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SOUTHWEST SMORGASBORD



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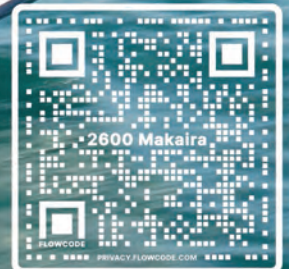
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It's a dream come true when a Louisiana deer hunter comes face to face with an enormous buck like this one. Will this be your year? (Photo by Matt Hansen) INSET: Cayce Causey caught this haul at the Chandeleur Islands. (Photo courtesy Cara Causey)

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ALMOST HEAVEN,

AND WE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO GO TO WEST VIRGINIA

A 14 foot aluminum boat, one old beat up seat cushion and a vintage blue and white Coleman cooler that would make Yeti owners cringe. A hand powered trolling motor (that's a paddle for you young whippersnappers so you won't have to ask Alexa), a hand-steered 15-horsepower Yamaha and a half-dried up creek meandering through the backwoods of the Louisiana landscape.

And not another boat in sight. All day.

It was a real fishing trip. Just like a lot of us grew up making. The only thing missing was a can of vienna sausage, some hoop cheese and a fresh garden tomato about 11 a.m.

As John Denver sang, "Almost heaven..." And I didn't even have to go to West Virginia.

"I have a special trip lined up if you are up for an adventure," Wesley Miller's voice boomed out over the speaker of my cell phone. "It's called a fishing trip. Real fishing. No electronics. No fancy gear. Us and an old boat."

Okay, I'm game. I'm always game when Wesley, better known as "Sasquatch" of Sasquatch Outdoors, plans a fishing trip. I can't remember a bad trip with Wesley, except maybe that time I forgot the Jack Link's Beef Jerky.

"Anything special I need to do or bring?" I asked Wesley.

"Yeah, wear some rubber boots," he replied.

After settling into the middle seat and feeling like I might just be able to do this without tumping the small boat over, we headed down Bayou Dorcheat. It was a slow trip, which was just fine because there was plenty to look at and Wesley's sage commentary made me feel like I had been there already.

The low water stage left the creek well within its banks, showing the root systems of age-old cypress trees and everything Mother Nature had placed here over centuries. Years of swift current had cut into the banks, formed sandbars and exposed river rock beds everywhere. Every runout had some sort of activity in the water. Small fish splashed in every direction. Each spot we passed looked fishy, but we forged ahead.

Bayou Dorcheat runs a long course through Northern Louisiana, but in the 115 miles from its source in Arkansas to its mouth in Lake Bistineau, there are surprisingly few access points. Most of the bayou is hidden away in forest and swamp land. The largest community that it passes by is the small town of Dixie Inn near Interstate 20.

We reached a couple of shallow shoals that required exiting the boat and dragging it across the shallows. And there was one time when Wesley had to jump a fallen tree and crash through the remaining limbs just to get to the other side. Fortunately, he put me out on the bank and I met him on the other side. There was now no question as to why boots were required.

We finally reached our destination that only the most adventurous would seek and found a shallow spot where Wesley and I traded places so he could run the hand powered trolling motor. That in itself was a sight. And as we passed in the middle of the tiny boat, it became apparent why he looked for a shallow spot. He wasn't worried so much about falling in, but he didn't want to lose either of the crappie poles or his tackle box, a small Zip-lock bag full of his special hand-tied hair jig "crickets."

We eased up to the spot Wesley had caught about 20 the day before and he



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.

2022



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Shell spearheaded the first recycling partnership with the Louisiana Sportsman Show and Festival, its affiliate Trash Rangers, and volunteers from St. Amant High School's FFA program. The three-day event recycled .24 metric tons of plastic bottles and .34 metric tons of aluminum.



