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BASS ON THE "BIG CREEK"

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REDFISH "A-POINT-MENT"

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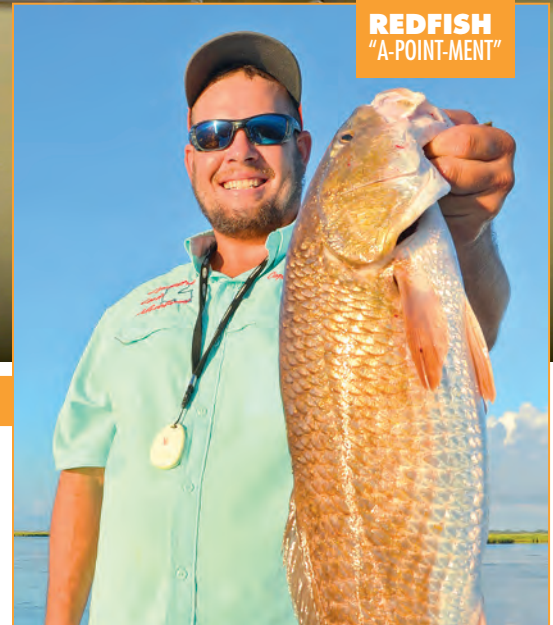
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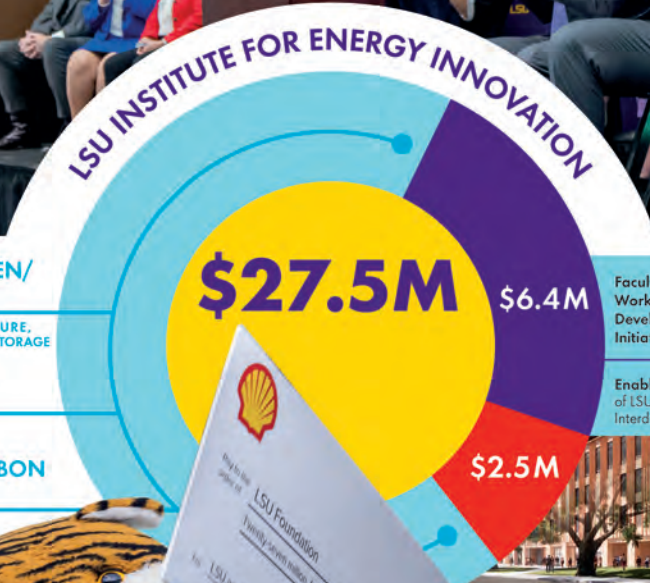
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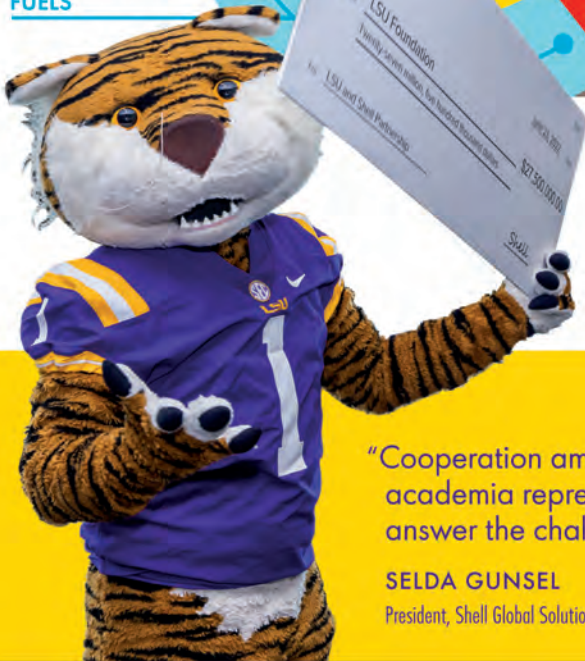
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RIDING OUT THE STORM



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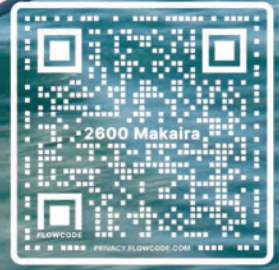
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SAY, ARE YOU THE OUTDOOR WRITER?

WHAT IS THIS FISH MY HUSBAND CAUGHT?

If you work in this writing business long enough, well, there are stories you remember for a long, long time — even longer. And when you started writing about fishing darned near 50 years ago, some stories fade.

But, not all, and some you'll read here will carry places, but not names.

Most started with a phone call, not cell-phone mind you, but those old desktop models, and the most memorable started one fine spring morning.

Ring, Ring.

"You the outdoor writer?"

THE STORY

It was a woman. Her voice was calm, but soon grew in pitch and volume to the point where she could have sung high soprano in any Metropolitan opera.

"See," she continued, "my husband and I were fishing in that pond up on North Sherwood (in Baton Rouge) and we

caught this fish that looked like a cross between a bream and a sac-a-lait."

Me: "So how big was it?"

Her: "About the size of a big bream, but it had a stripe and was a fatter than a sac-a-lait."

Me: "Any other markings?"

Her: "Well, it had some gold flecks in it, but it had teeth, teeth like we'd never seen before."

Me: "Teeth? How big?"

Her: "Little and pointy."

Me: "Diamond shaped? Kinda like sharp little daggers?"

Her: "Yep. They was sharp."

Me: "Did you eat it?"

Her: "Yep. Husband filleted it. It ate good." I didn't have the heart to tell her she'd caught a piranha, nor throw a scare into her, but did call Wildlife and Fisheries' Inland Fisheries folks, who told me it wasn't the first time they'd heard about such instances.

Seems like some folks think it's cute to

have this voracious flesh eater in tanks, then, when they no longer can feed them, or risk a fine for having such a "pet," they discard them into a local pond thinking these sorts of fish won't survive.

STRANGE ENCOUNTERS, PART II

Flounder are a saltwater fish, right?

There was this Sunshine Bass Club tournament and my partner decided our best chance for morning action was in Flat Lake. The water was muddy, so a square-billed, crawfish-colored crankbait worked around the stumps seemed to



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.

be a good choice, especially when, on the second cast, the hard strike, the ensuing, drag-pulling battle indicated it was.

“Get the net. Got the big bass, but it don’t feel like a bass.”

Knew the treble hooks were solid, and the fight hard, but dreams of hauling in the big-bass pot, even first-place stringer evaporated when this hefty flat fish came to the surface.

What the heck was a flounder doing in Flat Lake? Except that a tropical storm had hit around Morgan City a couple weeks earlier. That explained it.

But storms didn’t explain the next memorable call.

Ring. Ring.

Didn’t recognize the accent, but the woman on the other end of the line was excited.

“My husband and I were fishing where the Whiskey Channel splits off from the Atchafalaya (River) and we caught this fish we’d never seen before. It was flat and has eyes on the same side of its head.”

Me: “Ma’am it was a flounder.”

Her: “A what?”

Me: “A flounder. A saltwater fish.”

Her: “What on God’s Green Earth was it doing up there?”

Me: “Guess it got lost.”

It was as good an explanation as anyone could come up with, except all of us can wonder how that fish showed up more than 150 miles from the nearest saltwater — except the Atchafalaya had been unusually low that year and saltwater wedges do invade far north in our waters, and knowing bull sharks have been found in the Mississippi River as far north as St. Louis, that’s St. Louis, Missouri.

STRANGE, PART III

Again, the phone rings on the desk, and, again, a woman launched into a question about a fish, and, again, she was fishing with her husband. Ah, seems all these start with some sort of piscatorial marital bliss.

“We was fishin’ in the channel, Whiskey Bay, and we caught this fish with big teeth.”

Me (thinking, no, not another piranha): “What’d it look like?”

Her: “Big. Big teeth, and stripes and pointy fins, and big. It took 10 minutes to get

it in the boat.”

Me: “About where?”

Her: “Just south of Krotz Springs. We’d never seen a fish with such big teeth.”

Me: “Didja take a picture?”

Her: “Shore did.”

Me: “Here’s my address. Send a copy, please.”

Four days later, a photo of an eight-pound sheepshead fell from the envelope. Returned the photo with a copy of the sheepshead page from Jerald Horst’s “Fishes of the Gulf of Mexico.”

All true, and there are no names here just to protect the innocent. ■

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OUTDOOR UPDATE

A HOT HAND AND A BIG FISH

BUT CREW'S 42.6 YELLOWEDGE
GROUPEL WON'T MAKE STATE
RECORD BOOK

A By John Manion
giant 42.6-pound yellowedge grouper was caught on June 25 in the Mississippi Canyon off the coast of Venice. It would have made the record books as the largest ever caught in the state, but it was taken by electric reel and cannot qualify for record status, as curated by the Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association (LOWA).

Most anglers familiar with yellowedge say a 25-pound fish is impressive. The current state record yellowedge was taken in 2009 and weighed in at 41.9-pounds. This grouper managed to



best a state record by almost a pound which is a trophy fish and a catch of a lifetime, even without record status.

Joey Coco, from Baton Rouge, planned a trip to assist Horace Wilkinson, also from Baton Rouge, and a few other anglers with breaking in Wilkinson's new 32-foot Yellowfin boat. Coco is an engineer by profession and had a detailed plan laid-out for the mostly greenhorn crew. The day started early in the morning deep dropping for swordfish. After the crew managed to land a sword, they shifted gears to red snapper and made short work of their limit, boxing 18 fish.

HEADED FOR VENICE

As they made their way toward Venice, Coco guided the boat to several different spots to make a few dead drops for grouper, which are usually found around the 500 foot depth mark.

"As soon as we dropped it was on fire," Coco said. "One yellowedge grouper after another. I had sort of a hot hand that day."

The crew managed to box several yellowedge grouper in the 20-pound class and a golden tilefish for a bonus.

For deep dropping, Coco uses a Banax Kaigen 1000 electric reel paired with a Banax deep dropper rod. His rig is spooled with Sufix Top Shot 80 pound braid and a Sufix Wind-On 200 pound leader. The business end includes a custom 14/0 deep drop multiple hook rig with a hefty size chunk of squid to top it all off.

With the new boat well christened with plenty of catches, the crew made the call to head in.

Since Coco's plan had gone like clockwork, the crew had plenty of leisure time left to try a few unfished holes. Coco had identified a spot that had irregular bottom features using the Navionics App. Still in the Canyon in about 550 feet of water, they pulled, but with nothing but dead bottom on the sounder (not uncommon with grouper fishing). But then...

"I literally dropped it on that fish's head," Coco said. "As soon as it hit the bottom, that fish hit that bait. And the fight was on."

A BIG SURPRISE

The fish buried Coco's deep drop rig. For about 10 minutes the fish had a heavy strain on the electric reel and was managing to take drag from time to time. Eventually, the electrical reel was able to make gains on the fish, and the grouper began to rise to the top.

"It ascended to the surface about 40 feet from the boat. We thought it was a Warsaw when it came up just due to its large size," Coco said. "As we got it to the boat, everyone was hooting and hollering realizing it was a yellowedge."

On missing out on an official state record, Coco confessed that it was the one time he wished he had hand cranked a fish 550 feet to the surface. In the absence of state record memorabilia, Coco took plenty of pictures and measurements in order to memorialize the fish with a fiberglass replica.

"It will go on my wall and be the source of many future fishing stories at the camp," Coco said.

You gotta love it when a plan comes together!

And if you're fortunate enough to land a potential state record fish, be sure to check out the LOWA website, <https://louisianaoutdoorwriters.com/awards-records/fish-hunt-records/>, for rules and submission requirements. ■

Joey Coco caught this incredible yellowedge grouper that weighed 42.6 pounds in the Mississippi Canyon.



TEAM TUNA!

GROUP OF FRIENDS WORK TOGETHER TO BOAT 238.2 POUND YELLOWFIN

J By Kinny Haddox
ared Austin of New Orleans and a group of his friends make sure that once a year they all get together, charter a boat and go fishing. Wednesday, June 22, may make them adjust their tradition. They may want to go more often now.

The group was aiming to take advantage of the summer's snapper season and booked a trip with Capt. Nick Campos with VooDoo Charters out of Venice Marina. But they also decided to go look for a tuna as well.

They found one.

About 10 a.m., they hooked into a massive 238.2 pound yellowfin and finally, at around 11:30 a.m., they got it in the boat. Team Tuna included Austin, Sidney Freeman of Metairie, Ryan Martin of Metairie, Ryan Solar of Gonzales, Gino Gondolfi of Covington and Bryce Delafosse of New Orleans and deckhand Lee McLean of Lake View. The fish was weighed on certified scales at Cypress Cove Marina.

They were fishing about 60 miles out and caught several nice



snapper. Then the big tuna made their day.

"Most of the time, you have to drop a bait down to a tuna, but not this one. As soon as the bait hit the water, this monster nailed it," said Austin. "He took off and pulled 90 percent of the line off the reel. We worked him in a little bit and had to change fishermen. We each got worn out and had to hand the rod off so everybody could enjoy it, but that brute put up a fight we could have only imagined. We started by holding the rod in hand, but then started using a belt and finally had to go full harness to get



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it in. Seven or eight times it came up and got close, but then it took off again."

NO RECORD, NO PROBLEM

Austin said he had just landed a snapper and sat down to enjoy a cold refreshment when the fish hit and made the drag scream.

"We all said, hold on, this is going to be serious," Austin said.

One thing that makes the story interesting is that at the end of the battle, they decided to stream it live on Instagram.

"We were a little worried about sharks, but they didn't bother us," Austin said.

Had only one fisherman reeled in the fish, it would have been the fourth largest yellowfin tuna ever caught in Louisiana history, but since more than one angler took the reel, it can't be counted as a record. That doesn't bother Austin or any of his buddies. It's a memory of a lifetime.

We had a great time and we all had some pretty big hunks of tuna to take home. That fish is gonna feed a lot of people," he said. "And one of the best parts is that we had Bryce with us. He's 14 years old and had never seen anything like that. It didn't take him long to realize that fish was twice as big as he was. I'm sure he's hooked on fishing for life now. He's already a true fisherman. He rides his bike to City Park in New Orleans to fish all the time."

The boat had stopped earlier and loaded up on hardtails and that is what the big fish hit.

READY FOR THE NEXT ONE

Austin spends a lot of time on boats — big boats. He is a Baton Rouge river pilot. He also likes to fish out of a kayak, but has limited himself mostly to short trips on an infrequent basis because of family and work obligations.

"It's funny," he said. "Right after we got in and soaked all this in, we all started joking with each other about who's going to buy a boat so we can do this all the time."

The trip was cut short because of the big fish. Austin said they were all whipped and couldn't wait to get in and weigh the fish. And of course, start telling fish stories to all their friends. ■



Jared Austin and Bryce Delafosse with the big world class tuna.

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READER REPORT

GUMMY WORMS FOR CATFISH? YES, AND STRANGER THINGS, TOO

Fishing is always fun when it is a family affair. Our grandson, Tee Cooper, is 6 years old and we recently went on a fishing trip that is just too funny not to share.

We went fishing at the river to tight line on Friday. We had a couple of boxes of worms that we had leftover that we used while on vacation. We thought those would be enough for the day. We caught some nice catfish and most were just right to fry whole.

Well, before dark we ran out of bait. If you ever take Tee Cooper fishing, you have to stay until dark and then he is still begging to fish with the lights on!

Anyway, Jerry decided he would use a piece of ham. I opened the ice chest and saw candy that we had left from our trip. There was a bag of gummy worms in there. I told Jerry I was going to try a gummy worm. We all just laughed.

HAM OR GUMMIES?

Jerry didn't catch anything on ham and I caught a small one on a gummy worm. Jerry and Tee changed to a gummy worms.



Who needs regular worms when you have sour neon night crawlers?



Tee Cooper's creative baiting helped him nab this big catfish.

Jerry caught one and then Tee hooked a big yellow cat. Man, was the fight on, with him trying to get that big thing in the boat. Jerry was helping him hold his rod and they were yelling for me to get the dip net. It was wild!!!

We laughed and laughed when we read the name of the gummy worms, "Sour Neon Night Crawlers." The big catfish weighed 7 pounds, 12 ounces. The biggest surprise is when we cleaned him we saw something strange in his stomach pouch. It was a small squirrel. Yep the weirdest thing I ever saw!

That's one for the record books!!

Tee is the son of Malcolm and Victoria Cooper of Aimwell. He was fishing with me and my husband, Jerry, his maternal grandparents. ■

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GOOD NIGHT

GAGNARD HAS A BIG BASS PARTY AFTER DARK WITH A 10.87 TOLEDO LUNKER

M By Kinny Haddox
ost of the time, Zachary Gagnard of Many would rather be taking clients crappie fishing on the massive waters of Toledo Bend. This time of year, the sunken brush-tops are calling his name and telling him to bring crappie jigs.

But when fellow guide Wes Holt of Hooked Up Guide Service calls and says the big bass are biting, Gagnard can't say no. On July 1, he was glad he said yes. He went night fishing with Holt and landed a 10.87 pound lunker, his sixth lifetime 10-pound plus largemouth.

"That night, we just headed to a brushpile and didn't even graph it when we got there. We just started fishing," said Gagnard, the owner of Elite Guide Service. We pulled up and I caught one about seven pounds at 12:30 a.m., right after we started fishing. We went on to another brushpile and caught a five pounder, but decided there had to be more big ones where we started, so we went back.

"We pulled up to it and I threw a big old Monster worm with a half ounce weight right into the top," he said. "The bait hit the pile, came over a limb and she smoked it. When I set the hook, the rod bowed up and she took off. The rod doesn't bend like that often, so I knew what I had."

GET THE NET

Mind you, all this happened in the dark. And to make things worse, the duo had left their big light at the house and only had a small headlamp for extra light. After the big fish made its initial run, it headed straight for the surface and made a big jump. When the fish busted the surface and then belly-flopped back in the water, even without seeing it, the two experienced fishermen knew it was a 10-pound-plus fish.

"It's unusual to catch this big of a fish in the summer," he said. "The thing was 26 3/4 inches long. ...a giant. Its stomach was flat and if we would have caught it in the spring, it would have

OPPOSITE PAGE: Zachary Gagnard and his night-time trophy, a 10.87 Toledo Bend lunker bass.

probably weighed 13 pounds." The bait of choice for Gagnard was a seven-inch Zoom Ol Monster worm in Camo color. It was one of only two worms like that they had in the boat, despite having hundreds of other colors and types. He also used a tungsten weight and 15 pound fluorocarbon. They both use big weights to cover the whole brushtop and stay close to the bottom. The duo finally got the bass close enough to the boat to see it roll in the dim light that they had, and then dive again. Finally it came up and they got the net under it. As soon as they did, the hook fell right out.

"We just looked at the fish, then looked at each other and laughed," the 32-year-old Gagnard said. "It's a miracle I got it in because the hook was just hanging on the side of her mouth, not even past the barb."

NIGHT TIME IS THE RIGHT TIME

This time of year with it being so hot, the only time to catch big bass is at night, he said. Big bass pull up in the tops that are holding bream and feed, then pull back off to other spots to hold.

There was almost another chapter to the story. About 4:30 that same morning, he hooked another giant that never slowed down and broke his line at the reel. There's no telling how big it was, he said.

Gagnard almost exclusively guides for crappie, but he does an occasional bass trip, too. You can learn more about him at Elite Guide Service online or on Facebook. You can also follow Holt on his website and Facebook page. ■

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Ronnie Latapie still suffers from the effects of this horrible infection.



UNWANTED CATCH

Photo courtesy Ronald Latapie

GULF ANGLERS NEED TO BE MINDFUL OF DANGERS OF VIBRIO VULNIFICUS

T By Kinny Haddox
he list of what you can catch fishing in the Gulf of Mexico is lengthy. But there's one thing nobody ever wants to "catch": vibrio vulnificus.

Just ask Ronnie Latapie of Pearl River. Last year, Latapie and his extended family, a party of 60, made their annual trek to Grand Isle and went fishing. Latapie loves to surf fish and he went out on a Thursday. Fishing was slow, so he skipped Friday, but Saturday morning, his leg started hurting really badly. So bad that nobody could touch it. He had to take kids' ice pops out of the freezer and put them on it to help alleviate the pain.

