OF BASS

The next spot brought memories of later work days at IP, when I actually helped manage the reservoir. We unloaded buckets of the first Florida strain bass fingerlings into a grass bed on the lake’s edge right about here. And here, we ate fried fish at the annual Kraftman Fishing Rodeo. There was a trip with the Sheriff’s Department to evict squatters, a group of campers that decided it was so much fun, they brought their relatives and built a regular little tent city across from the lake. I think those folks moved on to Seattle.

I passed the old water outfall structure that we stood on catching white perch in the 20-foot deep hole. But somebody got drunk one Saturday night and fell in (no, it wasn’t me, but thanks for asking), so it was fenced off with razor wire.

I instinctively slowed down in the curve approaching the main boat dock. Here

on opening day, April 30, 1960, I sat waiting in line with my dad, a 12-foot aluminum boat resting on an old piece of paper mill felt strapped on top of grandpa’s solid black 1949 Pontiac Silver Streak, four shiny new cane poles sticking out the back window.

Bussey re-opened in July, 2020 after being closed for seven years for renovations. Since then, she’s given up multiple 10 pound bass, three pound crappie and even hosted the finals of a Major League Fishing pro bass tournament where a Kentucky angler pocketed \$100,000.

In the same event, an Alabama angler caught a new lake record 12-pound, 14-ounce. It won’t go down as noteworthy anywhere, but I sat in a boat 20 yards from Howell on this day, watching him fish. About five minutes after we left Howell, he caught the big fish. If you



*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.*

The author fishes for bass in a pocket in the lily pads on the "new" Bussey Brake.

were watching the live stream, you could have seen our boat idling away about 100 yards to the East as he boated the monster. Big bass have done me that way my entire life.

Bussey Brake. Over the years, time and nature wore on her. She got old and unproductive. But she has new life.

## INTO THE LAKE

At the main dock, I glanced at the bank where Dad and I kept our old aluminum boat. We didn't even have to lock it up. Times have changed, haven't they? That's the only place I ever fell into the lake. My school-teacher parents had saved up money for a three-horse Evinrude Lightwin outboard. Carrying it down the slippery slanted wooden ramp to put it on the back of the boat, I went in. And under.

The story goes that I sorta walked/stumbled up out of the water, still holding on to the Lightwin. It still cranked up that day and we went fishing. The story is true because Dad told it often. He was a straight shooter, a trait I may have partially missed in the family's gene distribution.

Outdoor legends like Grits Gresham, Bill Dance, Homer Circle, Cotton Cordell and more fished here back in the day, even before my back in the day. When she was new, Bussey was featured in the outdoor publications of the day, Outdoor Life and Sports Afield and newspapers around the south.

Today, her big trees are gone, but she held on to plenty of stumps, lingering ghosts of trees past, once standing so thick you couldn't see 100 yards into the lake. Out in the boat to see the new waters, I motored past the spot where I caught my first flathead catfish on a stump line. I learned why folks said grabbing a 40-pound flathead was like grabbing hold of an earthquake.

I passed a big flooded flat now covered with blossoming lily pads. We used to call it Stump City, an area that fed us hundreds of meals of fresh bream and crappie every year. There were many days where friends and I would



catch a Coleman cooler full of bream in the morning, Dad would bring us a bottle of Coca Cola and a hamburger and fries from ToTo's or Slayden's for lunch. He would take the fish home to start cleaning them. We'd go back out and start catching them all over again for the rest of the afternoon.

## TOO MUCH BUTTER

My Mom read from some crazy outdoor writer somewhere (again, not me, but thanks for asking) that you could improve a crappie hole by baiting it with grits. She cooked up a big washtub full and we dropped them in one of our favorite Stump City holes. It didn't work. As far as I remember, we never caught another white perch out of that hole. Knowing Mom, the grits had too much butter in them.

I fished my first bass tournament on Bussey with legendary Bussey angler Speedy Goodnight. He had three lures in his tackle box — black, purple and blue Fliptail plastic worms. We won that tournament with a 20 fish limit. Speedy caught 19 of them.

The old "graveyard island" is gone. It's where I caught my first bass on a rod and reel my Uncle Virgil gave me. He won it in a bowling tournament and he didn't fish, so there you go. The memories seem unending. But that's a good thing. Bussey is going to be a great place to fish for a long time to come. If you grew up near Bastrop and know what a fishing pole is, you have Bussey stories. Make sure and pass them on to others. And wherever your "Bussey Brake" is, make sure and share the stories with others. Keep them alive. Just like Bussey. ■

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# OUTDOOR UPDATE



## THANK YOU. VENDORS, EXHIBITORS AND ATTENDEES MADE 2022 SPORTSMAN SHOW A HUGE SUCCESS

By Kinny Haddox  
Thank You.

It sounds simple, but those two words really mean a lot when it comes to the 2022 Louisiana Sportsman Show and Festival held Father's Day weekend at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales.

Vendors and visitors came from across Louisiana and other states to see the show, which was sponsored by Shell. It was a great way to get things cranked back up for the lovers of the Louisiana outdoors following a couple of tough years. And while things aren't back to normal yet, the work put in by vendors and exhibitors, and the interest from attendees, made it special.

"I thank God that we were able to have a show in 2022 and that it was so successful. Thank you all," said Lisa Cuccia, President of Louisiana Publishing, which includes the Louisiana Sportsman magazine. "We wanted to give the vendors and sponsors a chance to recoup some of what was lost when we had to shut down in 2020 and then we had to miss 2021 due to Covid. I think we accomplished that."

Cuccia said she received wonderful feedback from vendors and the thousands of people that came to the show.

"We appreciate each and every one of you," she said. "We look forward to seeing you in the spring."

Next year's show will take place on March 17-19. It's never too early to mark your calendar and plan on being there.

"Everyone has been affected by the pandemic, whether it's inventory shortages or staffing issues and more," Cuccia said. "We were really pleased with the amount of boats, ATVs, RVs, tractors and lawn equipment we were able to

have at the show despite those issues."

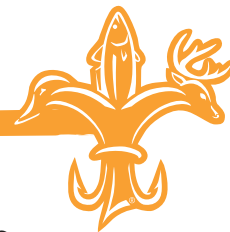
While the Louisiana Sportsman Show and Festival was a success, Cuccia said she is excited to welcome vendors and attendees back for the show's regular spring dates.

"It will also be a lot cooler for attendees and vendors alike," she said.

Besides the great vendors, displays and booths, the 2022 show also featured live music, which was a big hit. Feature performers were Adam Pearce and Dominick Michael. As usual, the fantastic Fetch-N-Fish presentations captured the attention, laughter and applause of young and old alike. Jason Reynolds and his high-flying dogs put on a show at the 41-foot long tank. ■



The Fetch-N-Fish presentations were one of the highlights of the show for visitors, young and old alike.



# STAR TIME

CCA'S 28TH ANNUAL EVENT OFFERS MEMBER ANGLERS REMARKABLE PRIZES

**T**he way the Coastal Conservation Association's Rad Trascher of Baton Rouge sees it, if you are fishing for saltwater species in Louisiana this summer, joining CCA and paying the modest entry fee to participate in the 28th annual CCA Louisiana STAR (Statewide Tournament and Anglers Rodeo) is really a simple choice. It's a solid insurance policy.

"It's the best insurance you can get," says the director of the STAR event. "I mean, it's insurance against what could be a big disappointment you could have fishing. Who knows, you could be the one to catch the biggest trout or the biggest red or the biggest anything and win your share of \$750,000 in this tournament. But if you don't join in, you could catch a prize fish or a tagged fish that could have won you a new truck or boat or other prizes, but you won't get it. Somebody else will."



If you don't think winning makes you happy, just check out Kenneth Nash, the 2021 STAR winner of the Chevy Silverado for the first tagged redfish caught.

Photo courtesy CCA

He also points out that entering the tournament, which costs \$35 for members, is less than the cost of buying shrimp for the day's fishing trip.

The competition has already started. But it's not too late to get in the game. And it's a big game!

"Sadly, it happens every year," Trascher said. "We have people who catch tagged fish, but haven't entered. Already this year

we have had several fishermen call about catching tagged fish, but they hadn't entered the tournament."

STAR is Louisiana's largest family fishing competition. Fishing began May 28 and running through Labor Day, Monday, September 5. The prizes are too numerous to even list in one article — trucks, boats, tackle and more. There are categories for every age group and every type of fisherman.

## PRIZES

Here's a sample of some of the prizes just from the tagged redfish division. First tagged redfish caught wins a new Chevy Silverado; Second tagged redfish wins a Keystone Passport 266BH; Third tagged redfish wins a 195XTS NauticStar with 115 horsepower Mercury four-stroke; Fourth and Fifth tagged redfish caught win 195XTS NauticStar with 115 horsepower

Mercury four-stroke and sixth through tenth tagged redfish caught win 1754 GatorTail Extreme Series boats with 40 horsepower EFI motors.

That doesn't even begin to list the numerous prizes for heaviest fish in each division and the special division winners.

There is a CCA advertisement in this month's Louisiana Sportsman that gives the important details. As Trascher said earlier, you must be a member of CCA to take part and you have to enter the tournament. Make sure you read and understand the rules. If you have any questions about STAR, see the FAQ page on the website <http://www.ccastar.com> or call CCA at (225) 952-9200. And you can follow CCA Louisiana STAR Tournament on Facebook.

There are divisions for tagged redfish, speckled trout, mangrove snapper, cobia, yellowfin tuna, red snapper, sheepshead, fly fishing, kayak, bank fishing, ladies, youth and more. There are 27 official STAR weigh stations and you can also check them out online at <https://ccastar.com/weigh-stations>.

"We always try and do everything we can to make the tournament exciting and to have the best prizes possible," Trascher said. "We've added yellowfin tuna to the lineup this year and we've changed a few rules to make it more competitive and give everybody a better chance of winning."

## MEMBERSHIP BOOST

The STAR event is actually CCA Louisiana's largest membership drive and boasts over 13,000 participants each year.

Since the tournament is meant to be a membership drive, it has a little something for all saltwater anglers fishing Louisiana waters. Its signature division is the Tagged Redfish Division. CCA releases 100 tagged redfish each year and if you are in the tournament and catch one, you win. STAR also has many inshore and offshore divisions with great prizes up for grabs. In addition to all of the adult divisions, STAR has a great youth division as well. ■

**OUTDOOR  
UPDATE**

# 10.41 TOLEDO BEND PRIZE

Jackson Cooper of Dry Prong landed the biggest bass of his life, a 10.41-pound lunker, on May 20 at Toledo Bend Reservoir. He also ended up winning the Big Bass Splash.

## BIG BASS SENDS DRY PRONG ANGLER FROM DEEP WATER TO THE "BANK"

**I**t By Dan Kibler  
took Jackson Cooper of Dry Prong a few minutes of idling around, observing, then two casts, to land the biggest bass of his life and get his biggest payday.

His second cast, on the first spot he fished May 20, produced a 10.41-pound lunker — he called her a "warhorse" — that wound up winning the 3-day Big Bass Splash on Toledo Bend Reservoir, good for \$10,000, a fully rigged Phoenix boat and



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The advertisement features a white boat with a black canopy and a Suzuki outboard motor, moving across a body of water under a blue sky with white clouds. The boat has several fishing rods mounted on the back. The Henderson logo, which includes a gear icon, is prominently displayed at the bottom.

a Dodge pickup truck.

His fish was also the first entry in the Toledo Bend Lunker Program's 2022-2023 season.

"Lines in was at 6 a.m., and I didn't catch her until between 6:30 and 6:45," said Cooper, who won \$5,000 for catching the biggest bass of the tournament's first hour, another \$5,000 over the tournament's overall big fish, plus the boat and truck.

## GOING DEEP

"I milled around a little, starting shallow, looking for the shad spawn, and there were a lot of boats around me; I don't know if the other boats were trying to take advantage of the shad spawn or hiding from the wind," he said. "But most of them were shallow, and I noticed a lot of baitfish, shad and bream, out in deep water. And I didn't see any shad popping up on the bank, so I was fishing offshore. I knew there were some (brush) tops around. I was fishing offshore. She came from 15 feet of water, out in front of some docks."

Cooper was fishing a V&M Wild Thang, an 8½-inch plastic worm, in blue flex, on an 7-foot-3, medium-heavy bait-casting rod mated with a Lew's reel spooled with 17-pound fluorocarbon. Cooper was Carolina-rigging.

"I lost a fish on my first cast, and I threw back in and she took hold of it," he said. "I think she caught it on the drop. When I picked up the slack, it felt spongy, so I set the hook and she immediately came to the surface to let me know it was her."

"Once she shot to the surface, I knew she was a big one, and that got me pretty fired up. She surfaced twice, came to the boat, then took me under the boat three times to try and break me off. Luckily, my equipment held up. I got her to the boat and belly grabbed her."

## A WARHORSE

"Once I had her in the boat, I knew I had a heckuva chance (to win). That's when it hit me. I put her right in the (livewell) because I was afraid I was going to drop her. She was actually a real warhorse. She was finished spawning; her tail was clean, but she had a lot of

damage to her face — she was blind in one eye."

Cooper, who was fishing by himself, took the big fish to Cypress Bend Park, where he was camping for the weekend. He got the big fish weighed, measured, certified for the Toledo Bend Lunker Program, and he sat back to wait out the weekend and see if his personal-best largemouth held up as the tournament's best.

"My family came in, and I spent Sunday with my family," he said. "I wanted to make it a fun day. I was planning on a little 'weather defense' on Sunday. When I woke up in the morning, it was raining cats and dogs. I didn't sign up to fish. About 7 or 7:30 a.m., it turned pretty, and it wound up being the most nerve-wracking Sunday I've ever had." ■

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# HOLLINGSWORTH BAGS ANOTHER TOLEDO BEND LUNKER

Jordan Hollingsworth got his third Toledo Bend Reservoir double-digit bass, a 10.16-pound lunker, on June 9, 2022.

**J**y Dan Kibler  
Jordan Hollingsworth might have to add some more walls to his camp on Toledo Bend Reservoir for all the bass he and his brother, Caleb, have had mounted by the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program.

Hollingsworth added a third fish that qualified for the program to his resume on June 9, a 10.16-pound bass that followed a 10.27 he caught on Feb. 4 and a 10.73 he caught on May 5, 2018. His brother caught a 10.93 this past March 4. The brothers have three of the replica mounts of those fish on the wall already, and Jordan will get the fourth when the TBLP's 2022-23 season ends next spring.

"Well, I did it again," said Hollingsworth, who is thrilled with his third double-digit Toledo Bend fish, but still wonders



An advertisement for Hughes Manufacturing. The top half shows four ducks flying in a line against a green background. A yellow starburst graphic contains the text 'CALL US TODAY! 337-824-2176'. Below this is a black banner with the text 'PIT BLINDS! PIT BLINDS! PIT BLINDS!' in white. The bottom half shows three different models of grey metal pit blinds against a blue sky background. The Hughes Manufacturing logo is centered at the bottom, with the text '1300 AIRPORT RD. | JENNINGS, LA. 70546 | 337-824-2176' and social media icons for Facebook, YouTube, and a website link 'www.hughesmfg.net'.

about its size.

"She looked bigger than any bass I'd ever caught, and the first one was almost 11," he said. "I called my brother, actually Face-Timed him, and he said, 'Oh my Lord, that's huge!'"

"All I had in the boat was a set of Boga Grip scales, but they've always been accurate. They showed her at a little over 11 (pounds). I took her to Fin & Feather, they put on the scales and got 10.16. I thought she looked bigger."

"Then, they measured her. She was 27 ¼ inches long and 20 ½ inches in girth."

In comparison, Hollingsworth's 10.27-pound fish from February was 26 ½ inches long and 19 ½ inches in girth.

"I don't know. All I know is that she was a big, big fish," he said.

## SCHOOL OF BASS

Hollingsworth found the fish in a school of 15 to 20 fish around the mouth of Housen Creek. He had started around lunchtime near his camp on the southern end of Toledo Bend and worked his way up the lake. It was about 6:30 when he found the school.

"I was graphing, looking for a new school of fish, and I saw some," he said. "I turned around and put the boat on Spot-Loc. I made a cast with a big worm and caught one, then caught another on the next case, and on the third cast, I caught another. So I picked up a big crankbait and caught one on the next cast. Then, I made a few more casts but didn't get a bite. I picked up a rod with a big, big swimbait tied on, threw it and let it go all the way to the bottom, and I started bringing it in. That's when she hit.

"This time of year, the fish are so alive. She started right up, out of the water, and when I saw her, I said, 'Oh, Lord.' She ran around the boat a little, and I ran around. I fell down one time. I got the net, and she jumped by the boat and I scooped her up. Her last jump was right in the net."

Hollingsworth said the school of bass was on a creek-channel drop in about 30 feet of water. He was fishing with an 8-foot Shimano baitcasting rod and a Daiwa Tatula reel spooled with 25-pound fluorocarbon. The swimbait, impaled on an 8/0 Owner Beast swimbait hook, was in a natural shad color. ■

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# MONTOUCET OFFERS INSIGHT INTO LDWF PLANS, ISSUES

By Jeremy Alford

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Secretary Jack Montoucet took time to answer a few questions from Louisiana Sportsman recently and provided some insight into himself and some hot topics for the Louisiana outdoors. Here is that interview:

**QUESTION:** You've been an alligator farmer, a fire chief, a state representative and now a wildlife secretary. That's a diverse background. Which was your favorite gig and why?

**MONTOUCET:** Alligator farming allowed me to do cool things such as utilizing alligator fat for biodiesel and developing an alligator meat market in the United States, which was both challenging and rewarding. I also love working with animals, especially alligators. Nothing more Louisiana than that! The other three were as rewarding because they involved providing services that helped people and dealing with the public. Those positions were also challenging because each involved crucial budget issues that would stand up communities in need. However, by far, alligator farming was my favorite.

**QUESTION:** You're unique among secretaries because you also have to work with an appointed commission for rule-making and other operations. Do you believe the current system of a secretary and an appointed commission is still the best way to serve the state's resources and sportsmen?

**MONTOUCET:** I believe that the current system is the best way to serve our hunters and fishermen since it allows them to have a direct voice about policies, rules and regulations that affect them, both professionally and personally. The public forum gives access to individuals who often share ideas that reshape proposed regulations and those already in place. That's what this system affords our residents. Many other states have similar systems, but not exactly the same.

**QUESTION:** You've spent the past five years endeavoring to reimagine the revenue picture at the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. A big part of that vision goes live June 1 with the consolidated licensing structure. What changes should the average hunter and fisherman expect in terms of costs and privileges?

**MONTOUCET:** I have looked at this department through the lens of a businessman. In doing so, I have attempted to do things out of the box to overcome the deficit the department was experiencing when I was appointed. Consolidating and restructuring licenses was imperative to address a looming \$20 million deficit. I am continuously looking at ways of getting things done that would benefit the department financially. By consolidating some of our licenses, our citizens have more privileges in some instances for only a slight increase in cost. The average outdoorsman will probably see an increase of about \$8. Our most avid sportsman who bought every privilege with



LDWF Secretary Jack Montoucet

the Louisiana Sportsman's license will see no change. Additionally, the old license structure was cumbersome and complex, which acts as a barrier for new hunters and anglers. We hope this license restructure eliminates that barrier, and paves the way for new license holders.

**QUESTION:** The new licensing structure will result in financial and operational changes for the department, too. How will this revenue restructuring enhance the department's mission?

**MONTOUCET:** As a businessman, I knew we had to monitor expenditures until we could find additional revenue sources. My first few years at the department we had to reduce contracts and not fill vacant positions to help keep the Department whole. The new revenue from the restructure will enable us to fill all the vacant positions responsible for managing our resources and properties. By filling vacancies, we can catch up on the backlog of work needed on our properties and our fish and wildlife evaluations. This will give us more opportunities for the public to have access to Wildlife Management Areas for people to enjoy more of what Louisiana has to offer.

**QUESTION:** You're constantly fighting Mother Nature in your job, from aquatic invasive plants to the feral hog population. Is the long-term vision one of management, rather than victory?

**MONTOUCET:** Mother Nature has been one of our biggest adversaries, from feral hogs to invasive plants. To add to that, coastal erosion is one of our other big fights. However, our long-term vision is management rather than victory. For instance, we are looking at finding a sustainable use for certain invasive plants.

Currently, we are working with a university on a research project that is looking to determine the viability of producing biodiesel with giant salvinia. Preliminary data indicates that giant salvinia produces as much oil as soybeans. We may also be able to look at its chemical components to see if there is any possibility of its components having some value. As for feral hogs, there is ongoing research that would result in producing a product that could substantially reduce the feral hog problem without affecting other wildlife.

**QUESTION: Chronic wasting disease was found in deer earlier this year. What will the plan of action look like, you think, and will it be enough to manage the issue?**

**MONTOUCET:** Louisiana's first case of chronic wasting disease was detected in Tensas Parish earlier this year. At this time, the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission has enacted a declaration of emergency that prohibits baiting within the CWD control area which consists of Franklin, Madison and Tensas parishes. In addition, a notice of intent has been introduced for the CWD control area for the 2022 deer season and beyond. The notice of intent includes a baiting prohibition for deer, and export regulations for deer carcasses originating within the CWD control area. The goal of both measures is to reduce further spread of the disease. Other priorities include increased surveillance and access to testing. CWD drop-off containers will be strategically placed across the CWD control area to provide testing access for any hunters who desire to have their deer tested. Cooperation between the public and LDWF will be needed to manage the disease and reduce the risk of further spread.

**QUESTION: Recreational red snapper season begins May 27. What are your expectations for that season?**

**MONTOUCET:** Last year's season ran for 147 days, the longest since we have implemented state management of red snapper, likely due to the impacts of Hurricane Ida on recreational fishing. Last year, we had a slight overage of 6,918 pounds, thereby reducing our annual quota to 809,315 pounds for this season. There is, however, an increase proposed by the Gulf Council which could make our new state allocation 881,685 pounds before the end of the summer. Regardless of any potential increase, our Commission asked us to take measures to preserve enough quota for the Labor Day weekend, so it's likely you may see a season closure somewhere

in the middle of the summer and a reopening for Labor Day weekend, which would continue the season until the current or adjusted quota is used up.