THE Rhythm OF LOUISIANA

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Playing a leading role in the energy transition throughout the state and US, Shell is committed to lowering emissions. This Shell CNG Renewable branded Ford F-250, which has a dual engine that can operate on compressed natural gas or gasoline, was on display. Shelley Piehet, Marketing Analyst for R-CNG (left) explains how renewable fuel is made from organic source material, including cow manure.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, a blue baseball cap with a logo, and sunglasses, is smiling and holding a large yellowedge grouper. She is standing on a boat dock, and the fish is being held vertically. The background shows a boat with a 300 outboard motor and a wooden pier. An orange graphic with the text 'OUTDOOR UPDATE' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

OUTDOOR UPDATE

Sue Beiriger was fishing out of Grand Isle on July 16 when she hooked into a 42.95-pound yellowedge grouper.

STATE RECORD YELLOWEDGE BIG 42.95 POUND TROPHY PUTS SUE BEIRIGER ON CLOUD NINE

S By Kinny Haddox
ue Beiriger has traveled from her home in Ascension Parish to fish in places all around the world. She's caught all kinds of big fish in her life fishing with her husband, Jared. She has been excited before, but never as much as on Saturday, July 16.

That's when she hooked into the state record yellowedge grouper fishing about 50 miles out of Grand Isle. The big fish weighed 42.95 pounds and was just three pounds shy of the world record.

"I screamed. I jumped up and down. Tears were streaming down my face. I just couldn't believe it," she said, still on cloud nine a week after the catch. "I've got all kinds of big fish all over the place, but grouper is my thing. And to catch the state record.

There's a video of it all and it has more than 5,000 views on Facebook. I think the reaction was probably more exciting than the fish itself."

Like many record catches, it was almost a record that wasn't.

DROP A LINE OUT

She and Jared had headed their boat, the Double Down, out of Grand Isle and were taking the custom built 38-foot catamaran aluminum hull boat out looking for red snapper with her two grandchildren, Cannon and Ellie, and some friends. She had not even been fishing as they limited out on snapper fairly quickly and they headed back to an area to fish for grouper.

"I was just letting everybody else fish and we stopped in an area that was like a little canyon out from the rigs," she said. "I decided to drop a line out and as it was sinking to the bottom, one of our friends caught an amberjack. Those fish fight all the way in like crazy and I didn't want to do that. But then I got a fish on and I just knew it was an amberjack, too.

"It's funny now, but I almost told somebody else to take the fish, but as I was reeling it in, it just stopped. I thought I had lost the fish, but it was still really heavy. We thought at first I had lost the fish, or it was an amberjack and a shark bit the tail off. But it was so heavy, so I kept reeling. Then, when we got it up to the boat and saw the fish, it was so exciting."



Sue and Jared Beiriger with their grandkids, Cannon and Ellie.

A NEW RECORD

When they got the big fish in the boat, there was some speculation that it could be a state record, so they cut the rest of the trip short and headed to Bridgeside to weigh it. Jared texted ahead so they would have the scales ready.

"My favorite is grouper," she said. "That's my dream fish. I've caught bigger fish of other species, but this was my dream fish, to catch the state record grouper."

She also made sure the catch was preserved. Not only will she have a replica of the fish made to hang at the entrance of their camp in Grand Isle, she also had a fish stamp print made and is having a skull mount made as well. The fish will take the prime spot in the camp previously occupied by a huge Cubera snapper caught by Jared in Costa Rica. But he doesn't care.

"I just love seeing her catch big fish," he said. ■

Flounder season set to close Oct. 15 to Nov. 30

An From News Reports annual closed season for the recreational and commercial harvest of Southern Flounder from October 15 through November 30 of each year has been finalized. This statewide closure for Southern Flounder is for all sectors and all gear types, including any flounder caught as bycatch in any other fishery. Exemptions that previously existed for southern flounder caught as bycatch on a shrimping trip are no longer applicable. The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission (LWFC) was granted the authority by the Legislature to modify the shrimping bycatch exemption if the flounder stock is overfished and/or undergoing overfishing.

This closed season is necessary to attempt to recover the stock of Southern Flounder, which is overfished based on results from the most recent flounder stock assessment. At their March meeting, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) staff briefed the LWFC on management options necessary to recover the stock.