A MYSTERIOUS PAIN

Latapie had a pre-existing blood clot condition, so he thought that was what was happening, but by Sunday morning, his fever was 104. He had to be helped to the car and his wife rushed him to Slidell Memorial Hospital. He got treatment with antibiotics and other medicines and blood tests. It took five days for the tests to conclusively show what he had.

He almost lost his leg. He almost lost his life. Today, he's still struggling to get back to normal and he wants to let others know about this terrible "flesh eating bacteria" and for those with medical conditions to avoid wading, getting finned by fish or having any direct contact with the water or fish. It's a serious deal.

"After it happened to me, we started hearing lots of other stories," he said. "I'm no doctor, but from what they told me, anybody with heart trouble, diabetes, liver disease, open wounds, etc., should not get in the water. As much as I love to fish, I

know I'll never wade out there again. And I'll wear gloves and stay in the boat when I fish. I won't go in the water unless it's a swimming pool."

SPREADING AWARENESS

His son, named Ronnie also, posted on Instagram about the event recently on the one-year anniversary of what happened to his dad.

"Y'all be careful fishing in the Gulf this summer," he posted. "Last year around this time my dad got vibrio vulnificus, a flesh eating bacteria that kills 1 out of 5 people. The doctors said it probably entered through one of his old surgery scars while he was wade fishing, but there are plenty of other ways he could've gotten it. He already had blood clots in the same leg but when he got vibrio it made it way worse. Almost a year later and he still can't go back to work. Be safe out there guys. Sharks and stingrays aren't the only thing to worry about when being in the water."

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention offers this information and more on its website:

"Some Vibrio vulnificus infections lead to necrotizing fasciitis, a severe infection in which the flesh around an open wound dies." Some media reports call this kind of infection 'flesh-eating bacteria,' even though necrotizing fasciitis can be caused by more than one type of bacteria.

Anyone can get a Vibrio wound infection. But some people are more likely to get an infection and have severe complications—for example, people who have liver disease or take medicine that lowers the body's ability to fight germs." ■



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COMMISSION ADOPTS NOTICE OF INTENT TO MODIFY CRAPPIE REGULATIONS ON BAYOU D'ARBONNE LAKE

T From News Reports
he Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission adopted a notice of intent to modify current crappie regulations on Bayou D'Arbonne Lake in Union Parish near the town of Farmerville.

Passage of this NOI will change the daily take of crappie that measure over 12 inches in length to 7 per person; the total daily take will remain 50 crappie per person. This proposed change is an effort to increase the number of larger crappie in the population. It also has the potential to improve the growth rate of crappie in Bayou D'Arbonne Lake, which was identified as being below average in a recent assessment of the fishery. Improved growth rates could be seen by directing angler harvest to the more abundant smaller size classes of crappie in the lake.

The proposed regulation will be fully evaluated after a minimum of three years to determine if it is achieving desired results.

Interested persons may submit comments relevant to the proposed rule by August 31, 2022, to Ryan Daniel, LDWF District 2, 368 CenturyLink Dr., Monroe, LA 71203 or via email at rdaniel@wfla.gov. ■



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REDFISH By John N. Felsher "A-POINT-MENT"



Small baitfish huddled together, each fighting against the tidal flow pushing them out toward open water as the current created a riffle at the tip of a

SMALL GRASSY POINT IN THIS VAST LOUISIANA MARSHLAND.

Behind the point, the obstruction formed a small eddy. A spinnerbait splashed just beyond the point on the upstream side. In the relatively clear green water, the gold blades flashed as the lure approached the point and then rounded it. WHAM! A big redfish engulfed the swirling temptation and headed for open water.

Legendary angler Bill Dance once said, "Points point to fish." While he said that about largemouth bass, the same holds true for saltwater. Anything a largemouth will eat, a redfish might grab and vice versa. In brackish tidal marshes, reds and bass commonly hunt in the same places and feed on the same forage.

"The great majority of my clients that want to catch redfish are bass fishermen," reported Mike Gallo, owner of Angling Adventures of Louisiana and the Spots & Dots Lake House

lodge (985-781-7811, www.AAofLA.com) in Slidell. "They already know how to work lures around cover, so they're used to fishing points."

ALTERED WATER FLOW

Broken weedy shorelines pockmarked by mini coves, very common habitat in Louisiana marshes, make uncountable small points that can hold redfish. Most people only think of "points" as observable land jutting out into the water, but points can take many forms. A "point" could include fallen objects, grassy edges, bulkhead corners, dock pilings, riprap and many other forms, perhaps even a sunken boat. Anything making a protrusion or a sharp edge that alters water flow



Capt. Mike Gallo of Angling Adventures of Louisiana shows off a redfish he caught while fishing a ragged marshy shoreline in the Bayou Biloxi marshes south of Lake Borgne. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Capt. Mike Gallo battles a Hopedale redfish.



John N. Felsner

creates an excellent place for redfish to ambush prey.

Reds normally bite best during some tidal movement. Water movement positions fish and bait. Winds can also cause or change currents. Strong breezes regularly overcome tides in the Louisiana marshes. Flowing water can also stir up bait, like small fish, shrimp, crabs and other morsels. Points constrict and redirect tidal flow.

"I look for shallow flats about two to three feet deep with areas of moving water around points or cuts and drains from duck ponds," said Tim Ortego of Louisiana Livin Adventures (985-209-1812, Facebook) in Chauvin. "In the summer, redfish push shallower in the early morning and late evening."

Many people believe that fish always hold behind objects out of the current waiting to ambush anything that comes along, but that's not always true. Redfish do that, but they also roam around looking for food. Many sea creatures feed by filtering water of larvae and plankton. They typically position themselves upstream of an obstruction facing into the current so they can eat. Redfish go where they find bait.

Many people believe that fish always hold behind objects out of the current waiting to ambush anything that comes along, but that's not always true. Redfish do that, but they also roam around looking for food. Many sea creatures feed by filtering water of larvae and plankton. They typically position themselves upstream of an obstruction facing into the current so they can eat. Redfish go where they find bait.

OFF THE POINT >



John N. Felsner 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 JohnNFelsner.com.

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OFF THE POINT

"A bass will sit on a point or a log for a long time, but a redfish might be 20 yards past the point," Gallo said. "Redfish cruise back and forth along a shoreline looking for something to eat. Redfish like to use the bank as a dead end. If a redfish is a foot from shore and flushes a minnow or a crab, it chases it toward the shoreline where it runs into a dead end. They do the same thing around grassy islands. They go around and around those islands. An island is kind of a never-ending point."

Small ditches draining marshy ponds create mini deltas with points marking either side of the channel mouth. These drains make outstanding places to catch redfish. Toss a popping cork tipped with a live or plastic shrimp as far as possible up the drain. Suspend the bait just off the bottom so the rig drifts naturally with the tide. Do the same thing with a cork around points. Cast it to the upstream side and let the wind or tide carry it across the point.

"I like a popping cork with 18 inches of 40-pound test monofilament tipped with a 3/0 Kahle hook," Ortego said. "I bait it with either a live or fresh shrimp. That will fill up a boat with beautiful Louisiana slot redfish, but don't be surprised if a big bull red hits it, even in the interior marsh."

An unweighted plastic shrimp also makes a fantastic enticement in these drains. If necessary, attach a small split-shot to the line for casting. Use the lightest weight possible. Let the tidal current carry the morsel naturally downstream. Just crank the reel enough to take up the slack. If the bait stops moving, raise the rod to get it back in the flow.

SPOON FED REDS

Anglers can fish points in many ways with anything that might tempt a redfish. A rattling crankbait, spinnerbait with a big thumping gold Colorado blade or a spoon should do the trick. Many people throw topwaters around a point. In calm water, use a popper and pause between "pops." When fishing a strong current, work a walking bait vigorously.

"During the summer, a ¼-ounce gold Johnson Weedless gold spoon or a spinnerbait with a gold Colorado blade tipped with a black and chartreuse plastic shad will get the job done," Ortego said.

Approach any point with stealth and make extremely long casts to avoid spooking fish in shallow water. Always start downstream of the point and throw baits past it. Work baits down with the current at first. Then, move forward slowly, hitting every piece of structure from various angles to find where fish want to stay.

In the summer, water temperatures in shallow marsh ponds become unbearably hot for fish. In addition, ponds with dark water and dark muddy bottoms absorb more heat. Hot water quickly loses oxygen. When water becomes too hypoxic, fish and other creatures go elsewhere or die.

During summer swelter, anglers might need to aban-



Lucas Wood fights a big one while his brother, Jacob, and father, Justin, watch during a trip with Capt. Tom Adams of Fishing Tom Guide Service in the Calcasieu Estuary near Lake Charles. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Another redfish comes to the boat after hitting a live shrimp dangling under a popping cork in the Calcasieu Estuary near Lake Charles. A popping cork makes a great presentation when fishing points. Let the current carry it along naturally.

John N. Felsher



John N. Feksher

don their favorite spring and fall honey holes to seek fish in cooler, deeper, water. Flowing water runs cooler than still water and traps more dissolved oxygen. Look for signs of life other than garfish or mullets, which can survive in water where other fish cannot.

“I look for what I call ‘the holy trinity of fishing’ — clean water, moving water and life,” Gallo said. “The places with the most life indicate more oxygen in the water. Places where the marsh meets large lakes and bays are more exposed to oxygen, especially if there’s wind. That’s where most of the life will be in the summer. If the water is too clean, I can see redfish, but they can see me too.”

After getting a bite, try to determine a pattern. Note everything, the water depth, position of the fish upstream or downstream, type of bait used and how. After determining a pattern, try to repeat it. Eliminate unproductive waters to concentrate on those spots that hold the most active fish. In a system as dynamic as the Louisiana marshes, conditions and patterns change frequently.

“Fishermen know what ‘match the hatch’ means, but they might not think of ‘match the vibration,’” Gallo said. “Fish live in a 3-D world surrounded by sounds. Their lateral line is their sonar. They key in on certain vibrations in the water. If a minnow swims against the current, it’s giving off a certain vibration. I try to find a lure that’s proportional to the tide so I can match that vibration of the minnow in that tide.”

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REDFISH "A-POINT-MENT"

GO DEEP TO SCORE

Usually, anglers only see a small section of a point. A long, sloping landform could extend far out into a waterbody. These formations might hold fish all along it. In the blistering summer, redfish tend to hunt in the deeper water near an object. With modern electronics, anglers can easily detect these formations and might even spot fish on them. Anglers might also discover oyster reefs, sandbars and troughs or other submerged structures that hold fish.

"Points are great places to fish, but most people just concentrate on the part of the point they can see," Gallo said. "Often, that point extends far out under the water. Fish might be up closer to the grass or farther from shore, but still hanging around that point. A great point for redfish in August could be a great point for trout in October or November."

Around these long, sloping points, toss spinnerbaits, spoons or crankbaits that resemble mullets. Work baits parallel to the structure just over the drop-off edge. In the summer, run baits just over the bottom. Use crankbaits that dive slightly deeper than the water depth. Reel it down to the bottom so the lip digs into the silt. Pause and it will float up backwards. The lip makes a mud trail that simulates a crab scurrying over the bottom.

Breaks in jetties also create superb points that might hold redfish. Off jetty ends, currents whipping around the tip scour holes, good places to drop Carolina rigs baited with live mullets, shrimp or pogies for bull reds.

Certainly no secret, points and the areas around points can



Topwater baits, such as this Bomber Badonk-A-Donk, can be not only highly effective for catching redfish, but incredibly exciting when a fish blows up on one.

John N. Felsher

lead to incredible action, as Bill Dance said. When fishing a Louisiana marsh or coastal bay, never pass up an opportunity to make your personal "a-point-ment" with big redfish! ■

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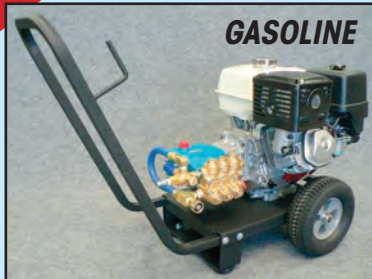
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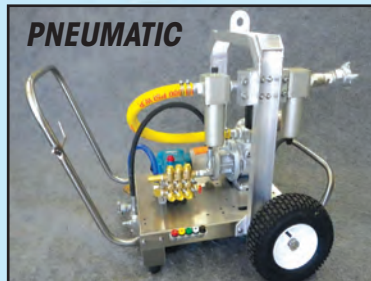
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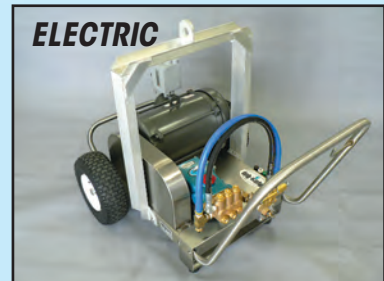
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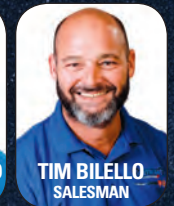
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PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

Chris Holmes



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

RIDE THE BULL IS BACK

WORLD'S LARGEST KAYAK FISHING TOURNAMENT IS READY TO ROLL AGAIN



A sea of kayak anglers dispersing onto Camanida Pass for the start of Ride the Bull, the World's Largest Kayak Fishing Tournament held in Grand Isle.



Kayak anglers rejoice!
The Coastal Conservation Association's Ride the Bull returns to Grand Isle on August 26 and 27, 2022. After a two-year forced hiatus, the World's Largest Kayak Fishing Tournament is ready to roll again.

RTB 11, originally set for August 2020, had to cancel due to Covid quarantines and for the protection of the kayak anglers, the tournament volunteers, and the community of Grand Isle. The disease was spreading at a high level and there was just no way to safely proceed.

Following the administration of vaccinations and a trend of lessening spread of Covid, a reset of RTB 11 was scheduled for August 2021. Despite a sudden ramping up of Covid, it was felt that the event could safely go on with proper precautions and social distancing in place.

But not so fast. With many kayak anglers already on Grand Isle pre-fishing for the tournament and generally enjoying an island getaway, Mother Nature threw in a big monkey wrench.

Tropical Storm Ida was out in the Gulf, rapidly intensifying, and setting her sights on coastal Louisiana. With forecasts becoming more ominous by the minute, CCA Tournament Director, Rad Trascher, took to Facebook just one day before the tournament to announce the cancellation.

"I've got some bad news. We've held out as long as we can, but obviously this storm is moving faster than expected," he said.

DOING THE RIGHT THING

Suspecting that evacuations would soon be issued for Grand Isle and the surrounding areas, there would be no way to safely hold the event. That plus the fact that the folks in Grand Isle didn't need hundreds of people in the way of their hurricane preparation activities.

"We're going to have to cancel..... With that, please keep all the Grand Isle residents and all the people of Hwy 1 as well as coastal Louisiana in your prayers and thoughts. Hopefully this will not be as bad as we think it is going to be," Trascher said.



Unfortunately, it was. Ida quickly ramped up to a Category 4 hurricane with sustained winds of 150 mph and post storm reports of gusts over 200 mph. The winds and storm surge rolled over the Hwy 1 corridor inflicting massive damage to Grand Isle, Fourchon, Leeville, and Galliano. It continued inland and brought its path of destruction to many other areas of south Louisiana.

In the immediate aftermath, no one knew if Grand Isle could or would return. The damage was severe. Bridge Side Marina, the home of Ride the Bull since its inaugural tournament in 2009, was all but leveled. The Vegas family who own the marina have been there before, too many times. However, with sheer determination and resilience, combined with literal blood, sweat, and tears, Bridge Side is back, along with many other Grand Isle families and businesses. There is still a long way to go, but there is no destroying the spirit that is Grand Isle.

HELPING WITH RELIEF

Trascher kept in close contact with Bridge Side and helped with several hurricane relief efforts over the months on behalf of CCA and Ride the Bull. In February 2022, an announcement

was made on the Ride The Bull Fishing Tournament Facebook page that kayak anglers were waiting to hear.

“We have set this year’s Ride the Bull for Aug. 27 to help everyone plan their travels. But there is still a lot of unknowns about the progress of Grand Isle’s rebuilding efforts and whether there will be enough accommodations, facilities and other factors needed to supply you with the typical RTB experience,” Trascher posted.

After again consulting with Bridge Side to make certain they were up to hosting the event, all systems were a go. On May 31, the Facebook page announced: “RTB 11 Take 3...let’s try this again! We will open registration at noon tomorrow (June 1) on the ccalouisiana.com page. Bridge Side is ready for us and Grand Isle needs it more than ever. Much more to info to come...”

For those not familiar with the event, it is a unique live catch and release bull redfish format that takes place in a defined area of Caminada Pass on Grand Isle for kayakers and other paddle craft only. Assist boats mill about the kayakers and when a bull is caught, the boats are called over to take the fish and record the catch time and the angler’s tournament registration number.



No net? Capt. Danny Wray, the founder of Ride the Bull, shows how he lands a big Caminada Pass bull red using his feet.

RELEASED BACK IN THE PASS

The fish are placed in aerated tanks and whisked to the docks at Bridge Side Marina where they are weighed, measured, and tagged by CCA and LDWF volunteers. The information is recorded and the fish are revived and released back into the pass.

The tournament first broke the world record in 2013 with 488 kayak anglers participating. Subsequent years raised that bar dramatically to nearly 750. The most recent years were in the 400-500 range. With all the lingering Covid issues, ongoing hurricane recovery in parts of south Louisiana, and the general state of the economy, record breaking crowds are not expected this year. However, all that participate will be helping Grand Isle, seeing old friends, and guaranteed a good time.

Spectators are another unusual aspect of the event. Several fishing piers, a large Hwy bridge and a beach shoreline afford non-fishing friends and family the unique opportunity to watch the fishing action as it unfolds. More than just a kayak fishing tournament, Ride the Bull has truly evolved into a festival celebrating everything kayak fishing has to offer.

Ride the Bull 11, Take 3, will be held on Aug. 26 and 27, 2022 at Bridge Side Marina in Grand Isle, Louisiana. For information on participating or volunteering go to: ccalouisiana.com. ■

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MARSH ISLAND ACTION

Redfish, trout give bass pro a great summer distraction

N By Don Shoopman
ew Iberia's Bassmaster Elite Series pro Caleb Sumrall will be setting the hook and reeling in fish many times in August. It's not just bass.

And that's before he went to the St. Lawrence River in upstate New York. During the early part of the month, he'll be catching redfish somewhere along the coast shoreline of Marsh Island and Southwest Pass in southcentral Louisiana.

"That's what I like. I like the break from bass fishing. Something to cure the need to fish. That way, when it I get to the tournament, I'm refreshed and thinking about bass," Sumrall said.

Redfish provide plenty of practice and plenty to think about whenever he's home this summer during breaks in the tour. After traveling to the St. Lawrence River at Clayton, New York, for an Elite tournament July 14-17, he's having another nearly month-long break before going to Lake Oahe in South Dakota, for the second-to-last tournament on the Elite schedule this month.

BLISTERED THE REDFISH

Sumrall, 35, was well-refreshed before the trip to New York. He blistered the redfish population while fishing with family members, including his daughter, Clelie. That will be continuing this month.

He also tapped the speckled trout population a few days earlier while fishing with his wife, Jacie, and young son, Axel. Again, he's looking forward to more this month.

On his Facebook page, he posted: "Smashed a little 3-man limit of trout today. I may be a freshwater fishermen by profession but the salt calls to me!"

When Sumrall targets redfish along the bayside or Gulf side of Marsh Island, he said, "I focus on anywhere the tides hit points, preferably on a high tide falling is where I like to fish. You can run the pattern on both sides. Anywhere you can get water in grass, that's the pattern."

Some people might give up on redfish in the late summer heat as bigger redfish head for deeper water. Not Sumrall.

"I like to fish for smaller redfish. They eat good," he said.

THREE WAYS

There are three ways to catch them, he said, starting with a ¼-ounce Cajun Boss Saltwater Spinnerbait, either black/chartreuse or pearl white soft plastic with a gold blade.

If that doesn't satisfy the redfish, he'll try a 3/8 ounce black/

Clelie Sumrall, the daughter of Caleb and Jacie Sumrall, wears the widest smile as she leans over an ice chest full of redfish she helped catch on a trip with her father. They had their limit before 8 a.m. while fishing the vast shoreline of Marsh Island.



Photo courtesy Caleb Sumrall

chartreuse Delta Lures Redfish Thunder Jig.