**QUESTION: The Legislature seems more open lately to creating or recognizing new ways to hunt and fish in Louisiana, from taking deer with air rifles to noodling catfish. Some of the laws being created were actually ideas from recreational fishermen and hunters passed on to the department. Are there any other ideas or suggestions coming from your license holders that might appear before the Legislature or Wildlife and Fisheries Commission in the future?**

**MONTOUCET:** Again, that's the beauty of working with our public, legislators and the Commission. The public will often offer great ideas to their local leaders or Commissioners who provide a perspective that we have not considered. Like anything else, there are recommendations that science or history will not support, and we have to take position against some suggestions. We anticipate that there will be a time our biologists will notice something during their work that shows a need to make changes to help a species or save portions of our Wildlife Management Areas. We can't predict that, but we know those things will happen. We also work with many regional and national groups that share ideas and outcomes that would benefit our hunters and fishermen or be mindful of trends that would negatively affect Louisiana. We are open to recommendations that help Louisiana. ■

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# ARTIFICIAL FISH STRUCTURE ADDED TO FOUR BAYOUS

**F** By Chris Macaluso  
our Bayous Pass in lower Barataria Bay is a spring and summertime magnet for speckled trout and those aiming to catch a few.

Located just about halfway between Grand Isle to the west and Port Sulphur and Empire to the east, the Four Bayous area is dotted with fish-rich, piling and concrete riprap reefs, the relics of the dozens of fishing camps, oyster processing houses and oil and gas wells that once stood in the bay.

Another artificial reef will provide the thousands of anglers who fish Four Bayous annually with a new option to search for trout, redfish and sheephead.

## BRINGING NEW HOPE

The Coastal Conservation Association Louisiana teamed up with Chevron and the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to deposit more than 2,000 tons of limestone across a five-acre area in Bay Ronquille, just east of Four Bayous, to try and replace some of the natural habitat lost in the area over the last several decades.

"A lot of people fish that area and we know through working with local fishermen and the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries that much of the natural oyster reefs and small islands that held fish out there have degraded from hurricanes and other factors," said CCA Louisiana Vice President for Habitat and Conservation John Walther. "Our aim is to replace some of what's been lost and to encourage the return of oysters, fish and crabs."

Construction of the reef began the week of May 16 and was complete within seven days. Materials and labor costs were donated by Madero & Sons/Deep South Construction. The overall cost of the reef was \$250,000, with half coming from CCA and Chevron and half from Wildlife and Fisheries' Artificial Reef Development Fund. Generally, fish will begin populating reefs within weeks of construction.

The golf ball-sized limestone was placed at least six feet below the water's surface with humps and depressions built in to mimic natural bottom contours and enhance productivity. Similar inshore reefs built by CCA Louisiana and Wildlife and Fisheries

have used recycled, crushed concrete and construction materials. "Using crushed concrete wasn't an option with this reef because of the shallowness of the water," Walther said. "We didn't want to chance boats hitting concrete chunks or shrimp nets getting caught in the concrete."

## FOUR BAYOUS IS HOT

Capt. Frank Dreher frequents Four Bayous from his launching spot at Grand Isle's Bridgeside Marina. He said when the wind has laid down this spring it has been holding more trout than anywhere else he's found in Barataria Bay.

"We're finding the fish all along the old campsites and in the areas where there is sunken rip rap and shell pads but when word gets out the trout are biting some of those reefs will have 8-10 boats on them," he said. "Anytime we can get more structure around Grand Isle it's a good thing for fishing because we've lost so much marsh and small islands over the last 20 years."

Walther said CCA Louisiana has submitted proposals for seven more inshore and nearshore reefs in areas from Jefferson Parish across the coast to Cameron Parish. Those include reefs in 50-100 feet of water to replace structure lost when oil and gas rigs have been removed. Thirty-seven reefs have been built by CCA Louisiana in partnership with Wildlife and Fisheries and corporate donors since 2002.

He added that fishing on other reefs in the Grand Isle area has been very good this spring as well, especially the eight-plus acre Independence Island Reef located about five miles west of Four Bayous. Coordinates to all inshore artificial reefs are available on the Wildlife and Fisheries website.

"We want people to know these reefs are there and to enjoy them," he said. "I know a lot of fishermen go past them to places they can see above the water. They tend to forget about the reefs. But I fish them all the time and they are usually very productive." ■



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

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# NEW OUTDOOR LAWS

## AIR RIFLES FOR DEER; LEGAL NOODLING FOR CATFISH PASSED IN LOUISIANA

**G** By Jeremy Alford  
ov. John Bel Edwards has signed a pair of bills into law that would create new ways for sportsmen to hunt and fish in Louisiana beginning this fall.

The new laws (Acts 214 and 215) allow for the taking of deer using air rifles, permit the hand-grabbing or noodling of catfish and create an entirely new framework for the use of bream as bait. While these hunting and fishing methods are nothing new to veterans of the outdoors, the Legislature for the first time has codified these tactics.

Rep. John Stefanski of Crowley sponsored the law that legalizes the use of a “pre-charged pneumatic device” for the taking of deer. That definition includes not only air rifles, but also pneumatic bows.

But hunters beware — even though the new law allows for deer to be taken with pneumatic bows, that activity will only be permissible during rifle season. That’s because pneumatic bows and air rifles hold the same classification, according to Cole Garrett, the general counsel for the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

For such a weapon to be considered a “humane and ethical hunting mechanism,” the law states the device “must fire a projectile of at least 30 caliber in diameter and at least 150 grains in weight with a minimum muzzle velocity of 800 feet per second or any combination of bullet weight and muzzle velocity that produces muzzle energy of at least 215 foot pounds of energy.” Additionally, “arrows or bolts must have broadhead points and can be used to hunt deer only during modern firearm deer season.” “That’s going to be really popular,” said

Sen. Neil Riser of Columbia during one legislative hearing, referring to the bow option. “I’ll probably use one.”

Stefanski said his constituents have been asking for this change for years, and he was surprised to learn most surrounding states already accommodate air rifles. “We’re one of the last states to offer this to sportsmen,” he said.

Tommy Tuma, the director of habitat stewardship at Wildlife and Fisheries, said his office has received calls over the years as well, particularly from veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. “This lets them hunt with no recoil,” said Tuma, “and there’s no sensitivity to sound. People have been asking about this for the past five years or so.”

Rep. Jack McFarland of Jonesboro led the charge to legalize catfish noodling. In case you’ve missed out on this trend, this involves folks sticking their hands in logs and other structures as bait in the hopes of catching gigantic catfish — by hand.

“Is that really a thing? You can catch catfish by hand?” asked a shocked Sen. Sharon Hewitt of Slidell during another debate.

McFarland assured her tons of folks love noodling and she would too if she gave it a chance. He added, “You may not want to participate, though. You can watch from the boat.”

“Oh, hell no,” Hewitt responded. “I want to participate.”

During the same debate, Sen. Eddie



Photo courtesy Russell Smith

Lambert of Gonzales, a commercial fisherman, interjected, “You don’t know where your hand is going right? I don’t know if I’m brave enough for that.”

“You don’t think about that part,” McFarland told him. “You just think about how big that fish is you’re gonna bring out.”

People have been noodling catfish in Louisiana for generations, but now the method is protected in the law. “I think we’re taking another look at this because it has become so popular because of YouTube and the internet,” McFarland said in an interview. “I really don’t think many people are receiving fines for this. We just want to prevent issues between fishermen and law enforcement.”

As a legal sweetener, McFarland’s new law also allowed for the use of bream, including those caught in minnow traps, as bait for recreational purposes. That’s already the case in Louisiana waters shared with Texas, but the law applies the new bait guidelines statewide. ■

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# LWFC ADOPTS NOI TO MODIFY HOOKED PASSIVE FISHING GEAR REGULATIONS

**On** From News Reports  
June 2, the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission adopted a Notice of Intent (NOI) to modify rules regarding freshwater recreational yo-yos, trigger devices, trotlines, limb lines, jugs, and all other passive fishing devices containing a hook or hooks. The proposed changes will modify existing rules and will be applicable statewide. The intent of the rule is to decrease litter, provide accountability to passive gear, and reduce risk to resource users, fish, and wildlife.

The following modifications to the existing rule are proposed and will be published in the June 2022 Louisiana Register:

- The proposed rule is applicable statewide.
- The proposed rule includes freshwater recreational yo-yos, trigger devices, trotlines, limb lines, jugs, and all other passive fishing devices containing a hook or hooks (hooked passive gear).
- Waterproof tags with name, fishing license number, and phone number must be attached to all hooked passive gear. Tag information may be written directly on the device.
- All hooked passive gear must be rebaited every 24 hours, and hooked, entangled, or ensnared fish and wildlife must be removed.
- No metal object may be driven or attached to the water bottom, stump, tree, or shoreline, except for those located above the water that are affixed to a private pier, dock, houseboat, or other manmade structure which is designed for fishing. Metal anchors not attached to the bottom are permitted.
- The existing prohibition on driving any (metal or non-metal) objects in the water bottom on Black Lake, Clear Lake, Prairie Lake, Caddo Lake, Chicot Lake, D'Arbonne Lake, Lake St. Joseph, and Lake Bruin is included in the proposed rule.



- Objects driven or attached to the lake bottom, stump, tree, or shoreline used to hold passive gear shall not be wider than two inches by two inches or two inches in diameter, and shall be removed when not in use.
  - Trotlines are limited to 150 hooks total per person and a cotton leader must be used on each end of a trotline.
- To view the full notice of intent, go to [www.wlf.louisiana.gov/](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/). You can also submit written comments relative to the proposed rule by contacting Robby Maxwell, Inland Fisheries Section, 1213 N. Lakeshore Dr., Lake Charles, LA 70601, or via e-mail to: [rmaxwell@wlf.la.gov](mailto:rmaxwell@wlf.la.gov) prior to July 29, 2022. Following the public comment period, the Legislative Oversight Committees will have a 30-day period to review the amended rule and a summary of public comment provided by LDWF. If this rule is finalized, the amended regulations will be effective in the fall of 2022. ■



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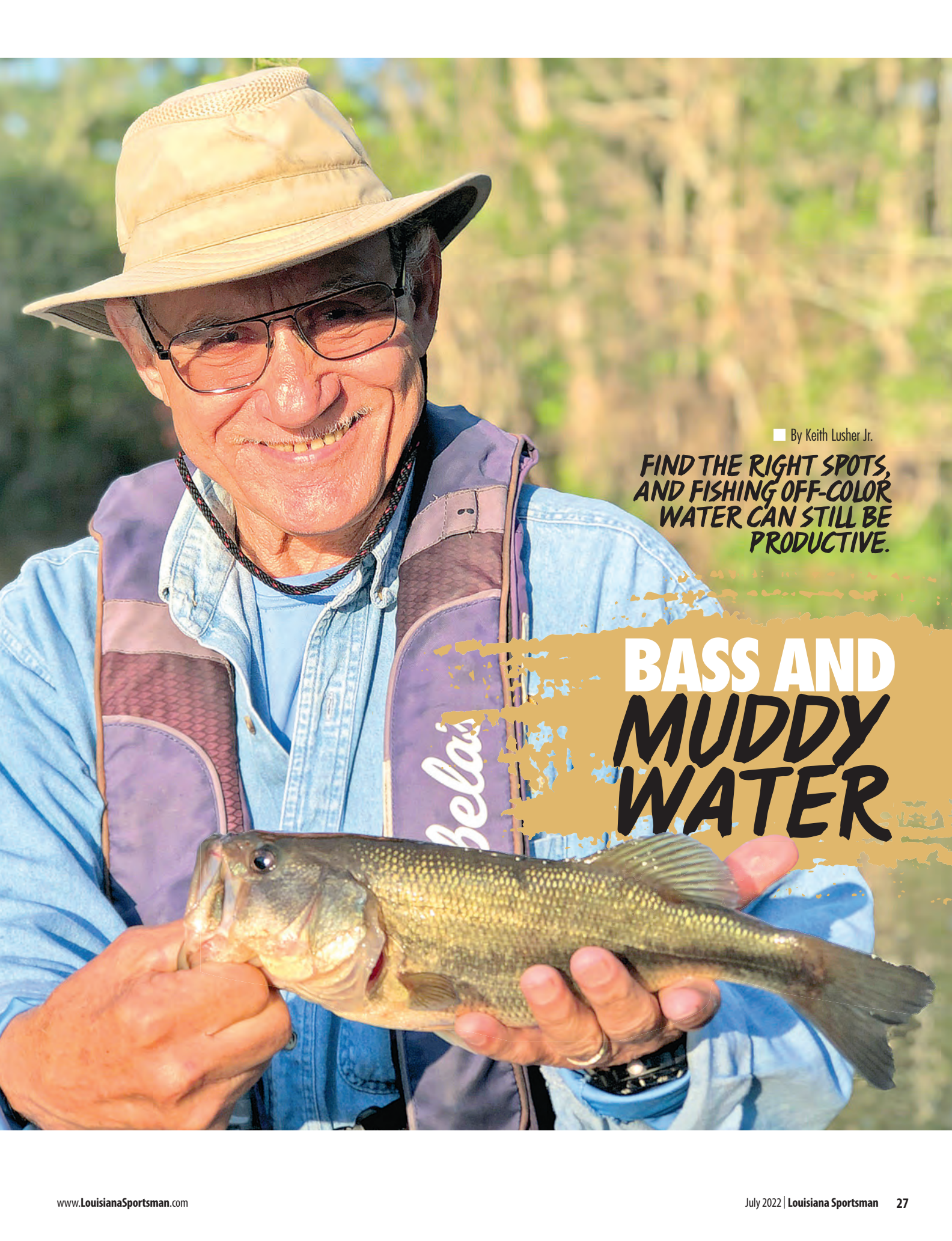


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■ By Keith Lusher Jr.

**FIND THE RIGHT SPOTS,  
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# **BASS AND MUDDY WATER**

# MUDDY WATER.

It's an all but universal deterrent to bass fishermen across the country. Here in Louisiana, muddy water takes on a life of its own because of our state's rich soil-lined river banks and silty marshes. It seems fishermen are always on the lookout for a heavy downpour that can turn the water from gin clear to chocolate milk within hours.

Personally, I've spent half my years avoiding muddy water for the simple reason being that I thought the fish couldn't see my lure.

## THE BULKHEAD

That all changed when I was 23 years old in summer of 1996. It was on a fishing trip to the Rice Field Canal just off of the Tchefuncte River in Madisonville. The canal was a favorite of mine for catching bass, especially during the morning hours when bass were aggressive and chasing shad on the surface. Armed with a full arsenal of crankbaits, I backed down my flatboat into the main river and within minutes was turning into the canal ready for an exciting morning of catching bass.

My level of excitement took a considerable nosedive as I pulled into the canal, however. It seemed the water was falling considerably, which was a plus, but the chocolate milk coloration was going to make things tough. I threw down the trolling motor and started casting towards the shoreline while

I scanned the waters surface in front of me for baitfish. After fishing for 30 minutes with no bites or sign of shad, I thought about turning around and heading back, but then decided to push further down the canal to see if the water would clear up.

I trolled the shoreline for another hour but the muddy water was a constant. I reached what the locals call the bulkhead; a simple wooden structure that spanned across the entrance to a large duck pond. I noticed water spilling through an open section of the bulkhead into the canal. Then, as if someone flipped a switch, there were a number of explosions on the water's surface as shad skipped in every direction including up. This was quite a refreshing sight being that I had gone over two hours without seeing any surface action.

As I positioned the boat a little closer I cast into the swirling clean water pouring out from the duckpond into the muddy canal and immediately hooked up with a bass. As I frantically unhooked the fish from the treble hooks, I heard another set of explosions happening in unison. I tossed the bass in the ice chest and casted out into the same place and after three turns of my reel handle, I had another bass on! I finished off a limit of 10 within an hour and headed home with a cooler of bass, but more importantly my fear of fishing muddy water seemed to be quelled, at least for the time being.

Muddy water leaves anglers wondering just what is lurking just below the surface.





A huge bass explodes out of his hiding spot in muddy water to engulf an unsuspecting shiner swimming nearby in the clear water.

## LEARNING THE WEST PEARL

As years passed, my hatred for muddy water evolved into a tolerance. I learned, after numerous trial-and-error trips, that the key to fishing muddy water was to locate clean water and target the mixing line. My understanding of this grew a little more after a bass fishing trip with a gentleman that fishes what is probably Louisiana's muddiest river: the West Pearl River.

Originating in Bush and emptying into Lake Borgne, the West Pearl is a beast of a waterway. It collects runoff from numerous tributaries which results in a persistent flow. Joe Picone of Covington has been fishing the river for over 24 years and has learned to embrace the chocolate milk colored water that the river generously offers 12 months a year.

While fishing with Picone, he told me that the best thing about fishing muddy water is the consolidation of fish in one spot.

"When I fish murky water, I know if I can find a drain with clean water coming out, there's a pretty good chance I can catch 12-15 bass off that drain. When I'm fishing clean water, they're more spread out along the shoreline and not nearly as concentrated," Picone said.

The 75-year-old also shared his thoughts on how bass relate to dirty water.

"Muddy water isn't something that these fish run from — they just acclimate. I've looked at tagging studies showing bass don't travel far distances like say a specked trout will. Bass are 'homeboys' and will typically stay in the same area for months at a time if the food is there," he said.

As we picked up batches of fish at each drain the subject turned from catching fish to questioning what the scene looked like from beneath the surface. There definitely seemed to be some strategy on the side of the bass in the way they ambushed the baitfish.

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## AMBUSH BENEATH THE SURFACE

Upon arriving home the wheels in my head began to turn. Could it be done? I certainly had the camera equipment to film underwater so that wasn't an issue.

The only problem would be finding the right spot to preemptively place the camera where this feeding phenomenon would happen. I decided on a local spot that I knew very well. It was a run-off drain that consistently spewed clean water into a relatively new lake. It was a man-made lake in my neighborhood that hadn't quite cleared up from some work on a dam that was done about a year ago. I've encountered bass feeding along the mixing line routinely in this spot numerous times days after a hard rain.

My plan was to wait until the next downpour and set the camera up in the middle of the alley of clean water that spilled out of the cut.

Four days went by and that downpour came. Before the storm rolled in, I mounted the camera, an underwater motion sensor camera made by Trail-cam. Unfortunately, I placed the camera

just off of where the clean water spilled out and was forced to relocate it the next morning. After making sure that it was set up near the mixing line, I left the camera for the day to see what it might capture. I returned back to retrieve the camera that afternoon and headed home to review the photos.

I loaded the SIM card into my laptop and scrolled through the files with the anticipation of capturing bass wreaking havoc. The first photo taken was a school of shiners swimming against the current in the clean water that was spilling out of the drain. The camera continued to snap pictures of the shiners as they settled in where the clean water flowed from the drain. After scrolling through a few, my attention transitioned from looking for bass, to trying to figure out what the shiners were doing. As they darted around in the clear water it looked to me like they were feeding on something; possibly small organisms or tiny bugs.



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Joe Picone knows not to give up on bass in muddy water. They're still down there!



As I turned from photo to photo, my attention was focused on the shiners and then it happened! I was looking at a still shot of a shiner swimming by taken at 9:32:05 a.m. When I opened the next file the unassuming minnow was hit by a tank of a bass that looked to explode across the mixing line.

My camera takes pictures one second apart so within the span of three seconds the bass hit the minnow and was gone out of view. I sat in awe and after reviewing the sequence of photos what felt like 100 times. And while I only captured one bass on film, the information I've learned from observing the shiners was invaluable as far as fitting another piece into the puzzle that is the mixing line. ■

### TOLEDO BEND >

Working a runout like this one, Joe Picone targets the mixing line, the spot where clear water meets muddy water — an excellent spot to land bass.

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north side of Housen Creek and from the first cast to the last over a three-day period we caught good-sized bass, 15-18 daily, up to 6 ½ pounds. Water temperature was in the 80s and we were fishing with Stanley Top Toads in 2 to 3-foot depths. Those bass were gorging on bream around their beds.

I'm not saying a scenario like that trip with the Missourians will repeat itself this July. But it could and should, perhaps multiple times before the dog days of summer arrive. I'll sure try to make it happen because the conditions leading up to the seventh month of the year have been favorable.

It all depends on if the water stays up and on how much/fast it heats up.

Even if the heat wave descends on lake country, the shallows ought to be the place to target bass for the first 2-3 hours in the morning and last 2-3 hours in the afternoon at Toledo Bend. The drill then will be plastic frogs — like my favorites Top Toads and Stanley Ribbits — and buzz baits, for sure.

## LISTEN TO THE BASS

I'll concentrate on shallower water until the bass tell me to go deeper to fish drains and ditches that bass make a beeline for in the postspawn and as the water warms.

Then it'll be time to fish those bass, which usually are more wishy washy and moody in 20 to 25-foot depths, with Carolina-rigged Junebug/red, red bug or plum apple soft plastics, Alabama rigs with small shad-colored swim baits, similarly colored drop-shotted soft plastics and shad or bream-colored crankbaits and Rat-L-Traps.

Crappie fishing has been very good for a couple months. They are being caught on jigs, mostly, and shiners around brush-tops in 22 to 25-foot depths. Popular colors for the soft plastics are Monkey Milk, pink/white and chartreuse. That Monkey Milk Natural Forage Phat Shad has been hard to beat, according to one local fishing guide.

I hope everyone has a happy and safe Fourth of July.

I've been guiding on this lake most of my life. Give me a call at (936) 404-2688. ■

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Steve Johnston with a 9-pound 7-ounce bass he caught at Lake St. John.



# ST. JOHN'S SUMMER BASS

Cypress trees and boat docks provide answers to angler's prayers

**L**ocated northeast of Ferriday, sits a lake that doesn't get the recognition it deserves, especially this time of year. Lake St. John is an oxbow off the Mississippi River nestled in the far eastern portion of Concordia Parish.

The lake gets a lot of attention during the summer months for recreational water sports, but July can also be a great time to catch largemouth bass. Because of the boat traffic, especially on weekends, it's a good idea to fish early and late to beat the crowd.

Lake St. John covers approximately 2,200 acres, sprawling six and a half miles from north to south and a half mile across. With an average depth of 12 feet and maximum depths of around 37 feet, the lake checks off every box of what a bass fisherman looks for in the summer. You can normally expect to find the water clarity to average around the 3 foot range in the summer months.

Lake St. John is a lake that Steve Johnston of West Monroe has had circled on his bucket list for a long time. Most folks don't just fish St. John as a trophy bass lake, but it does give up eight and nine pounders in the spring. It has a good population of all sizes of bass, too, and it isn't unusual to catch five to seven pounders even in the summer.