The LWFC chose to move forward with an annual closed season in the fall to allow mature female flounder to escape inshore waters and move offshore to spawn. This closed season is projected to create a 50% reduction in mature female Southern Flounder harvest. The closed season is an attempt to help the stock recover to a healthy biomass target by 2028. ■

State record bluegill



Photo courtesy Tim Trahan

Tim Trahan of Arcadia caught a 2.24-pound bluegill on May 30, 2022 that unseated the previous Louisiana state record bluegill, which weighed 1.83 pounds and was caught in 2016.

Trahan was fishing in a neighbor's pond between Shreveport and Monroe. ■

David Still with his 13.0 Bussey Brake lunker bass.



FATHER KNOWS BASS

DAVID SILLS LANDS 13.0 MONSTER LARGEMOUTH BASS ON BUSSEY

T By Kinny Haddox

Here's an old TV show called "Father Knows Best." There's a good chance 21-year-old Bryce Still never watched that show, but at least he knew to do what his dad, David, told him. Especially when it came to going fishing this past Father's Day. In this case, it was "Father Knows Bass."

The father-son team went fishing on Bussey Brake and "Father" not only knew best, he caught the best one of the day, a 13-pound lunker largemouth that is the largest one caught in the lake on record. The Stills did not get to weigh the monster bass on a certified scale. The official lake record to date was caught by Randy Howell with a 12-pound, 14-ounce bug-eyed largemouth during the Major League Fishing tournament earlier this year.

"We weighed it several times and it weighed 13.03 the first time and we put her in the livewell and kept fishing trying to figure out what to do," Still said. "We weighed her again on two different scales and the fish went 13.0, so that's what we called her at."

After the second weighing at the main dock in front of several witnesses, they took her back out in the lake and released her. Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries biologist Ryan Daniel said he is handling the fish this way. It will be listed as the largest bass caught on record, but it will have an asterisk beside it because it was not on an official scale.

THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM

The most amazing thing about the story is that it was the first bass that the 50-year-old Still caught on Bussey since it has been reopened, even though he lives in Bastrop.

"We knew there were some big ones in there and that's why I wanted to go to Bussey," Still said. "But I never expected for us to catch a fish like that."

It was a pretty day, with the temperature around 85 degrees and a north wind. I honestly think the reason the big one bit is because there was a cold front coming that night and the pressure was falling."

If you ever think one cast by a good looking spot is enough, Still says maybe you need to rethink that.

"I had already cast at the brush twice and got nothing," he said. "But the boat floated up a little bit closer and there was a shadow on the backside, so I threw back in one more time. I let it sit, worked it up and down, and then let it sit again. When I raised it the second time, the line started moving off. She took off and when she busted the top of the water, we both knew it was a huge bass, but not that huge."

"Bryce tried to knock her off with the net twice," he said, laughing about the competitive nature of their fishing together. "But when we got her in, we knew she was well over 10. And the hook was just barely hanging on the side of her mouth. One more good run and she would have been gone."

A GOOD DECISION TO GO WITH BUSSEY

And that "Father Knows Best" part? Bryce had wanted to go to another lake, but the elder Still wanted Bussey. Since it was Father's Day, that's where they went. Still works away from home a lot on his job building windmills and wanted to fish his "home" lake. Bryce is a pipefitter for an area business.

The big bass bit a 10 1/2-inch Red Shad Zoom worm fished with a 5/16-ounce weight, 20 pound Seaguar line.

There is now a certified scale at the Main Boat Dock of Bussey operated by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. The Stills did not know about that before they released the big one, but aren't as worried about whether it's the official record or not.

"We wish we would have known about the certified scales, but we didn't and we are confident the scales we used were accurate. It is what it is. We know what we had," Still said. "The scales are always right on with what weights we catch in tournaments and frankly, anything near that big, they usually weigh a little short. So she could have been 2-3 ounces bigger."

The elder Still also said it won't be his last trip back to Bussey. "I don't think that fish will go a long way away and I know this coming spring when she's full of eggs, she'll weigh close to 15 pounds. I'll be working that stretch of water every chance I get," he said. ■

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Stockton Roberson with his 11.50-pound Lake Claiborne largemouth that was the Majestic Big Bass winner.