His next offering would be a chartreuse Matrix Shad 1 ½ to 2 feet under a Four Horsemen Popping Cork. He tips it with a piece of shrimp sometimes to encourage the redfish to bite.

He doesn't soak any of the artificials for long in one spot.

"If I catch one, I might make a couple more casts in there, but I stay on the trolling motor. I just keep going down the banks," he said.

Some shoreline areas that often are a little more productive for him are around Bayou Michael, the side of Lake Sand and Southwest Pass.

GOING FOR TROUT

But his Xpress X21 Pro aluminum bass boat won't stay along the shoreline for long if he can't drum up cooperative redfish.

"If the salinity's up and water clarity allows, I like to fish for trout," he said, noting he fishes for speckled trout along the reefs on the Gulf side of Marsh Island.

"My absolute favorite bait is a topwater Zara Spook. Spro makes a good topwater walking bait that they'll actually eat, too, a Spro Fat Papa Walker 130."

Sumrall targets the traditionally productive reefs and usually does well, but tips his cap to a veteran charter boat captain.

"Shane Johnson is a specialist on it," he said about the New Iberia skipper who consistently pulls speckled trout off the reefs.

The Elite pro is hopeful he shines at his speciality down the stretch of 2022. In between, he'll answer the call to saltwater. And the reds and specks better watch out. ■

FOURCHON TROUT

Fishing is hotter than the temps at Timbalier and Raccourci

My By Rusty Tardo
old friend Capt. T-Man Cheramie (985-677-6294) said he is seeing more trout this year than he's seen in decades.

"The fishing has been phenomenal," he said. "Anytime the winds lay down, we're heading out to the big bays and the beaches. Timbalier Bay, Lake Raccourci and the beaches and barges are all red hot right now, just as hot as the August temperatures so you know how hot that is."

SO MUCH BAIT

Cheramie is a die-hard live bait fisherman and has almost always fished with live minnows fished about 3 feet under a popping cork. But he said there is so much bait in the water this year that he's adding live shrimp to the menu.

"There is just so much bait in the water it's unbelievable," he said. "Shrimp are jumping everywhere, pogies are everywhere, even the crabs are everywhere."

"The water is loaded with bait and the trout are gorging themselves on it. And these fish we're catching right now are real quality fish."

Cheramie said he'll hunt trout on the reefs and structures in Timbalier and Raccourci, and all along the beaches. His personal favorite tactic is to hit the beaches early in the morning and fish topwater baits for big trout.

"When I run along the beaches, I look for birds because it's almost a slam-dunk there's trout feeding right there," he said. "And if I'm casting under the birds I'll throw either a VuDu shrimp or double rigged beetles."

BEACH BIRDS PAY OFF

Cheramie said most of the time he ignores the birds because the trout under them are usually small. But when the birds are working along the beach or in the big bays near the coast, he'll give it a shot.

"Sometimes you do real good under them, but most times you don't," he said.

"I don't suppose I need to tell you to start early and quit before you have a sunstroke. August is hot and humid, and that sun is no joke."

Cheramie is right. Even when the wind is blowing and you



According to Capt. T-Man Cheramie, the fishing at Timbalier Bay and Lake Raccourci is red hot right now.

have plenty of light clothes on, you still need to drink plenty of fluids and don't push your luck. The fishing is fantastic, so you should be able to catch plenty and still avoid the dangerous heat later in the day. ■

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TAKE A KID FISHING

Target jetties, beachfront and the short rigs for variety at Sabine Lake

T By Capt. Adam Jaynes
here are a couple certainties living on the Gulf Coast during the summer: it is going to be hot and humid; the fish are going to bite; and we are going to have to always keep an eye out for hurricanes.

It is also a great opportunity to make some memories out on the water with your children that are off from school. It is important to remember on those trips when taking children out that the trip should be more about them and less about you.

It is important to focus on them and make sure that they have a great time, as we want them to enjoy the outdoors and want to come back on the next trip.

HOW YOU FISH

Let the age and ability of the younger fishermen on the boat dictate how you fish that trip. Often times, this will mean throwing live or dead bait. It may also mean the child spends as much time playing with the bait in the livewell as they do fishing. That's okay, too.

Throwing live or dead bait is easier and it will also help keep them excited. The variety of fish caught will be greater and keep them even more curious. I know I greatly enjoyed fishing dead shrimp off the dock on the Mermentau River as a child. Every cast would be a bite and I would get to catch everything from hardhead catfish, sheepshead, black drum, redfish, whiting, croaker, speckled trout and sand trout.

I attribute a large part of my love for fishing from those days as a kid when I was fortunate enough to sit on that dock and fish.

I frequent the jetties, beachfront and the short rigs more often during the summer than any other time of the year. This is in large part due to the more consistently calm weather pattern that the summer offers. I particularly enjoy running the beach and short rigs due to the variety of game fish that we have the opportunity of catching.

It is not uncommon to get onto Spanish mackerel, tripletail and ling. The gulf can make for some amazing memories for the young ones. The numbers of different species they will likely get to see are nearly endless, although they typically get the most excited over the sharks and dolphin.

OVERLOOKED LURE

An overlooked lure that can be rather deadly at the short rigs is

Capt. Adam Jaynes and his daughter posing for a picture before cleaning some tasty tripletail. Jaynes started exposing his daughter, Maryn Elizabeth, to all things fishing and outdoors at a very early age. She is only two years old and is able to point out bream and catfish off the dock.



a spoon. I prefer the Johnson Splinter spoons in ¼- to ½-ounce when out in the Gulf. It is a great way to get down deeper quicker at the short rigs and catch a mess of fish.

I prefer the silver spoon for trout and the gold for redfish. The shape of the Splinter spoon helps getting down quicker in strong currents. Definitely use a swivel to help prevent your line from twisting when fishing a spoon.

Be prepared with plenty of water and do not forget to use plenty of sunblock as well for both you and the young ones. I would recommend focusing a little less on what kind of fish you are actually catching and just make sure the kids have something to reel in, even if it's an old nasty hardhead.

After all, kids are only kids for so long. ■

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GOLDEN TEMPTATIONS

LIVE CROAKERS MAKE FANTASTIC BAITS FOR BIG SPECKLED TROUT

W By John N. Felsher

hen a trout reaches about three pounds, it mostly eats finfish. If that's what they want, offer it to them!

"Bigger trout are not like school trout," explained Capt. Ronnie Daniels with Fisher-Man Guide Services in Pass Christian, Miss. "A big trout can eat a good sized fish. I've seen 12-inch fish come out of a 20-something-inch trout. Even a 4-pounder can eat a 10 to 11-inch white trout. Big trout might not feed much during a day, so an angler needs to capitalize on that by using a bait that the big specks definitely like to eat."

Whenever Daniels specifically wants to catch giant speckled trout, he puts a live croaker on a hook. He sometimes uses croakers five to six inches long, but he prefers a 2 to 3-inch fish. It works equally well in Louisiana and Mississippi waters.

"Croakers are natural prey for giant trout, redfish and other fish," Daniels said. "Almost anything out there will eat them, especially larger trout. I've always heard that trout eat croakers because croakers eat trout eggs. I don't know if that's true, but a big trout will definitely go for a live croaker."

GRASS FLATS

When fishing grass flats around the islands off the coast, Daniels uses a modified version of a Carolina rig. Instead of the usual lead weight, he attaches the main line to one end of an in-line chatter weight, a cylinder filled with rattles that resemble shotgun pellets. Lighter than a lead weight, a chatter weight holds a croaker down where birds can't dive on it, but doesn't pin the baitfish down in the seagrass. On the other end, he attaches a leader tipped with a 1/0 or 2/0 kahle hook.

"When fishing around grass beds, I always like to hook a croaker through the tail right above its anal fin," Daniels said. "I put the hook right through the backbone and the lateral line on that bait. That's the hardest part of the bait. It's not going to kill him or paralyze him. The leader depends upon water clarity. If it's super clean, I might use a 20-pound fluorocarbon leader, but in Mississippi Sound, we can usually get away with a length of 30-pound monofilament."



OPPOSITE PAGE: Live croakers make excellent bait for many saltwater species. They work particularly good for enticing giant speckled trout.

LET 'EM SWIM

Toss the bait to a likely spot and let the croaker swim around. The action of the squirming fish provides enough temptation for any big trout. Every time the croaker kicks, it sends out additional vibrations from the rattling weight.

"Whenever the croaker is out there, the angler can feel him kicking around," Daniels said. "If he stops moving, I'll bounce the rod tip to get him out of the grass and back in the strike zone. Don't reel it! Reeling it just drags the fish backwards. That's not natural and a trout won't hit it like that."

Hold the rod tip at about a 90-degree angle to the bait. When a trout takes an interest, it will thump the croaker to shock it before gulping it down. A trout must swallow a fish head first to fold its fins down and keep from choking.

"The worst thing anyone can do when fishing with large live bait is set the hook immediately as soon as the trout bites," Daniels said. "That just pulls the bait out of that trout's mouth. It takes patience to successfully fish a big live bait. When the trout thumps, point the rod tip at the bait. That puts enough slack in the line for the trout to take the bait and swim off for a couple seconds. When the trout pulls the line tight, set the hook."

For booking a trip with Ronnie Daniels, call 228-323-1115. On line, see msfisherman.com. ■



Capt. Ronnie Daniels with Fisher-Man Guide Services shows how to hook a live croaker to catch large trout, redfish and other saltwater predators while fishing in the Mississippi Sound near Cat Island.

John N. Felsher

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HUNTER OF THE MONTH

Lexi Normand

Lexi Normand hunted this 9-point for about a month before killing it on Jan. 6, 2022 on private property in Avoyelles Parish. The buck scored 151 inches and weighed 215 pounds. It measured 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide, had 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch main beams and a 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch base.

ANGLER OF THE MONTH

Heath Kennedy

Heath Kennedy with a 10.3-pound bass and a 6-pound bass caught directly on the tail end of a bad storm on March 23, 2022 at Caney Lake in Chatham.





POGIE- RONI

**IT'S WHAT RINGS THE
DINNER BELL FOR FRENZIED
MANGROVE SNAPPER.**

■ By John Manion

Years ago, when the strict two-per-man red snapper limit was implemented, anglers looked to other bottom fish to fill the box. Mangrove (or grey) snapper became a popular target. Today, with the same draconian red snapper limit in place and sky rocketing fuel prices, that popularity continues.

Anglers usually find mangroves easier to locate, with fish being caught in the first shallow water platforms they encounter all the way out to structures in several hundred feet of water. Better yet, anglers don't have to search out the magic 200' depth to find the big fish. Unlike their red cousins, when a school of mangroves is located, the big fish are right there with the whole pack.

There are a few catches, though. Their popularity has made this fish quite shy; they will quickly turn their nose up at anything attached to an apparent hook and line. When they are fooled, the feeling of a line sends mangrove bolting for the safety of the platform's entanglement of structure. These are hard pulling fish and break-offs are common, particularly on the fatty's anglers prefer.

MANGROVES LOVE ITALIAN FOOD

George Cox of Slidell and Tre' Haydel of Baton Rouge are serious about catching mangroves. They've developed a handful of techniques that put more fish in the boat and on tourney leader boards. They managed to place second in this year's 2022 Swollfest Fishing Rodeo out of Grand Isle.

Chumming for big fish is hardly a groundbreaking technique. Just look how Jaws turned out. But these guys have put their spin on the classic technique — Penne pasta.

"The mangrove come running out from the rig with a fork and a spoon and they just gobble it up," Haydel said laughing. "But really, the pasta is just a filler. It's creating a bigger volume of chum in the water."

Cox and Haydel start working on their "Pogie-Roni" dish before the trip. Haydel makes the noodles while Cox cuts up chum using his own version of a chum-cutter box. The pasta goes into a bait ice chest first, followed by the cut-up pogie. This mixture is at least 50-50 but can lean heavier toward the pasta than the chum. Top off the mixture with ice and let it rest before serving.

"As ice melts over the pogie the pasta is soaking up the juice," Haydel said.

"Yeah, the pogie gravy makes a good slick," Cox added.



A pair of fatty's that not only look good on ice, but even better on the 2022 Swollfest Fishing Rodeo leaderboard. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** With the Pogie Roni served and hooked sardines floating in the slick, both anglers patiently wait for the hard pulling mangroves to take the bait.



WHERE TO MAKE RESERVATIONS

Most platforms will hold mangrove, but Cox and Haydel are looking for numbers of fish. Their goal is to use the chum to coax a school of fish out of the rig legs. They generally target older platforms or a grouping of interconnected platforms. Plenty of structure is a good thing. However, too much of a good thing can hurt because pressure matters.

Platforms that are regularly fished tend to have a lot of shark pressure and any shark will tell you that snapper on the hook is a delicacy. The chaos of fighting snapper will have sharks in the chum slick before you can get the first snapper in the boat.

“Just when you start catching, the sharks will come up. That drives the school right back into the rig and the window to try to catch those fish is gone,” Haydel said.

Cox is also particular about how the boat is positioned to the platform and how that is impacted by the current. The objective is to throw the chum into the platform and allow it to wash through the rig legs. Cox tries to set up a “catch zone” about 10-20 feet outside the platform. This gives the angler a better chance at keeping hooked mangroves out of the underwater snares.

Once Cox has the alignment right and the boat secure, Haydel pitches just a handful of Pogie-Roni on the outer edge of the platform. If the mangrove don't show with the first appetizer then the duo is unhooking and moving to the next platform. They don't waste chum on a couple fish. They want to see numbers for committing the entrée.

“Yeah, they're here,” Haydel says to Cox. “And a couple good fish. They got one good one.”

PROPER DINING ETIQUETTE AND UTENSILS >



John Manion is an LSU graduate and has been writing about the Louisiana outdoors since 2009. He grew-up hunting and fishing the marshes of South Louisiana and lives in Slidell with his wife Betsy and their two girls. He can be reached at jemanion4@gmail.com.

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PROPER DINING ETIQUETTE AND UTENSILS

The tackle Cox and Haydel use is another key to landing more fish. Mangroves are stout and strong pulling fish. Once hooked up they are usually only feet away from their salvation — barnacle encrusted rig legs. Because of the ease at which these fish breakoff, Cox and Haydel don't have the luxury to finesse a fish to the boat.

"You gotta give it everything you got to reel and pull the fish out of the rig," Cox said.

Both guys are rigged heavy and set on full drag. They are geared-up with Ugly Stik jigging rods, ultra-stiff (60-100lb class). The rod is paired with a Penn slammer reel, 6500 or 7500 series. They use 80 pound test PowerPro braid, which is tied to 50 pound fluorocarbon leader with a uni to uni knot. They use a 5 to 10 feet length of leader.

"I like the Spanish sardines because it hides the hook so well. The sardine holds the hook but its soft enough to come when the hook sets. Sometimes pogie won't let the hook pop out," Haydel said.

The combination of fluorocarbon and a hidden hook is key. The fish, particularly after a couple guinea pigs disappear, can get spooky quick. The long invisible leader allows the hook infused bait to float naturally in the chum ball, avoiding detection from the pickiest of eaters.

RINGING THE DINNER BELL >



Mangrove schools have a healthy mix of young and old fish. Tre' Haydel holds up a quality fish he was able to yank out of class. **ABOVE:** No net man required. George Cox uses his heavy gear and locked down drag to pull a nice mangrove out of the platform and straight into the boat.





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RINGING THE DINNER BELL

With lines baited, Haydel bombards the platform with a heavy dose of the Pogie-Roni. The fish are on the mixture quickly and competitively, complete with fork and spoon. The water comes alive with flashes of darting fish and boils with whitewash swirls as more and more fish race out of the platform into the chum slick.

The pogie saturated noodles release the oils into the water. The size of the pogie and pasta bait ball quickly grows as the current pushes it wider and deeper. As the mangrove begin the frenzy to get a bite before the other, the fish pull further and further out away from the rig legs.

“The longer you keep the fish in a frenzy and out of rig, the better the chance you have to catch,” Cox said. “Sometimes you can put 10 in the boat or sometimes it’s two in the boat.”

In addition to adding volume of chum, the pasta also allows the angler to better track the chum and fish eating it. The color of the noodles is easily visible in stained to green water. That gives the anglers a better chance to pitch their baits so that the bait looks like part of the chum ball.

“Your job is to make your bait look exactly like the chum coming out of the rig,” Cox said as he pitched his skewered sardine toward a rig leg.

He’s intently focused on his rod tip and the small loop of fluoro coming out. Since the bait is floating naturally, the line is completely slack. As soon as the tip moves, it becomes an all-

The second step in making Pogie Roni, pouring the sliced pogie over freshly cooked penne pasta. Just need to add the ice.



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Don't forget the paperwork!

Mangroves have a generous 10 per man limit. But there are a few things anglers should be aware of before heading offshore. First, in addition to a standard saltwater license, anglers are required to get a Recreational Off-shore Landing Permit (ROLP). This is a free permit and available where licenses are sold. Make sure to check the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Recreational fishing pamphlet (<https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/>) for the other specific details on fish types, how to measure size, and catch methods.

Also, anglers are required to have and use tackle that is designed to prevent fish mortality. One dehooking device is to be on the angler's boat. Also, standard J-hooks cannot be used when fishing with cut bait; non-stainless steel circle hooks are required instead. Check out www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/best-fishing-practices for techniques to increase survivability when releasing bottom fish in the Gulf. ■

out effort to quickly take up any remaining slack. At the same time, pulling the rod to let the No. 5 circle hook do its work. Cox's Ugly Stick completely doubles over.

While the rod is hyper-extended, Cox continues reeling and starts walking the fish toward the back of the boat. Haydel is on the other side of the bow and hooks up as well. It's a brief moment of pandemonium with water thrashing on both sides of the boat. Each guy gives the other a guttural play-by-play on the fish. But neither is listening to one another as both Cox and Haydel sound like they are trying to pry a car off a small child.

This is where the heavy tackle pays another dividend. With no "net man," each angler is on his own. The big snapper are never allowed any drag. Instead, Cox just uses the momentum he's generated to fling the fish over gunnel. Haydel does the same thing right behind him.

Observing the spectacle in real time, it almost looks like 9 pound snapper are jumping in the boat.

Dreams really do come true!

Summertime is snapper time and if your red snapper limit fills up too quickly, don't be shy about targeting their bronze cousins. Try stretching your pogie budget with your favorite pasta.

But remember one last tip from Haydel, "Mangrove prefer their Pogie-Roni served al dente!"

Catch'm up. ■

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT ➤



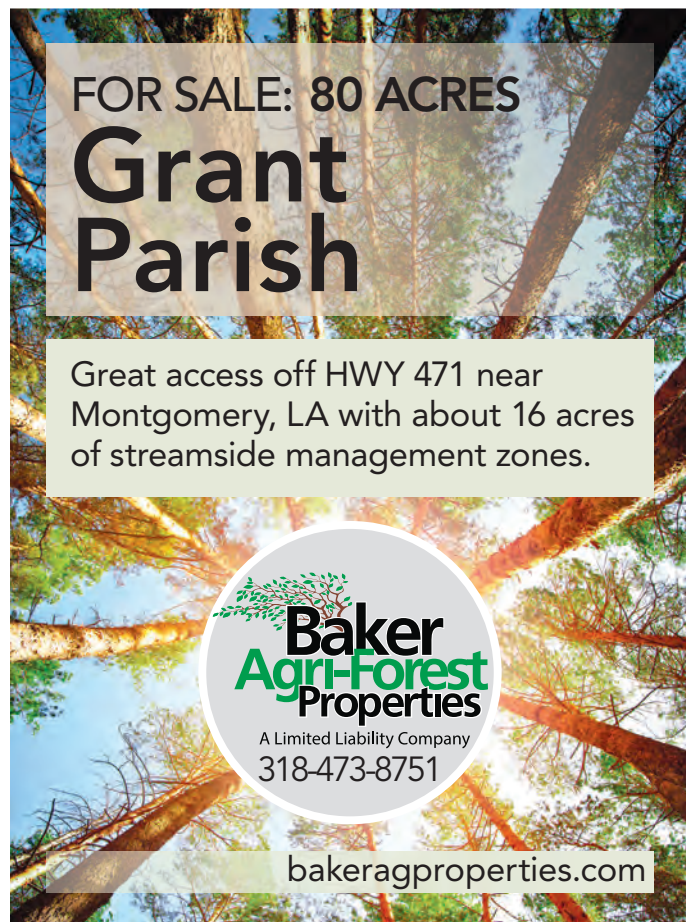
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Brian Cope

The pending world record pompano dolphinfish was caught out of Ocean Isle Beach, N.C. by Charlie Noonan. It weighed 11.34 pounds.