## TARGETS GALORE

Since it's a typical oxbow, it has your usual targets to consider, especially cypress trees. Lots of cypress trees.

"I like to focus on the isolated cypress trees off the bank in 3 to 4 foot of water," Johnston said. "My favorite bait to throw is a Yum Dinger in the Red Bug color."

Red Bug consists of a red body with blue glitter. The Yum Dinger

is a 5" soft plastic stick bait that Johnston likes to fish with a small 2/0 weedless hook fished with an O-ring.

"I like to pitch it against the cypress trees and just let it sink slowly and as it sinks it makes a fluttering motion," he said. "If a bass doesn't hit it on the fall, I'll reel it in and throw it against another tree."

This method resembles a dying bream and that's what the bass are feeding on this time of year. The cypress trees offer the perfect hiding spot for the largemouth bass looking to ambush those unsuspecting bream. And St. John is full of all shapes and sizes of bream.

## BOAT DOCK HEAVEN

There's another tried and true type of fishing spot that St. John has plenty of. If you like fishing docks, Lake St. John should be at the top of your list. That's where Johnston will end up when the cypress tree pattern isn't producing.

"I usually target the ends of the boats docks out in deeper water focusing on brush tops," Johnston said. "A June bug lizard fished Texas rigged is my bait of choice for this pattern."

## ACCESSIBILITY

If you're looking for the most convenient location to launch

your boat, look no further than Spokane Resort. Located at 4269 Hwy 568, the resort sits right in the heart of Lake St. John. Not only do they offer a boat launch, they offer lodging if you're looking for a place to stay. You can also stock up on bait and groceries all in one spot before accessing the lake.

Even though Lake St. John is most known in the summer for its annual Fourth of July Flotilla, it can still be a great place to land that bass of a lifetime, all while taking in the beautiful scenery the lake has to offer. ■

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YAMAHA



## BASSIN' THE BASIN

By Don Shoopman

When crickets chirp and cicadas hum in the middle of the summer, an accomplished Gonzales bass angler knows where he's going to fish and catch bass in July.

Tim Carmouche heads for the Atchafalaya Basin, the nation's last great overflow swamp, and much of the time makes most of his casts along Big Pigeon in the Bayou Pigeon system east of the Atchafalaya River.

"July's a tough time of year once the water (temperature) gets up. It pushes 90 (degrees) by that time," Carmouche said a few weeks after he qualified for the 2022 B.A.S.S. Nation National Championship at Tennessee's Pickwick Lake.

Carmouche, 41, was the highest-finishing Boater Division angler from Louisiana May 4-6 in the TNT Fireworks B.A.S.S. Nation Central Regional at Grand Lake in Oklahoma. If it wouldn't have been for a dead fish in his five-bass limit on Day 3, he would have won the regional title outright.

He has shaken that setback off and is honing his considerable skills with some bass fishing in the Atchafalaya Basin, which has been his go-to place for bassin' every summer since he was a kid.

"I'd much rather be in the Basin that time of year," he said, noting he fishes the Stephenville side of the East Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee. "The fish are going to be current-related, feeding on crawfish and bream."

### FAVORITE STRETCH

His favorite stretch is the Big Pigeon area, he said, generally the stretch on the lower end closer to Grand Lake. He'll look for moving water, even if it's caused by wind, and fish accordingly.

Carmouche, a production specialist who has worked 19 years at

the Shell Geismar Chemical Plant, likes fishing that area because there are cypress trees in deep water and shallow water, dead-falls in the same areas and vegetation in various depths.

Mostly, he taps the bass population by punching hyacinths "90 percent of the time" with a Reaction Innovations California 420 Sweet Beaver. The key is to find the hyacinths in deeper water than the rest of the area, whether that "deeper" water is 3 feet or 12 feet.

"I don't let the bait go all the way to the bottom. I'll pitch it in there and just hold it, make it look like a bream" by shaking it up and down against the bottom of the mat, he said. He fishes it under a 1 ¼ or 1 ½-ounce weight most of the time (1 ounce if the vegetation's "thin") and on 65-pound test Suffix braided line spooled on a Shimano Metanium on a 7-foot-7 G. Loomis NRX fishing rod.

He also fishes a lot this time of year with Texas-rigged Zoom Speed Craws and Zoom Baby Brush Hogs. His other favorites are a 3/8-ounce black/black blade Lunker Lure or a chartreuse/white Lunker Lure with a gold blade around cypress trees and hyacinths, or a ¼-ounce white Outcast swim jig with a single tail pearl white jig trailer from Fat Albert.

If those don't trigger bites, he'll offer a black/chartreuse or green copperhead shad Lucky Craft 1.5 or a dark-colored KVD 1.0.

His best tip?

"We pay attention to bluegill bites," he said. "It's a struggle if we're not getting bluegill bites. If we go 30 minutes without a bluegill bite we'll pick up and go somewhere else." ■

**LURE REVIEW** ➤

## LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman



Shanda Sinkey of Frisco, Texas, hooked and boated this 8.72-pound bass on Mother's Day on an 8-inch Mag BUZZ Worm, new from Mister Twister, while she was fishing on Lake Fork with her husband, Chris Sinkey.

# MISTER TWISTER 8-INCH MAG BUZZ WORM

**B**ass angler Chris Sinkey of Frisco, Texas, had an idea before Mother's Day how effective an 8-inch Mister Twister plastic worm with a special tail might be on his home lake, Lake Fork.

Mister Twister, one of his sponsors, hadn't yet introduced the 8-inch Mag BUZZ Worm. Sinkey, however, had been pinching off 12-inch Mag BUZZ Worms just above the enlarged sack and catching bass on the tweaked worms for approximately a year.

In early April, Sinkey sent a photo of one of the tweaked 12-inchers to Mister Twister sales manager Darryl Laurent and wrote, "Cut the buzz worm down to about 8-inch this weekend and did pretty good on it. May be an idea."

Unbeknownst to Sinkey, Mister Twister was ahead of him.

"I sent it to Darryl and asked, 'ever thought of making an 8-inch? You don't really have anything in between a 6- and 10-inch.'"

"Funny you mentioned it. This is

what we're coming out with," Laurent said. And Laurent sent him three bags of 8-inch Mag BUZZ Worms before Mother's Day.

Sinkey and his wife, Shanda, caught 16 bass, big and small, that weekend, most



**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.



of them on Mother's Day. She caught an 8.72-pounder — a little more than 24 inches long — on the 8-inch Mag BUZZ Worm, he said.

He was sold on it. Naturally, his wife was, too.

"I told him, 'Man, that is the perfect worm.' He was kind of concerned and asked if the tail ripped. I told him we didn't have a single one split."

Sinkey, 46-year-old owner of J&H Truck Service, which hauls aggregate material for construction, has been with Mister Twister for nearly four years. His favorite before the 8-inch Mag BUZZ Worm hit the market recently was Mister Twister's BUZZ Bug.

Until a few years ago, Sinkey did more than hold his own on several pro bass fishing tournament circuits in the Lone Star State. He scaled back his tournament activities to devote more time to his family and his business.

With a house also on the shoreline of Lake Fork, he manages to get in plenty of time on the water with his wife, friends and youngsters. He also coaches and serves as captain for high school bass anglers, including his own boys.

The Sinkeys fish the 8-inch Mag BUZZ Worm almost exclusively on a ¼-ounce Santone Lures Piglet Shakey Head. Usually, he fishes it in 15- to 20-foot depths. He suggested to those who want to Texas rig the plastic worm to use a 3/0 or 4/0 hook under a ¼-ounce worm weight.

The all-around outdoorsman said he doesn't drag the plastic worm across the bottom. Instead, he and his wife retrieve it with subtle, light hops, like you would do with a drop shot. That hopping action triggers that tail, he said.

"I've always been a fan of cutter tail worms. It's a great feature. The way the worm tapers and narrowness near the tail gives it wavy action. The cutter tail of the worm moves water," he said.

"Since the introduction of the Mag 12 BUZZ Worm, we have had a lot of calls for a

smaller size, 8 to 10 inches. Most of these requests were due to the fact fishermen were saving their used Mag 12s and cutting them off at the top of the egg sack and reusing them at around 8 ½ inches," Laurent said.


"So, developing the Mag 8 Buzz Worm was fairly easy from the start, just working out the actual length against thickness and tail sizing. Starting out, we are introducing 14 colors covering solid colors with flake, colors with multi-colored tails, laminated colors and our classic red bloodline color."

For more information about the 8-inch Mag BUZZ Worm and other Mister Twister products, call 318-377-8818 or visit [www.mistertwister.com](http://www.mistertwister.com). ■

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# FISHING FOR FUN

NSU'S UNDERWOOD EYES BIGGER PRIZES THAN FISHING TROPHIES

**As** By Don Shoopman  
a successful young college bass angler at Northwestern State University, Tanner Underwood is grounded and under no illusions of grandeur about one day making a living as a bass pro.

The Bossier City native will be a sophomore this fall balancing studies and bass fishing. The scale will lean heavier to the side of studies but he'll enjoy every minute he can on the water, where he had several memorable tournament outings as a high schooler.

NSU came calling via a letter after he teamed with Benton Tigers Fishing Team member Peyton Grantham to finish second in a 2018 FLW High School Fishing Toledo Bend Lake Open. The offer to join the NSU Fishing Team was put to good use with multiple other academic scholarships after graduating from Benton High School.

## PRIORITIES SET

The son of Jimmie and Jennifer Underwood is studying to enter the nursing profession. In so many ways he made it clear he is a student first, a student/athlete second.

"I'll try to fish as many (collegiate bass tournaments) as I can, as much as school allows me to," he said. "I've just got to do what I've got to do."

This summer he's making money bush hogging and weed eating the property at UOP Honeywell, a chemical plant in Blanchard.

He enjoyed fishing three collegiate bass tournaments as a freshman at NSU, he said. He teamed with Parker Elliott, a Texan who grew up near Lake O' the Pines, and probably will fish with



Northwestern State University's Tanner Underwood, left, and his father, Jimmie Underwood of Bossier, had a good day on the water in March on Grand Bayou in Coushatta.

him again as a sophomore, he said, if Elliott doesn't transfer to a bigger school.

His post-college plans right now don't include trying any of the major bass fishing tournaments or circuits.

"Nothing wild," he said, noting he'll probably settle down and start a family. "I'll just go fish whenever I can, take the kids fishing, just have a good life, teach my kids the sport I love."

He's proud of his high school bass fishing days with Grantham.

"We've been best friends growing up. Us being best friends is what helped us click and get along so well," he said.

The 2020-21 BHS Angler of the Year and Grantham enjoyed the highlight of their high school fishing career together with a hard-earned win in Major League Fishing's U.S. Army High School Fishing tournament at Lake O' the Pines in 2021. Their five-bass limit weighed 22 pounds, 15 ounces, just enough to hold off the runners-up from the Hallsville, Texas, High School Bobcats, Noah Jarrett and Cooper Mayes, who had a limit weighing 22 pounds, 4 ounces.

Underwood, 18, considers Cypress Lake and Black Bayou Reservoir his home lake, a place he visits when he wants to get away and "fun fish." The lake's a few miles northeast of Benton High School, where he was on the fishing team five years starting as an eighth-grader.

## CANEY LAKE LOVE

His favorite lake to fish is Caney Lake, even during the dog days of summer in July.

"I love fishing Caney," he said.

His summertime experience pays off each July at Caney Lake. He'll start fishing early with a black Spro Bronzeye Popping Frog or a white or chrome Yellow Magic.

"I try to fish topwater stuff. As it gets hotter in the day I go out to fish deeper points with grass with a Carolina rig. I fish for



Benton High School's Tanner Underwood, left, and Peyton Grantham made their last high school event together a memorable one by winning an open tournament in June 2021 with 22 pounds, 15 ounces, at Lake O' the Pines in Texas.

offshore fish," he said.

He probes five to 12-foot depths while positioning his boat in 10 to 12-foot depths and casting to the shallow side. His C-rig setup has 15-pound test Seaguar fluorocarbon line tied to a 3-foot long, 12-pound test Seaguar fluorocarbon leader. Underwood's C-rigged soft plastic of choice is a watermelon/red Zoom Centipede.

One of his favorite memories is from neither Cypress Lake and Black Bayou Reservoir or Caney Lake. He was fishing with his maternal grandfather, G.M. Dodson of Plain Dealing, and his younger brothers, Tyler and Tate, at scenic Ivan lake, west of Cotton Valley and northeast of Ivan, one mid-summer day in 2017.

He had a watermelon/red GYCB Senko tied on when he stuck something that pulled back and then some. It was a heckuva fight before landing his personal best, a 9-pounder.

"It was pretty cool. My grandpa got down on the deck of the boat and grabbed it," Underwood said.

While Tyler is following in his footsteps as a high school angler, Tate is concentrating on baseball like his oldest brother, who was a pitcher for the BHS Tigers.

Underwood's competitiveness showed on the mound and on the water. He got into bass fishing at a young age on trips with his father, much of the time on Lake Fork near Quitman, Texas, where the family had a camp.

"I just got hooked on it," he said.

He'll always love fishing, but he also knows the odds of making it a profession are stacked against anybody. He's got his priorities together. And that's a formula for success on the water and in life. ■

## SPORTSMAN SHOWCASE ➤



Tanner Underwood's PB is this 9-pound "hawg" he caught July 11, 2017, while fishing with his grandfather, G.M. Dodson of Plain Dealing, and two younger brothers, Tyler and Tate, on Ivan Lake.



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With its BOSS Outdoors black nickel lightwire frame, this compact-sized spinnerbait offers great vibration. The high end swivels, blades and hand tied skirts set this lure apart from the mass-produced spinnerbaits on the market.

**For more info, visit: [911customlures.com](http://911customlures.com)**



## THE OUTLAW NET

The extra-long rods used when crappie fishing create one problem — how to net that slab before the hook tears out of its paper mouth. That's where The Outlaw net from Crappie Monster comes in. Adjusting from 6 to 12 feet in length and with a lightweight but rigid handle, anglers can scoop those fish without fear.

This net works extremely well when using the Livescope or when spider rigging. The removable head measures 20 inches by 16 inches so it handles even the largest of slabs. The silicone netting stays hook-free, meaning you can slip

that fish into the livewell and back to fishing in a snap.

Feel the need for a shorter version? Opt for The Outlaw Scoper, a 48-inch version of this net with all the same great features, just in a more compact footprint.

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

## BARNETT HYPERTAC 420 CROSSBOW

Compactness and high maneuverability aren't words normally associated with crossbows. But the Barnett HyperTac 420 is all that and more, and is a welcome addition to the company's list of hunting weapons.

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loaded with features, including an anti-dry fire system, a 3-pound pull trigger for smooth, consistent shots, a side-mount quiver and illuminated scope.

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A GLIMPSE OF  
FISHING PAST JUST  
MAKES THE PRESENT  
ALL THE BETTER.

# OLD SCHOOL

Perhaps as we get older, we are more disposed to the paraphernalia of the past. That's especially true when it comes to fishing gear and accessories of bygone, but not forgotten, days and the embedded memories they release.

The Louisiana outdoors is a plethora of fishing-related history. Nothing conjures up the attention of old and young alike than a glimpse inside a tackle box of old wooden bass lures. Or holding up an old saltwater rod and reel that has fought a literal ton of redfish, snapper or hundreds other species. Or, a factual explanation of an old piece of equipment and how it worked. Every piece has a story to tell and the past 50 years has been a whirlwind of change for fishing.

They say if you don't know where you've been, you can't know where you are going. That's wise beyond words and reminds us that fishing is more than, well...fishing. Even my favorite old

fishing book points to that fact.

"Rivers and the inhabitants of the watery element were made for wise men to contemplate, and fools to pass by without consideration," wrote Sir Izaak Walton in the *Compleat Angler*. That was in 1653.

So a look back is worthy, if not essential. In the following pages, Louisiana Sportsman writers Kinny Haddox and Chris Holmes present a "Double Feature" on some of the things of days gone by that got us to where we are today. Come and go along. Perhaps you'll learn something. Or perhaps you'll recall something that makes you realize maybe you are just a little bit "old school" yourself.

**FRESHWATER FAVORITES** ➤

**THEY'RE FUN TO COLLECT,  
SHARE AND YES—THEY  
STILL CATCH FISH.**

■ By Kinny Haddox

# FRESHWATER FAVORITES



# LET'S TAKE A LITTLE TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE.

First, let's go way, way back to grandpa's steel rod and HALF and HALF tackle box. Apparently this was one of the first brands of tackle boxes, dating back to 1909. My grandpa used to carry an assortment of hooks and lead in his.

Half And Half is an old tobacco product, also known as Burley and Bright, and the "tackle box" started out as a pipe tobacco can which, when emptied, Pops repurposed into a tackle box. He also had an old steel rod and reel and a tiny metal reel that was just that, a reel with small handle and wooden knobs.

Okay, now let's go just way back. Remember Wooden cricket boxes, two-tray UMCO tackle boxes, small wooden fish decoys, Lucky 13's, the River Runt and maybe a Nip I Diddee or SkipJack? The first plastic worms were types like Lunker Lures' pre-rigged models, complete with three hooks, beads and a spinner. And what about cane poles and those clamp-on rod holders that fit on your car window trim to hold them?

## "NEWER" OLD

Now, let's take a look at some of the "newer" old of freshwater fishing. As the bass craze kicked it up a notch in the 70's and 80's, a whole new world opened up where anglers carried an amazing selection of five, maybe six different kinds of crank-baits in their boxes, lures like the Little N, the Big O and the Hot Spot. Remember them? They still catch fish, too, if you are brave enough to risk losing one of them. And then came the development of multiple colors of plastic worms — black, blue and purple — worms that you rigged the hook in yourself, some new fangled technique called the "Texas Rig." Mister Twister, Creme, Fliptail. Those were a few of the more popular. And there were only a few.

Studying the history and development of fishing equipment can go as in-depth as you'd like. Most would rather fish, so we may go into the future not even knowing some important facts.

Some real old stuff — a Half and Half "tackle box," wooden cricket box, fish decoy, old plastic worms and a steel rod and reel — heavy action!  
**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Neal DeForest is all smiles after landing this luncker on one of his dad's old Nip I Diddee wooden bass lures.



**In** 1975, Jim Bagley, founder of the Bagley Bait Company, was in Monroe for a fishing seminar. I was blessed to get to meet him. The original lure he marketed in bulk was a pork rind type bait called the Black Magic Eel in 1954. But at some point in the early days, he also dabbled with plastic worms. He mailed me a couple of packs of his “Ol’ Jim’s Monster worms. They were red and cost 75 cents for a two-pack. Information on them is scarce. The current owners of Bagley lures, known mostly for its balsa wood products, had not even seen one nor could find out any information on it when contacted.

As we moved into the 1990’s and beyond, “plastic worms” came in all shapes and sizes — and colors. Suddenly, they also became “creature baits.” Those are still around today and come looking like crawfish, multi-legged lizards, monster centipedes and even alien creations from outer space. And the color spectrum broke wide open. Colors like June Bug and Watermelon Red, Pumpkinseed, California Love, Disco Green, South African Love and on and on hit the market. There are even weird colors like glowing chartreuse or bright pink. One major company today has over 600 active solid and combo colors available. They all seemed to catch fish, but most would agree some of those fish were awful hungry. Many of these baits don’t look

like anything that a bass would see in it’s natural environment. And how about plastic frogs? There are probably more shapes, sizes and color patterns of frogs on the shelf of a major bait retailer than there actually are in Louisiana lakes.

Crankbaits began to take on a real-life look that was amazing. Computer generated printing lures made plastic crankbaits look like real bream, crappie and even baby bass. Crawfish models became popular, then 20 or more varieties of crawfish colors all had their favorites among fishermen.

Picking baits heading into the first few years of the turn of the century became a bigger challenge than picking a spot to fish.

## DEFOREST TREASURES

Old School is important to a lot of folks and one of those is Neal DeForest, Jr., of Ruston. Neal grew up with fishing with his dad, Neal, Sr., one of the pioneers of club bass fishing in north Louisiana. The younger Neal has always had his dad’s detailed interest in fishing gear, but now that he has passed away, that interest is even more keen and ties him more to fishing than ever before. Fortunately, he still has many boxes of his dad’s old gear. He even has an original mold where Neal Sr. (who he calls ‘Ol Pod because that’s what he called most other folks), made his own Fliptail worms.



As lure options grew, so did the size of old tackle boxes because fishermen felt the need for at least one of every type lure and several colors of their favorites. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Neal DeForest and his dad’s old fishing jersey from the early 1970’s, complete with patches from awards he won and his favorite lure companies.



And, he still fishes with them today. He catches fish on them. “Even if he was still around, it would be really cool to catch fish on the baits that he used and I’m sure I would do it,” said DeForest, president of DeForest Engineering Consultants. “I don’t think I ever feel as close to him as I do when I’m catching something on a lure, and I know that 50 years ago, he caught something on that very same bait.”

DeForest is protective of the old lures when he fishes them. He uses 30 pound braid and after almost having to go in after an old Mudbug one time, he started just fishing the deep divers in open water. And, he pretty much quit fishing the ones that dive out of his reach.

One of DeForest’s keepsake treasures is one of the old possum-belly tackle boxes full of crankbaits, spinnerbaits and topwaters. He also has his dad’s old fishing jersey mounted. Back in the early 70’s, “fishing jerseys” were covered in patches representing baits and companies. Nobody ever said it, but you figured the more patches a fisherman had on his shirt, the more fish he probably caught.

“I learned so much from dad about how to tweak these old baits to make them better,” DeForest said. “The little things make a difference. He hardly ever fished a lure without taking off a prop, bending a metal lip or adding something to it. I bet not many people today remember what the really good buzz bait fishermen did back in the day. They would tie on their buzz baits and leave them hanging out the window while they were driving. Spinning the blade for hours at 45-50 miles an hour would definitely give it a different ‘chirp’ when you pulled it through the water.”




*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.*

**A SECOND CHANCE >**

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## A SECOND CHANCE

DeForest said finding an old lure and trying it out is one thing, but to actually catch a fish on it is another.

“Coming to grips with the reality that a bait has been sitting somewhere for 50 years or longer, just waiting for a chance to maybe get used again. It feels special to take them out and give them a whirl,” he said.

One of the most exciting catches was on an old clear brown smoke Boy Howdy. DeForest cleaned it up with an emory cloth and tossed it out past a brushtop, not far from the boat. He saw the water boil under the bait, then teased the fish with a slight twitch.