MAJESTIC BASS

CLAIBORNE'S LATE NIGHT BIG BASS PARTY LEAVES ANGLERS WIDE AWAKE

W By Kinny Haddox
hat were you doing from 2 – 4 a.m. on July 23? It's a good bet that you weren't out fishing. But some folks were, and at least three of them are glad they were.

While most of us were sleeping, a trio of anglers landed three bass this past weekend in the Majestic Big Bass tournament that weighed a combined total of more than 30 pounds, and on Lake Claiborne no less. Claiborne is a great fishing lake, but not known as a lunker bass haven.

Stockton Roberson of Dubach led the pack with an 11.50-pound largemouth caught around 3 a.m. Tyler Lewis caught a 10.38 pounder around 4 a.m. and Craig Kolb caught a 9.39 pounder around the same time. Roberson and Lewis won big bass of the hour for their respective catches. Roberson also won the overall big bass prize. Kolb's catch was good news/bad news. He landed it the same hour as Lewis and came in second in hourly big bass despite an enormous fish.



EIGHT HOURS PAYS OFF

The key to the big ones in the 16-hour long annual marathon hourly big bass event, which begins at 8 p.m. on Friday, was night fishing. And patience. Robertson sat on the same spot, a small hump off the end of a boat dock in deeper water, the entire tournament.

"We had been catching some good bass there at night and I knew if I sat there long enough, it would pay off. I had sat there and cast in the same area for eight hours when she finally bit," he said. "I had caught one small fish at 8:45 and then didn't get another bite until the big one. I was just sitting there zoned out and fishing on cruise control. I felt the bite and it woke me up and I set the hook. When it set, I knew she was a big one. When she broke the top of the water, I knew by the sound it was my personal best."



Craig Kolb's 9.39 whopper almost topped the 10 pound mark.

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Roberson, a 24-year-old employee of Stallion Oil Field Services, caught the fish on an 8-inch black and blue PlasmaTail plastic worm. It's a worm he has to order because he can't find it in local tackle stores.

A GREAT SURPRISE

Lewis said fishing for him was slow as well, but he got the right bite at the right time.

"I was fishing in an area off the bank, but not too far from the docks," he said. "I only got five bites the entire tournament and this one kind of surprised me. I felt the bite and as soon as I set the hook, she dove down and wallowed around on the bottom, then came up like a marlin and jumped as far out of the water as she could trying to shake the hook. She came to the boat fairly easily, but when she saw the boat, she took off again on a couple of runs.

"When I finally got her in the net and in the boat, I sat down and was shaking so bad I couldn't even retie my line," he said. "God just blessed me. I'm no better than any other fishermen, I was just blessed with this big one."

It was also his personal best. He caught his bass on a 10-inch Blue Fleck worm. He lives in Homer.

Local angler and tournament director Dale Taylor puts on Majestic tournaments each summer on Lake D'Arbonne and on Claiborne. The majority of the tournament hours are at night because the bite is better and the anglers get a break from the heat.

Lake Claiborne is a 6,400 acre lake created in 1970 located just outside of Homer. ■



Tyler Lewis landed this double digit 10.38-pound monster on Lake Claiborne.

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WHAT TO DO?

Some hunters, elected officials at odds with LDWF on CWD measures

C By Joe Curtis
hronic Wasting Disease (CWD) slithered into Louisiana when the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries announced on Feb. 2, 2022 that a suspected case of CWD was reported in a harvested deer.

The tentative diagnosis was made on samples submitted by LDWF staff from an adult buck taken on private land in Tensas Parish. The Louisiana Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory confirmed the results.

Since then, LDWF officials imposed an emergency ban in July on deer supplemental feed and deer carcass exporting encompassing all of Madison, Tensas and Franklin parishes. These areas are heavily hunted by sportsmen from around the state, producing many trophy deer each year.