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: POMPANO DOLPHINFISH

The pompano dolphinfish gets little respect from anglers. So much so, that many anglers think it's an April Fool's Day prank. Others think it's just a small, oddly-shaped dolphin.

Still others believe it's a hybrid between two separate species — a pompano and a dolphin. But the pompano dolphinfish is indeed an actual fish that is not a hybrid of any species. It is, however, a cousin of the common dolphin (a.k.a. mahi mahi) that anglers are far more familiar with.

Although they do look quite similar to the common dolphinfish, they don't grow nearly as large. The current pending world record pompano dolphinfish stands at a little less than 12 pounds compared to the world record dolphin, which is 87 pounds.

Pompano dolphinfish have elongated bodies with brilliant blue-green colors on their backs. Their sides range between blue, green, silver and gold, but quickly fade to muted colors when removed from the water. They have compressed heads and long dorsal fins that extend the entire length of their bodies. Their

tales are deeply forked.

FAST SWIMMERS, SHORT LIVES

The mature males (relatively speaking — their life expectancy is only between 3 and 4 years) develop protruding foreheads, somewhat like common dolphinfish, though not as noticeable.

These fish are one of only two members of the Coryphaenidae family — their common dolphin cousins being the other. Like dolphinfish, they can be found throughout many places on the earth's tropical and subtropical oceans.

While dolphinfish often move fairly close to shore at certain times of the year, pompano dolphinfish prefer to stay in the open ocean much more. Anglers along the U.S. east coast and Gulf Coast states catch them infrequently, and most are misidentified as common dolphinfish, which they sometimes intermingle with. Catching them often leads to fishing reports of "weird looking (or deformed) juvenile dolphins."

Pompano dolphinfish are not picky eaters. They eat a wide variety of smaller

fish and squid. They are fast swimmers and have no trouble catching prey.

The spawning rituals of pompano dolphinfish are much different than most other fish species. Instead of congregating in an area and mating in groups, these fish pair up with only one mating partner. They spawn several times a year.

As stated earlier, these fish are often misidentified as common dolphinfish. They have several nicknames, including tiny dolphin, blue dolphin, little dolphin and small dolphin. Their meat is firm and sweet, and is known as good table fare.

Neither Louisiana nor Mississippi list the pompano dolphinfish in their state record books, but anglers who catch one in the 8-pound range or better are encouraged to apply. ■



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.

BARRY GALLOWAY USES THE INFORMATION HE LEARNED AS A DIVER TO HELP HIM CATCH BASS AT BOGUE CHITTO.

■ By Keith Lusher Jr.

BASS "ON THE BIG CREEK"



With the advancement in electronics in the world of bass fishing, anglers are now learning more than ever about how bass behave underneath the water's surface.

Barry Galloway of the small community of Enon in Washington Parish fishes the Bogue Chitto River and doesn't have a single transducer under his boat. What he does have however, is something that most bass fisherman don't –

DIVING EXPERIENCE.

Galloway was raised in Franklinton and got his start fishing the Bogue Chitto River when he was a young boy.

His knowledge of the fast moving river grew with every trip that he made. At age 20, he started spearfishing the river and became very knowledgeable as to how the fish use structure as a current break. His subsurface training didn't stop there however. When Galloway turned 24 he was given the opportunity to learn even more about the river when he was hired on with the Washington Parish Sheriff's Department. Galloway was recruited to be part of the dive team and received training in swift water recovery on the Bogue Chitto. It was during the training that he learned the physics between moving water and structure.

FOLLOW THE BUBBLES

The 36-year-old has since then fished the river hundreds of times and along with the knowledge learned from diving, he's meshed together a strategy to regularly put plenty of bass in the boat. While finding the right spot to fish is important, maneuvering the river to get to your first spot can be a challenge.

Galloway fishes the section of the river from the Mississippi state line down to Isabel. Galloway said when operating a boat on the river it's important to follow the bubbles.

"If you pay attention to where the bubbles are on the surface of the river you'll notice that they are always floating on the surface of the deeper water," he said.

Barry Galloway can visualize where bass hide behind structure in the river and that's where he throws his bait.





Success! Knowledge meets presentation and brings another feisty largemouth to the boat.

That's because the water that's flowing in the deeper sections of the river is traveling the fastest. This results in more air mixing with water through a whirlpool affect caused by large logs and submerged stumps. Galloway uses a 15-foot flatboat with a 40 horsepower jet drive engine and said the jet drive engine is worth its weight in gold on the Bogue Chitto because of all of the underwater structure.

BENEATH THE SURFACE

When choosing which spots to fish, Galloway looks for large objects that are located in the deeper sections of the river. Logs and root systems are the primary target when casting.

"When I was diving almost every big piece of structure that broke the current had a fish behind it," he said. "I've spent so much time underwater that I can visualize where a fish is going to be by watching how the water is flowing around the wood."

While structure is the number one target for Galloway, there is a section of the river that holds fish that's a bit less obvious to anglers: ledges. Galloway said most of the steep ledges are located on outside bends in the river.

SETUP >



Keith Lusher Jr.
owns and operates
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He is the outdoor writer for the
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Fishing Report* on WWL Radio.
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Galloway points out one of his favorite types of spots to fish because he knows from experience above and below the water that this is the type of place fish live.

SETUP

In as much as the Bogue Chitto is a unique river, it requires a unique setup. Galloway recommends fluorocarbon line and stays far away from braided line.

"There's just not enough time to react when you get hung up with braid," Galloway said. "A few years back there was a gentleman fishing the river and he got hung up on a limb. His line tightened up on him so fast he couldn't pop the bail. There was so much tension on the line that when it popped back it struck him in the leg. Both the sliding weight and the hook was embedded in his leg and had to be surgically removed at the hospital."

That's not what anyone wants as the outcome of a day of fishing. As far as what fishing pole he prefers, Galloway answered with a resounding, "No comment!" It seems the seasoned veteran has been through his fair share of broken rods due to overhanging limbs and debris.

"Sometimes all it takes is leaving my spinnerbait in the water while resting my pole on the bow and the current will pull it overboard," he said.

When it comes to lures, there are two favorites of Galloway's: Spinnerbaits and craws.

"When I'm covering a lot of water I like a spinnerbait because it allows me to cast fast and retrieve fast," he said. "Most of my casts are behind structure and after a few turns of the handle when that bait gets 3-4 feet away from the wood, I'm reeling in quick to make another cast."

Galloway really likes using a ¼-ounce white Humdinger. When throwing the spinnerbait he lets his boat float downriver while manning the trolling motor to avoid obstructions in the river.

While covering a lot of water is efficient, there are some spots in the river that demand more time to fish. Large bends in the river that create eddies with calm water is where Galloway ties on a Rage King Rage Craw in the Blue Crab color and starts flipping.

KENTUCKY BASS

The Bogue Chitto has a healthy population of Kentucky bass, also known as spotted bass. Galloway said there's a clear difference in where he catches these fish.

"The Kentucky's tend to tolerate the current better where as the largemouth's are always in the still water," Galloway said. He catches more Kentucky's in the river than largemouths by a 3-1 ratio and while the fish are smaller on average than largemouths, he prefers the fight that the fish give.

With years invested in diving and fishing the river, Galloway said it's by far his favorite river to fish in Louisiana. And while he has a "sixth sense" due to his past history with the river, he said it's never too late to start learning and recommends every bass fisherman give it a try.

"After you start putting the pieces together the rewards far outweigh the risk," he said. ■

MORE ABOUT BOGUE CHITTO ➤



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MORE ABOUT BOGUE CHITTO

The Bogue Chitto River flows into Louisiana from Mississippi. The name of the river is derived from the old Choctaw language, meaning "big creek."

In Louisiana, the river meanders through the Bogue Chitto State Park in Washington Parish, Louisiana. It closely parallels La. 25 and 16 for a considerable distance. Unimproved access to the river is available at several Louisiana Bridges, Highway 437 at Warnerton, Highway 38 at Clifton, Highway 16 at Franklinton,

Highway 437 at Enon and Highway 21 in Sun (St. Tammany Parish).

The entire length of the river is part of Louisiana's Natural and Scenic Rivers system. While it is a great place to fish, its beauty above the surface is often considered a hidden gem of the Louisiana outdoors.

Some areas of the southern end of the river are also popular for tubing in the summertime. The Bogue Chitto eventually flows into the Pearl River canal north of Bush. ■



Galloway guides his boat down the scenic Bogue Chitto in search of bass hideouts.



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longer-than-expected fishing trip by stowing a pack in your tackle bag. Sit in the deer stand a little longer without going hungry, and keep a pack or two in the truck to keep you out of the fast food line when you're short on hunting time.

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Slightly longer than 5 inches and weighing in at 7/8 of an ounce, it's got great casting distance and a profile that will appeal to bass looking for a big meal.

It's wide walking action and popping ability is further enhanced by dual rattle

chambers that create a clacking noise that's sure to aggravate fish into striking aggressively.

For more info, visit: spro.com





SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

BASS PRO TYLER STEWART SAYS THAT'S AN IMPORTANT DECISION WITH NO TEXTBOOK ANSWER.

■ By Kinny Haddox

A guy cleaning out his attic contemplates going to his school reunion. A band considers whether or not to play a show in Idaho. And a company salesman just has to show up to close a deal. They all ask themselves, “*Should I stay or should I go*” in the iconic Choice Hotels TV ad that first aired in 1995. Remember it?

The right choice, according to the ad, is to go and get the right reward!

Believe it or not, the same thing applies to bass fishing.

Very seldom do fishermen pull up to a spot, or a stretch of bank, start casting and catch a limit of bass in one spot. And even if you are catching a few, your mind knows there’s a spot right up the lake where the big ones are probably biting and there are probably more fish. Perhaps you should run up there before somebody else hits the spot.

Should you stay or should you go?

Or perhaps you idled around a bend in an old creek bed and there on a little hump, there are a dozen or so fish showing

on the screen of your electronics that you’re pretty sure are bass. You make a cast and catch one, then get another hit and miss the fish. Things slow down, but you still see the fish on the depth finder. The lake’s pretty crowded and you sure don’t want to leave and let somebody else get your spot. Besides, they might not be biting anywhere else. But, there is this spot just a couple hundred yards away that probably has more bass on it.

Should you stay or should you go?

IMPORTANT DECISION

It’s almost as important a decision, and sometimes more so, than what bait to throw or what technique to use.

Bass pro Tyler Stewart from Dubach has seen just about every situation you can imagine. The young pro who fishes the Major League Fishing Tackle Warehouse Pro Circuit quite successfully knows the feeling.

“So for me, basically the most important thing is timing,” Stewart said. “You want to make sure you try and get the timing down to where you are on a good spot when the fish are feeding. What usually happens is that initially, in the first 10





Two more trophy bass caught by Tyler Stewart in a recent bass tournament. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Stewart stays on a spot as long as he is catching fish, especially big fish. He loves big crankbaits like the one he casts here for big bass.

minutes you start on a spot with fish, you are going to catch the best fish of the day. But after you beat up a school of bass for 10-20 minutes and they see your bait over and over, they figure out something just isn't right.

"They'll shut off and no matter what you do, you can't buy a bite. If it's a really good spot, the best thing you can do when they stop biting is give them 20-30 minutes to recover, maybe even go to another spot for an hour or longer. That way maybe you can come back and duplicate what you did when you first got there."


Stewart admits that when you are in a tournament, or even just fishing for fun, it's hard to leave those fish. But he personally has trouble and knows a lot of others that can't just sit on a spot all day and expect them to react even if you do something different. And if you leave, there's always the chance somebody else will pull up on the spot and sit on them till they bite or it gets dark.

In the pro fishing game, big bass are most important and when Stewart pulls up on an offshore hole, he always goes big to start.

"When I see a school of fish down there, or I come up to a spot that I know holds fish, I always throw a big fish bait in there first. A big crankbait, a big worm or a spoon — something to trigger a big fish bite," he said. "Catch those big fish first if you can."


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VARIETY OF LURES

He fishes a variety of makes and models of lures. For crankbaits, he likes shad color or chartreuse patterns and for worms he chooses Zoom or Googan in plum or green pumpkin colors 90 percent of the time. He likes to fish big flutter spoons in silver or gold. The reason for big baits is that big bass don't want to chase down a lot of little bites when they are hungry. A big old gulp all at once keeps them from spending too much energy getting supper. And, frankly, it just gets their attention quicker.

If fishing is tough and you need to get one more bite or two out of a spot, he recommends taking off a few minutes to let the school rest and replenish, then going with more of a finesse approach like a shaky head or a drop shot.

Stewart keeps his lure selection pretty simple and that helps him focus more on technique, presentation and staying on fish. Those are the keys to catching them, he said.

And to answer the overall question, "Should I stay or should I go?" Stewart said there's no textbook answer to that. You just have to go on your experience, and the more time you spend on the water, the more experience you have. You develop instincts and you have to trust them.

"I've learned a lot in the pro fishing game and one thing I can tell you is that there are some guys out there that are not only

good fishermen, but they are so good when it comes to making decisions like where to fish or how long to stay there," he said. "The guys that win or place a lot, it seems like they always make the right decisions when it counts the most. It isn't luck."

SHALLOW WATER BASS

Stewart said there are always bass shallow and if you can figure them out, it's a whole different ballgame. In that situation, it's more of "blow and go."

"Some people don't think that is the case, but it's been proven over and over in fun fishing and in tournaments. A good number of bass — and good bass — stay shallow or suspended right off shallow water pretty much all the time," he said. "When you are bank fishing, there are two approaches as to whether you should stay or you should go.

"If I'm fishing shallow and catching fish in a certain depth of water or type of structure, I'll just put the trolling motor down and cover as much bank as I can. I'm always looking for new water and don't stop on an area just because I caught a fish. The other approach, again when things are tough, is to find a stretch of bank you know is productive and just go back and forth on it. If the fish slack off, you can try another lure and sometimes that helps. Again, every angler has to develop patterns that work for them."

SOMETHING TRIGGERS THEM >

Tyler Stewart says "it's time to go" in this photo from one of his MLF tournaments.

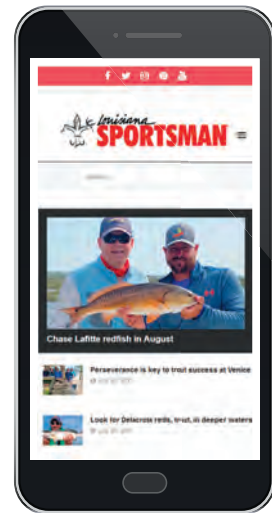


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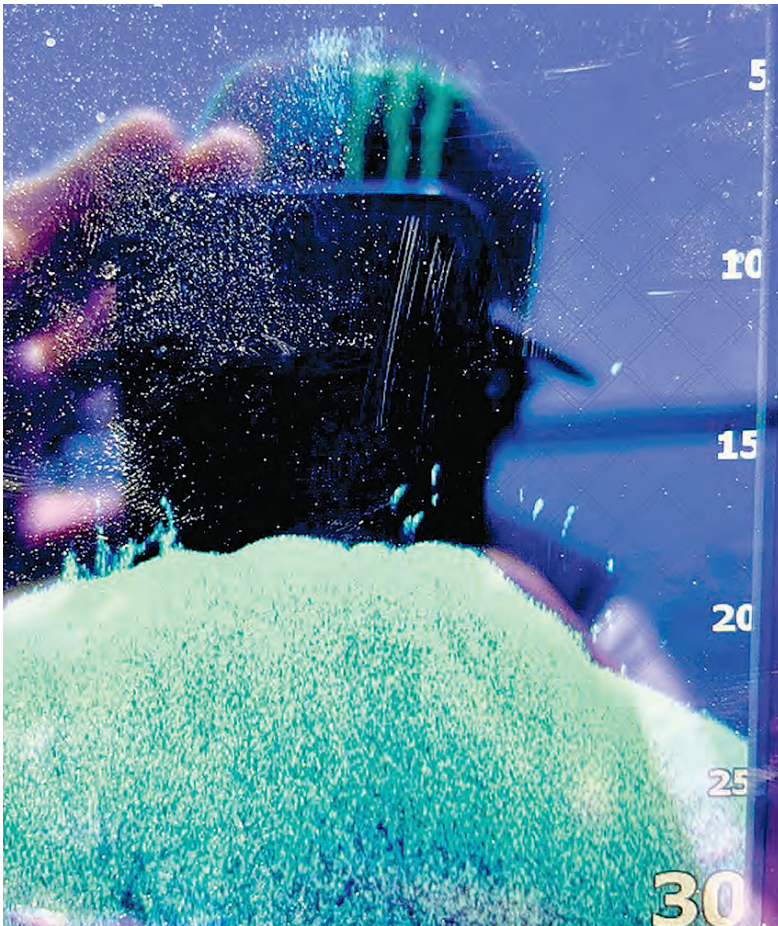
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SOMETHING TRIGGERS THEM

Tyler says one of the most remarkable things about bass fishing is that you can locate a good school of fish and fish it hard without a bite. You can leave, come back and the fish do the same thing again. But the third or fourth time you try, you might go from zero to catching 20-30 pounds.

"I don't know how to explain it other than something has to trigger them to bite. It's a reaction to the bait or it's just time to eat," he said.

This time of year, bass are generally schooling and chasing bait on most lakes. While most fish in schools are in the one-three pound range, Stewart said occasionally a six or seven pounder is lurking under the school and you can catch them. Even if big fish aren't busting the surface and chasing shad, if there's a lot of action going on and they are close by, they are triggered to bite.

"In a tournament, you aren't going to get the kind of fish that you need to win by chasing schooling bass unless it's something very rare," he said. "But

they are fun and I won't turn up my nose on schooling fish. I'll go mess with them. I can't help it. But I won't stick with them very long unless there are some real good ones biting in there."

Whatever he is doing, Stewart said he always tries to learn something every day on the water. He suggests even weekend fishermen take the same approach. You can always learn something, he said. His goal is to go home every day as a better angler. Sometimes even when he knows the fish are biting on a certain lake or river, he'll go somewhere else just to work on a certain technique and to make himself better.

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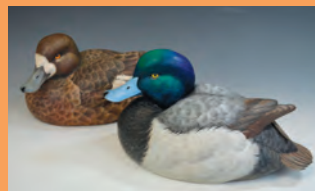
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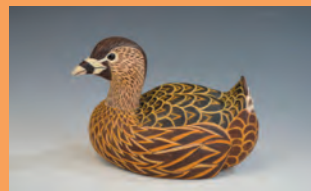
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Kinny Haddox has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 47 years. He and his wife, DiAnne, live in West Monroe.

Continually learning about the habits of bass helps Stewart bring in whoppers like these two. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Today, anglers don't have to wonder if there are fish in a spot, because you can usually see them on your electronics, like the little green dots on the edge of the dropoff on the middle right.



There's one "stay or go" answer that is easy. Should you go fishing? Yes. Always. If you get the chance, go.

Don't just go when they are biting or when your buddy caught them. Go whenever you can, in different bodies of water and in different conditions. That's how you learn to be a better bass angler.

Stewart has only been on the pro tour for a few years and he already has one major tournament victory under his belt and six top 10 finishes. He's fished a total of 52 total major events and earned two national title appearances, including \$170,000 - plus in cash winnings.

His main sponsors are Monster Energy, Outlaw Ordinance, Favorite Rods and Ludwig Marine. ■

LURE REVIEW ➤

SALTWATER

STATE REGULATIONS (0-10.357 miles^Δ)

| 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 ^Δ & Black ^Δ | 24" TL | 4/day (aggregate)* |
| Scamp ^Δ | 16" TL | |
| Nassau & Goliath | UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS | |
| Yellowfin ^Δ | 20" TL | |
| Red ^Δ | 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 | 10 in aggregate* |
| Cubera, Yellowtail, Gray (mangrove) | 12" TL | |
| Queen, Blackfin, Silk, Wenchman | None | |
| Vermilion Snapper | 10" TL | None |
| Schoolmaster, Dog, Mahogany | None | |
| Gray Triggerfish* | 15" FL | 1/day in aggregate |
| Lane Snapper | 8" TL | 20/person/day in aggregate* |
| Almaco Jack, Goldface Tilefish, & Bluefin Tilefish | None | |
| 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.
^Δ Closed season for gag grouper Jan. 1 - May 31. Closed season for black, red, yellowfin, largemouth & scamp grouper from Feb. 1 - March 31. ~ Greater amberjack season is open May 1-31 and Aug. 1 - Oct. 31. * Closed season on gray triggerfish Jan. 1 - Feb. 28 and June 1 - July 31.