“Boom. He nailed it,” DeForest said. “It was over seven pounds. And on a topwater close to the boat, one that dad had caught fish on, it felt like no other fish I’d ever caught before. I just sat

there for a few minutes and thanked God for the whole experience. Then I took a couple of pictures and put the fish back.

Sometimes today he uses an old bait to jump start a tough day on the water. Throwing one of those, especially catching a fish on it, kind of gets your mojo going a little bit and helps you catch more fish, he said.

DeForest’s first experience fishing on his own was when his mother’s dad took interest in him and taught him how to set up a trotline and store it on an old wooden paddle with slots cut for the hooks. One day, DeForest made up his own 14-hook line from scratch, baited it with nightcrawlers from a neighborhood cane patch and set it in a pond behind the house. He said he dreamed all night of getting up and running that trotline full of catfish.

“I still remember like yesterday,” he said. “It stormed all night and it was so sloppy down there, but every hook except two had catfish on them. I took them off and we cleaned them and dad fired up the Coleman stove out back and fried them up. I still have that old trotline paddle hanging in my office. It means a lot to me.” ■



## SALTWATER SAGA >

Neal DeForest shows some of the “like new” old bass lures from one of his dad’s old possum belly tackle boxes. **INSET:** This big bass knocked a chunk out of one of DeForest’s old wooden baits, but the experience was worth it.



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■ By Chris Holmes

# SALTWATER SAGA

*VIRTUALLY EVERYTHING'S  
CHANGED IN THE FISHING  
GAME, EXCEPT THE FISH!*

# COASTAL SALTWATER FISHING GEAR IS LEAPS AND BOUNDS OVER WHAT IT WAS 50-60 YEARS AGO.

Rods and reels weigh in the ounces, boats run 70 miles per hour or more, GPS has eliminated fishing maps, Fish Finders actually show the fish striking your lure, Power Pole anchors, braided super lines, technical clothing, computer generated lures that perfectly duplicate baitfish — except for a heartbeat. . . and on and on.

Virtually everything fishing related has been modernized and improved. Except, well, the fish.

When it comes to inshore fishing in Louisiana, the one constant over the last many decades is that speckled trout and redfish are the most popular quarry — in that order.

Once virtually unregulated, both of these species have seen major changes regarding size and creel limit restrictions, particularly in the mid 80's to mid 90's. However, Louisiana still provides the most liberal trout and redfish regulations and unrivaled fishing in the country.

In the early 80's alarm swept through the coastal recreational community. The blackened redfish craze swept the nation and spawned sparsely regulated commercial purse seining of breeding stock redfish wherein untold millions of pounds of the off-shore brood stock were being decimated annually. Combined

with the inshore recreational take of juvenile reds, redfish stocks were severely depleted.

## FISHERMEN BAND TOGETHER

Sport fishers banded together and major changes were brought about through hard-fought legislative battles that resulted in the 1986 banning of purse seines for catching breeding-size bull redfish. Over the course of the next 10 years, additional agency actions and legislation produced a commercial and recreational ban on fishing redfish in Federal waters of the Gulf, declaring redfish as game fish in Louisiana, establishment of a required additional saltwater fishing license and a ban on gill net fishing for trout and redfish. Strict laws against recreational fishermen selling or bartering fish were enacted. Concurrent reductions in trout and redfish creel limits and lengths have remained constant for several decades, through the present, except for portions of Calcasieu and Cameron Parishes which have a lower creel limit and strict maximum length on speckled trout.

Block ice and metal coolers were standard equipment in days gone by. This nice pile of specks and flounder shows that the old gear can still produce fish. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** This photo could be from decades ago, but it was taken on a recent trip using old gear and lures. Karl Rockvoan shows off a nice flounder caught on an original H&H Lure Company Cahoe minnow.



**G**rowing up in the early 70's, we measured success of our trips not by the number of fish or catching a legal limit. Our unit of measure was the number of ice chests and coolers. Most popular at that time were coolers of 48-quart capacity. With no minimum size limit, the terms "cigar trout" referred to tiny specks generally under 10 inches and "rat red" was used for small redfish under about 15 inches. Both were abundant and regularly stacked into the boxes as part of the day's haul. There was also no prohibition against recreational anglers selling their catch, so after cleaning all we wanted, giving some to family and friends, the rest were regularly sold to restaurants or seafood markets.

Saltwater lures 50-60 years ago were limited, basic and they worked. Dead shrimp and live minnows were also used and savvy anglers that wanted to use live shrimp usually had to cast net their own. Although some are still used today, many of those favorite artificial lures have gone away in favor of the latest and greatest for fishermen always looking for that magic lure to give them an edge. Today, the styles and types of saltwater lures are literally countless. Yes, they catch fish, but also seem to catch fishermen at a higher rate.

## WE HAD TO TRY IT

On a couple recent trips, we decided to head "back from the future" to see if the old gear and lures of yesteryear still had what it takes. Sporting a vintage Garcia Mitchell 300 spinning

reel paired with a two-piece fiberglass rod, we managed to get fish landed (with the aid of an old green monofilament landing net) to safely stow in the aluminum cooler. Yes, everything worked like a charm. Technology has dramatically changed, but fish still eat the same bait and lures.

"Big" Kenny Campo grew up in the inshore fishing mecca of Shell Beach. He has the bonafides, having learned from two of the best, his late grandfather Celestino and legendary father Frank "Blackie" Campo. Kenny has lived through all the changes. Some great, some not so much. His biggest lament is the lack of courtesy.

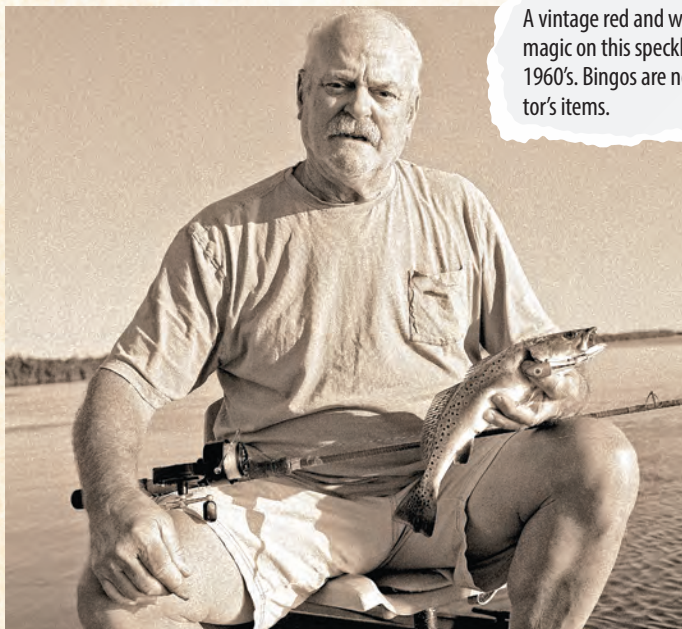
"There are so many people fishing today and there really is no more respect. It used to be a given to move on or give others their space, but I've seen places today were boats were too close to even cast," he said. Campo still fishes many of the places he did as a young child with his grandfather. "I was very fortunate, I learned not only where to fish, but how to actually find fish. If you tell fishermen today that you can smell fish, they look at you like you are crazy. They have no idea about slicks or how tide lines work or other signs to look for," he said.

Not all technology is bad he said.

"Despite catching all the fish we wanted, we were fishing with heavy, stiff fiberglass rods and Penn Peer reels with nearly unbreakable nylon line. It was just a routine of hooking them and winching them into the boat. Today I fish with a long, flexible rod that bends almost in half. I enjoy it more. Back then, the fish were fighting you, now you are fighting the fish," Campo said.

This wooden tackle box belonged to the author's late grandfather and contains some of the basic, most popular tackle used in the 60's and 70's for fishing trout and redfish in Louisiana. Some no longer made, but all still catch fish.





A vintage red and white Bingo, Mitchell 300 reel, and fiberglass rod worked magic on this speckled trout recently, the same as they did back in the 1960's. Bingos are no longer in production, and are now considered collector's items.

It is a good bet that these two iconic baits have landed more speckled trout and reds than any other. The Sparkle Beetle was introduced about 1962 and the Cocahoe minnow about 1970. Both are still available and catching fish today.

H&H was started 63 years ago by Bill Humphries and his wife Tommy. H&H is a legend in the freshwater fishing community especially for their original H&H Spinnerbait. Mr. Billy was an avid speckled trout fisherman, but there were only a handful of regularly used artificial lures.

"Bass fishermen fished every weekend with their buddies and were always trying to outdo each other. Therefore, they were constantly looking for the latest and greatest new lure. It was easy to sell freshwater baits," Humphries said. "However, speckled trout were so plentiful and easy to catch that there wasn't a demand for many lures. The Sparkle Beetle is the one that broke it wide open," he added. Humphries followed up with the Cocahoe minnow and these two soft plastics led the way for the mind-boggling choices available today.



Chris Holmes has kayak fished in the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and many places in between.

**SHAD RIGS >**

## GRANDPA'S WOODEN TACKLE BOX

On a nostalgia whim, I dug out my grandpa's (Papa) old wooden tackle box that I hadn't looked in for several decades. He was an avid fisherman in the 50's and 60's, but passed away in 1971 before I was a teenager. The heavy box is adorned with brass hardware and built more like a piece of fine furniture than a fishing box. The box has large compartments combined with removable trays that have dividers to arrange different size lures. Upon opening, that unmistakable old tackle smell hits you like a blast from the past — they all smell that way. The smell is clearly a combination of lead weights, rusty hooks, jig-head paint, hard and soft plastic lures and immeasurable fishing adventures.

The lure assortment is typical of the best of those times. Not a huge variety, but different actions for each, and all could be considered confidence baits for given situations.

Taking up the majority of tray space is Louisiana's own H&H Lure Company's soft plastic Sparkle Beetle and Cocahoe minnows.

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## SHAD RIGS

Next up is the Boone Shad Rig. They came double-rigged either on monofilament or light steel leader. The most popular colors were white and yellow or a combination of both. Bright orange was a close third. Large red or white eyes with black pupils were painted on the heads.

The slim, bullet shaped head had a stout hook and nylon bristled tail. Tipped with a piece of shrimp and cast under a popping cork, they were hard to beat. Although they are still in business, Boone no longer sells Shad Rigs. H&H also has their own version called the Speck Rig and Redfish Rig with the differences being hook size and weight. H&H says these are the No. 1 tandem rig of all times with over a billion sold. Mr. Billy fondly recounts catching six trout at one time.

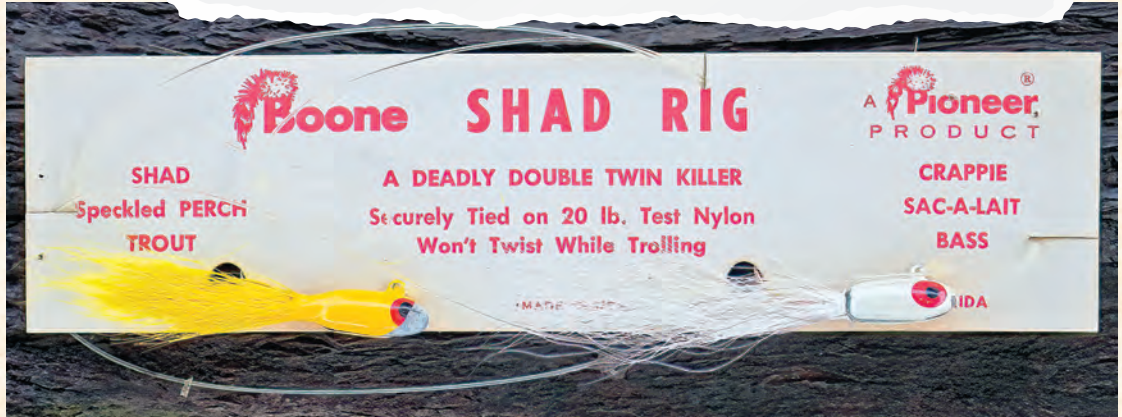
"I bet a friend I could do it and then tied three Speck Rigs in a row. I cast and slowly worked it feeling each hit until all six hooks were filled," he said.



For hard lures, Papa seemed to prefer Bingos and MirrOLures. Bingos were made in coastal Texas beginning in the early 1950's by the Doug English Lure Company and are one of the most recognizable saltwater baits of all times. They are shaped like funny little baitfish and came in various sizes, colors, and quirky patterns. Some even had a mirror like flash material embedded in the center of translucent models. They are made of tough poured hard plastic with wire-through design for two treble hooks and two attachment points for different swimming actions. Bingo's are mostly collected today as relatively inexpensive pieces of coastal fishing history.

Unlike the slim, flat-sided Bingo's that don't look anything like a real baitfish, L&S Bait Company began producing their namesake, MirrOLure, in south Florida in the early 1950's. The lures were designed with a mirror-like film embedded inside the bait which creates an irresistible flash that looked just like a baitfish. With three treble hooks, it is hard to miss a fish on a MirrOlure. They are still produced today with the company owned by the

The venerable Shad Rig was a staple of most coastal anglers decades ago. They came as pre-rigged tandems on either monofilament or steel leaders. Painted lead heads with nylon bristle tails, the simple design was highly effective and were often tipped with a small piece of market bait (dead shrimp) for a little scent and flavor.



third-generation grandson of the original founder.

Next up is an assortment of silver spoons. These simple, shiny chunks of metal were designed to flash and look like a bait fish. All saltwater baitfish have silver on their sides. Various sizes and shapes were made with a single treble hook at the rear — some dressed with yellow or white bucktail. The brand names on these spoons are legendary in saltwater fishing history — Mr. Champ, Side-Winder, Little Cleo and Johnson's Sprite. The majority are silver, but a couple were painted with an omnipresent red and white striped pattern on one side. Red and white was offered in almost all saltwater lures sold during those times.

## WOODEN PLUGS AND MORE

The rest of the box was filled with a couple wooden plugs, the usual assortment of hooks, jigheads, corks, sinkers, swivels and line. Miscellaneous small items were contained in metal Kodak film containers. Insect Repellent was a must. Fishing was primarily an anchor and sit operation. No moving about with a trolling motor. Mosquitoes, gnats and sand flies wreaked havoc then as they do today. A can of Off or Pic slow burning coils was an essential.

There were a few items that are not readily found in most modern anglers' boxes, including an ice pick. Back then there were no Twice the Ice machines dispensing cubes. Local ice houses sold block ice. Many fishermen made their own in milk cartons. A pick was surely needed to manage the ice into smaller chunks for proper icing of fish and of course, beer. Whetstones were a must. Today's chemical and lazer sharpening produces needle-sharp hooks. Not so much, many years ago. The old timers were both smart and frugal. New hooks were sharpened out of the package and hooks dulled from use weren't replaced, they were sharpened, often right in the boat. They were also needed to keep manual filet knives sharp. There was also a bottle opener (fishing is thirsty work) and miscellaneous items like a compass, a box of matches, clip on sunglass lenses, reel oil, spare spool and/or line, and a signaling mirror because there were no cell phones.

And last, but not least, a hand-held scale — because, you know, fishermen lied back then too. ■

Made in coastal Texas beginning in the early 1950's, Bingo was a simple, hard plastic lure that came in a multitude of colors and several sizes. It was highly effective from the boat, surf, or pier. No longer in production, they are collector's items, but those who choose to fish them still find success.

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**Mitchell 300 Spinning Reel**

1962: \$32.95 (Sale price \$15.95)

2022: \$69.99\*

\*Brand name only and no comparison to the quality of the original French-made Garcia Mitchell reels that are collectible and many still in use today.



Old outboard motors like these small Evinrude models and even large ones were cheap in days gone by. Not true today. LEFT: This page from a 1965 Cabela's catalog shows a popular Mitchell 300 spinning reel for less than \$20.



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By John N. Felsher

# FUN FOR RENT

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John N. Felsher

## From rivers to lakes, bays and bayous to vast marshes, the Gulf Coast offers some of the **BEST FISHING IN THE NATION FOR MANY SPECIES.**

Not everyone can afford to own a boat, but they still want to fish. Hiring a charter service costs money, but sportsmen who only fish occasionally save dollars. After adding all the expenses of owning and operating a boat, anglers can pay for several charter trips each year and still save money.

“We provide all the tackle and bait,” confirmed Ron Harmon of Captain Ron’s Charters (228-860-4308, [www.CaptainRonsCharters.com](http://www.CaptainRonsCharters.com)) in Gulfport, Miss. “The only thing we require for anglers booking with us is to bring their own food and drinks. In Mississippi waters, our charter license covers everyone on the boat, so non-resident guests don’t need to buy separate fishing licenses. I also recommend people bring a hat, camera, sunglasses and sunscreen.”

### HOW DO YOU KNOW?

Many people book charters because they’ve never fished before. Others who regularly fish their local waters want to try something new. With so many great charter services available, how does one know which one to choose?

Everything comes down to two words — research and communications!

Before spending big bucks to hit the water, surf the internet. Look at service websites. Many captains also periodically post fishing reports and photos on other sites. If a captain hasn’t posted a report in years, that’s not the first one to call. Read recent articles in periodicals or websites that might mention a captain or service who works a particular area. Does that captain fish for what you want to catch the way you want to catch it?

“Research the area you plan to fish,” Harmon suggested. “We get many calls for tuna, but that’s not a practical fishery for us because of how far we need to go out to find tuna. We go to great lengths to try to accommodate requests from our clients,



# 2022 LOUISIANA FISHING REGULATIONS

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

but fishing is fishing. I'll do everything I can to make sure they get what they are expecting and bring them back safely."

After deciding on a place to go, talk to people who own marinas or lodging in that area. Call local sporting goods stores or bait shops. Ask them to recommend captains. Then, do some research on those individuals. Check out their reviews on line.

"Start with local resources, such as a community Facebook page and find a properly licensed captain," advised Daryl Carpenter with Reel Screamers Guide Service (225-937-6288, [www.reelscreamers.com](http://www.reelscreamers.com)) in Grand Isle, La. "Many of my first-time customers come from local referrals. Hire charter captains local to that area and not people who come in temporarily from somewhere else. The hotel/motel and marina owners know who their charter captains are."



**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](mailto:JohnNFelsher.com).

## WHEN TO CALL ➤

April Bethea shows off a king mackerel she caught while fishing aboard a charter boat in the Gulf of Mexico. By taking a charter, anglers can fish for species they might never otherwise catch.



John N. Felsher

## SALTWATER

### STATE REGULATIONS (0-10.357 miles^)

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^ & Black^	24" TL	4/day (aggregate)*
Scamp^	16" TL	
Nassau & Goliath	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
Yellowfin^	20" TL	
Red^	20" TL	2 of 4 grouper total
Atlantic Sharpnose & Bonnethead shark@	None	1/day
Shortfin Mako Shark@	Males 71" FL / Females 83" FL	1/day/vessel/aggregate
Other sharks (except prohibited species)@	54" FL	1/day/vessel/aggregate
King Mackerel*	24" FL	3/day
Spanish Mackerel*	12" FL	15/day
Striped mullet	None	100 pounds/day
Black seabass	None	None
Seatrout, Spotted (Speckled Trout)	12" TL*	25/day*
Red Snapper*	16" TL	2/day*
Other Snapper		5 mutton in 10 snapper aggregate
Mutton Snapper	18" TL	
Cubera, Yellowtail, Gray (mangrove)	12" TL	10 in aggregate*
Queen, Blackfin, Silk, Wenchman	None	
Vermilion Snapper	10" TL	
Schoolmaster, Dog, Mahogany	None	None
Gray Triggerfish*	15" FL	1/day in aggregate
Lane Snapper	8" TL	
Almaco Jack, Goldface Tilefish, & Blueline Tilefish	None	20/person/day in aggregate*
Blackline Tilefish, Anchor Tilefish	None	
Tripletail	18" TL	5/day
Hogfish	14" FL	5/day

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

## FRESHWATER

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

\* see exceptions in pamphlet. \*\* no more than two may exceed 30 inches.  
 \*\*\* catfish limit is 100 in aggregate; however, 25 fish in aggregate may be undersized.  
 # only one fish may exceed 27 inches. @Shark season is closed between April 1 and June 30.  
 ^ Closed season for gag grouper Jan. 1 - May 31. Closed season for black, red, yellowfin, yellowmouth&scampgrouperfromFeb.1-March31.-GreateramberjackseasonisopenMay1-31andAug.1-Oct.31.Closed season on gray triggerfish Jan. 1 - Feb. 28 and June 1 - July 31.

## WHEN TO CALL

After narrowing down the field, call a few services. Whenever possible, speak directly to the captain, not a booking agent. Call in late afternoon after the captains return from a long day of fishing and get a bite to eat. Don't call too late because most captains go to bed early.

"The absolute best idea before booking a charter is talking to the captain," Carpenter said. "I want a customer to call me because I want that customer to hear me and I want to do the same with that customer. I want that customer to be comfortable booking with me. My philosophy has always been 'if the captain doesn't have time to talk to you on the phone, what makes you think he's got time to deal with you on the boat?' Tell the captain exactly what you want to do and what you expect out of a charter. Communication is the key. If you have a pleasant conversation, then go with your gut."

When talking to the captain, don't hesitate to ask questions. Is the captain properly licensed? Ask about the boats and equipment. What does the captain provide? Inquire about any extra fees such as fuel surcharges, fish cleaning services and

tips. Request references. If possible, talk to some anglers who recently fished with that captain.

Let the captain know how many people will comprise the party and a little information about them. If the party will include young children, ask how the captain feels about that. Some captains cater to family groups and might fish a special way to get the youngsters involved. Others might only host adults. Don't surprise the captain by booking a trip for six people and showing up with one adult and five small children.

## MULTIPLE BOATS

If a party consists of more people than can fit on one boat, the captain must place anglers in multiple boats. The person who makes the call and books the trip won't necessarily fish with the captain who answered the phone.

"We all get bookings that require multiple boats," Carpenter said. "The customer might not know they're being handed off to someone else. As operators, we need to inform people of that so they can make a personal communication with that captain to see if they feel good about booking that trip."

Captains and customers also need to discuss what they will



As the sun rises for another day of action, Justin Hoffman fishes near a marshy shoreline on Calcasieu Lake south of Lake Charles, La. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Capt. Kenny Kreeger of Lake Pontchartrain Charters shows off a black drum he caught while fishing in the Rigolets near Slidell, La. A good charter captain can usually find something biting.

actually do on the water. Some people only want to fish a special way or catch a specific species, tempting redfish on a fly rod, for example. Does that captain fish for that species that way? Is that species in season or when is the best time to catch it? Others want to bring home an ice chest full of fresh fillets. Others just want to relax, enjoy the day and don't care what bites.