BAN AREA REDUCED

In August, pressure from hunters and elected officials led the LDWF to reduce the ban's area to approximately 10 miles in Franklin Parish.

"We know that there was some environmental contamination," LDWF Deer Program Manager Johnathan Bordelon said in a July 7 meeting.

"(The Tensas Parish deer) had been shedding infectious material into the environment for some time. We did not know where that deer came in contact with the disease and whether or not it spread the disease to other deer in the area."

The ban has no "sunset," meaning the time it is active could be forever or just temporary. LDWF has a goal to collect 300 samples this year to obtain more details about CWD.

If hunters or landowners have any questions, they should

contact their local LDWF officials to make sure they understand the regulations and borders of the ban.

Many hunters, business owners and lawmakers balked at the LDWF ban on feeding and the reach of the ban, claiming the ban would hurt businesses relying on the annual deer season.

Leading the push to reduce the original control area's ban were Rep. Neil Riser and Sen. Glen Womack. Riser, who sits on the Natural Resources and Environment committee, led an oversight hearing in which the reduced area was proposed.

"This issue has always been how will a hunter define that area; how will enforcement do that," Riser said.

"Sen. Womack recognized how serious CWD is, so we don't want it to spread," Riser said. "But, like Franklin Parish and other rural agricultural parishes, it was covering a lot outside the 25 miles. We're trying to revise and narrow the ban width. We looked at the true 25 miles."

AFFECTING MANY PEOPLE

Riser and Womack's main argument was the negative impact on businesses that sell the deer feed such as Sullivan's Feed & Western Wear in Winnsboro, Franklin Parish's seat. On an average year, Sullivan's will sell \$400,000 worth of deer feed and sells to an eight-parish area, according to Jessica Sinclair, owner of the business.

"This is going to affect everybody from me, farmers, the hunter providing their family some meat, the processors, the taxidermists even to older couples with land leases," Sinclair said. "If you can't feed, a hunter is not going to sit there all day and wait for nothing. Feeding and baiting is a big part."

Recreational feeding of the deer is also popular in this region, Sinclair said. Some people feed the deer to watch them, and

under this proposed law, they can no longer feed the deer.

Paul Bartleson of Tensas Parish said LDWF officials were being “vague” about CWD and their methods of control.

“One deer found at Yucatan and no other deer found around it? How do you have a problem and only be one deer?” he said. Bartleson said he felt that one case was not enough for any bans. “In my opinion, (CWD) might happen, but it isn’t here yet,” Bartleson said. “When they get more than one isolated case or a blow up, that’s a different case.”

During the hearing, Bordelon explained to the Natural Resources and Environment committee the requirements of the control area. It is a deer carcass export ban, meaning any deer harvested in this ban area cannot leave the area unless it has been quartered, processed to the point where the spinal cord and skull cap has been cleaned efficiently and removed, Bordelon explained.

TAXIDERMY TRACKING

LDWF will also track deer to taxidermists harvested in the control area.