YELLOW MAGIC HAVANA

BASS CAN'T RESIST NEW VERSION OF WALK-THE-DOG TOPWATER LURE

All the anticipation of walking a premier topwater skillfully along that narrow path between lily pads builds with each sweep of the fishing rod.

The big bass' explosion is the reward for fishing with the new Yellow Magic Havana, crafted with cutting edge technology and painstaking attention to detail. It's repeated time after time in waters from coast to coast.

No one knows that more than the bass fisherman who helped design the Yellow Magic Havana some 20 years after introducing the showstopper popper Yellow Magic. Butch Ray of Emory, Texas, is responsible for both.

"They're great throwing, great fishing baits. You'll see when you take one out of the box. They're quality baits," Ray said recently, proud of the newest edition of Yellow Magics.

They aren't just for bass, Ray said about both the Yellow Magic and newcomer Yellow Magic Havana.

TOPWATER TERROR

"They're really a good bait. The thing about these two baits here, of course they're made for bass fishing. But they're also really good topwaters for speckled trout and redfish," he said. That should peak the interest of anglers.

The 73-year-old Ray, who has owned B&L Distributors since 1989, sold the

Mustang Resort at Lake Fork in 2020 after owning the marina in Alba, Texas, for 35 years. He was a regular on the B.A.S.S. pro circuit before devoting his attention to the marina and artificial tackle design and manufacturing.

"I helped design it with the company that produces it for me. We had such good luck with the other bait and production of it was so good I felt there was a need for a topwater walking bait," he said.

WHAT'S IMPORTANT?

The keys to a productive walk-the-dog topwater, he added, are rattles, hooks, balance and the paint job. Yellow Magic Havanas are hand-painted in custom colors featuring a top-of-the-line finish.

It was a lengthy process start to finish, Ray said, because of the distance between Emory and the production facilities in Japan. He'd tweak a prototype, then wait for the company to respond with another prototype.

Finally satisfied after nearly a dozen prototypes, Yellow Magic Havanas went on the market in late 2016.

"I'm very particular about quality control, especially when I get the first batch. I would take them out and fish them," he said, adding his goal was to determine how they performed in the water.

"It is doing well. It's kind of a specific topwater in that it's a walking bait, which

is really good when fish are chasing shad," he said, noting, however, that any walking bait can be limited to a certain number of months because of weather patterns each season.

THEY'RE GOOD EVERYWHERE

"These things are good up North, a good smallmouth bait, in clear water lakes in New York, like Thousand Island."

The Yellow Magic Havana excels in Florida and in Mexico. Mexico? Ray uses the walking bait and the Yellow Magic Popper during fishing breaks on his duck hunting trips south of the border.

"They work and they'll eat them, especially on those lakes over there (in Mexico)," he said. "They're super good in the Basin and in Florida."

Ray predicted the Yellow Magic Havanas will become favorites at Lake Fork.

"Yeah, they're popular here. I don't think they'll ever be as popular as the original Yellow Magic," he said.

His personal best bass on a Yellow Magic was an "11 and change" hawg in 2018 at Lake Fork. His personal best on a



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.



Photo courtesy SouthernReelOutfitters.com

Yellow Magic Havana was a 10-3, also at Lake Fork.

He has gotten his hands on several 8-pound class bass on the Yellow Magic Havanas in Mexico.

Ray explained, "Those bigger baits are made for catching bigger bass on topwater."

For more information on Yellow Magic Havanas and other Yellow Magic products, go to www.yellowmagiclures.com or call (903) 473-1423. ■

BASS CLASS ➤

Brian Duplechian, a fishing guide at Lake Fork, holds a trophy-sized bass he caught on a Yellow Magic Havana at Lake Fork.



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TEAMING UP

ROME, DAWSON PUT THEIR TALENTS TOGETHER TO TAKE ON THE BASS

By Don Shoopman

Team Louisiana's 24 two-man teams headed to the 2022 Abu Garcia Bassmaster High School National Championship in August include two seniors-to-be at Central High School.

Matthew Rome, who celebrates his 17th birthday Aug. 10, and Connor Dawson, 17, are competing a second straight year for the high school national title in the tournament that starts Aug. 11 at Lake Hartwell near Anderson, South Carolina.

"It's an honor to go two years in a row because not too many people get to go. It's a pretty good feeling," Rome said the first week of June.

Dawson said, "I'm excited. I'm ready for it. That's all I'm thinking about right now. I've been looking at Lake Hartwell and trying to learn about it. It'll be a different animal for us. I've learned it's very clear, very deep with steep banks. It's going to be a challenge. It's going to be fun. We're very excited and already got our place booked."

A LONG WAY

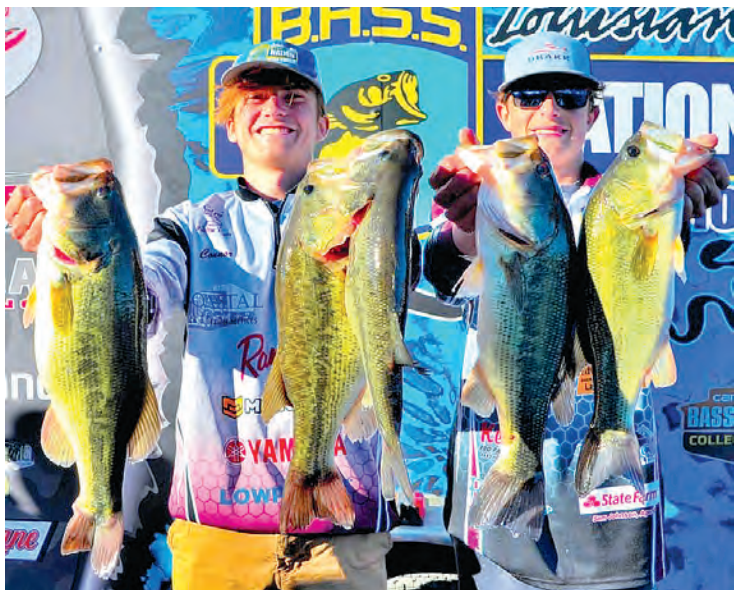
Rome and Dawson have come a long way since their freshman season together in high school bassin'. Their friendship before high school led to teaming up for bass tournaments.

As freshmen, they qualified for the state tournament and



Connor Dawson's first bass catch came at age 7 in 2012. Ten years later he will be fishing his second straight national bass tournament.

Connor Dawson, left, and Matthew Rome hold up a heavy limit of five bass at the LHSBN East Qualifier out of Doiron's Landing in Stephenville. They won the tournament.



helped CHS win a state title. The two all-around outdoorsmen stepped up their game as sophomores, starting with a 13.45-pound first-place finish in November 2020 in the Louisiana High School Bass Nation West Division Trail State Qualifier at Toledo Bend, their first visit to the lake.

They finished fifth in the LHSBN West Division Trail standings and qualified with 16 other teams for nationals at Tennessee's Lake Chickamauga.

One month later, back home, the high school bass anglers showed their sense of community service. They shoveled sand into sandbags and delivered them to Louisiana residents impacted by Hurricane Ida in late August.

They were red-hot in the 2021-22 season with a ninth-place finish in October at Doiron's Landing, Stephenville, then won in February with 14.45 pounds.

MOST SATISFACTION

What gives Rome the most satisfaction winning or finishing high in an LHSBN tournament?

"I'd say it's when we win at Doiron's because a lot of people know that area, so it's hard to win tournaments over there. This year's win was the best one. They had 175 boats, some real good fishermen," Rome said.

"We kind of figure it out pretty good. Once we have confidence in an area we just put our heads down and fish and end up doing pretty good."

The bass tournament partners, both working as stockers this summer at Winn-Dixie in Central, fished a third straight state tournament on the Ouachita River in May.

Because they fish together a lot, it's no surprise their favorite fishin' hole this time of year is the Bayou Pigeon area on the east side of the Atchafalaya Basin. Specifically, they like to tap the bass population in Cross Bayou.

Dawson said he has fun there.

"Whenever it's right it's just fun and I can catch them the way I like to ... which is punching. We both love to do that," he said.

Dawson's favorite setup includes a Strike King Rage Bug on 65-pound test PowerPro braided line spooled on a Shimano Citica seated on a 7-foot-3 Favorite EH fishing rod. He ties a 3/0 flippin' hook to the braided line under a 1-ounce Tungsten weight.

DEPTH TARGET

They target hyacinths in 3-4 foot depths, he said.

"If you go there at the right time you can catch 50 fish easy. I've always had most of my success over there on crankbaits or any kind of soft plastics," Rome said, noting his favorite crankbait is a khaki-colored Bandit 100 and top soft plastics are craw worms.

Randal Bordelon, Dawson's stepfather, captains the team in his 2021 Z519 Ranger powered by a 225-h.p. Yamaha Sho.

Dawson said Bordelon got him into fishing, "anything freshwater," then he got hooked on bass fishing.

Rome began bass fishing in the seventh grade and met Luke Miller, a member of the Denham Springs-based Junior Southwest Bassmasters.

"He was always better than me," Rome said.

As they got into the high school ranks, Miller wanted a different partner.

"I didn't have a partner. Connor said he didn't have a partner," Rome said, noting the two friends decided to pair up. "We started off in ninth grade and weren't too good. These last few years we've gotten pretty good," he said.

They hope to be "pretty good" again Aug. 11-13 at Lake Hartwell. ■

Matthew Rome shows his first bass catch at age 12 in 2017.



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TOLEDO BEND >

BASS ON THE BEND

Hydrilla no-show sends bass anglers to shoreline structures

S By John Dean
tumps are starting to show as Toledo Bend falls below 170.0 feet as summer starts creeping across the big lake. Evaporation and lack of much rainfall is taking its toll.

Some lily pads are starting to show now. The heat's showing up big time, too.

The no-show, for an umpteenth straight year, is hydrilla. At least, it isn't covering as much, if any, of the lake like it has in the past, providing protection, shade and cooler water for baitfish and bass.

Oh, I'm seeing and hearing reports about hydrilla in 6 to 10-foot depths, some of it with milfoil mixed in, north to south along the lake, and also in Housen Bay and Six Mile Creek. The grass that's been gone so long hasn't even begun to approach its previous prevalence. But at least it's coming back to some extent. But not enough to depend on for bass.

We all miss the hydrilla, for sure. The days of going out with only two or three fishing rods on the deck rigged with a jig or soft plastic to plunk and dunk, as we called dropping baits vertical, are done.

THE ANSWER

There is an answer, however, to catching bass without an abundance of grass in the dog days of summer. We don't have the luxury of that particular environment, but we do have a rapidly growing amount of new structure — boathouses. And lots of them.

Marine construction around the lake has mushroomed. Those structures also offer shade, cooler water, protection and ambush points. Some of the boathouses are huge ... if you'd board up the walls, they'd be big houses.

And you know what many of those structures, old and new, have in common? Brushpiles to attract crappie.

In July, Toledo Bend's pool level was at 169.95 and we anticipate it will continue to fall. Average water temperatures have been in the middle to lower 80s, but should climb through the end of July into August.

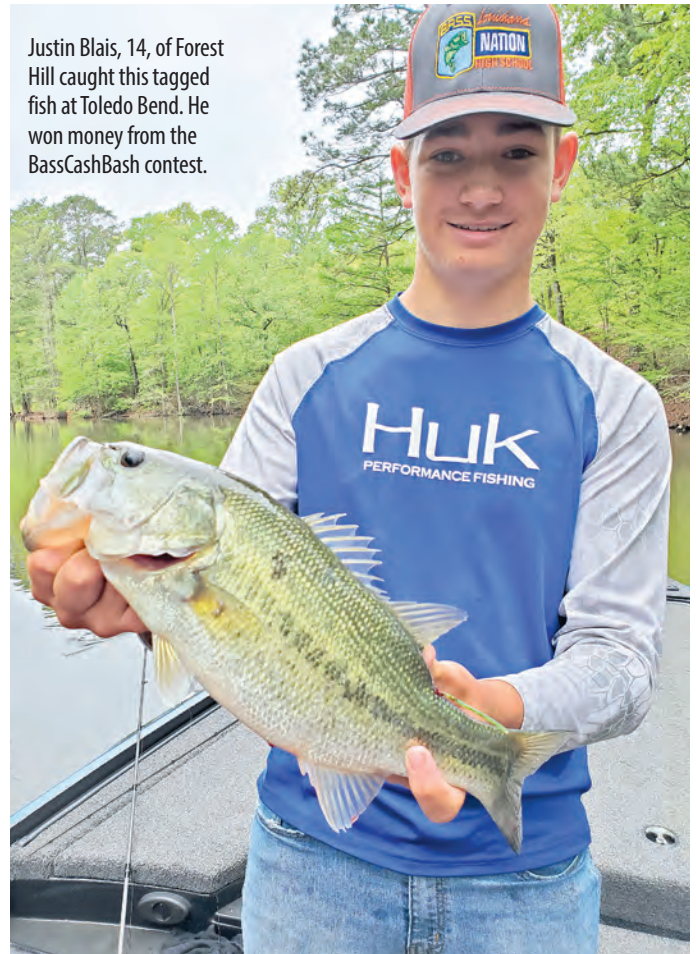
Many successful bass anglers from weekenders to pros increasingly target boathouses across the country. It's time to follow that pattern at Toledo Bend.

Don't get me wrong. The first and last two hours of daylight can offer some sizzling bassin' — longer if there's heavy cloud cover — with topwaters and other low-light artificials.

Otherwise, utilize the cover we've got. Target boathouses and boat docks in 15-foot or less depths. I'd say 50 percent of the bass are on the bottom and 50 percent are suspended.

Take a page from Florida's John Cox, who relies on his strength while fishing the Bassmaster Elite Series and Major League Fishing's Tackle Warehouse Series. He is in the race for AOY on the Elite tour because he has consistently caught bass on jigs, soft plastics and bladed jigs in the first six tournaments "shallow"

Justin Blais, 14, of Forest Hill caught this tagged fish at Toledo Bend. He won money from the BassCashBash contest.



— 6-foot depths or less — before going to New York's St. Lawrence River in July. Think about that.

DIFFERENT APPROACH

Fishing boathouses, of course, requires a different approach than punchin' hydrilla for those 3 to 5 pounders. It's a time to use 10 to 12-inch plastic worms in June bug/red, plum, red bug and plum apple. And it's a time to crank deep-diving, shad-colored, chartreuse/white and chartreuse/blue/white colors. And try golden bream Delta Lures Thunder Jigs around all that structure at Toledo Bend. Skip those Thunder Jigs under docks and hold on.

Those long plastic worms, mostly in black/blue hues, should get more than their share of bass any time from sunset to sunrise because they provide bigger silhouettes. Night fishing will be a prime time opportunity for bassers to get a double-digit bass in their hands. Target points, ridges, dropoffs along drains and boat-houses and boat docks.

If you fish at night, make sure you are clearly visible to other boaters and fishermen and follow all navigation laws.

Crappie fishing around sunken brushpiles in 22- to 25-foot depths can be fair to good during the day but improved at night, too.

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

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■ By Kinny Haddox

There are many ways to stick tomatoes in your garden. I prefer 12-foot cane poles cut into four-foot sections. They're small, cheap, sturdy and last multiple years. Even though I don't fish with one anymore, I go buy a few each year.

NOT IN 2022.

I walked into the Honey Hole, a well-stocked prime spot for all things fishing in West Monroe, and asked owner David Owen why he had moved the cane poles off the rack out front. He just laughed.

"I haven't been able to get cane poles in two years," he said. It wasn't funny. It was a prime example of what has been going on in the outdoor sport industry.

"Sorry, we're out of that," has become an all-too-familiar response to fishing and hunting customers. Or orders placed online come weeks or months later. Retailers have done their

best, but it is a battle.

Shortages of guns and ammo, baits and all kinds of tackle have been prevalent. At one point in 2020, so many people were fishing that bait shops had to ration live fish baits like crickets and worms. That's something no one would have ever dreamed.

BIG TICKET ITEM PAIN

But where it is really painful is big ticket items. Boat and ATV shopping has been hit and miss. Parts are even worse. Break the prop on your boat? It might have taken months to get in the past year. Order a new boat? Again, probably a months-long wait.



Sticker shock hits some boating shoppers hard, but dealers and boaters keep finding a way.



Four-wheelers and larger ATVs have also been hit hard by supply and demand issues — and inflation.

Manufacturing was hit. Then lockdowns on shipments and supply disruptions even hit big market items like trucks and other tow vehicles. Thousands of new pickup trucks sat on lots for months waiting on key chips and other parts from China. The selection and competitive pricing that has spoiled us all in our outdoor pursuits is gone.

It was very noticeable at the 42nd annual Louisiana Sportsman Show and Festival in Gonzales on Father's Day weekend. But you have to hand it to the folks that put on the show and the vendors and dealers who were there with booths and gear. They did the very best they could to showcase products and offer them for sale or customer order. It was a step toward bigger and better things next year.

Inflation is an issue, too. A major purchase these days can rock your world.

NOTHING LIKE IT BEFORE >



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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NOTHING LIKE IT BEFORE

David Ivey, General Manager of Boats Unlimited of Baton Rouge was one of many dealers that all said about the same thing about the supply chain.

"No sir, we have never seen anything like this," he said. "It's absolutely insane. The boats we are getting now may have been on order for eight months or longer. "We had one customer whose rig took a year. It's everything. Motors, tires, props, seats...The whole system is a mess. And I don't see any end in sight unless some serious political changes occur. In fact, this isn't a sales pitch, it's a fact. If you see a boat you like and you can afford it, you better get it. We don't know when we will get more. And I hope people understand. It's not us. Be patient. We're trying to make it through the best we can."

Long-time sporting goods manager Lea Benoit of Bowie's Outfitters, a huge part of the show with stores in Louisiana and Mississippi, has expressed the same feelings about some sporting goods.

"I'll tell you this. If you see something you want or need, whether it's a big ticket item or a new rod and reel, you better go ahead and get it while you are looking at it. If you don't, there's no telling how long it will be until we can get another one like it," he said.

Manufacturers pressed for materials and labor the past couple of years aren't making some low-end products with very slight profit margins. Who can blame them? Thus, the shortage of even things like cane poles.

And inflation is brutal, but it isn't stopping outdoorsmen or dealers. Just as an example, a 2022 Ranger Z521L with a 250 Mercury motor lists for \$82,895, and that's not even the most expensive bass boat. The popular saltwater 2022 Excel Boats Bay Pro 220 with a 150 Yamaha retails for \$62,990.00. Bigger boats easily go into six figures. Popular,

top-of-the-line electronic upgrades can add \$10-\$15,000 more to each. Prices vary according to dealers, makes, models, motors and accessories.

Most buyers end up financing their boat for longer than their car or truck. Are you a hunter? The Polaris Ranger Crew 1000 Premium two-seater side-by-side starts at \$19,399 retail without any customization accessories. Average price five years ago in 2017 was \$12,675. Correspondingly, prices of used outdoor equipment is at an all-time high, and low availability levels, as well.

AMMUNITION CONCERNS

Hunters and shooting sports enthusiasts know the situation all too well. Ammunition is scarce and is at a premium. And it's not getting better either, according to one large exhibitor at this year's Sportsman Show, Patrick Tarlton, vice president and part owner of Ammo Wild, a central Texas business.

"We sell ammo across the country and in the past 20 months, it's been crazy," he said. "Not just availability, but the prices. It's not going to get better. Since the start of 2022, we have seen three price increases. The year started with one and we've had it go up twice already because of supply issues."

A steady flow of customers at their booth seemed to indicate customers realize that fact as they stocked up on calibers that

Buying a boat is a major financial decision, compounded these days by the current economic situation. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Patrick Tarlton of Ammo Wild shows customers his selection of ammunition. Availability is scarce and prices are high, but hunters and shooting sports participants haven't backed away.





are difficult to find. The same scene is repeated daily at sporting goods stores across the state and nation.