"The captain needs to know exactly what are the intentions and expectations for the trip," Harmon said. "We go to great lengths to try to accommodate the requests from our clients. We are going to fish for what they want to catch, but fishing is fishing. We can't guarantee that will work that day."

Also consider options. If the desired plan doesn't succeed, perhaps the captain can recommend Plan B or C. For instance, if the party wants to troll for king mackerel, but rough weather makes that impossible, perhaps the captain might suggest hitting a hot redfish hole or dropping shrimp next to pilings for sheephead.

"Sometimes people come with expectations a bit too high," Carpenter said. "Some people want to get a limit of speckled trout and then a limit of redfish. Sometimes we can do that, but sometimes it's just too windy to chase specks. The ideal customer says, 'Captain, I'm leaving it at your discretion. We'll go after whatever is biting.'"

**SCHEDULE WELL  
IN ADVANCE** >



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## SCHEDULE WELL IN ADVANCE

Since most charter services stay busy during prime fishing times, potential customers should schedule an outing well in advance. Don't show up on the dock at 7 a.m. on opening day of red snapper season and expect to hire a charter. Captains understand that genuine emergencies do happen. If a customer must cancel for some reason, that person should contact the captain immediately to give the service an opportunity to book another trip.

Weather probably causes the most cancellations, particularly for offshore adventures. Boat captains must ensure the safety of everyone aboard the vessel. If a captain cancels a trip due to unsafe weather conditions, don't argue. Usually, that captain will work with the party to reschedule the trip or offer an alternative, such as switching from offshore to an inshore excursion.

In addition, customers must show up at the designated time and place ready to spend a day on the water. Don't crawl to the dock after running the bars all night and expect to catch fish. Also, don't judge the trip by the weight of the ice chest. Captains know their areas and keep up with fish movements, but they can't make fish bite.

"Many people book a fishing guide and think they are going to load the boat," Carpenter said. "No matter how good the captain is, we're still chasing a wild animal that moves. As charter captains, we do everything we can do to put people on fish, but sometimes fish just don't cooperate. In addition, some people



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just can't fish. I love when customers bring their wives or children with them because they listen to what we tell them to do. They're usually the ones who catch the most fish."

Many Gulf Coast captains offer excellent fishing packages. Some include food, lodging and other services. Unfortunately, recent hurricanes devastated large sections of the Gulf Coast. In some places, lodging and other services might still be difficult to obtain.

"Grand Isle is coming back from Hurricane Ida, but we're still having trouble with enough affordable lodging for customers because we still have so many contractors occupying the rooms," Carpenter said. "As far as the fishing goes, we're back! We want people to come down and have some fun!"

Take a little time to pick the right captain with proper credentials and evaluate the entire experience, not just the fish count. Did that captain provide an adventure that created a good lasting memory? If so, you picked the right captain! ■

### TROUT HOTSPOTS >

Capt. Tommy Pellegri of Custom Charters shows off a speckled trout he caught while fishing near one of the barrier islands south of Cocodrie, La. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Some guides clean the catch. Here, Tommy Adams of Fishing Tom Guide Service begins to fillet a redfish his customers caught in the Calcasieu Estuary near Hackberry, La.



John N. Felsner



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# HOT TIMES TWO

## Biloxi Marsh heat includes weather and fishing for speckled trout

**W** By Rusty Tardo  
 hen I asked Capt. Mike Gallo (504-259-3474) where the fishing will be hot this month, his answer was immediate. "In July? It'll be hot everywhere! This is Louisiana!"

And of course, Gallo was right. It'll be hot. It'll be that sweltering, humid, clothes-stick-to-your-back kind of hot that won't leave until late September, so we fishermen just have to make the best of it.

But if you pick your days and timing, Gallo said the fishing action will be hot as well.

"Leave the dock early and quit early," Gallo said. "Sunscreen, sunglasses, hats and lotsa liquids are essential equipment this month and next.

"And knowing a little bit about the species you're targeting will help you decide where to fish."

For instance, if you're hoping to catch trout, then you should know they'll be in full spawn mode in July. That means they will be seeking water with higher salinities to spawn in and that will instinctively move them closer to the coastline.

"Any areas nearer to the coast, those outer lakes and bays that get a good influx of salty water should hold fish," Gallo said. "And lakes that are closer to the interior and farther from the coast will have lower salinities and will be less likely to produce."

### EAST SIDE PICKS

Gallo said he especially likes to fish the area on the east side of the Biloxi Marsh, where there are numerous islands and reefs and where the salinities are high.

"Lawson Bay, Fishing Smack Bay and Drum Bay have numerous islands, points, cuts, coves, reefs... it's a great area to fish when the



Capt. Mike Gallo with a speckled trout caught on a Matrix Shad in glow color fished under a 4-Horsemen cork.

winds cooperate," he said. "I look for birds and when I see them diving on bait, I'll go give it a few casts just to see what's under them. This time of year it's frequently catfish or undersized trout, but occasionally I'll get into a mess of keeper size specks. It happens enough to keep me trying.

"The key this month is to fish moving water, so a good tide range is important, and look for any kind of life in the area — anything! Baitfish, minnows, shrimp, crabs... and wherever you find bait, you'll probably find trout."

Best trout baits this month: Live shrimp under a 4-Horsemen Cork, or Berkley Gulps or Matrix Shads in the glow color, he said.

For reds, Gallo said he'll target the Northeast Lake Borgne shoreline.

"Reds don't require as high salinities, but they do require oxygen in the water," he said. "High heat dissipates oxygen and still water, like in smaller ponds, with little influx of water will have the least amount of oxygen in these hot summer days.

"The point being, fish move in water which is oxygenated water, preferably on days with at least a ¾ foot tide range. I'll focus on points with current around it, areas with grass, coves and cuts, as long as you have moving water. And you can fish reds with a variety of baits. I like to toss silver spoons, or in grassy areas, a Texas rigged weedless Matrix craw, or the tried-and-true live or dead shrimp under a popping cork." ■

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# TRICKING TROUT

## Increase your odds with live bait for Sabine specks

**T** By Capt. Adam Jaynes  
 he dog days of summer can be tough at times for those trying to get on a decent speckled trout bite, especially for those throwing artificial lures. Often times the bite is diminished rather quickly after the sun breaches the horizon. Many anglers will opt to throw live bait to increase their odds of having a successful fishing trip during the hottest parts of the summer. Live shrimp is definitely the most readily available and most utilized. Live croaker, piggy perch and mullet are other favorites, but often times can be more difficult to come by whether from the bait stand or cast netting this time of year.

Fishing live bait is obviously nothing new and it is something most anglers are good and successful at doing. However, most anglers will go to “their spot” and anchor, PowerPole down or use the spot lock feature on their trolling motor and make relatively the same cast over and over until their box is full or it is time to move to another “spot.” There’s nothing wrong with that technique, it’s easy and effective to catch a literal boatload of schoolie trout. But there is another way.

### DREDGE THEM UP

A technique that I do not see utilized near as much when fishing live bait for speckled trout is “dredging.” It is a little more difficult and you will have to pay more attention to avoid getting hung up on the bottom, but it can result in some higher quality fish.

This style of fishing is similar to dredging soft plastics like we used to spend a lot of time doing on the causeway reef on the south end of Sabine Lake, just with different rigging. Instead of using a jighead like we do with soft plastics, we rig the live bait on a Carolina rig.

A Texas rig will work, but I prefer the Carolina rig with live bait. They can be made relatively easily or purchased at your local tackle store, whichever you prefer.

As with jig fishing, the amount of weight needed will vary based on the depth at which you are fishing and the conditions. Deeper water will require a little heavier rigging as well as if it is windy and you are making a faster drift. If possible, I prefer to use a drift sock to slow my drift down instead of increasing the weight of my rigging.

### USE A DRIFT SOCK

Drift socks are something else I do not see utilized very frequently any more around here. I highly recommend keeping at least one on your boat. They fold up to not take up much space in your hatch and they do not require charging or gasoline to use!



Jack Pyburn with his youngest brother, Joe. Joe did more in his short time on this earth than many of us ever will and he is still making an impact on everyone that comes to know him. I imagine he is still catching trout like these in heaven, maybe even bigger!

The “where” part to using this technique is anywhere you would typically cut a drift. For me, just like the coldest part of winter, I have to be fishing close to a deep-water access during the heat of the summer. I am after those speckled trout that are better fish that are coming out of the ICW and Sabine River onto the flats to find a quick meal before retreating back to the deeper areas. The islands on the north end of Sabine Lake are my favorite; Well, what is left of them.

There are relatively few hang-ups as the majority is a sandy bottom and they all border the ICW. Stewts and Sydney Island are probably my favorite. I approach them all the same. I will kill the big engine and slowly start trolling in looking for active bait, that is how I decide what depth to make my drift in. When I am dredging live bait, I will make my drifts a little on the deeper side in the 4 to 6 foot range or so.

It’s a fun and relaxing bite if you have never done it with the potential for a big payoff! ■

**PADDLES ‘N PUDDLES ➤**

## 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).

# A COUPLE OF YAKERS

CHRIS AND JANIE MURPHEY ARE LEAVING A WAKE IN THE KAYAK WORLD



It is a rare site to see Janie and Chris Murphey fishing side-by-side. Their competitive nature regularly has each fishing their own style and area, but remaining within sight of or at least phone contact with each other for safety. If there is a fish on this point, it is a pretty sure bet that one of these two determined kayak anglers will catch it.

**C**ompetitive, inspiring, comical, driven and loving — all words that come into play when this power couple hits the water. Janie and Chris Murphey are making their mark on kayak fishing in south Louisiana with both regularly making appearances in the winners' circle at various tournaments across the state. They accomplished one huge feat with Chris placing 1st and Janie placing 3rd in the difficult Bayou Coast Kayak Fishing Club's Minimalists Challenge earlier this year. Although they have only been kayak fishing for a couple of years, their determination and dedication are matched only by their love of the sport.

"We took a getaway to Grand Isle and were bank fishing along Highway 1. We were novices and knew really nothing about saltwater fishing. Not having much success, I saw two kayakers go by and a light went off. If we could only get on the water, I knew we could do better," Chris said.

Shortly thereafter, they purchased two used kayaks, a pedal drive for him and a paddle kayak for her. They were immediately hooked, but things didn't go as planned.

"I thought I would just tow her around with my pedals, but it didn't go so well," he said. "It was almost impossible to keep her kayak straight and became both strenuous and frustrating."

Janie recounts one particular day fishing Shell Beach when fighting strong currents made them realize that the plan wasn't going to work.

"Let's just say that it was a long ride back to Denham Springs," she said. They immediately purchased her a pedal drive and haven't looked back. Both are now fishing newer Hobie Outback models, and all is well.

"I love my Outback," she added.

**PICKING IT UP FAST >**



## PICKING IT UP FAST

By the success the two are having, you could never tell how relatively new they are to the sport. Their first kayak trip was in October 2020. Janie had only fished here and there with friends and Chris, although a bass tournament boat fisherman, had never before fished saltwater.

To say that these two are ate up with kayak fishing is a huge understatement. Janie keeps track of their trips and in 2021, they made 113 trips to fish coastal Louisiana and have logged over 60 so far this year. During the week, they regularly make freshwater trips close to home.

They enjoy the competitiveness and skill-building aspects of tournament fishing so much that they have added their own daily competition. The fictional “Murphey Cup” is their private challenge when hitting the water. The rules are made up and change as they go.

“Before the trip we’ll say ‘three biggest bass over 12 inches or two trout and two reds wins’ and whoever comes out on top holds the Murphey Cup until the next trip. When we meet up with fellow kayak anglers, they are always asking who’s winning now?” he said. They suspend the Murphey Cup challenge when fishing actual tournaments in order to concentrate on the task at hand, but it is great practice and motivation for the real tournaments.

“There is something on the line every time we fish together,” he said.

Their competitiveness was front and center when I met them for a trip for this article. While getting the kayaks rigged-up off the side of the road, I went to the truck for a second, turned around, and Janie was in the water and pedaling out.

“Oh yeah, if she knows where she is going, she is not waiting for anybody. She will be first to her spot,” he said.

For some reason, I had the notion that these two would be fishing the day side-by-side. Wrong. “While we fish in the same

general area, we both go do our thing. We keep in sight or at least phone range for safety, but we are not usually fishing the same spots,” she said.

## YOU OWN IT

Both agree that the big challenge in kayak fishing is that all the decisions and actions are your own.

“You are captain, deckhand, and angler all rolled into one. You have to find, catch and land the fish all on your own. That’s what makes it such a challenge,” he said.

Being new to the sport and the salt, they knew that only time on the water would increase their skills and success.

“In order to fast-track our experience, we went as much as we could. Although we absorb knowledge from others and watch a bunch of YouTube videos, time on the water is the only real way to continue to learn and get better,” they both said.

While I’m not sure if this would happen on tournament day, there were a few times during the trip where the couple dynamic may have trumped the angler dynamic.

“Throw at that point over there, I saved it for you,” she said.

You won’t hear that too much when two buddies are fishing together. I’m pretty sure had this been a tournament, Janie’s lure would have first hit that point with nary a word spoken. Of course, the trash talk is ever-present and is bolstered by who happens to own the Murphey Cup at any given moment.

## FRIENDLY COMPETITION

While their competitiveness is fierce, it is friendly and healthy. Both genuinely wish for the other to succeed and it has the result of making both of them better kayak anglers. In order to chronicle their adventures and document their catches, they started the “Bent Rod’s Kayak Fishing” page on Facebook.

“It sounds corny, but kayak fishing has literally been life changing. We are sharing our adventures in hope of involving others in the sport,” he said.

Kayak fishing continues to grow as a sport. Couples kayak fishing is a growing segment within the sport. The Murpheys are a prime example. While tandem kayaks are available, they are not ideal for fishing with limited space for gear and close casting quarters. Single kayaks prove a much better decision.

Any kayak that gets you on the water is better than none. As the Murpheys discovered the hard way, paddling makes things a bit more difficult. Chris Murphey’s advice for couples thinking about kayak fishing is sound.

“Start out with anything you can peddle, using your legs. Paddling is difficult and you will need your arms for fishing,” he said. ■

Janie and Chris Murphey have only been kayak fishing for a couple of years, but they have jumped in with both feet (literally) and have pedaled their Hobie kayaks into the winners’ circle in various tournaments across coastal Louisiana.





# SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: BLUEFISH

LIKE 'EM OR NOT, THEY ARE FIERCE FIGHTERS FOUND AROUND THE GLOBE

**K**nown for their fierce fighting ability and for often biting soft plastic fishing lures in half, bluefish (*Pomatomus saltatrix*) get mixed reviews from anglers.

Some anglers are big fans of bluefish, but others find them to be more of a nuisance than a prized catch. It's a fairly mundane-looking fish, usually featuring blue (sometimes blue-green) on their backs, fading to silver or white along their sides and belly.

One somewhat distinct feature is that bluefish have two dorsal fins, with the second (rearward) one being larger than the front dorsal. These fish also have seemingly oversized, yellow eyes. They have razor-sharp teeth and use them indiscriminately on their prey, often leaving chunks of flesh in their wakes.

Anglers also give bluefish mixed reviews for their food quality. Some anglers love to eat them smoked or grilled. But just as many other anglers refuse to eat them no matter how they are prepared.

## FOUND ALMOST ANYWHERE

Bluefish are pelagic fish, and can be

found all over the globe. Anglers catch them everywhere from the deep sea to nearshore reefs, inshore marshes, piers and in the surf. They will bite just about any type of bait or lure, and are often targeted with single-hook Clarkspoons or lures with small treble hooks like GOT-CHA plugs. Wire leaders or very heavy mono lines are essential due to the quick cutting ability of the fish's teeth.

Anglers often call larger bluefish "choppers" or chopper bluefish. Other nicknames include blue, old blue, blue snapper, blue chopper, blue gator, and harbor blue.

Bluefish are one of only a few species in the world that do not have any known relatives. They travel in schools — sometimes very large schools, and they cause surface frenzies when hungry, as big numbers of them slash relentlessly at baitfish.

They are not picky eaters, and if they can chop it up into bite-sized pieces, bluefish will go for it. Very young bluefish eat plankton, but they turn to other fish once they are big enough. They also serve as prey to numerous larger fish species, including sharks, striped bass,

tuna, billfish, dolphinfish, and porpoises. When very small, they are often eaten by larger bluefish.

When spawning, female bluefish lay anywhere from 400,000 to 2 million eggs, which drift with the current for about 48 hours before hatching. Hatched bluefish measure only about .08 inches in length.

The Louisiana state record bluefish weighed 21.88 pounds. Steve Van Every caught the fish in July of 1982.

Mississippi's state record bluefish weighed 16 pounds, 6 ounces. It was caught by Joe Krebs in 1984. The world record bluefish, a 31-pound, 12-ounce fish, was caught by James Hussey in Hatteras, N.C. in January of 1972. ■

## HOW SPORTSMEN COOK ➤



**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.

## HOW SPORTSMEN COOK

Nathan Justice

# NASHVILLE- STYLE RED SNAPPER

TRY THIS SPICY, SWEET RECIPE  
FOR A SPECIAL SUMMER TREAT

With the heat of summer settling in, it's time to get on the water and catch some of the tastiest fish in the Gulf of Mexico...red snapper! This tasty Gulf specimen is highly sought after both recreationally and commercially, making them easy to find at your local seafood market. Grilled, baked, fried and even smoked, red snapper holds its own with a wide variety of cooking techniques.

Nashville-style fried

chicken is the perfect combination of spice, sweetness, and acid, so why wouldn't it work with red snapper? The sweetness from the honey, the heat from the cayenne and the acid from the pickles makes for a balanced combination with crispy red snapper. Find the structure, drop a line, and hold on tight; this summer (and your dinner plate) is sure to be full of red snapper!

Happy Fishing,  
Recreational Chef



### TIP!

Great accompaniments for this tasty sandwich are fries, coleslaw, pickles, and salt and vinegar chips.



**INGREDIENTS:**

- 4 Red Snapper Fillets (6 ounces each)
- 2 Quarts of Vegetable Oil

**BRINE:**

- ½ Cup Buttermilk
- ¼ Cup Pickle Juice
- 1 Tablespoon Hot Sauce

**DREDGE:**

- ½ Cup Flour
- ¼ Cup Cornmeal
- ¼ Teaspoon Salt
- ¼ Teaspoon Garlic Powder
- ¼ Teaspoon Onion Powder
- ¼ Teaspoon Cayenne Pepper
- ¼ Teaspoon Smoked Paprika

**NASHVILLE-STYLE HOT SAUCE:**

- ½ Cup Melted Butter
- 3 Tablespoons Honey
- 2 Tablespoons Cayenne Pepper
- 1 Teaspoon Smoked Paprika
- 1 Teaspoon Smoked Sea Salt
- ½ Teaspoon Chipotle Powder
- ¼ Teaspoon Garlic Powder
- ¼ Teaspoon Onion Powder
- ¼ Teaspoon Chili Powder

**THE FIXINGS:**

- 4 Brioche Buns
- 1 Jar Sliced or Sandwich Style Pickles
- 2 Cups Prepared Coleslaw (optional)

**PREPARATION:** Serves 4

1. In a shallow dish, mix the buttermilk, pickle juice and hot sauce to create the brine. Once the brine is combined, add the red snapper fillets to the brine and refrigerate for 2 to 4 hours.
2. Heat the vegetable oil to 350°F in your fryer or Dutch oven.
3. While the oil is coming to temperature, combine the flour, cornmeal, salt, garlic powder, onion powder, cayenne pepper, and smoked paprika in a shallow pan to create the dredge.
4. After the red snapper has brined for 2 to 4 hours, remove from the fridge and dredge each fillet twice. First, remove each fillet from the brine and dip in the dredge being sure to coat all sides of the fillet. Then, dip the fillet back into the brine. Finally, dip the fillet in the dredge for a second coating, then place on a baking pan until ready to fry. Repeat these steps until all the fillets are coated.

5. Once the oil has reached 350°F, fry the red snapper fillets in batches as to not overcrowd the fryer for 4 to 8 minutes or until golden brown. The frying time will depend on the thickness of the fillets. Thicker fillets will need more frying time.
6. While the red snapper is frying, combine the warm melted butter, honey, cayenne pepper, smoked paprika, smoked sea salt, chipotle powder, garlic powder, onion powder, chili powder and mix thoroughly ensuring there are no clumps.
7. When the red snapper fillets are finished frying, toss or brush the Nashville-style hot sauce over each fillet.
8. Serve the Nashville-Style Hot Snapper on a brioche bun topped with pickles and coleslaw.



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

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## HUNTER OF THE MONTH

**Adisyn Brown**

Adisyn Brown killed two turkeys this year in Claiborne Parish.

## ANGLER OF THE MONTH

**Dustin Reiners**

Dustin Reiners got his personal best bass on April 4, 2022 while fishing at Lake Fausse Pointe State Park.



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# 6 WAYS TO SUNDAY

■ By Kinny Haddox

# WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, WE ONLY ATE FISH ONE WAY.

We ate whole fried bream or small to medium sized crappie and catfish steaks. Nothing went to waste. I learned to peel the meat off a fish skeleton well enough to make a house cat jealous. Bass? Never heard of one of those.

Most of them were all fried in a black cast iron skillet on the Coleman Stove in the backyard.

Back in those days, I also spent a lot of my childhood with my neighbor C.L. Cornish. Other than my dad, he taught me more about outdoor life than anybody else. He was a patient man, but he didn't hesitate to straighten me out. Many times, he said, "Boy, you messed that up six ways to Sunday."

What "six ways to Sunday" really means is thoroughly, completely and in just about every way imaginable. But "six ways to Sunday" isn't always a bad thing.

Like eating fish. Today, there are dozens of ways to cook a fish, or even fry a fish. And with crappie now being the fish of choice by a lot of folks all year long, let's take a few minutes to look at some of the most tasty options and some tasty side dish combinations to go with each. The same methods can be applied to almost any type of fresh fish, both freshwater and saltwater.