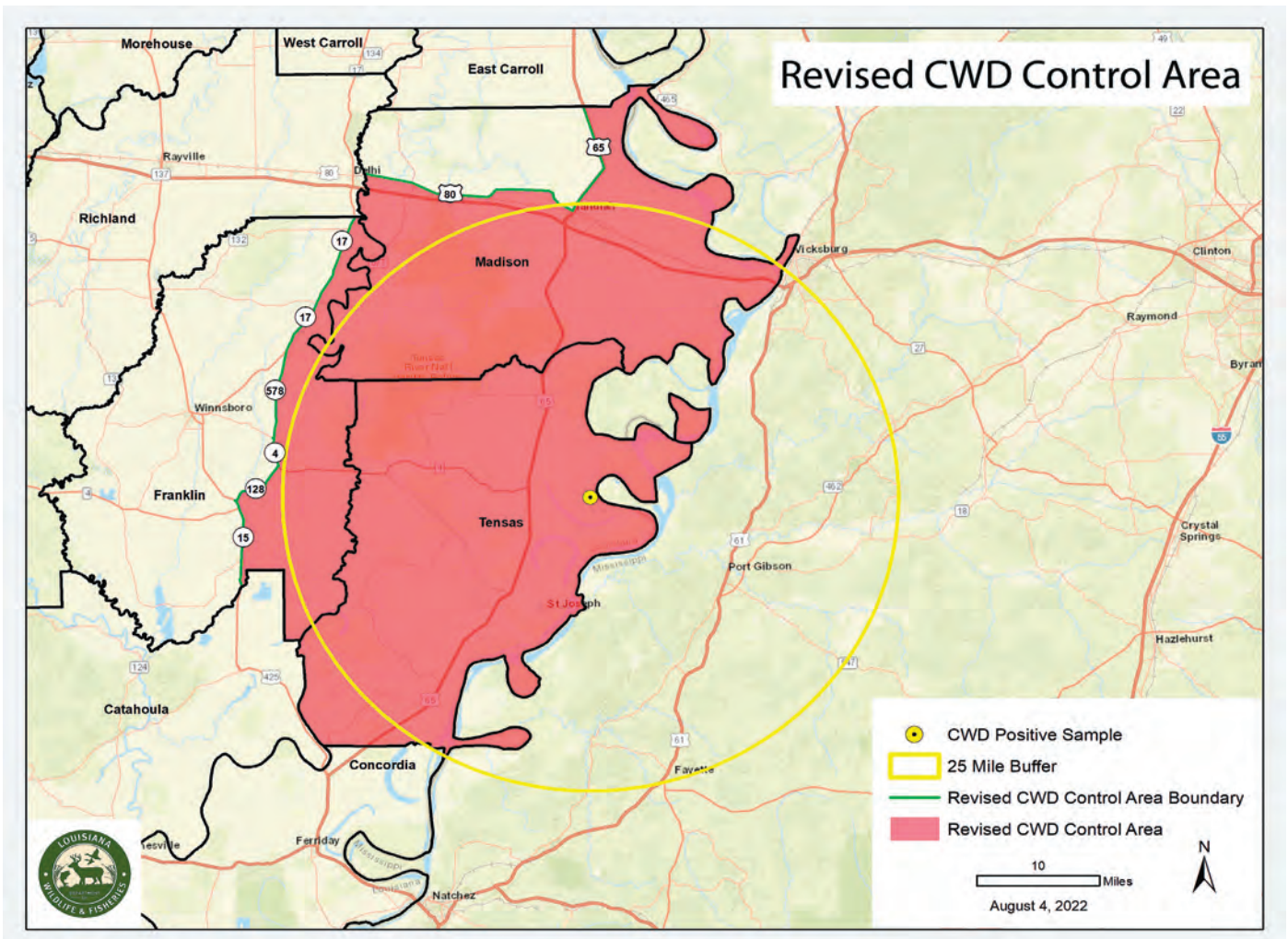
“If you are a hunter and just harvested a buck you would like to take to the taxidermy, you bring the deer to any taxidermist within the control, regardless of the parish as long as that parish is within the control area,” Bordelon said.

However, if you want to bring it to a taxidermist outside the control area, Bordelon said, “the commission tasked us with developing an electronic waiver. A waiver that would allow hunters to transport certain parts outside the control area, and the parts in this case would be prohibited to move. You would have to go to our website because you may harvest that deer outside of normal office hours.”

With that waiver, a hunter would provide specific information such as LDWF number, parish in which you harvested the deer and affirmation during that process, stating you agreed to the conditions, according to Bordelon.

A hunter has 72 hours from the execution of the permit to bring the carcass to the taxidermist. Once a hunter has the unique number, he or she can then move the deer with the number on their smart device or have it printed out. Once at the taxidermist, he or she has to agree to two things: dispose of the carcass (double bag items and dispose in a trash container) and must retain a unique identifier with their customer records.