The country's leading arms sales manufacturers explain it like this. During the Obama administration, fear of tighter firearm regulations led to a run on guns and ammo. Then, that demand trailed off during the Trump Administration. Now, with the Biden Administration talk of gun control, the rush is on again. But this time, combined with supply chain issues, it is making it a pretty tough business. That has meant shortages or total lack of some popular calibers and limits of one or two boxes of certain shells and bullets by most sporting goods stores so more customers could be served.

Overall, there has been a quiet bright side to social distancing for the industry. While people avoided crowds, they found fishing and other outdoor pursuits to be safe. And the situation brought a whole new group of people into outdoor sports. One survey using data from 24 states showed that participation in fishing and that sales of fishing equipment increased by 50% in 2020 - not including big ticket items.

American outdoorsmen and women are still pursuing their favorite sports and find-

ing ways to bear the cost and availability issues. What drives them to do so?

Perhaps it's this.

Famous American humorist Mark Twain said, "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

In other words, those who want will find a way: Eat. Sleep. Fish. Boat. Hunt. Camp. And be patient. ■

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DOWN, BUT NOT OUT, SPORTSMEN PERSEVERE

After researching multiple sources and conducting numerous interviews, here are 10 quick points about the pursuit of outdoor happiness these days:

1. Covid seriously hurt businesses the past two years. Charter boat operators, guides and resort businesses were hit hard by social distancing. Fortunately, they are getting back to full speed.

And the situation led to a large group of new fishermen and outdoor enthusiasts.

2. Political decisions compounded the recovery situation, continuing to affect manufacturing, supplies and shipping, from major ports all the way to local deliveries.

3. Inventory shortages and demand are pushing prices higher; the labor market struggles for qualified workers and costs at wholesale and retail have seen double digit inflation.

4. Then there's the price of gasoline (see No. 2). It may get



worse. The \$4.60 national average is predicted by reliable business sources like the Kiplinger Letter to soar well over \$5 a gallon for regular and diesel near \$7 a gallon on average by the end of summer.

5. Retailers have cut expenses where they could — even garbage pickup, store hours, inventory, travel, advertising and more, and one bluntly stated, “I’m afraid nothing is transitory about this. I’ve never seen prices go down after they go up.”

6. Despite all this, it isn’t all bad news. Surveys have shown that less than 20% of fishermen reduced the numbers of trips they take. The number of people fishing increased an estimated 10-15% in 2020 and another 8-10% in 2021.

7. There were an estimated 5.4 million new gun owners in the U.S. last year.

8. Major product development and promotion in the

outdoor industry has slowed from the norm. That was apparent at the world’s largest tackle and outdoor show, ICAST in Orlando. Last year, the number of exhibitors was down 30%.

9. And through all of this, the Gulf Coasts “perfect storm” was made worse” by Mother Nature herself. In August 2020 Hurricane Laura was catastrophic. Two months later, Hurricane Zeta, hit. In total, five named storms struck Louisiana in 2020. More devastation followed in 2021 from Hurricane Ida and all of them spawned additional tornadoes, wind damage and other storms in Louisiana and Mississippi. The southern part of Louisiana has yet to totally recover, but they are getting there.

10. While things are tough, outdoorsmen and women and sporting goods businesses appear tougher. The long lines to get in the recent Louisiana Sportsman Show proved interest is still high and fishermen, shooters, campers and hunters aren’t giving in. ■

— Kinny Haddox



The outdoor economy is tough right now, but businesses like Bowie Outfitters are battling to keep sportsmen in gear at the best prices possible.



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**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>.

KEY WORD: "LAKE"

WATER IS THE MAIN
COURSE ON THE MENU FOR
THESE TWO STATE PARKS

THIS MONTH'S
FEATURED STOPS:
LAKE BISTINEAU AND
LAKE CLAIBORNE

LAKE BISTINEAU STATE PARK

You know when the names of state parks include the word “lake,” it has got to catch the attention of fishermen, boaters and folks that like to camp with a view where they can look out over the waters for that peaceful, easy feeling.

Welcome to Lake Bistineau State Park at Doyline and Lake Claiborne State Park just outside of Homer. It’s summertime and they are your ticket to that and lots more. While they are both located less than 50 miles apart, the two parks and lakes are almost entirely different. The diversity gives visitors lots to choose from and a guarantee of a good time with something for everybody.

And there is a catch. Fish, that is. Both lakes are chocked full of bass, bream, crappie and catfish. And because of all the visible structure, the fish aren’t hard to find.

Area fishing pro Homer Humphries fishes both lakes and said they are two of his favorites.

“I love bass fishing there and they are both such pretty places. There are loads of places to catch fish, both big and small. And bream fishing is fabulous all summer long. Crappie tend to move with the seasons, but when you find them, it’s on,” he said.

It might seem redundant to say “cypress studded lake” in Louisiana because it seems like most of them are. But this one’s a bit different. Its unique beginnings came when a log jam on the nearby Red River created the original lake. The lake was drained and the jam cleared, but in 1942, the government decided to construct a permanent dam, refilling the cypress swamp and creating Lake Bistineau. The lake is long and narrow, and actually touches parts of three parishes.

Bistineau is lined full of cypress trees, draped in Spanish Moss. There are open areas, too, where water skiers can enjoy the lake. If you are new to the lake, make sure you know the difference.

The State Park is located on the western shore of Lake Bistineau not far from Minden and Doyline. The park itself is a blend of beautiful vistas and outstanding recreational facilities. Memorable for its upland mixed hardwood forest and its enchanting stands of cypress and tupelo trees, the park offers two boat launches, hiking and biking trails and playgrounds.





LAKE BISTINEAU STATE PARK

103 State Park Road
Doyline, LA 71023
318-745-3503
lakebistineau@crt.la.gov

LAKE CLAIBORNE STATE PARK

225 State Park Road
Homer, LA 71040
318-927-2976
lakeclaiborne@crt.la.gov

Local angler and guide Homer Humphreys shows why folks like to bass fish on Bistineau. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** These Lake Bistineau campers went all out to make their home away from home a great place to vacation.

Wide-trunked cypress trees lure photographers, boaters and nature lovers to Lake Bistineau State Park, located a short half-hour drive from Shreveport and Bossier City. It's a kayak lovers dream. If you want to see north Louisiana's pristine wetlands at their wildest, this is the place to be.

You can explore these waters even if you don't bring your own boat. Rent flat-bottom boats, canoes and kayaks and paddle out to Sandy Island, Snake Island or any of the other half-dozen islands. There is also an 11-mile canoe trail. Keep an eye out for the plentiful wildlife along the shorelines.

On the mainland, you'll find 10 miles of hiking trails and a waterfront disc golf course. The park's equestrian trails have made this a destination for horseback riders. Additionally, guests can take advantage of the disc golf course along with the diverse bird populations who frequent the area making it perfect for birding.

Guests have their choice of seven deluxe cabins along with one deluxe lodge available for rent. Two larger group camps can accommodate up to 48 and 160 people. RV campers can choose from 61 sites, many within view of Lake Bistineau.

Area 1 is located in the main section of the park, with cabins, and a group camp.

Picnicking along the lake is tremendously popular at numerous sites equipped with tables, grills, and nearby restrooms. Several picnic pavilions are also available for larger groups.

There are lots of things to do around the park as well from the R.W. Norton Art Gallery and its botanical gardens in Shreveport to the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum. In nearby Minden, explore the local history and heritage at the Germantown Colony Museum.

LAKE CLAIBORNE STATE PARK >

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LAKE CLAIBORNE STATE PARK

Lake Claiborne is almost like two lakes. There's a huge open area down in front of the spillway that offers a multitude of opportunity for watersports. It's on the western side of this area that you'll find the State Park. Many sunken tops and brush-piles also make it a hotspot for fishing and schooling striped bass are a unique catch here.

You can take your pick: swimming, fishing, birding, boating of all kinds, waterskiing, camping, hiking or just plain relaxing and enjoying the unsurpassed natural beauty at Lake Claiborne State Park. For fishermen, the freshwater lake was lavishly stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, striped bass, sunfish and crappie (what many folks up here call white perch). The lake itself, at full reservoir level, has a surface area of 6,400 acres.

In the arms of the lake and the northern ends, there are hundreds of boat docks, stumpy areas and shallow grassy areas for great fishing. But be aware in this end of the lake — stay in the boat lanes unless you are idling or get ready to visit your local boat repair shop.

In the park, two-bedroom cabins are nestled among the pine trees, and many offer a view of the lake. The RV campground rests among the slopes of the north Louisiana foothills, offering shaded spots to get closer to nature. Whatever your preference for an overnight stay, you'll be sure to rest peacefully.

One of the most popular activities for visitors of all ages is swimming at the park's sandy beach. The beach is situated on an inlet of the lake and is protected from boats and other activity.

The park also offers the top two rated disc golf courses in the state. Both courses offer 2 sets of tee pads, the blue tees are for the skilled players and the red tees for the newer players or first timers at the park. Families are encouraged to check out discs at the fee station on their next visit. Both courses start and end at the entrance. Scorecards and maps are available.

The woods of Lake Claiborne are also home to a wide variety of wildlife. Deer roam all over the property. Lovely nature trails and a scenic overlook will allow you to appreciate the beauty of the area at your own pace.

And because of the large open water area and secluded location, guests can wander down to the shore at night for star-filled sky views far from city lights.

Beyond Lake Claiborne State Park's borders are many more opportunities to see north Louisiana at its finest. Right in Homer, see the historic Claiborne Parish Courthouse — completed in 1861. In nearby Ruston, check out Mitcham Farms, a peach orchard and country store. And in Minden, you can explore the Dorcheat Historical Museum. ■

HOW SPORTSMEN COOK >



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.



Visitors to the Lake Claiborne State Park find a cozy getaway on the swimming beach right in the park.



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– Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser

HOW SPORTSMEN COOK

Jason Thornton



CAJUN FISH CHOWDER

A TASTY, EASY-TO-MAKE GOURMET
MEAL WITH A REAL KICKER

This is one of those recipes that once you make it, it becomes a regular part of your kitchen menu rotation. It is super easy and even an amateur can make this seem like a gourmet meal.

For this recipe, I blanched 2 pounds of sac-a-lait filets in heavily salted water. Then I used a fork to lightly break the filets into lumps. I added the lump fish meat at the very end and folded into the chowder. The real kicker to this recipe is the crab boil.

TIP!

Crab and/or shrimp work really well with this chowder.



TIP!

If you prefer your chowder a bit thinner, just add more stock.

PREPARATION: Serves 4

1. In a large pot, melt butter and sauté the chopped shallot over medium heat.
 2. Add all other ingredients with the exception of the seafood and seasoning.
 3. Reduce heat to a medium/low setting and cook for 20 minutes stirring occasionally.
 4. Fold in your desired seafood and continue cooking until the seafood is completely cooked through. Seafood cooks quickly, it shouldn't take more than 5 minutes or so for this to be cooked.
 5. Season to taste.
- * You can serve this in a bread bowl for a complete meal.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 10 ½ ounce cans Cream of Potato Soup
- 2 10 ½ ounce cans Cream of Mushroom Soup
- 2 14 ¾ ounce cans Cream Style Corn
- 1 12 ounce can Evaporated Milk
- 1 shallot chopped finely
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup seafood stock
- 1 capful of Zatarain's liquid Crab Boil
- 2 pounds seafood of choice
- Seasoning of choice



BAYOU D'ARBONNE CRAPPIE ➤



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

Chunky crappie like this bring fishermen below the spillway during the summertime.



"I use eight poles when spider rigging fished 8 to 10 feet deep in roughly 20 feet of water."

Since there's not much structure below the spillway, Garvin focuses on suspended crappie around the edges of the creek bends.

"I like to fish a Bobby Garland jig in a combination of three colors — pink, chartreuse, and blue," he said. "My favorite jig head is a Rockport Rattler in the 1/8-ounce model in a bright color as well."

"With my busy schedule, I'm limited to how often I get to fish, so I want to capitalize when I can and the spider rig allows me to do that."

Garvin said the most important detail to mention about this method is live bait.

"I tip my jigs with a shiner," he said. "I have found that when I use that larger profile bait, I tend to catch larger crappie and less trash fish."

KEEP MOVING

Garvin also pointed out that technology has helped fishermen like himself be better at keeping live bait during these hot summer months.

"It's all about covering water," he said. "The crappie are schooled up and on the move following baitfish, so I set my trolling motor on low, around the 1 mph range, and start fishing."

"I catch the majority of my crappie from daylight to mid-morning using the spider rig approach."

When the bite slows down, Garvin will migrate down the bayou and start single pole fishing fallen treetops and lay downs.

"When the sun gets high in the sky, the crappie will hold tight around the structure and I'll start picking them off one by one with a jig pole in hand," he said.

Even though the big lake above the spillway gets most of the recognition in north Louisiana, Bayou D'Arbonne ranks high among locals looking to fill up their freezer in August before the start of hunting season.

Besides the launch below the spillway on the east side of the bayou, there is also an improved ramp at Holland's Bluff below Rocky Branch where you can reach the upper ends of the bayou and a public ramp off White's Ferry Road near where the bayou runs into the river. ■

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**EXTRA THOUGHT AT
INSTALLATION CAN SAVE
YOUR DUCK BLINDS.**

■ By Darren Digby

RIDING OUT THE STORM



For as long as hunters have been chasing the annual waterfowl migration in our coastal marshes, they've been dealing with nearly annual frustrations that come along with the territory.

As a coastal hunter, you've not really earned your stripes until showing up to brush a favorite blind only to find that a

SUMMER STORM HAULED IT OFF TO WHO KNOWS WHERE.

However, a bit more forethought can go a long way in adding resilience to your next marsh blind to prevent a rebuild year after year. As a consulting engineer and passionate waterfowl hunter with deep roots in our coastal marshes, my two worlds collide when it comes to building duck blinds. That's not to say that it's been without failure, but I hope a few tips here may save fellow hunters along the coast some time, money and headache.

It goes without saying that the basic wooden blind structure, generally comprised of a floor and rails, should be assembled in a sturdy fashion. Though this arrangement can be as crude or lavish as one might choose, it should be assembled in a sound fashion to build strength as all parts are well secured to one another.

For the securing duties, I opt for 3 - 3½-inch screws, preferably deck style screws with the star drive tops. Such screws are designed for service in harsh environments and the star drive makes working in difficult areas easier with less stripping from the drill. Using quality screws also affords a measure of portability in that they usually can be disassembled should the location go cold in favor of a new build elsewhere.

DESIGN MAKES THE DIFFERENCE ➤



Taking time to design and construct your duck blind as sturdy as possible from the ground up reduces the heartache of annual structure rebuilds.



A well anchored duck blind frame like this one with sturdy wood and long screws can last through many storms and seasons.



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DESIGN MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

Even when securely constructed, however, it's the design that often makes the difference in a blind riding out the next storm or being a casualty of that storm. Solid paneling for walls is a recipe for catching as much wind and/or moving water as possible, thus putting the whole structure at risk. Instead, take a page from modern flood resistant buildings and include flow-through capabilities, be it wind or tidal surge.

We all prefer some semblance of a wall to offer respite from winds during the season, but that can be achieved with heavy brushing just the same. Intermixing broad leafed vegetation like palmettos within the "walls" can achieve wind blocking for those big northern blows without the use of solid wooden paneling.

With all of the above in mind, what I've found to be the most common cause for blind loss has been failing to properly negate the force of lumber's natural buoyancy on well-assembled structures during storm surges. It's not that what was built wasn't strong enough, in fact it was built so strong that it literally acted as a raft and floated away as a single piece when surge waters got high enough.

Our coast is in fact littered with fully assembled blinds having drifted off to points unknown, still fully intact. As a result, just



as much attention to detail is warranted for what goes into the ground as what is seen above it.

Sufficiently staking the whole assembly down is critical in preventing the mentioned rafting effect, but simply going straight down a foot or two may not always be enough. Instead, plan for at least three to four feet or more of in-ground staking, depending on the stability of the ground. Not all of our marshes are alike, be it salt marshes of Hopedale to the flotant of Cameron. Adapting efficiently to those unique conditions is critical.



Anchoring a solid base on your duck blind provides years of use with only brushing and a little touch-up work needed every season. **ABOVE:** Wooden anchors like this on the posts of your blind help keep you from wondering where your blind went after summer storms pass through.

HELP THE CAUSE

In general, any measures enacted to resist a stake in coming back out the same way it went down will help the cause. Our recent builds feature staking that not only goes deep into the ground, but preferably staking at angles on either side of the structure. The angles provide additional resistance to the vertical lift of buoyancy upon significant surge inundation.

Screws partially drilled into the sides of posts or wedges of wood act as barbs that serve to make installation minimally more difficult, but unplanned removal significantly more difficult as they grab at the mud and roots of the ground. If still in doubt, a bag of ready-mix concrete is one of the few construction materials that's still fairly cheap these days and can do wonders for post stability just about anywhere.

Of course, utilizing non-buoyant materials would be best, but something like metal brings its own challenges, both in additional costs and being more difficult to transport to the remote location ducks and duck hunters seek.

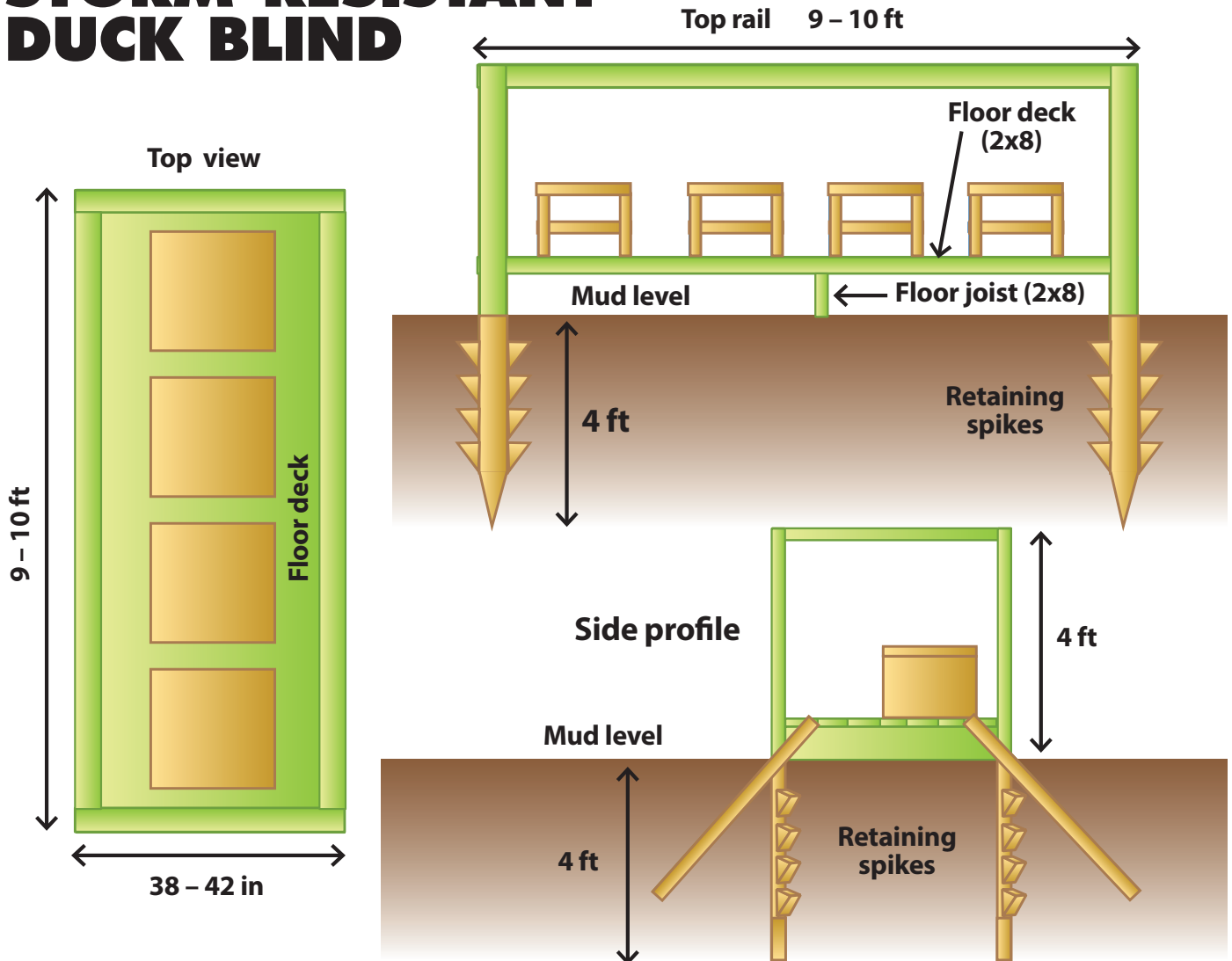
Before heading out to build this year's blind at your favorite duck hole, give some additional thought to what you're planning to install below the ground surface. Properly investing in this aspect could be the difference in whether or not this construction effort is a one-time hassle, or an annual headache. ■

DOVE DOPE >



Darren Digby, an environmental engineer and USCG licensed captain, has been hunting and fishing the marshes of Southeast Louisiana since childhood. He lives in Baton Rouge with his wife Ella and their two kids.