## WAY NO. 1

**Plain fried fish** — For most folks, this is the way. Salted and peppered fillets dredged in corn meal or one of the commercially prepared fish fry mixes can then be sent swimming in 350 -375 degree peanut oil for about four minutes, varying one minute either way depending on the size of the piece of fish. Put the fried pieces on a rack or pan lined with paper

towels to drain excess oil. You can place them in an oven at 170 degrees, but no hotter, to keep them warm while you finish the whole batch if need be. This is Fish Frying 101 and there's absolutely nothing wrong with that.

**Sides:** This is Side Dish 101 as well — hushpuppies and french fries. That's it. Plus some ketchup, tartar, a slice of white bread and some sweet onions.

## WAY NO. 2 >

Fish Fry 101... crispy fried fillets, French fries, hushpuppies, onion, white bread and your favorite dipping sauce. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Planning for a variety of fish preparations starts with cleaning your fish. Here's a mess of crappie as, clockwise from top left, skinned whole, scaled whole, fillets, fillets with skin on.



## WAY NO. 2

**Whole fried fish** — For most old school folks, this is the way. Season up some whole fish — those that are a pound or smaller. If it's a little bigger, make a couple of score marks down each side so it will cook through. That also adds more surface area for the crispy meal parts! You can also leave the fins and tail on, making some extra crispy crunchy parts to bite off as well. Do watch for bones. Watch really close. Experts know where they all are. Newbies might want to have an expert show them, or at least check out a YouTube video. Yes, they have those.

If you've ever done this, you'll understand the old 14th century saying, "the nearer the bone, the sweeter the meat." It's true.

**Sides:** Kick it up a notch here and serve up some potato salad with it and try something that may be new to most people — squash bread. There are several recipes available, but basically you make hushpuppies and add a generous amount of finely diced onions and fresh squash in the mix. Warning, once you eat one of these, plain hushpuppies will never be the same!

## WAY NO. 3

**Skillet sautéed fillets in butter** — This method is a bit tricky, but leaves you with absolutely marvelous tasting fish fillets. Fillets with skin left on one side work great. Prepare a non-stick or black cast iron skillet by heating butter to medium high

(careful — it burns easily). Dredge your fish in self-rising flour, shake off the excess and cook one side until brown (skin side first), then flip it and brown the other. The trick is in turning the fish gently to preserve the light flour crust and not break up the fillet. You'll want to set those right on the plate to avoid extra handling. Squeeze a bit of lemon or lime juice on them just before eating.

Sauté means browning food quickly over fairly high heat using a small amount of butter or oil in a wide, shallow pan.

**Sides:** This one's great paired with your favorite cole slaw and, since you don't have all that grease in anything else, fry up some onion rings.

## WAY NO. 4

**Crappie Étouffée** — If you are like me and sometimes end up a little lacking in fresh fish, here's a way to make the most of the least amount of fish. Make a pot of Crappie Étouffée. Basically, Étouffée means "smothered" and it is a thick sauce exploding with flavor. You can use a package of commercial mix or make it from scratch. When it's done, let it simmer a bit and then add small pieces of crappie into the pot. It only takes about five minutes for the fish to cook. Then let it rest for about 20 minutes and it's ready to serve.

**Sides:** Obviously the first "side" here is actually the bottom —



Golden brown whole fried fish are an old staple for piscatorial pleasure. Snap off the tail, pull off the fins, eat the crunchy part. Pull the fish apart and eat the fish right off the bone.

a big scoop of white rice. Then add french bread and a green salad. This one's a bit more fancy, so make sure and put your napkin in your lap.

## WAY NO. 5

**Fried fillets in a batter** — There are dozens of ways to deep fry fish, but one that varies a lot from plain fried fish is to coat the fillets with a batter. There are several good batter mixes on the market, you can make your own, or you can just dip the fish in egg, then flour, then repeat. It's a bit messy, but a messy cook is a happy cook. And happy cooks have happy eaters.

Here's a tip to make it more tasty and to help the batter stick. After you season the fish to your taste, coat it with plain mustard and drizzle it with your favorite hot sauce. Then batter it. Speaking of batter... this one's a home run hitter.

**Sides:** Try sweet potato fries and fried biscuit quarters and a bowl of slow cooked white beans. The fried biscuits are uber simple. Just take a roll of store bought biscuits and lay them on a cutting sheet. Cut them in quarters and fry them like regular hushpuppies until brown.

You can even use the flaky biscuits for a little less uniform look and a little more brown surface.



*Kinny Haddox has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors for 45 years. He and his wife, DiAnne, live in West Monroe, La.*

## WAY NO. 6 >



When frying fish in a batter, you can make it better by coating your fillets in a mixture of mustard and your favorite hot sauce.



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Here's a simple dish for fresh or leftover fish — a fish taco with grilled crappie fillet.

## WAY NO. 6

**Fish tacos** — This one is a great way to use fish that you just cooked, or even leftovers. You can fry fish fillets, or if you are into eating healthy, bake them in the oven. For more flavor, cook them on the grill and wrap them in foil until you are ready to make your tacos. Simply prepare your fish the way you want. Then warm your soft flour tortillas. If you like, you can brown crispy corn tortillas in a skillet or the oven, making sure to fold them as they cool so they hold their taco shape. Add your favorite toppings. A simple but tasty combination is fish, lettuce and salsa.

**Sides:** Warm canned Mexican corn in a skillet with butter then prepare some fried or baked pepper poppers or, if you can stand the heat, just crunch on a plain pepper of your choice with your taco. Avocado slices or guacamole finishes it off.

## AND, WAY MORE

Yes, there are way more ways to fix fish than these six. Never hesitate to try a variety of methods of frying, baking, or grilling your fish. Variety is the spice of life and when you combine it with some of our good southern spices, now you're cooking.

**Bacon-wrapped fish bite** — Wrap a small fish fillet around a generous slice of pepper, then wrap it with a piece of bacon, coat it with fish fry and deep fry it.

**Fish cakes** — Mix up a crabcake recipe but substitute broken up pieces of fish for crab. Prepare as you would a regular crab cake and serve as a main course or the main ingredient in a sandwich with a sour dough bun.

**Lemon-pepper fish** — Clean, dry and spread out fillets on a flat baking dish with sides. Drizzle it with melted butter, add black pepper and then squeeze fresh lemon juice on the fish. You can even add thinly sliced lemons and dried parsley to make it look like a chef did it. Put it close under the broiler until it begins to brown. It only takes minutes to cook.

**Whole fish stuffed with boudin** — Take a whole fish, stuff it with pre-cooked boudin, then bake it in the oven or smoke it on the grill.

You can use a flavorful broth and poach your fish....Wait. No. Don't do that.

Seriously, let your imagination — and your favorite cookbook or food website — be your guide. And as Julia Child liked to say, "Bon appétit." ■



# LOUISIANA'S STATE PARKS

■ By Kinny Haddox

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



# BACK TO NATURE

PASS A GOOD TIME WITH  
LOADS OF FAMILY FUN,  
SOUTH LOUISIANA STYLE

**THIS MONTH'S  
FEATURED STOPS:**  
LAKE FAUSSE POINTE  
AND CYPREMORT POINT

## LAKE FAUSSE POINTE

Family vacations are on everybody's bucket list for this time of year and you don't have to go far for a special group vacation that doesn't involve long lines and loud crowds. Who needs roller coasters and shuttle buses and nothing but pavement, right?

It's an ideal time to get back to nature and slow down from the busy pace of life. It's a great time to visit two of Louisiana's finest southern state parks — Lake Fausse Pointe in St. Martinville and Cypremort Point south of New Iberia.

These two parks are an easy drive from anywhere in south Louisiana and not a long trip at all from the northern part of the state. When you get there, you'll find lots of things to do and the beauty and intrigue of Louisiana that can only be experienced up close and personal. It's a great place to camp, fish or enjoy the vast expanse of all things good about south Louisiana. There are swamp and marsh sights, peace and quiet and a get-away vacation without having to really get away that far.

The massive Atchafalaya Basin is considered a wild and untamed area. For the most part, it is. But the Lake Fausse Pointe State Park that occupies a 6,000-acre site in the Basin is not. It's no trip to the city, mind you, but it's loaded with outdoor opportunities galore.

Fishing, boating and canoeing opportunities abound. A boat launch gives visitors easy access to the labyrinth of waterways that winds through the Basin. Overnight visitors can "rough it" in the campground or stay in lake-front cabins. A visitor center complex features a boat dock with rentals; and three hiking trails and a canoe trail offer an "up close" view of the area's plant and wildlife, as well.

Lake Fausse Pointe State Park, at the edge of a beautiful water wilderness, is also a perfect point from which to explore the natural and cultural heritage of South Louisiana. Combine your wilderness adventure with a tour of nearby historic areas such as the city of St. Martinville and Longfellow-Evangeline State Historic Site. A stay at Lake Fausse Pointe State Park will remind you of the remarkable diversity of South Louisiana.



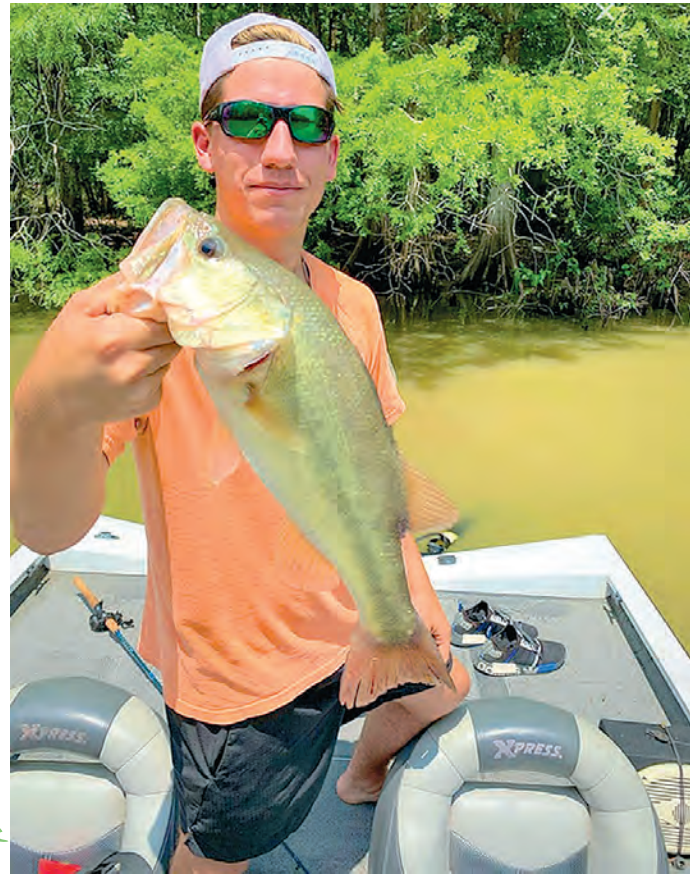
If you like hiking, there are several trails like Armadillo Ridge, Cardinal Run and Barred Owl Trek, the longest at 3.3 miles. This trail has many footbridges over the wettest areas. There are also numerous canoe trails which follow well marked waterways and include access to several primitive canoe only campsites.

There are 50 units for camping in tents or trailers, each equipped with water and electricity. Primitive group and canoe campsites are also available. Eighteen waterfront vacation cabins featuring screened porches, air conditioning and piers are enormously popular throughout the year.

Exploring the park is all about the boardwalks. Keep your boots dry as you hike the elevated walkways through healthy stands of cypress trees, taking in views of the park's name-sake waterway or neighboring Dauterive Lake. To better understand the sights and sounds of Lake Fausse Pointe State Park, park naturalists are on hand to help orient visitors, with programs that explain the history, ecology and biology of the Atchafalaya Basin.

**CYPREMORT POINT >**

There are all kinds of fish around Fausse Pointe, including big largemouth like this one. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Life at Fausse Pointe epitomizes the slogan, "life, eat, fish", all in the same place.



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## CYPREMORT POINT

You might feel like you are about to drive off into Vermillion Bay and if you look at this site on the map, it will confirm that. So slow down when you get close. This park between Grand Isle and Cameron is one of the very few locations near the Gulf of Mexico that can be reached by car. After that, you can head out in any direction in boat, heading for protected inland waters or the wide-open Gulf.

Part of it might remind you of other famous summer destinations. It does have a half-mile stretch of a man-made beach that provides a delightful area for relaxing, picnicking and enjoying the water. It also affords an opportunity for fishing of all kinds, crabbing, water skiing, windsurfing and sailing.

A boat launch just outside the park's entrance is only a few miles from the Gulf. Catches of flounder and redfish are not uncommon in the area. You don't even have to bring a boat to

catch supper. Fresh water from the Atchafalaya and Vermilion rivers invites speckled trout and redfish to the grassy shallows. For those interested in fishing from the shore, a 100-foot fishing pier is situated on the Bay. Overnight visitors also have access to adjacent boat docks and a fish cleaning station. You can even catch your own bait with a cast net off the bank or one of the piers or walkways.

In addition to excellent water facilities, the 185-acre park also holds a special attraction for nature enthusiasts. Located in the heart of a Louisiana marsh, the site contains an abundance of wildlife. The quiet observer may happen upon nutria, muskrat, alligator or a number of bird species native to the state. Deer, black bear, rabbits, opossum and red fox also make their home in this area, so stay aware of your surroundings and you may discover more of the natural charm of Cypremort Point.



This huge redfish caught at Cypremort Point shows fishing isn't just good for numbers, but for trophy bulls as well.



**LOUISIANA**  
State Parks

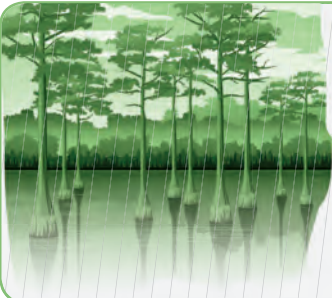


# Explore the outdoors at Louisiana State Parks

“Louisiana truly is a ‘Sportsman’s paradise.’ Whether you go saltwater fishing at Cypremort Point or freshwater fishing at Jimmie Davis, our state parks have something close to home for every angler. Visit [www.LaStateParks.com](http://www.LaStateParks.com) to start planning your next fishing trip today!”

– Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser

**STATE PARKS:**  
LAKE FAUSSE POINTE, CYPREMORT POINT



**LAKE FAUSSE  
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lakefaussept@crt.la.gov

**CYPREMORT POINT  
STATE PARK**

306 Beach Lane  
Cypremort Point, LA 70538  
337-867-4510  
cypremort@crt.la.gov

**C**ypremort Point State Park is a popular spot for wind surfing. Thanks to its unique geography, it's perfect for that. The waterway is synonymous with quality seafood — just look for the Vermilion Bay Sweet brand of shrimp found in grocery stores

throughout the state — and every spring, Cypremort Point State Park brings scores of fishermen into Vermilion Bay. Fresh water from the Atchafalaya and Vermilion rivers invites spotted sea trout and red drum close to shore. Redfish and speckled trout also swim the grassy shallows near Cypremort Point, so

anglers can set out from the nearby boat launch and overnight fishermen have access to the park's boat docks.

A half-mile-long beach runs the length of the park, offering opportunities for swimming, kitesurfing, windsurfing and just plain old hanging out. The marshes near the beach give hikers a chance to spot some of south Louisiana's most famous residents — alligators — as well as deer, red foxes and even black bears.

While you're in the area, be sure to see some of the nearby sites. Avery Island (where TABASCO brand hot sauce is headquartered) and nature preserve Jungle Gardens are a short ride away. And in Morgan City, check out the International Petroleum Museum and Exposition and see the Mr. Charlie Oil Rig — the first moveable and reusable offshore drilling rig in the world. ■



*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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# DEER G&O

**SUCCESSFUL HUNTING  
INCLUDES SETTING  
SPECIFIC GOALS AND  
OBJECTIVES.**

■ By David Moreland

## Are you getting what you want or are you just spinning your wheels when it comes to setting and meeting goals for your deer herds and harvest?

People are all the time setting goals and objectives for everything they do. Parents instill this in their children at a very young age. It really sinks in when they graduate from high school and it begins to accelerate as they start paying bills with their own money! We all have goals. The Saints want to win the Super Bowl. The LSU baseball team wants to win another national championship. Hunters want to kill the biggest buck in the world and be on the cover of Big Buck Hunter!

Goals have to be realistic if they are to be achieved.

This is especially true when setting deer management goals and objectives. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries had the goal of keeping CWD out of the state. So much for that. Now the goal is to keep it contained in the infection zone and increase surveillance around it along with continued monitoring of herds across the state.

Biological goals are not the same as hunter goals and generally it is the hunter or user group that determines management goals. In the sixties and seventies most hunters just wanted to kill a deer so seasons and limits were set to accomplish that. In the eighties and nineties hunters wanted to kill bigger bucks so the DMAP program was developed to help hunters accomplish this.

Today, hunters want to kill trophy class bucks, lots of them and every year. I'm not sure any program can achieve that, unless you have all the money in the world, but that is what hunters want. This is really not a realistic goal for Louisiana where so much of the deer landscape has changed over the years.

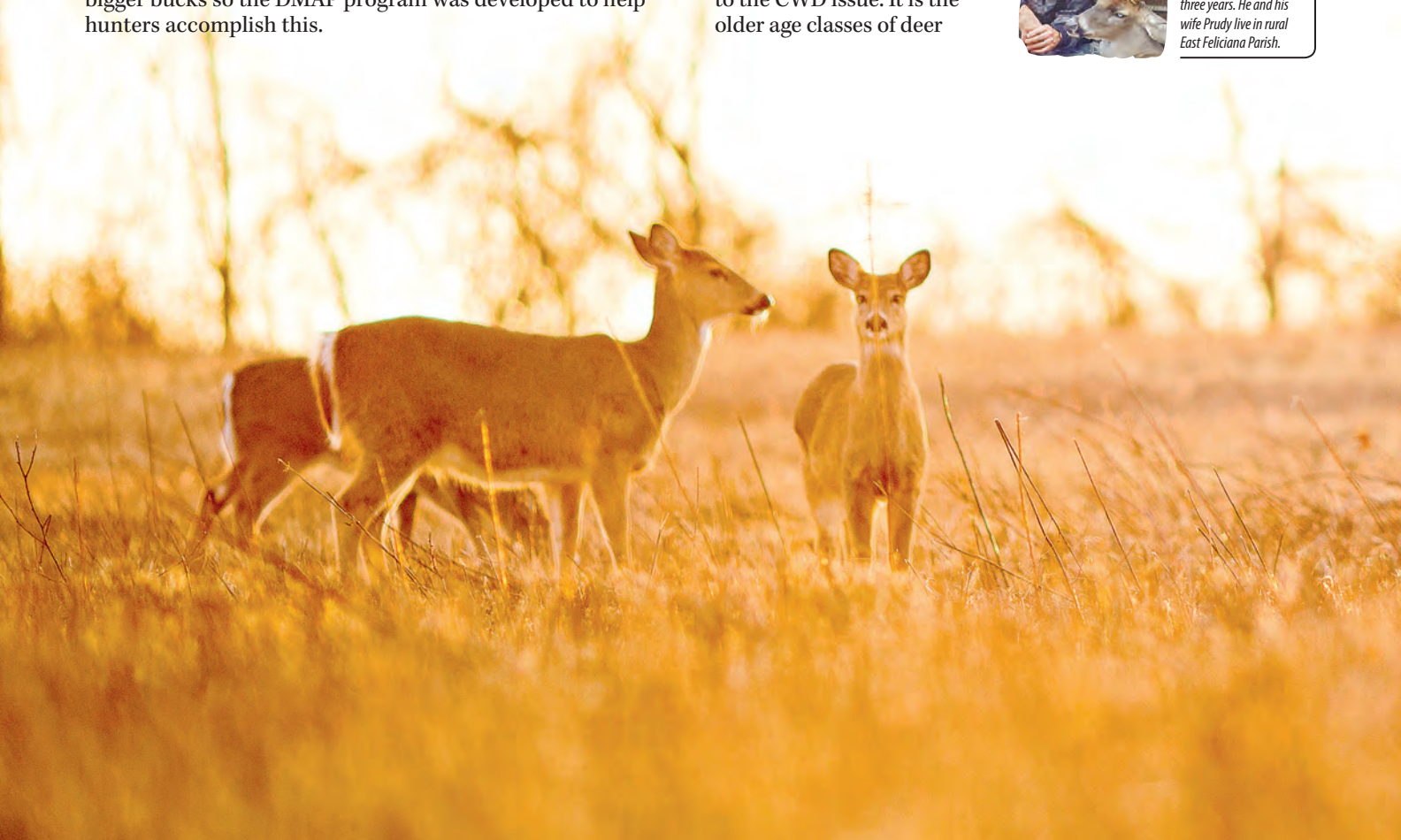
### NOTHING WRONG

I have to interject that there is nothing wrong at all with a hunter, hunting club, or landowner simply wanting to just hunt and shoot deer, regardless of size. Hunting is outdoor recreation and recreation is the activity of enjoying yourself with what you are doing. This is a great goal and one that is pretty easy to achieve with the deer population that we have in Louisiana. Rules and regulations established by clubs or landowners are sometimes necessary to achieve established goals, but they can take the fun out of hunting.

The goal of just shooting deer, any deer, is probably a sound biological goal due to the CWD issue. It is the older age classes of deer



**David Moreland** is a retired wildlife biologist with LDWF, having served as the State Deer Biologist for 13 years and as Chief of the Wildlife Division for three years. He and his wife Prudy live in rural East Feliciana Parish.





In Louisiana, harvest data indicates most 1 ½-year-old bucks are spikes, such as these two young bucks in East Feliciana Parish.

that begin to show symptoms of the disease and shooting the younger age classes of deer will prevent possible infected deer from living in the population longer than desired.

As already mentioned, deer management goals must be realistic. Biologists can help a club or landowner establish these goals based on the science of the deer population and habitat in a particular parish. Once the goals are established, then the science can be used to measure the success of the program. Over time, the science (biological data) can be used to establish trends and provide insight as to whether the program is working and producing desirable results. I would suggest to hunters who are simply enjoying the deer hunt and outdoor experience to maintain some sort of record keeping file on harvested deer just to have documentation, in case the herd suddenly goes south!

I want to focus on four aspects of the science or record keeping. These are age structure of herd, body growth or weight, reproduction and antler development. Some of this data can be collected just from observations. But it is always best to document data from harvested deer rather than just estimating ages, weights and antler data.

### **SEX RATIO AND AGE STRUCTURE >**



## SEX RATIO AND AGE STRUCTURE

Observations during the hunting season can document the sex ratio of the herd. A few hours of sitting in the deer stand and seeing a dozen does and a couple of spikes would generally indicate a population dominated with females and would also be an indicator of some pretty heavy bucks only hunting. Deer are generally born at a 50/50 ratio of males/females.

Hunting can change this over time. DMAP data over the past few years has indicated an increase of adult bucks in the harvest and this indicates hunters are passing up younger bucks and allowing them to grow older. Under the current bag limit regulations hunters are encouraged to harvest both bucks and does.

There is plenty of literature available these days to show hunters how to age deer. While it can be tricky aging older deer, most hunters should be able to place deer into the three basic age groups: fawns (six month olds), yearlings (1 ½ year olds), and adults (2 ½ and older deer). It is best to harvest deer from several age classes and knowing the ages of harvested deer will point out if this is happening. Age data is also important for establishing trends from other deer measurements such as weight and antler development.

## BODY GROWTH AND WEIGHT

Information about herd growth of each age class is a must to really determine how much bang you are getting for your buck! Feeding and food plots are big money items and if your deer are not responding you may want to save money and see what the native habitat will produce.

Nutrition is the key. Without quality and sufficient nutrition, deer will not be able to reach their potential and this is a killer for those desiring to grow big bucks. The landscape has changed in Louisiana over the years. Pine dominant timber stands are now the main focus of forestry management and generally this habitat cannot provide the quality nutrition for the growth and development hunters desire. Consequently, documenting live weights of harvested deer will show you if your supplemental nutrition program is working. Trust me, estimated weights are worthless; most hunters over-estimate the weight of a harvested deer, especially bucks.

What is desirable body growth for deer? Fawns should double their weight from six months to 1 ½ years; after this, deer should increase 20-30 percent from ages 2 ½ through 4 ½ years. The body growth of older free-ranging deer generally begins to decline after 4 ½, but on habitats with excellent nutrition, body growth may continue for a few more years.

The following is what I suggest to be desirable live weights for Louisiana deer:

	6 months	1 ½ years	2 ½ years	3 ½+ years
Females	60	110	120	130
Males	70	125	150	175+

If you look at the LDWF website and check out the DMAP reports you will see the average live weights of deer for the various habitat sites around the state and for the various parishes. Then you can compare those weights to your deer herd and determine if you are below average, average or above average. Documenting body weights is a must if you want to try and grow bigger bucks.

## REPRODUCTION ➤



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## REPRODUCTION

Reproduction or productivity of your deer herd is something that can be measured from observations. Documenting the number of fawns a doe produces can be obtained from observing deer in the early archery season. Based on current literature, adult does on habitat with good nutrition should be producing twins. Yearling does should be producing at least one fawn. The average live weights of the does in your herd will provide you with some idea of what to expect. Yearling does that weigh less than 100 pounds may not be breeding at that age as expected due to their poor physical condition.

Likewise, adult does weighing less than 110 pounds may not be physically able to produce or care for twins and may be producing only a single fawn. Low productivity is an indicator that the habitat is lacking and needs some management work. Timber cuts will provide the herd with the best bang for the buck unless the forest plan is to produce a dominant

pine forest and incorporate herbicide treatments to reduce native hardwood browse. In this case the strategy may require increasing forage plantings or supplemental feeding.

A more science-based technique to monitor productivity is to examine female reproductive tracts during the late season and determine reproductive success from that data. It also will provide insight as to when the rut occurred on your property during the season. On our small property in East Feliciana Parish I harvested a 1 ½-year-old doe that had bred on Dec. 8 and was pregnant with twins. This is considered good productivity, but due to stress, disease and predators it does not necessarily mean there would have been two new deer on the property in 2022. On another tract of land in East Feliciana Parish I harvested a 7 ½-year-old doe that was pregnant with triplets and had bred on Dec. 20. This is excellent reproduction and indicates a healthy deer herd. A Wildlife and Fisheries biologist would be able to help you collect this type of science based data.

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According to recent LDWF data, Louisiana hunters are killing more 3 1/2-year-old and older bucks than ever before.

## ANTLER DEVELOPMENT

Documenting antler development, beam length, tine length, antler mass with circumference measurements is a must to develop growth trends of the bucks. In Louisiana, most yearling bucks are spikes, but if nutrition is good some should be producing branched antlers. As they grow and become older antlers generally increase in size which is what hunters want. However, nutrition is again the key factor and if nutrition is lacking, antler growth will at best be mediocre and not many bucks will be hung on the wall.

Again the state DMAP data can be used to document the growth trends in your herd and how they compare to the state averages. A recent study in New York measured the Boone and Crockett score for bucks in all age classes. The yearling bucks average score was 50 B&C with over half scoring less than 50. The average score for 2-year-old bucks was 90-100 and 2/3 of them scored less than 100. Three-year-old and older bucks averaged 110-120 B&C, with 2/3 of them scoring 120 or less.

Using this data to evaluate your deer is a good technique to see how your herd stacks up and if your program is producing results. A buck that scores 120 B&C is a quality buck, but is a far cry from trophy status. This type of information would provide you with good insight as to exactly what size buck your habitat will produce and aid in future management decisions if you are not getting what you want. As we have heard so often during this pandemic, follow the science! ■



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# BOW HUNTING IS A JOURNEY

THE END GOAL ISN'T THE SOLE PURPOSE OF BOW HUNTING

**A**s we begin another year of this column, I've been reflecting quite a bit about my personal journey of hunting with archery gear. Things have certainly changed in our sport since I first picked up a bow. Some of those changes are for the better and some not so much. One thing is certain though — as with everything else, change is inevitable if not always welcome.

After more than three decades of shooting a stick and string and working in the archery industry, the basic tenets of archery remain the same. But the equipment, the business, and many of the new participants are drastically different.

Bow hunting means many different things to many people. For some it is simply a means to begin their hunting season early, providing an opportunity to get away from home and scout for the upcoming gun seasons. Some of these casual bow hunters only shoot their bow a few times before halfheartedly occupying a stand for a few hours a weekend hoping to stumble upon an animal.

## THE JOURNEY AND PROCESS

I've been in camp with people who have zero confidence in their ability to see game or capitalize on the opportunity if they do. For them it feels like a chore to maintain, tune, and become proficient with their gear. And this often shows in their lack of success in the field. Others are solely focused on the trophy animals and the gratification of posing with their kill on social media platforms or adding to their game room wall.

Each person has their own personal reasons for hunting with a bow. But for many of us who are committed to the sport, the journey and the process are as important if not even more so than the destination or the result. Note that I said journey and process. Because in its pur-



Tight groups like this are no accident. They are achieved through a process.



Sammy Romano

est form that's what bow hunting is really all about.

## DON'T MISS THE POINT

Many people in today's fast paced world of instant gratification have become so focused on the destination or result that they miss the entire point. Throughout

this year's column I will focus on these two elements in hopes of helping oth-



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

ers to take the time to enjoy them both and the satisfaction that this brings. Where relevant, I will also reflect on my own personal journey. Each step along the way I've learned many lessons from both the equipment and the animals I've pursued (many of them the hard way).

Most of us don't bow hunt because it is easy. And that's a good thing because usually it isn't. We as bow hunters must first place ourselves in extremely close proximity to an animal who has senses far more acute than our own. When we occupy the same close quarters as them, we are somewhere we are not meant to be. And the shot clock is often counting down fast. Once in range we have to draw and launch an arrow at the animal, striking it in a vital area, then trail it for a successful recovery.

## WHAT DRIVES YOU TO BOW HUNT?

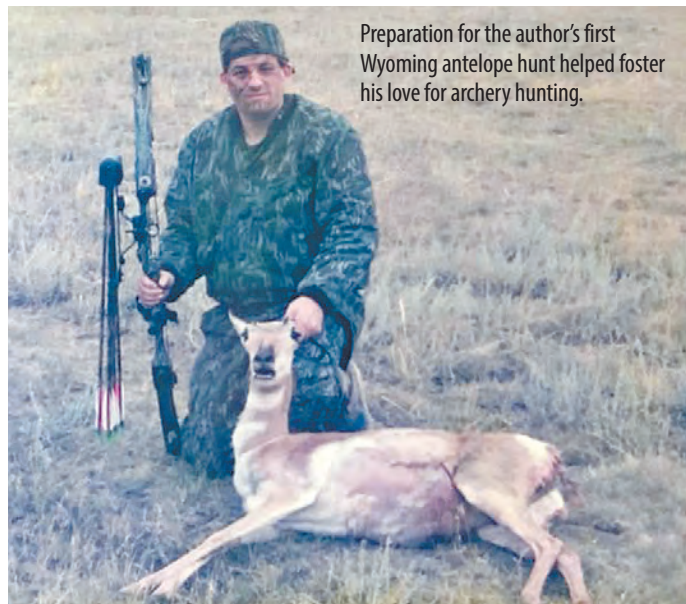
Bow hunting is a conscious choice to use a weapon that requires us to shrink the distance much closer and use additional skills to reach a successful conclusion. All of this doesn't happen consistently by accident, but rather through a process that begins long before the hunter takes to the field on the first day of a hunt. Today's equipment is certainly more efficient than when I started in the late 80s. But the basic tenets of proper form and much of the overall process are not.

Although this process is different for every hunter, many of us share certain common denominators. By sharing my process in upcoming installments, I hope to help you with yours. My journey really began when I first realized how important this process was in preparation for a big hunt in Wyoming back in the early 90s.

Steve Borsa who worked as a manufacturer's rep for Browning Archery had invited me to his lease in Kaycee, WY. I would be hunting with Bill Norton, who was the President of Browning (no pressure there!).

As a kid who had only hunted the thick woods of Louisiana and Mississippi, heading out West with a bow hunting for new species in more open terrain presented a huge challenge. Bear in mind this was before modern rangefinders. So practicing distance judgement was huge, especially for someone with little to no depth perception.

After months of preparation, I successfully filled both my mule deer and doe antelope tags. And I fell in love with the process of archery itself. I will elaborate on this hunt in next month's column. But suffice to say, it helped me to grow as a bow hunter in many ways. ■



Preparation for the author's first Wyoming antelope hunt helped foster his love for archery hunting.

Sammy Romano

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# JOHNNY WINK

*IT ISN'T THE BLIND THAT MAKES THE MAN,  
IT'S THE MAN THAT MAKES THE BLIND.*

**T**here are only two ways you can get Johnny Wink to stop talking about hunting ducks and geese. First, offer him something good to eat. Second, give him a call and he will let it do his talking.

Wink lives and hunts near Jones, a small farming community with a population of less than 200. It's so far north up US Hwy. 165 that on a still fall day, you can hear Arkansas hunters yelling "woooo pig sooiiee."

Wink loves waterfowl hunting as much as anyone you could ever meet. He lives and breathes it all year long, especially the months before, during and immediately after each season. He is the owner and operator of MegaDucks waterfowl hunting lodge, where he has been a duck and goose guide for 45 years. He started duck hunting as a teen and because of his prowess with calls and decoys, starting hiring out to take a growing number of older duck hunters each year.

He worked as one of the first employees of Duck Commander and hosted several of the famous Duck Man film series for Duck Commander. It was the words of the very Duck Commander himself, Phil Robertson, that set Wink on his way. Wink couldn't always afford the biggest and best blinds or the sweet spots in north Louisiana's waterfowl rich agricultural mecca. But Robertson told him that didn't matter.

"Wink, it isn't the blind that makes the man," Robertson told him. "It's the man that makes the blind."

Wink is the winner of numerous duck & goose calling contests and has put on dozens of waterfowling clinics. He hosts special events for youth and women to try and grow the sport and has given duck and goose calling lessons across the country. He serves as a Guardian Elite team member of Drake Waterfowl, is the former editor of the Louisiana Road Trips magazine, author of two books and is the main subject for a book and movie about the outdoors.

Those are some of the reasons he was named to the initial class of the Louisiana Chapter Legends of the Outdoors.

"I just can't tell you how much this means to me," he said, more than once. This is just such an honor. Louisiana has so many great people in the outdoors. To work at it my whole life and to see the rewards I've seen, it's just overwhelming. And then, to get recognition for it, wow, it's just... I don't have words."

"The people in duck and goose hunting have been my life," he said. "They believed in me when others didn't. And all the hard work has paid off in many more ways than just killing ducks. If



I had it all to do over, I wouldn't do a single thing different."

Wink points out that his main objective is the same objective that any duck hunter should have. First and foremost, be safe. No duck is worth somebody getting hurt. Whether you shoot ducks or not, it's important that everybody go home just like they came.

Trying to make sure everyone has a good time is important, too. He tries his best. Of course, in the duck guide business you can't limit out every time. But Wink realizes that is just part of it. In fact, there are days that can put the best hunters, guides and their dogs to sleep in a duck blind, as witnessed in one of the photos with this article.

His successes far outweigh any bad days. Testimonies to that

fact abound, like the one below from repeat customer Sean Bordelon, who made these comments about Wink's induction.

"I have hunted with Johnny Wink for close to 10 years now, and one thing I can say is, there is a reason why I keep hunting with him. I have hunted in many states and in many types of situations, but as far as consistency and all around hospitality, Johnny is top notch. He brings a wealth of experience and camaraderie to the blind every morning. As soon as you pull up at Megabucks, you are greeted with a friendly handshake and a smile," Bordelon said.

"The accommodations are great, whether you are there with a friend or two or a big group of friends. Even when others are not killing birds, we have done very well. Johnny and the guides he employs are excellent callers and make every effort to see that all your needs are met. I can confidently say that I have not met a new hunting buddy in Johnny, but a lifelong friend. And I can say the same about his employees as well.

I have hunted where there are beautiful, spacious, "mansion type" lodges, and those were great, if you are wanting a beautiful house. But if you are a "hunter" then Megabucks is your place."

As you might expect, Wink has a duck-related story for just about everything, including taking advantage of investment opportunities.

"You know the most sought-after duck in the world?" he asked. "It's the mallard — and it's the mallard drake. Do you know who patented the first-ever drake mallard call? They sound totally different than the hen calls we use duck hunting.

There have been some made way back in the early 1900s, but the first one that was patented was made by hand by Phil Robertson and his wife, Kay. You know who owns that one? Me. They gave it to me. It's in my vault.

"I call it my 401(Miss) Kay," he said. "I don't want to part with it, but the way duck-call collectors pay megabucks for special calls, I have it if I need it." ■

*The Legends Hall of Fame was founded by Garry Mason of Springville, Tennessee and the Louisiana Chapter is managed by Peyton McKinnie of Marion. You can follow them 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.



“” *The people in duck and goose hunting have been my life. They believed in me when others didn't. And all the hard work has paid off in many more ways than just killing ducks.*



## MUDDY PAWS ➤

## MUDDY PAWS

Bryan Beatty

The “hold” phase involves the dog actually holding the bumper for several minutes without being restrained.



# FORCE FETCH

IT'S AN IMPORTANT STEP IN THE FOUNDATION OF A HUNTING DOG'S TRAINING

**T**alk to anybody who's trained retrievers long enough and the topic of “force fetch” will inevitably come up. Most consider it an absolute necessity in building the dog we want.

I've seen plenty that have been force fetched and plenty who haven't, and I can tell you I'll never train another dog without force fetching it. Ronnie Wilkinson of Tri Parish Retrievers (225-939-2398) would definitely agree. He also helped me with force fetching my current Lab. You can follow the group at Tri Parish Retrievers on Facebook.

“Force fetch is the foundation that introduces the dog to pressure which will transition into other forms such as collar pressure as the dog advances in training. It all starts with fetching on command

where the dog learns that it must do what the handler wants to avoid pressure,” Wilkinson said.

What is force fetch? Its applying pressure teaching the dog that the pressure ceases with the desired outcome. It begins the transition to more advanced and formal training as the dog ages out of the puppy stage.

There are several steps to it and most associate force fetch with the dog learning to “fetch” on command starting with ear or toe pinching. This is a pretty hard task if never done before. If anyone hasn't, I'd urge them to seek help from someone experienced with it or have a professional do it. Not force fetching correctly can cause a lot of issues which can become more problematic later.

## HOW TO START

To begin the process, the dog should be five to six months old with its adult teeth in. The dog is placed on a table off the ground at a height comfortable for the handler to work with and leashed tightly to restrict movement so it can't squirm around or try to get off the table. Pressure is applied via ear pinch or toe pinch (ear pinch is easier for me.) When the dog opens its mouth, a bumper is quickly put in it and the pinching stops.



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

With repetition, the dog soon learns that “fetch” means that if it takes the bumper, the pressure stops. Anticipate that the dog is going to be nervous being on the table and may try to bite so wearing a leather glove on the hand with the bumper is a good idea, which I’ve learned the hard way. This is a natural reaction, so its best not to discipline the dog since it doesn’t know any better and is anxious.

Patience and knowing when to quit are key. Some dogs get it in a couple of days, others might take longer. If the dog shuts down, stop and start again later.

When the dog reaches for the bumper without pressure, they’ve figured it out. Then a move to “hold” is made where the dog will hold the bumper in its mouth until taken via the “drop” or “give” command. When starting on hold, the dog is likely going to want to spit the bumper in the beginning, so somewhat firmly gripping the dog’s mouth while repeating “hold” will teach it that it has to hold it until told to give it up. Ensure that the dog’s teeth aren’t between the dummy and its cheeks causing pain while being gripped. Once at a point where gripping the dog’s mouth isn’t necessary, keep making them hold it.

## NO ROLLING

Discourage it from rolling it in its mouth or holding the bumper by the end. Tapping the dog under the chin on the “hold” command, reinforces the concept. The goal is to get to the point where the dog holds the bumper for a few minutes with the handler several feet away while the dog is still on the table. If the dog is loose or even on a leash, the tendency to run is too great, so keeping it on the table avoids that issue.

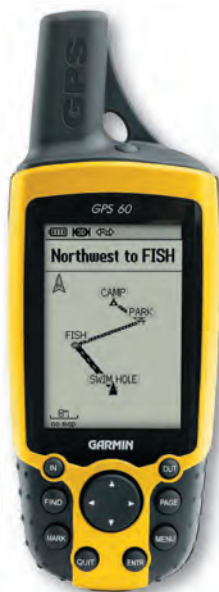
The process advances from the dog reaching for the bumper right in front of its nose to reaching down to pick it up off the table and holding on its own. Once it has this down, moving to picking up the bumper off the ground on the “fetch” command while leashed is the next step all the while reinforcing “hold” with the dog at heel before taking the bumper.

Moving on, a row of bumpers can be set out with the dog at heel and fetching them (called walking fetch or ladder drill) on command and progressing until a bumper can be skipped and the dog only picks up when given the “fetch” command.

Once through force fetch, your dog will be on its way to more complicated tasks such as marking, steadiness, honoring running blinds and more. ■



This young lab is working through Force Fetch training.



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**MORE HUNTERS THAN  
EVER ARE WAGING WAR  
ON HATED COYOTES.**

■ By Andy Douglas

# SUMMER NIGHT SONG DOGS



# THERE ARE VARIOUS REASONS HUNTERS TRY AND TAKE OUT A FEW COYOTES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

It's not just turkey and deer hunters protecting their game, either. With a healthy increase in coyote populations — farmers, ranchers and even pet owners have joined the ranks of predator hunters using thermal optics and night vision. They are waging war on one of the most hated and feared predators that walk the outdoors — the coyote.

## HUNT THIS SUMMER

The cooler February breeding season is long gone, and adult coyotes are on the hunt, trying to feed pups. They are after anything easy and are especially devastating to the deer herd when fawns are being born and are young. Summer is here, and it's prime time.

"I have a lot of success during the summer months coyote

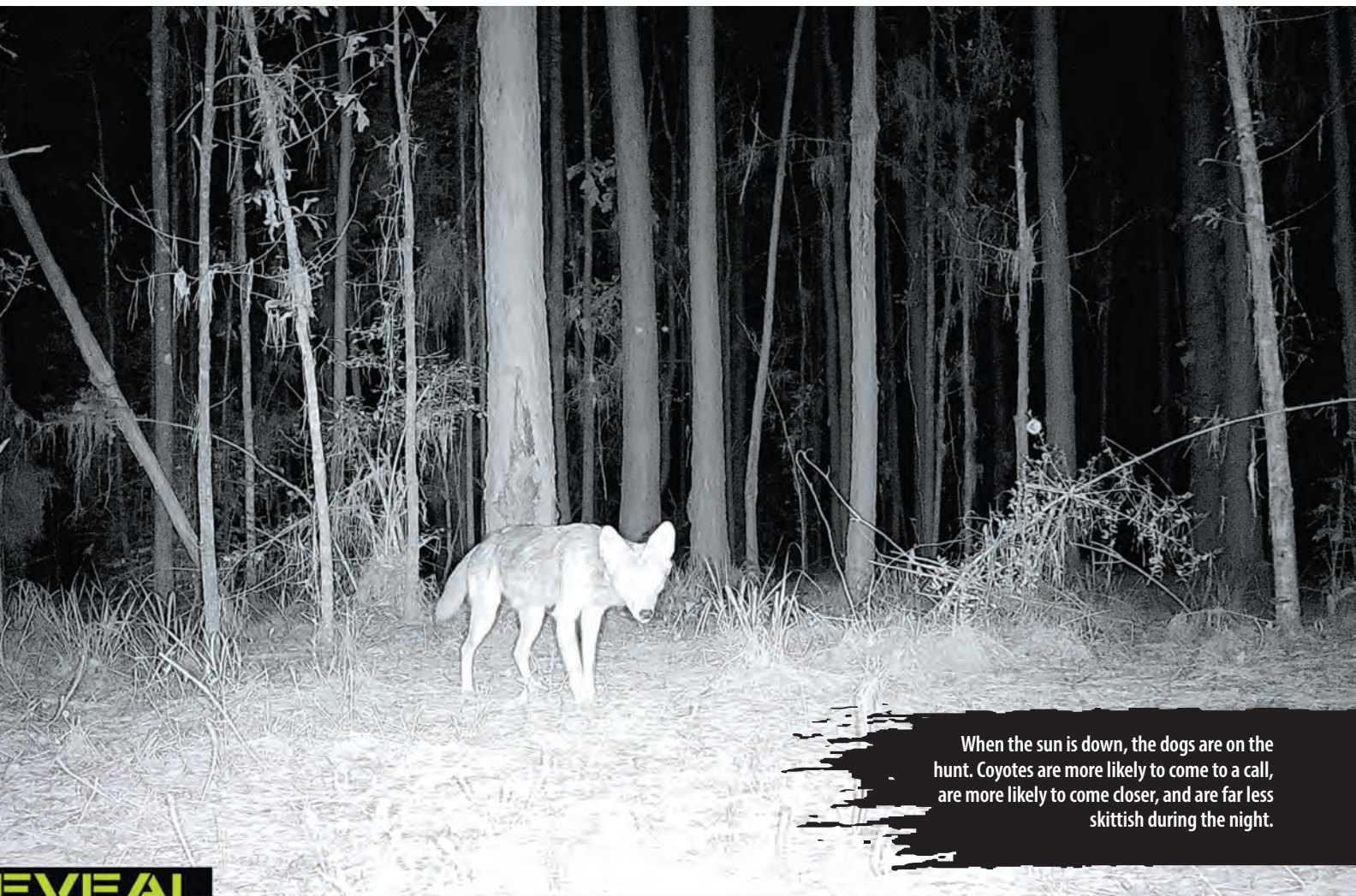
hunting at night. They are on the move looking for small game to feed their young ones. Rabbit distress and woodpecker distress calls will bring them in," said Joel "Hans" Miller of the Hans ETX YouTube Channel. "Sometimes, though, you have to get out there and see what works well in your area."