STORM-RESISTANT DUCK BLIND





DOVE DOPE

PROPERLY MANAGED SUNFLOWER FIELDS SCREAM "BUFFET OPEN" TO DOVES

If By Kinny Haddox you plant it, they will come. "It," in this case: Sunflowers.

Big, large, bright, and cheerful plants whose flowers can be seen a mile away. They are easy to plant and manage. Beautiful to look at and as a wonder of nature, they actually turn and face the sun, following it across the sky, as they grow. When they mature, they simply face east.

And for hunters, it's a crop that screams

"Buffet Open" in bright yellow lights to resident and migrating doves. Sunflowers are literally dope for doves.

Doves are one of the most widely hunted game birds in Louisiana and across the southeast. The most common are mourning and white-winged doves. Most early season birds in Louisiana are resident doves. For decades, landowners and wildlife managers have planted all kinds of crops to attract doves. Things like corn, millet and wheat work well. But

a properly managed sunflower field in a good location is hard to beat when it comes to making a "dove field," especially in combination with other prime fields.

GREAT ATTRACTANT

"There's no doubt that a properly cared for sunflower field is a great attractant for doves," said Colby Daniels of Mer Rouge. Colby operates Top Gun Guides in north-east Louisiana and while they mostly host duck and goose hunts, dove hunting is popular on their farms as well. You can contact him on Facebook or at 318-669-3793.

"The main thing about doves and sunflower fields is you have to keep the

A field of sunflowers is pretty to look at and dope for doves, making them prime spots to hunt around. **BELOW, RIGHT:** Dove hunting is a family affair and a great way to start out young hunters.



attracts doves, but it tends to hold them as long as other necessities are nearby.

The choice of a planting site for a successful sunflower dove field is important. It should be close to a good water source and near good roosting and loafing areas for doves. When doves aren't feeding or watering, they like to just sit and watch the world go by. That's evident by the numbers you see lined up on powerlines in areas with good populations.

AT LEAST FIVE ACRES

The field also needs to be at least five acres. The bigger, the better to actually hold doves. There is a rule of thumb that you need at least one acre of sunflowers for every hunter. So if you have 20 hunters, you need at least a base of 20 acres. And an irregular or rectangular field gives more edges for hunters and better access for doves.

Doves also like to fly treelines or power lines and they also need a source of small grit, like a gravel road or sandy bank.

Planting sunflowers in strips with bare ground areas is also better because it gives doves easier access to seed and hunters good spots to hide in the middle of the action. Doves detect food by sight and they are also very wary, especially once the season opens and shots are fired. Daniels said they usually plant sunflowers solid in the field, then go through and cut down 4-5 rows every 40-50 yards that gives hunters a good place to hide. Although they don't plant them every year, they've done it for more than 20 years on and off.

There is one catch to sunflower fields these days. It isn't a crop you can sell and costs have skyrocketed, costing nearly \$200 an acre to do it right and maintain the field. That's not chicken feed, for sure.

And it's expensive dove feed. ■



ground clean," he said. "You can't let the weeds grow up or the doves can't get to the seeds."

Daniels said that in farming country, sunflowers work well with other crops, such as corn, rice or millet.

"Doves like all of those and when you've got plenty of feed, you can not only attract doves, but keep them around for a while. They even like soybeans, but that's usually later in the season when they swell up a bit. They don't like them when they are still hard," he said.

IT'S THE SEEDS

Actually, after the flowers wilt and dry out, they are the most attractive to doves. The key is the hundreds of seeds found in the flower's head — each one can hold up to 2,000 seeds. As the sunflowers dry out, seeds drop to the ground and are easy pickings for doves. A good supply of sunflower seeds not only



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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| 2022 | | BEST DAYS | | | | VALUE |
|------------|-----|-----------|------|-------|----|-------|
| MOON | SUN | FAIR | GOOD | EXCEL | | |
| AUG | | | | | | |
| Mon 1 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 43 |
| Tue 2 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 41 |
| Wed 3 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 38 |
| Thu 4 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 41 |
| Fri 5 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 49 |
| Sat 6 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 38 |
| | | | | | | |
| Sun 7 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 32 |
| Mon 8 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 43 |
| Tue 9 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 54 |
| Wed 10 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 66 |
| Thu 11 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 70 |
| Fri 12 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 61 |
| Sat 13 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 53 |
| | | | | | | |
| Sun 14 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 45 |
| Mon 15 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 42 |
| Tue 16 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 44 |
| Wed 17 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 51 |
| Thu 18 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 63 |
| Fri 19 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 54 |
| Sat 20 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 49 |
| | | | | | | |
| Sun 21 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 49 |
| Mon 22 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 49 |
| Tue 23 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 47 |
| Wed 24 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 56 |
| Thu 25 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 65 |
| Fri 26 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 74 |
| Sat 27 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 76 |
| | | | | | | |
| Sun 28 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 64 |
| Mon 29 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 52 |
| Tue 30 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 40 |
| Wed 31 | ☀ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | 33 |

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| | | LUNAR PERIODS | | | | TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| MOON RISE | PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD | MOON SET | PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT | | | | |
| 9:54 am | 3:09 pm - 5:39 pm | 10:44 pm | 2:41 am - 5:31 am | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 10:54 am | 4:02 pm - 6:10 pm | 11:10 pm | 3:34 am - 6:04 am | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 11:55 am | 4:56 pm - 6:44 pm | 11:37 pm | 4:27 am - 6:35 am | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 12:59 pm | 5:52 pm - 7:20 pm | 12:06 am | 5:21 am - 7:09 am | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 2:05 pm | 6:50 pm - 8:02 pm ☀ | 12:06 am | 6:17 am - 7:45 am ☀ | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 3:15 pm | 7:53 pm - 8:49 pm ☀ | 12:41 am | 7:15 am - 8:27 am ☀ | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| | | | | | | | |
| 4:27 pm | 8:59 pm - 9:45 pm | 1:22 am | 8:18 am - 9:14 am | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 5:38 pm | 10:05 pm - 10:47 pm | 2:12 am | 9:24 am - 10:10 am | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 6:42 pm | 11:09 pm - 11:55 pm | 3:14 am | 10:30 am - 11:12 am | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 7:37 pm | no period | 4:24 am | 11:34 am - 12:20 pm ☀ | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 8:23 pm | 12:08 am - 1:04 am | 5:40 am | 12:33 pm - 1:29 pm ☀ | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 9:01 pm | 1:01 am - 2:09 am | 6:55 am | 1:26 pm - 2:34 pm ☀ | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 9:33 pm | 1:46 am - 3:14 am | 8:08 am | 2:11 pm - 3:39 pm | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| | | | | | | | |
| 10:02 pm | 2:27 am - 4:15 am | 9:18 am | 2:52 pm - 4:40 pm | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 10:30 pm | 3:02 am - 5:14 am | 10:24 am | 3:27 pm - 5:39 pm | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 10:58 pm | 3:38 am - 6:10 am | 11:27 am | 4:03 pm - 6:35 pm | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 11:27 pm | 4:13 am - 7:05 am ☀ | 12:29 pm | 4:38 pm - 7:30 pm | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 11:58 pm | 4:49 am - 7:59 am ☀ | 1:31 pm | 5:14 pm - 8:24 pm | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 12:34 am | 5:28 am - 8:54 am ☀ | 2:32 pm | 5:53 pm - 9:19 pm ☀ | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| | | | | | | | |
| 1:15 am | 6:58 am - 10:40 am | 4:27 pm | 7:23 pm - 11:05 pm | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 2:01 am | 7:47 am - 11:33 am | 5:19 pm | 8:12 pm - 11:58 pm | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 2:53 am | 8:40 am - 12:22 pm | 6:05 pm | 9:05 pm - 12:47 am | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 3:49 am | 9:32 am - 1:08 pm | 6:46 pm | 9:57 pm - 1:33 am | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 4:48 am | 10:26 am - 1:52 pm ☀ | 7:22 pm | 10:51 pm - 2:17 am | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 5:48 am | 11:19 am - 2:31 pm ☀ | 7:53 pm | 11:44 pm - Midnight | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 6:48 am | 12:11 pm - 3:07 pm ☀ | 8:21 pm | Midnight - 2:56 am | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| | | | | | | | |
| 7:48 am | 1:04 pm - 3:40 pm ☀ | 8:48 pm | 12:36 am - 3:32 am | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 8:49 am | 1:57 pm - 4:13 pm | 9:14 pm | 1:29 am - 4:05 am | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 9:50 am | 2:51 pm - 4:47 pm | 9:40 pm | 2:22 am - 4:38 am | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |
| 10:52 am | 3:46 pm - 5:22 pm | 10:09 pm | 3:16 am - 5:12 am | ☾ | ☀ | ☾ | ☀ |

ANY LUNAR PERIOD IS ENHANCED WHEN IT OVERLAPS A KEY SOLAR PERIOD. THE BEST OF THESE OVERLAPS ARE DESIGNATED BY THE SUN SYMBOLS:
 ☀ = DAWN ☀ = HIGH NOON ☀ = DUSK
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■ By Kinny Haddox

HOG WILD

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**HUNTERS, LANDOWNERS
CALL FOR PUTTING THE
CUFFS ON FERAL HOGS.**

There's no other way to say it. SOME THINGS ARE JUST USELESS AND NASTY.

That's the way most people who have run across feral hogs feel about the dastardly creatures. They are called wild boars, swine, piney woods rooters and — well, we can't print other names they are called.

No matter what you call them, they are dangerous and destructive and this malicious invasive species is out of control in Louisiana as well as some other states. It's one creature nobody stands up and says, "Wait. Leave them alone...they were here first."

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries says feral hogs are found in all 64 parishes in Louisiana, and Louisiana's feral hog population was estimated at 700,000 several years ago. With increased attention on these pesky wild porkers and an emphasis on rooting them out, estimates today are more like 900,000 — possibly up to a million. And they aren't just in the woods. They come out in the fields and even roam populated rural neighborhoods in numbers that are hard to believe.

They are rarely seen because they only come out at night, and

then they are cautious of any human activity, which causes them to retreat to the depths of the woods and somehow disappear until their next raid. The evidence they leave behind, though, is indisputable. They leave rooted up areas of the earth from wheat fields to acorn flats to people's yards that literally look like a series of small bombs went off.

MINIMAL PROFESSIONAL ATTENTION

With only minimal attention from professional wildlife agencies, many sportsmen and landowners are taking matters into their own hands. They're shooting them with night vision. They're trapping them and putting them down. They're hunting them down with dogs. And scientists are even trying to figure out a safe way to poison them.

"Several years ago, Brian Tucker and I traded out some of our Tiger Bend deer stands with Hogg Boss for a hog trap," said Peyton McKinnie of Marion, a Deputy with the Union Parish

Hunters with long-range rifles and binoculars take up positions in deer stands in the late evening and early morning and are also using night vision to stalk huge feral hogs after dark.





This big boar bit the dust to a night hunter trying to slow down the growth of feral hog populations that is literally "hog wild." ABOVE: A good bait set for feral hogs starts with corn and rice bran and is sweetened with some sort of hog attractant, or even plain sugar, to add "dessert" to the menu.

Sheriff's Office. "They were a fairly new thing. We let that thing sit there and I walked by it hundreds of times. I had no real desire to set it up and trap hogs. But people kept talking about hogs tearing up the deer woods, tearing up their fields and farms and even getting into town and causing destruction around us. We figured we just had a couple of sounders on our hunting club, but when we set the traps up and got the video cameras up, oh my gosh, they were everywhere."

The same thing happened in other areas they went with the traps, and as their success rate grew, others joined in. There's no season and the hogs aren't going anywhere. Now, people like McKinnie and one of his hog hunting partners, Caleb Gates, enjoy taking out the hogs more than they like deer hunting. And that's saying a lot. It's fun, and it's badly needed.

"I tell you what, there are so many of them that it's kind of gotten to be like a video game," he said. "You bait up an area and they start coming to it. You set up the trap, then be patient and they'll come back. You can sit and watch them on your phone through the video feeds.

Then, when the whole sounder gets inside, you lower the gate remotely and you've got them."



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.

**REAL WORK
BEGINS** >

REAL WORK BEGINS

Once that happens, the real work begins. The hogs are killed and then disposed of. Usually McKinnie and his friends take them to deer processors and there is a long waiting line for people wanting the meat. In the heat of the summer, the hogs are full of parasites and are just nasty, so they dispose of them in the woods.

McKinnie said private trappers are growing in numbers and doing a good job, but they get no help from anybody. It's expensive to buy traps and bait them and it certainly takes a lot of time. He's hoping one day the state, perhaps the LDWF, will get serious enough about it to offer some bounty like they do for nutria and really make a dent in the population instead of letting it go hog wild.

To bait the traps, McKinnie and others use corn mixed with rice bran and then some sort of sweetener, like Delta Magic or even plain sugar. The amount of what McKinnie calls "dessert" is limited, so the hogs all rush in to the feed pile at the same time, trying to get as much of the goodie as they can.

Hog awareness is growing faster than anyone realizes. When legendary giant boar, "Mr T", was killed by Matt Talbert of Sterlington, it was featured in newspapers and magazines like Louisiana Sportsman, where it became one of the top 10 viewed posts on LouisianaSportsman.com in 2021.

Scientists, like those at the LSU AgCenter and the LSU

Department of Chemistry are working on a bait and delivery system to help reduce the population of feral hogs.

DEVELOPING KILL PILLS

Glen Gentry, LSU AgCenter feral hog specialist, and John Pojman, a chemistry professor at LSU, have been working for several years on perfecting a bait and delivery system that will kill feral hogs, but minimize risk to off-target animals. Researchers have to develop a formula that is more attractive to hogs based on features such as smell and texture than it is to other animals such as deer or raccoons.

Ironically, researchers are using sodium nitrite, a common food additive in products such as bacon, which is lethal to pigs at fairly low levels. The problem with sodium nitrite is that it breaks down when it comes into contact with moisture. And it gives off a chlorine-like odor that pigs don't like.

Scientific solutions are hard to develop, plus the approval process is time consuming on steroids. All the while, sow hogs are reproducing faster than rabbits. And then, there are some people who voice concern that all the hogs may die. Gentry has a quick answer for them.

"People are concerned when some kind of new control method that's going to come on, the pigs are going to disappear," Gentry has said. "We've been poisoning rats for 50 to 60 years. We still have rats."





This is the Hogg Boss system setup. There are also other models on the market and the numbers of people using them to slow the invasion of feral hogs is growing. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Kory Gilbert with a good night's work of sows and boars captured by the Hogg Boss trapping system.

BUILDING A BETTER "MOUSE TRAP"

Kory Gilbert of Sterlington never knew much about feral hogs until he joined a hunting club in St. Francisville and they were everywhere. He had some predator trapping experience and club members challenged him to come up with a solution.

He knew if he could build a trap and incorporate video technology into it, he'd have a solution. Working for months in his kitchen, he developed a drop gate that was activated by cell phone signal as the trap owner watched what was happening on a live video feed.

It enabled 10-15 hogs to be caught at once instead of two or three like old trap systems. It was the first commercial hog trap system manufactured in Louisiana.

"I had worked on the idea for a long time and when I finally had that 'Edison moment' and the thing worked, giving me total control, I knew I had something. Today we have Hogg Boss gates in all 50 states."

Hog problems are bigger than they've ever been and trapping is bigger than it has ever been. While people trap all year long, the peak season is in the fall when people are getting back in the woods and see how many hogs there are. Then, the period in January when deer seasons are ending, people are still mad at them and want to get rid of them."

BIG BOYS ARE ELUSIVE

Tucker, who also hog hunts with McKinnie, said there's one thing that is tough to do with traps.

"The big boars just don't come to traps easily," Tucker said. "In fact, we don't see many of them, especially the older ones with big tusks, on the camera or video. But the good thing is when we clear out most of a sounder, there are some guys that can come in there and hunt singles with a gun and they can get those big boys."

Tucker said on a recent set, they caught a bunch of hogs and weren't even seeing any more, but a friend who gun hunts went out and killed four big boars.

"They just don't hang out with the rest of the mommas and babies much and they sure don't like to come to a trap," Tucker adds. "One thing that's great about the traps, though, is it keeps you out there all year long. You can't hunt anything else, but you can hunt the hogs and it keeps everybody in the club involved and engaged. They all see the pictures, too."

It would seem like with all the hunters and people in the woods plus all the hogs, there would be more run-ins, but Tucker said that just doesn't happen. Like any animal, if there's a way out, they'll take it. And they see us before we see them, he said. Also, where they hide when people can't find them is a mystery.

"I think they just lay up in big thick tops or brush," he said. "They know the places that people don't go." ■

STICKS & STRINGS ➤

The author poses with a mule deer he killed while on a bow hunt out west.



THE PROCESS BEGINS

CONSTANTLY LEARNING IS THE KEY TO GOOD BOW SHOOTING

Sammy Romano

As mentioned in last month's installment, my first Western bow hunt in the early 1990s caused me to focus on and become enamored with the process of bow hunting.

Up until then I had only hunted white-tailed deer east of the Mississippi River at close range from elevated stands. Honestly my game was sloppy when it came to proper preparation. This was sufficient when taking shots within 25 yards, but wouldn't suffice at the longer shot distances and more open terrain of Wyoming.

Mechanical broadheads were in their infancy. String materials were of much poorer quality. You had to really work to get fixed blade broadheads to shoot accurately at distances over 25 yards.

This was also before the days of internet and ready access to "how to" information. So everything had to be learned firsthand (and often the hard way).

Bows available in the early 90s were extremely primitive compared to today's modern compound bows. Bow risers were often not cut out for a true center-shot. And string materials were of much lower quality, constantly stretching and changing the tune of a bow.

Bows were much longer overall, making them unwieldy in many hunting situations. They were also generally much slower shooting, making distance judgment even more crucial in the absence of range-finding technology.

My Browning Maxim bow, for example, was 44 inches axle-to-axle length and

shot my aluminum arrow at only 235fps. Arrow shafts were of good quality, but the tolerances of components such as nocks and especially inserts left a lot to be desired. So more attention to detail was necessary to achieve a given degree of accuracy back then.

Still, I am glad I was able to experience these challenges. They have made me a better bow technician as well as hunter. And I have a greater appreciation for the ease with which newer technology



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.

allows for bow setup.

Once I started to stretch out my shot distances, I quickly found that my broadheads were shooting inconsistently at longer distances. This led to me seeking answers as to why. First, I paper tuned my bow, ensuring my arrows were flying straight with my target tips. After some adjustments, I achieved perfect arrow flight. My broadheads were now hitting in the same area of the target as my target tips. But they weren't grouping nearly as well. I learned that this was due to poor tolerances in my arrows' inserts.

Because of a loose fit, my inserts were often crooked in the end of my arrows causing broadhead misalignment. This off-center alignment led to a rudder effect. Because no two were out of alignment exactly the same amount, my broadhead groups were poor, especially at longer distances.

The solution was to carefully heat the end of the aluminum arrows then spin the insert (they were glued with hot melt cement back then), floating the glue evenly and thus balancing

each broadhead. I even went so far as to spin them on a dial indicator. Once they were properly spin balanced, my groups immediately tightened up, even as far as 70 yards out.