## HUNT AT NIGHT

During hot summer months, it only stands to reason that coyotes will be more active and move at night vs. daylight hours.

"I keep game cameras out during summer, and I get way more pictures at night than daytime — they are bedded down, finding shade and trying to keep cool," said Miller, a resident of Ben Wheeler, Texas.

Hunters must hunt whenever they have the chance, but the



When the sun is down, the dogs are on the hunt. Coyotes are more likely to come to a call, are more likely to come closer, and are far less skittish during the night.



night is the best choice for summer when there is a choice.

"Yes, night hunting coyotes is better. I may be a little biased because I sell thermal optics," Miller said. "But, I talk to coyote hunters from all over the country every day. Many buy a second thermal scope or upgrade to a different thermal scope. Most of them say that they have hunted coyotes during the day all their lives, but now are having much more success at night. "Coyotes are more likely to come to a call, are more likely to come closer, and are far less skittish during the night."

Miller also works at Outdoor Legacy, specializing in night vision and thermal optics sales.

Hunters can rest assured that when it comes to hunting coyotes at night during the summer months, they will have plenty of opportunities.

## WHEN TO HUNT

As the sun sets on hot summer days, temps cool, and coyotes start to prowl and look for opportunistic meals. When is the best time to go? There are many nighttime scenarios: full moon, new moon, before moonrise, after moonset, dusk, or

dawn. Miller has some sound advice.

"I hunt whenever I can hunt—and that's most people too. My buddy Jason says the best time to hunt is when you can go out and do it. So that's my philosophy."

You can only hunt as your work schedule and family duties allow. It can be tough hunting at night and staying rested. Plan your hunts ahead of time or develop a routine.

"I usually get the kids in bed by 8:30 or 9:00 p.m., and I go out and hunt for a couple of hours," Miller said. "I may hunt a little longer on the weekends."

If hunters have options on which nights to hunt, darker nights and darker times of the night would be a better choice.

"There is no science behind this, but from as many years as I have night hunted and as often as I do, everything comes out later on a full moon night. It seems like coyotes will be out later than normal; instead of coming out 9 -12 p.m., they seem to be out 2 - 3 a.m. I usually don't like to hunt full moon nights, but hey, you have to hunt when you can," said Miller, "And on a new moon night, everything seems a little earlier."

**SET-UPS >**

## SET-UPS

When you set up to call, obviously consider the wind. Coyotes will almost always approach the caller from downwind.

"We try to set up and call them out of the woods or thickets into an opening or a field," Miller said.

Moonlight brightness is another consideration. When a coyote is coming to a call, he may approach from downwind, but he can see very well, especially in the moonlight. On bright nights, hunters should stand under a tree and catch some shade from the moonlight.

"On a really bright night, I like to stand in front of a big tree so it will break my silhouette," Miller said. "If I can, I will try and keep the moon over my shoulder so that when the coyote approaches, it's looking into the moonlight and will be a little more blinded."

The darker the night, the less you will have to hide or be particular about hiding, such as a new moon, a cloudy night,

before moonrise, or after moonset.

Calling is not the only way to set up for killing the "song dog." Hunters can hide and wait, sort of like still-hunting. Setting up near cattle is an excellent strategy as coyotes are constantly harassing and stalking them under cover of darkness.

Hunting over dead animals is another set-up that works well. Still-hunting or calling is more effective in this scenario. Cattle farmers will often drag dead cows to specific areas on their property, and this could be a coyote bonanza if you can obtain permission to hunt.

"We dump out dead pigs that we have shot in a certain area," Miller said. "I often come back to this spot a few nights after dumping some and hunt coyotes. This has been very productive."

Dead cows, dead pigs or gut piles at hunting clubs are good coyote night hunting places to think about. If you or your neighbor dump table scraps consistently in the same spot on the fringes of your property, this could be another option.

Hunters must hunt whenever they have the chance, but the night is best for summer when there is a choice. This is Joel Miller's philosophy.





Predator hunters utilizing modern thermal optics and digital night vision have an advantage when targeting coyotes. The coyote in this photo has found his way into the crosshairs of a Pulsar Thermion 2 XP50, and he did not survive.

## PROVIDE A DISTRACTION

When setting up an electronic caller, utilize a decoy. Day hunters use them regularly, and night hunters should do the same.

“Even at night on my Lucky Duck caller, I will still run my decoy—the little tail that slings around,” Miller said. “The coyote may catch that decoy movement drawing their attention and they are less likely to spot you, especially on a bright night.”

## WRAP-UP

Finding success at coyote night hunting is simply understanding a few basic things. A coyote will always rely on its keen sense of smell first, so always play the wind.



Andy Douglas is an outdoor writer and photographer from Brookhaven. A native of Lincoln County, he's chased deer, turkeys, bass and most anything else the past 35 years. He lives the outdoor lifestyle and is passionate about sharing that with others through stories and photos.

Position yourself and hide as well as you can using the shadows and the cover of darkness. Coyotes are at ease and move more at night. Hunt when you can and as often as you can, remember the basics, and you will have the advantage. ■

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YOU GOT ONE!**

Joel "Hans" Miller, a nationally renowned coyote night hunting expert and one of *The Late Night Vision Show* podcast and YouTube Channel hosts, holds a song dog taken utilizing thermal optics.



Joel "Hans" Miller is a nationally renowned coyote night hunting expert and one of *The Late Night Vision Show* podcast and YouTube Channel hosts. Miller has noticed a behavior pattern of coyotes located in areas where there is regular hog hunting.

"Here is a little secret that has been working well for me. In an area where we pig hunt, it seems like the coyotes will come to the gunshot when we shoot," he said. "Many times after I've shot a hog, a coyote has shown up. So, if I shoot a pig in a field, I will sit there a while because there is a good chance that a coyote will show up. I've taken several coyotes after killing a hog.

"This goes along with what I just said, and I learned this from someone else. After you call in and shoot one coyote, don't pack up and leave. Keep calling and keep sitting. Some friends and I won a coyote hunting contest earlier this year in February just because when we would shoot a coyote, we would leave the caller running. We would get another one or two dogs after we shot the first. We even had coyotes run past a dead coyote coming to the caller."

Keep that call running after you shoot for at least another 10 minutes, said Miller. ■



# HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK

## GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

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

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



**Scott Gibson**

Scott Gibson of Slidell with a redfish caught on an orange plastic crawfish rigged on a weedless hook with spinner. This beautiful red was caught during a gorgeous sunset in the Rigolets marsh.



**Sriya Hebert**

Sriya Hebert harvested her first deer on Nov. 24, 2021.



**Chae Hebert**

Chae Hebert took one of her biggest deer to date at the Bayou Buck hunting club in Lillie, La.



**Dawson Latiolais**

Dawson Latiolais, 11, got these wood ducks while hunting on Bodcau WMA on Jan. 13.



# HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



**Ryan Leonard**

Ryan Leonard poses with the 230-pound, 10-point buck he took at the Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge.



**Easton Roszell**

Easton Roszell killed this 8-point on family land in Louisiana. In his first hunting season, Easton set out to kill the buck he named "Ice breaker," as he hoped this was to be his first deer to kill. After hunting him for 4 weeks, and killing two deer before him, he along with his dad set up a new tent and got him on Jan. 2.



**Miah Juneau**

Miah Juneau killed her first deer on Nov. 28 in Avoyelles Parish.



**Bradley Leveron**

Bradley Leveron of St. Amant harvested his first buck in West Baton Rouge Parish. He made an excellent shot on the 8-point with his .30-.30 and the buck didn't run 40 yards before expiring. He was accompanied by his uncle, Brandon Smith.



Kaylyn Thornton and her cousin Audrey helped harvest and process this beautiful doe in Iberville Parish. This was Audrey's first time on a deer stand. Now she's hooked!



Blakely Cheramie killed her first buck in Union Church, Miss.



This 275-pound Tensas Parish buck was killed by Anthony Bruce on Dec. 12, 2021.



Justin Blais, 14, caught this 5.98-pound bass at Indian Creek while fishing a high school tournament.



Wes Hebert Jr. shot his first deer on Nov. 27, 2021 in Lillie, La.



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

- The "Best Days" column is based on the ever-changing positions of the sun and the moon, rating each day on a scale of 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more solar/lunar influence that day is experiencing (see "Value" column or corresponding black bars).
- The two Primary periods (Moon Overhead and Moon Underfoot) vary in length from one hour to three-and-one-half hours, depending on a number of important lunar cycles, such as how close the moon is to the earth that day and how high its orbit is. The solar symbols alert you to when a Primary period overlaps a major solar period (eg: Dawn, High-Noon, and Dusk). The secondary periods of Moonrise and Moonset last about one hour each... 30 minutes before and after the listed time. (See key at bottom of each month for more detail.)
- **Astro Tables** is a quick-reference version of its parent publication, the **PrimeTimes Wall Calendar**, which is recommended for those wishing more complete data on the best days and times to go fishing and hunting for the entire year (see "Available Products" below).
- **PrimeTimes** forecasts are based on solar/lunar research at a leading college of astrophysics and our own research pond/wildlife area. Annual data is supplied by the U.S. Naval Observatory. All times are adjusted to the center of your time zone and for Daylight Saving Time.

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and-valleys forecaster. Includes rise and set times for the sun and moon, space to log your catches, "Timely Tips," plus fish and game symbols showing you each month's don't-miss periods. Also includes exclusive summary charts revealing the best and worst days of 2022, the year's best periods, a look ahead at 2023, and more. Comes with FREE 2022 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for \$8.95, plus \$3 s&h.

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

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2022 JUL		BEST DAYS		LUNAR PERIODS									
		POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCEL	VALUE	TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED						
				MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT						
Fri	1					58	8:03 am	1:43 pm - 5:13 pm	10:45 pm	1:14 am - 4:54 am			
Sat	2					51	9:02 am	2:36 pm - 5:52 pm	11:18 pm	2:08 am - 5:38 am			
Sun	3					50	10:01 am	3:28 pm - 6:30 pm	11:47 pm	3:01 am - 6:17 am			
Mon	4					48	11:01 am	4:21 pm - 7:03 pm		3:53 am - 6:55 am			
Tue	5					51	12:00 pm	5:12 pm - 7:38 pm	12:14 am	4:46 am - 7:28 am			
Wed	6					59	1:01 pm	6:05 pm - 8:11 pm	12:40 am	5:37 am - 8:03 am	Half		
Thu	7					47	2:04 pm	7:02 pm - 8:44 pm	1:07 am	6:30 am - 8:36 am			
Fri	8					40	3:10 pm	8:01 pm - 9:23 pm	1:35 am	7:27 am - 9:09 am			
Sat	9					38	4:20 pm	9:03 pm - 10:09 pm	2:07 am	8:26 am - 9:48 am			
Sun	10					46	5:34 pm	10:09 pm - 11:01 pm	2:45 am	9:28 am - 10:34 am			
Mon	11					56	6:48 pm	11:18 pm - 11:59 pm	3:32 am	10:34 am - 11:26 am			
Tue	12					67	7:58 pm	no period	4:29 am	12:51 pm - 12:25 pm	Low		
Wed	13					73	8:59 pm	12:20 am - 1:08 am	5:36 am	12:51 pm - 1:33 pm	FULL & PERIGEE		
Thu	14					63	9:50 pm	1:29 am - 2:17 am	6:51 am	1:54 pm - 2:42 pm			
Fri	15					54	10:31 pm	2:24 am - 3:26 am	8:07 am	6:30 am - 8:31 pm			
Sat	16					45	11:06 pm	3:13 am - 4:31 am	9:21 am	3:38 pm - 4:56 pm			
Sun	17					42	11:36 pm	3:55 am - 5:33 am	10:30 am	4:20 pm - 5:58 pm			
Mon	18					43	12:04 am	4:33 am - 6:31 am	11:36 am	4:58 pm - 6:56 pm			
Tue	19					51	12:31 am	5:06 am - 7:28 am	12:39 pm	5:31 pm - 7:53 pm			
Wed	20					63	1:01 pm	5:40 am - 8:22 am	1:40 pm	6:05 pm - 8:47 pm	Half		
Thu	21					54	12:58 am	6:15 am - 9:15 am	2:40 pm	6:40 pm - 9:40 pm			
Fri	22					51	1:27 am	6:52 am - 10:08 am	3:40 pm	7:17 pm - 10:33 pm			
Sat	23					52	1:59 am	7:31 am - 11:01 am	4:40 pm	7:56 pm - 11:26 pm			
Sun	24					53	2:36 am	8:14 am - 11:54 am	5:38 pm	8:39 pm - 12:19 am			
Mon	25					62	3:18 am	9:03 am - 12:45 pm	6:32 pm	9:28 pm - 1:10 am	HIGH & APOGEE		
Tue	26					70	4:06 am	9:54 am - 1:36 pm	7:23 pm	10:19 pm - 2:01 am			
Wed	27					80	5:00 am	10:45 am - 2:25 pm	8:07 pm	11:10 pm - Midnight			
Thu	28					84	5:57 am	11:39 am - 3:11 pm	8:46 pm	Midnight - 2:50 am	New		
Fri	29					73	6:56 am	12:31 pm - 3:53 pm	9:20 pm	12:04 am - 3:36 am			
Sat	30					62	7:56 am	1:24 pm - 4:30 pm	9:50 pm	12:56 am - 4:18 am			
Sun	31					50	8:55 am	2:16 pm - 5:06 pm	10:18 pm	1:49 am - 4:55 am			

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# UNFORTUNATELY, NOT ALL OUTDOOR STORIES ARE A PLEASURE FOR US TO WRITE

**A**fter more than 50 years in this writing business, there are times when a dread comes over me about what must be written. This is one of those times.

In late May, there was a two-boat nighttime collision on False River, the 13-mile long oxbow near New Roads in Pointe Coupee Parish.

It occurred during the near 50-year-old Friday Night Cookie Jar tournament held regularly during the spring and summer. This one's personal to me and in many ways. I've personally fished in this tournament more than once and I can't count the days and hours I've spent in a boat on False River. We constantly preach boating safety.

Two men died in that wreck, and Wildlife and Fisheries continues its investigation of the fatal crash between a lengthy bateau and a 20-foot fiberglass bass boat. The photo of the mangled bateau leaves a wonder of how anyone in that boat survived. But, there was one, along with the 15-year-old son of Baton Rouge dentist Dr. Kenneth St. Romain. It was a most cruel and ironic twist,

because St. Romain is the son of Kenneth St. Romain, a man who's dedicated countless volunteer hours to improving safety on False River. The eldest St. Romain has organized an annual bass tournament on his home lake through the Pointe Coupee Kiwanis Club.

Proceeds from the PCKC tournament pay for installing and maintaining buoys along the pier-studded lake to limit no-wake zones within 50 yards of the bank. It's also helped limit the run-ins between the lake's two main user groups — fishermen working the piers for bass and water skiers/pleasure boats.

## **DISTURBING DISCOVERY**

After the recent accident, it took several hours for Wildlife and Fisheries to recover St. Romain's body, and what they found was disturbing. St. Romain was wearing one of those inflatable life vests. The problem was the vest didn't inflate. Pay attention here.

For those who don't know about these personal flotation devices (PFDs), some come with what's called "an automatic

inflation mechanism," something we'll call an "activator" for short. Activators are designed to inflate the vest after the wearer hits the water. The activator is supposed to trigger a CO2 cartridge to inflate the vest.

That didn't happen in this instance, and the vest's manufacturer won't be identified here to avoid all those legal entanglements in our litigious world.

Some of these vests come with a pull cord to activate the cartridge, but that doesn't help if the vest wearer is unconscious.

This was not an isolated instance: it happened to me.

My vest didn't inflate when I accidentally hit the water one time. Thank goodness, I pulled the cord and it inflated, but I was aware enough to pull the backup manual yellow tab even after pulling a "stupid" and leaning out over the gunnel



*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.*

to free a fishing lure.

What happened after my stunt sent me to changing the activator in another inflatable vest. Apparently, that's something needing annual attention, along with checking the CO2 cartridge for an expiration date. If that doesn't work, the vest doesn't work.

What happened after that tragic Friday night triggered a quick public Wildlife and Fisheries response, apparently because this wasn't the first time the LDWF's Safe Boating staff had seen the same problem with these vests, both during accident investigations and safe boating checks.

**Here's what that staff reported:**

- All PFDs must be U.S. Coast Guard approved, and there's a label on the PFD that says if it is. PFDs must properly fit the boater wearing it, including any age and weight restrictions. A little-known federal regulation restricts using USCG-approved inflatable vests to fishermen/boaters 17 and older.

- In the let-the-buyer beware column, the report stated there are some inflatable vests on the market without a CO2 cartridge either attached or included. While these PFDs are being likely sold at a reduced price, they either come with the cartridge included but not attached and properly armed or the cartridge is sold separately. Appropriate cartridges must be purchased additionally and installed by the customer prior to use.

Some inflatable vests are inflated by breathing through a tube.

The report warns, "These PFDs could be largely ineffective and have little or no inherent buoyancy. LDWF suggests use of inherently buoyant PFDs or a PFD properly equipped with an automatic inflation mechanism. If an unconscious or injured boater enters the water with a faulty PFD they may not be able to initiate inflation."



Earlier this summer, LSU head football coach Brian Kelly, center, posed with a life jacket as part of "Wear Your Life Jacket to Work Day" to promote the use of life jackets. It's also important to make sure your life jacket is functioning properly. Here Kelly is shown with Major Clay Marques, the state's boating law administrator and Lt. Tim Fox, LDWF boating education coordinator.

- Read all instructions, because all inflatables are not the same in function and/or deployment. The report says, "Wearers must be made aware of deployment procedures and should never assume that an inflatable will automatically inflate."

So, check your inflatable vest now, and the Safe Boating staff recommends having a "buoyant" throwable PFD aboard if or when an inflatable unintentionally inflates.

It could be a life saver. ■

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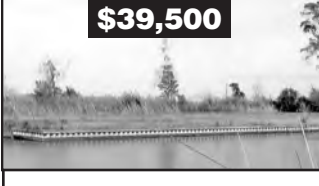
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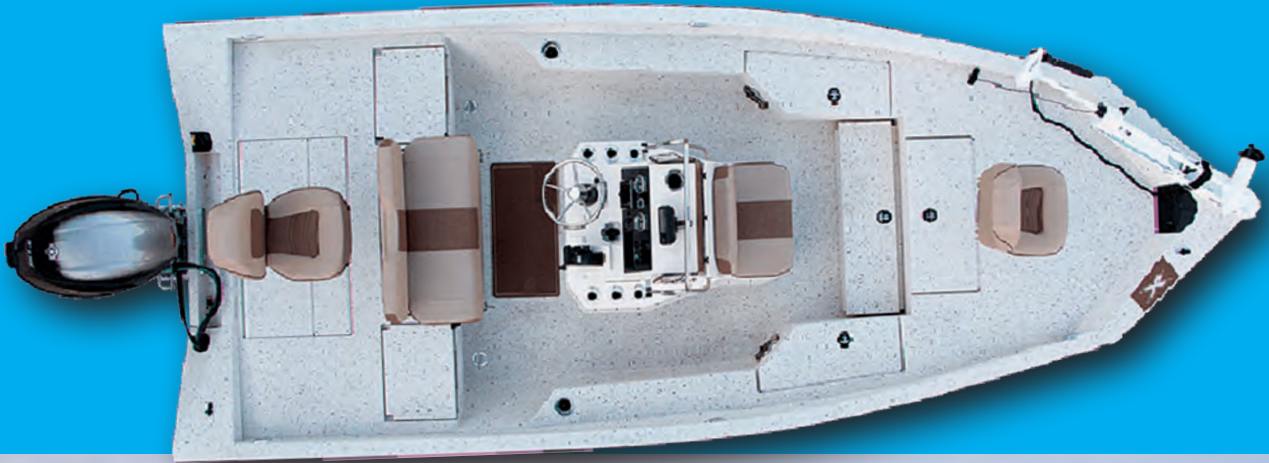


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H18



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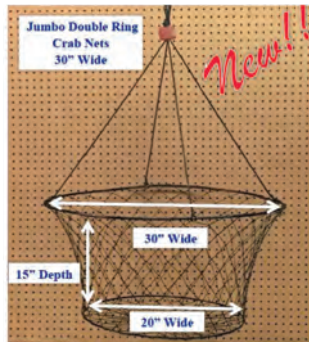
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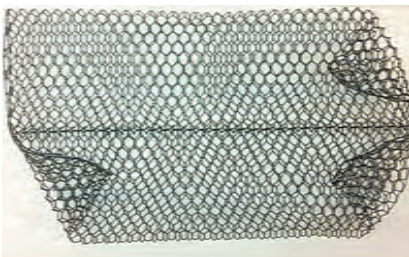
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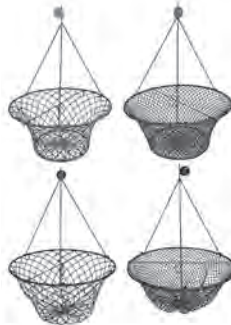
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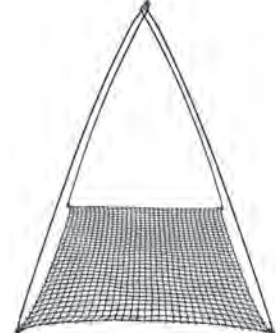
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