All of this time spent tuning my bow and fine tuning my arrows made my bow deadly accurate with both target tips and broadheads, regardless of the distance. This would prove to be key to my success on my upcoming hunt. Although technology has vastly improved the tune-ability of modern compound bows and made broadhead alignment almost a sure thing, these same principles still apply and I use them often today. Archers who weren't around to experience these issues much of the time don't appreciate how good we have it today. And they are often at a loss for what to do if they have a problem. Next month I'll tell the story of that trip, and how well it all worked out. ■

Wide open spaces that are typical in western states present a challenge to hunters who are accustomed to taking shorter shots.

Sammy Romano



RONDA JOHNSON

PAYING IT FORWARD TO CHANGE LIVES, ESPECIALLY FOR WOMEN AND VETERANS.

Being the first female inducted into the Louisiana Chapter of the Legends of the Outdoors Hall of Fame is important to Ronda Johnson of Haughton for a lot of reasons. But mostly, it's because it further enables her to do what she's been doing all her life.

"My mentors, my daddy and my pawpaw. I'm so thankful they passed their passion for the outdoors on to me," she said. "Even in an era where women hunting wasn't cool. Now I'm able to pay it forward by helping others enjoy the outdoors and all it has to offer."

And pay it forward, she does.

Ronda has served as the NWTF Dorcheat Bayou Gobblers chapter president and on the Louisiana NWTF State Board as Treasurer. She's involved with The Women in the Outdoors Outreach Program and Wheelin Sportsman hunts for 17 years. She is currently the North Louisiana Wheelin Sportsman Coordinator and Board Member for Barksdale Warrior Hunts.

In 2016 and 2018 she was voted Mossy Oaks Pro Staff of the year in the Turkey Southern Division of the United States. She is also involved in the SisterHood of the Outdoors for Louisiana. She has managed and helped make hunts possible for hundreds of women, youth and disabled veterans.

Because of her contributions she has been inducted into the Hall of Fame.

CHANGING LIVES

"This honor makes me happy and very proud," she said. "To see others accomplish a dream they've had come true. The smiles on their faces are priceless and so fulfilling for me. When they realized I backed up a trailer, they harvested an animal, they caught a fish for the first time. Their confidence level grows inside them and they have a WOOHOO moment.

"It can change their lives forever. I was able to take my Dad hunting for the last time as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's made it impossible for him to do what he loved so much. To see the joy and happiness in his eyes that this brought to him. That's what I enjoy seeing the most in helping others. That look of complete joy and happiness in their eyes is a blessing for me."

While Johnson helps all kinds of people, she especially loves it when women get involved. She urges women who want to learn more about the outdoors to find an organization or individual that mentors women. You don't have to know anything.



The Sisterhood of the Outdoors, NWTF Women in the Outdoors (WITO) or Louisiana Becoming an Outdoor Woman (BOW) are those type of groups.

Sisterhood of the Outdoors is a group of ladies that have joined together to share a mutual passion...hunting. They book trips and specialize in creating opportunities and encouraging women in the outdoors and shooting sports.

"My passion is working with our physically challenged and wounded warriors through our NWTF North Louisiana Wheelin' Sportsmen and Barksdale Warriors program Giving them the opportunities to enjoy the great outdoors once again and giving back to our warriors that have given so much for us," she said. "I love to turkey and

““” People ask me if I get paid for volunteer work. I tell them, ‘Yes, so much I can’t even take it to the bank.’ I just make small deposits in my heart each year.

deer hunt and fish with my husband. “What I enjoy most is to watch the sunrise or sun set on all God’s creation. Seeing everything come alive in the morning or seeing everything go to sleep in the evening. I say God is pulling the covers off in the morning and pulling them back up for a good nights rest in the evening. Those sights are always the same wherever you are. His artwork is always breathtaking and magnificent.”

SPECIAL PAY

Johnson received the NWTF Lynn Boykin Hunting Heritage Award, which recognizes an individual that has made outstanding contributions in protecting our hunting heritage. “People ask me if I get paid for volunteer work,” Johnson said. “I tell them, ‘Yes, so much I can’t even take it to the bank.’ I just make small deposits in my heart each year.”

Johnson’s outside-the-box approach for the NWTF has expanded the typical mentored hunt to include alligator and frog, and she has held additional banquets to raise funds specifically to fund Wheelin’ Sportsmen events. Her approach frees up Super Fund dollars to be used for habitat enhancement.

“Ronda goes well beyond the call of duty,” NWTF CEO Becky Humphries said. “Her innovative thinking and dedication to the NWTF mission has made our presence in Louisiana that much stronger.”

Perhaps Ronda’s most ringing endorsement comes from a family member who knows her well.

“Ronda Johnson is my oldest sister and has mentored me since I was a kid, said Rodney Vise. “She’s amazing. Even though she’s my sister, I haven’t seen anything when she puts her mind to it that she can’t accomplish. We came from a hunting background since we were kids.” ■

You can learn more about the Hall of Fame, founded by Garry Mason in Tennessee and headed in Louisiana by Peyton McKinnie of Marion, 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.

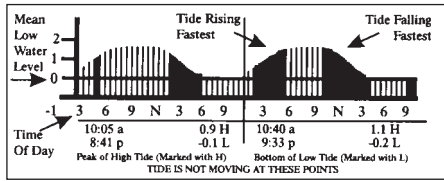




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Fish feed most actively when the tide is moving. Louisiana Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most-active feeding periods each day in the Tide Guide. Just fish those times indicated in black. To find the best time to fish your favorite honeyhole,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

Tide Corrections

| East Point, Grand Isle | HIGH | LOW |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|
| Barataria Pass | +1:00 | -0:10 |
| Bastian Island | +0:41 | +0:12 |
| Bay Gardene | +2:51 | +2:44 |
| Bayou BonFouca | +9:59 | +10:11 |
| Breton Islands | +0:54 | +0:48 |
| Caillou Boca | +0:40 | +0:48 |
| Caminada Pass | +0:20 | +0:12 |
| Chandeleur Light | +0:37 | +0:34 |
| Chef Pass | +5:17 | +5:07 |
| Cocodrie | +1:22 | +1:33 |
| Comfort Island | +1:34 | +0:54 |
| Delacroix Island | +3:42 | +3:31 |
| Empire Jetty | -1:03 | -1:45 |
| Four Bayou Pass | +2:18 | +0:17 |
| Gardner Island | +0:40 | +0:47 |
| Grand Pass | +1:48 | +1:16 |
| Head of Passes | -0:48 | +0:00 |
| Hopedale | +4:17 | +4:56 |
| Independence Island | +2:29 | +1:59 |
| Jack Bay | +1:59 | +1:28 |
| Joseph Bayou | -0:36 | -1:37 |
| Lafitte | +1:45 | +2:51 |
| Long Point, Lake Borgne | +2:28 | +2:11 |
| Manila Village | +2:32 | +3:13 |
| Michoud Substation | +5:24 | +5:02 |
| New Canal (Bucktown) | +10:34 | +10:49 |
| North Pass | -0:31 | -0:37 |
| Paris Road Bridge | +5:53 | +5:58 |
| Pelican Islands | +2:26 | +2:26 |
| Pointe a la Hache | +3:12 | +3:01 |
| Port Eads | -0:17 | -1:37 |
| Raccoon Point | -0:03 | -0:20 |
| Shell Beach | +4:32 | +4:25 |
| Ship Shoal Light | -1:54 | -1:50 |
| South Pass, Miss. R. | -1:13 | -1:20 |
| Southwest Pass, Miss. R. | -0:38 | -1:33 |
| Tchefuncte River | +10:23 | +11:01 |
| Timbalier Island | +0:19 | +0:23 |
| Wine Island | +1:08 | +1:02 |

| Calcasieu Pass, Lighthouse Wharf | HIGH | LOW |
|----------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Cote Blanche Island | +4:33 | +3:40 |
| Eugene Island | +1:49 | -0:39 |
| Lighthouse Point | +0:58 | -0:53 |
| Mermentau River ent. | +0:20 | +0:25 |
| Point Au Fer | +1:53 | -1:02 |
| Point Chevreul | +3:16 | +0:30 |
| Rabbit Island | +2:01 | -0:36 |
| Shell Island | +3:08 | +0:45 |
| South Point | +1:55 | -0:33 |
| Southwest Pass, Vermillion Bay | +1:42 | +0:51 |
| Weeks Bay | +3:58 | +3:56 |

| | SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SAURDAY | |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|--|----|
| East Point Grand Isle | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | FQ | 6 | |
| | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | FM | 12 | |
| | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | |
| | | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
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| | SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SAURDAY | |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|--|----|
| Calcasieu Pass Lighthouse Wharf | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | FQ | 6 | |
| | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | FM | 12 | |
| | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | |
| | | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
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SPORTSMAN'S COVER CONTEST GALLERY



Koby



Randy Boyett



Tanya Crowe



Henry Dinh

ON THE
COVER



BASS BITE, YELLOW JACKETS STING

AND GEORGE AND I GO FISHING AGAIN

Everybody's got a best fishing buddy. I must admit, mine is George. We enjoy fishing together. We enjoy taking in the wonders of God's creation. And we especially enjoy giving each other the kind of hard time that isn't socially acceptable anywhere but in a boat.

One Sunday morning, our preacher boldly stated we should be nice to everybody all the time. As soon as he said it, George and I looked around the congregation until we made eye contact and we both shook our head in disapproval. Not to contradict a man of the cloth, but the preacher just didn't know. The uglier we were to each other, the more stinging the barbs, the more fish we catch. If we were nice all the time in the boat, we'd never catch a fish.

One day George and I went fishing and it was a beautiful day. We slipped off to a large private lake in the woods affectionately called the Aquarium because

it has so many fish that even his son, Little George, can catch them. And since we weren't bream fishing, Mrs. George, didn't mind.

I have to confess, George's name isn't really George. That's his main alias. You see, George is in the Witness Protection Program. He isn't even supposed to go out in public, much less get his picture made or be written about. He never takes off his sunglasses and I have to blur his face in our fishing pictures. But I'm so much fun to fish with, he's willing to take the risk.

The rock ramp at the Aquarium isn't in the best shape, so on this trip I unhitched my boat from my old two-wheel drive truck and waited for George to hook it to his big old loud four-wheel drive work truck.

We had stopped short of the ramp near a big stately old oak, mainly because it was August-in-Louisiana hot. And here, there was shade. I was at the

back of the boat taking off the tie-down straps. George was at the front of the boat securing the trailer to the hitch. All of a sudden he started hollering (it was something like eeeeeiiiiii — oooorrgggghhh — yaaaaiiiiiieeeee), flailing his arms up in the air and running in a tight circle.

Now, I must point out that it is not unusual for George to exhibit this type of unexplainable behavior when we are fishing together. But it's usually when something happens like him saying, "I've already fished that top good . . . there's nothing there" and then I throw in there and catch a three pounder.

Or when he loses a big one at the boat



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

and asks, "Man, did you see that?"

"No. I didn't see it. Did you have one?" I casually reply.

As George grabbed one ear lobe, then the next, I noticed about a dozen yellow jackets buzzing around him. Now, I don't know why God put yellow jackets on this earth. And I don't know why they bite you on the ear lobe, although George does have fairly big ears. I "Googled" it to try and find an answer, but still have none. I did find out that yellow jackets' closest relatives are hornets and they closely resemble each other, but apparently hornets have more distance from the eyes to the back of the head.

In my book, If you are close enough to be able to see that, you are in deep trouble no matter how many entomology classes you have taken.

In a matter of seconds, George and I were both about 30 yards from the boat and we noticed a whirlwind of yellow jackets coming out of the ground not too far from the place we had parked. One of us had stirred them up somehow. It was probably the gray smoke puffing from the extra large exhaust pipe on George's big old loud four-wheel drive work truck aimed right at their below-ground home hole.

Had George not been stung already on both ears, it would have been a sight to see. I must take some blame here. I parked my truck there first.

But after doing more research, it was really George's fault. He was wearing a bright yellow shirt and a dark red cap. Colors like dark red will sometimes be interpreted as natural predators for yellow jackets, according to the good folks at Orkin. Google.World. Also, if you wear bright colors like yellow, these pests might mistake you for a flower. And if you wear cheap cologne like George's 18-year-old British Sterling for Men, it just makes it worse. No wonder they went right at him.

On the other hand, I stayed safe standing there in my pine tree green fishing shirt looking like a big flowerless bush with only a small hint of deet fragrance from mosquito repellent.

That's not really important at this point, but could serve to help others fishing this time of year in yellow jacket country. And while I'm being helpful, let me add that wearing white is best, again according to the Orkin man. This lack of color will typically make yellow jackets and bees leave you alone. That's why beekeepers wear white.

Look, a couple of those yellow jackets can put a full grown man into a full blown run for his life. We were fortunate there was another fisherman at the ramp smoking a cigarette. We borrowed one, took out the tobacco and moistened it and George put it on his ear — a poultice I think you call it. He would not let me take pictures of this. In a minute, this old home remedy helped some, the yellow jackets had settled back to their regular territory and we snuck over, got the boat and went on fishing.

So back to our fishing trip. I can add modestly here that I actually caught a nice 4-pound bass on my first cast.

"Well, I'll be John Brown," George said. I didn't say anything, but wondered if that was one of his new aliases.

George had a little tougher time getting started. He was obviously hurting and a bit nervous. We both ended up catching quite a few bass that afternoon. But every time George got a "bite," instead of setting the hook, he got all jumpy and started swatting around. It's hard to set the hook on a bass that way.

He denied that was happening. And being somewhat of a trained bugologist himself, informed me curtly that yellow jackets don't bite anyway — they sting. Bass bite. Well, for most of us. ■

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HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



Maygen Levert

Maygen Levert's first deer was taken on a hunt with her Paw Paw Paul and her dad, Kyle Levert, on Big 16 Hunting Club in West Baton Rouge.

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Mick Aube'

Mick Aube' of Breaux Bridge caught this 2-pound white catfish with blue eyes while fishing with his dad and grandfather in Fearman Lake in Vermilion Parish. Mick then released the fish.



Leighton Arnemann

Leighton Arnemann, 5, got her first red snapper while fishing out of Venice.



Kayden Romero

Kayden Romero caught this beautiful bass at a private pond in Lafayette Parish.



Bentley Packard

Bentley Packard, 9, of Sibley with his first 5-pound-plus bass caught on Bayou Dorcheat in Northwest Louisiana. It weighed 5 pounds 4 ounces.



Andrew Levert

Andrew Levert, 10, got his first deer, a spike, on a hunt at Big 16 Hunting Club in West Baton Rouge with his Paw Paw Paul.



Jackson Duke

Nine-year-old Jackson Duke slammed the bluegill with his Paran, Anthony Puglia.



Mark Blanchard

Mark Blanchard with a 14 1/2-inch sac-a-lait caught in Belle River.



Damian Baumann

Damian Baumann, 10, took his first deer on a hunt with his paw paw, Paul Levert, at the Big 16 Hunting Club in West Baton Rouge.



HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



William & Benjamin

William and Benjamin Suggs with some bass and bream caught in a pond in Weyanoke.



Brody LeBlanc

Brody LeBlanc killed his first deer with a perfect shot at 75 yards. He was hunting with his dad, Chris, in Union Parish on Jan. 15. Brody, Chris, and Brody's grandfather all killed a deer on the same hunt. Three generations made great memories.



Steve Ashy

Steve Ashy of Doug Ashy Building Materials holds two "sow" trout from the beach off Grand Isle on May 5.



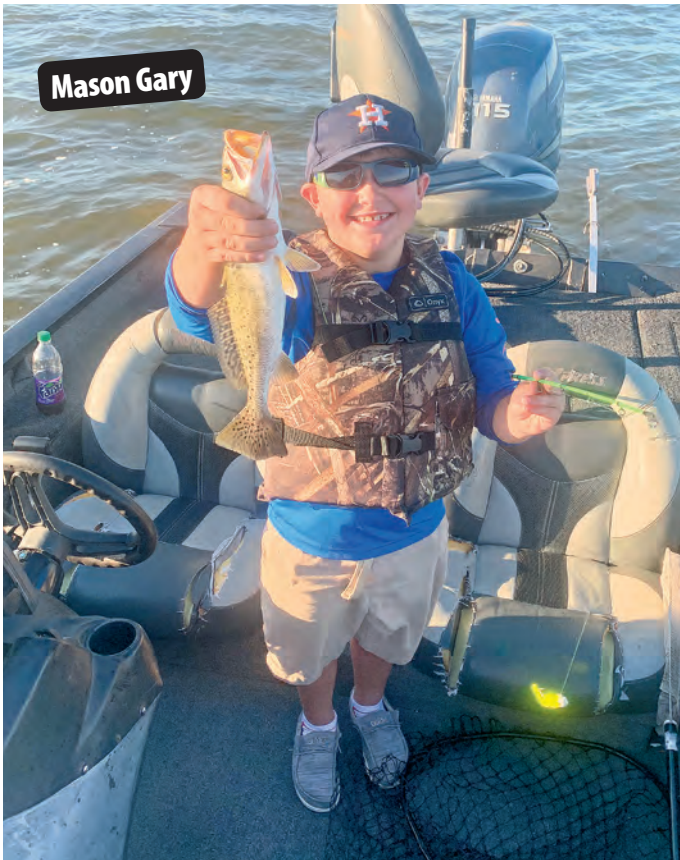
Jim Boutte

Jim Boutte caught his first redfish in Hopedale at Duck Pond with his father and grandpa.



Hylton Petit

Hylton Petit of Destrehan with a nice red caught in the MRGO.



Mason Gary

Mason Gary, 7, loves redfish, speckled trout, sac-a-lait and bass fishing. Here he is with a speckled trout he caught in Vermilion Bay.



Peter Duong

Peter Duong was jigging with Marsh Demon Lures "Mardi Gras Mambo" at Myrtle Grove Marina when he caught a two man limit of reds in freezing temps.



Max McGill

Max McGill from Georgia had a blast fishing from the dock at Hopedale Marina while his dad, Trey, was still celebrating the National Championship.



Cody Robinson

This redfish was caught by Cody Robinson on Dec. 27 in Lake De cade.



Weston Duck

Weston Duck used a 6.5 Creedmoor to down this Webster Parish buck.



HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



Alyssa Guidry

Alyssa Guidry of Larose with a 22-pound drum caught out of Caminada Pass in Grand Isle with cracked crab on the bottom.



David Osborn

David Osborn destroyed the redfish in Lake Borgne.



Banks Bernard

Banks Bernard with an extra spotted redfish caught off live shrimp under a popping cork at the MRGO.



Rustin Guidry

Rustin Guidry of Larose caught a 25-pound bull red out of the Fourchon Pass by the rock jetties with cut mullet on the bottom.

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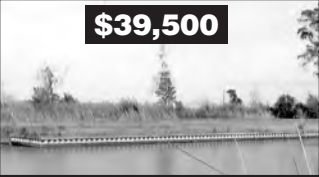
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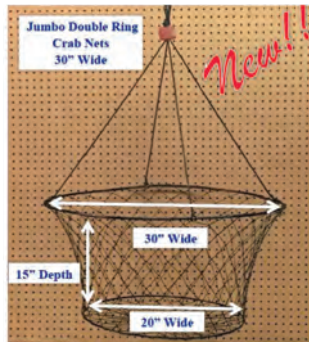
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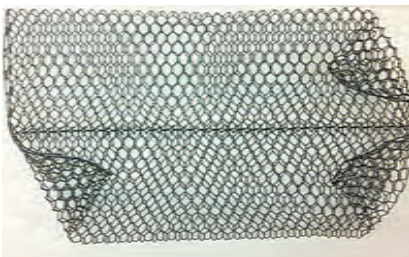
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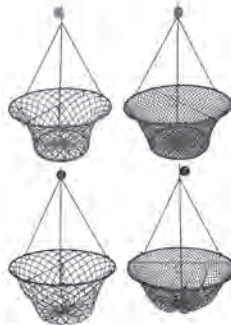
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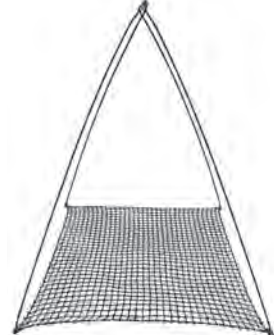
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