In 2021 during the season, a similar feeding ban was imposed in parts of Morehouse and Union Parish as a reaction when a deer harvested in south Arkansas just a few miles from the state line was confirmed with CWD. After testing several hundred deer, none were found with CWD there. ■





THE BEST OF ICAST: FRESHWATER

Brian McKinnon, center, poses with his invention, the PacBak P88-MK Combo, chosen Best of Show at the 2022 ICAST outdoor show.

PACBAK P-88 COMBO COOLER, TABLE, SEALER (AND MORE) IS ICAST WINNER

T By Kinny Haddox
here's fishing for fun and then there's fishing for flavor. The flavor part comes from eating your catch, and the fresher you can eat it or the quicker you can preserve it, the better.

That's one reason why the PacBak P88-MK Combo was chosen as the Best of Show at the 2022 ICAST show in Orlando, Florida in July and boosted the small company to the forefront of fishing in an instant. It won out over more than 900 entries in the New Product Showcase, including all the big boys of the industry. It was designed for freshwater fishing use, but frankly, could go anywhere.

MOBILE KITCHEN

The innovative do-it-all-cooler is basically a mobile kitchen (which MK stands for). The cooler has a battery operated vacuum sealer, a removable/foldout table top, a cutting board and three different chambers for storing food, drinks, bait and, of course, fish. It works for a trip to the pond, an overnight camping trip or

on trips to hard-to-reach waters.

"Me and my brother grew up on the river," said Brian McKinnon, designer of the system. "We would fish all summer long, and pretty much out of necessity we would take two coolers to separate the wet and cold from the dry and warm. We would take a table and a vacuum sealer and go up river until we couldn't see footsteps. Then, we would take salmon right out of the river and throw them on the grill."

McKinnon and the company are based in Anchorage, Alaska. They almost didn't even make it to the show and settled for a small booth on the outer edges of the arena. But the unique product overcame adversity to win the Soft and Hard Coolers Best of Category and the prestigious main event of ICAST, the Best of Show Award.

Adversity is nothing new to McKinnon. Tragedy almost destroyed his life. He was in attendance at the infamous country music concert mass shooting several years ago in Las Vegas and a good friend died in his arms. He ended up struggling with

PTSD and was even homeless at one point. But he overcame and now is at the top of the fishing cooler game. This is a great item, but it certainly is not your daddy's ice chest. MSRP is around \$899.

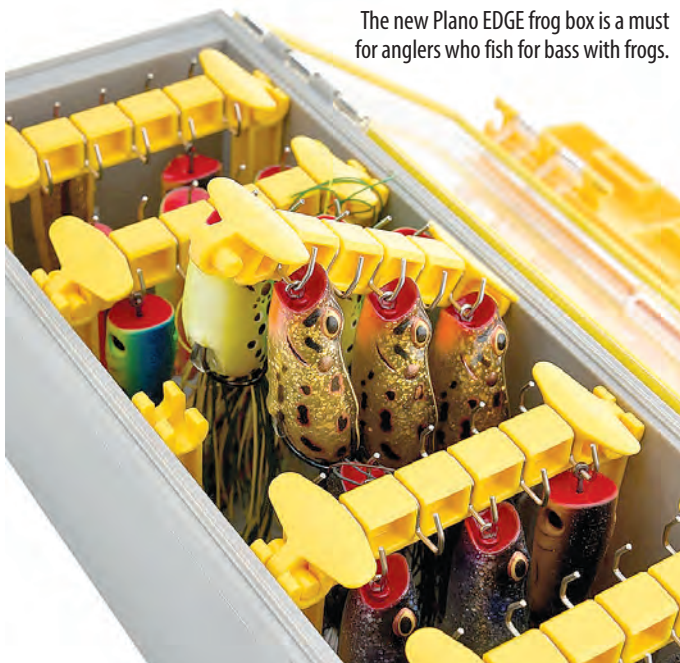
Here are a handful of other new freshwater products for 2023 to be on the lookout for:

PLANO EDGE FROG BOX

The use of plastic frogs for catching bass is at an all-time high. A few years back, anglers might only have six or a dozen frogs in their tackle arsenal. Today, serious anglers have dozens in all kinds of shapes, sizes and actions. The new Frog Box offers 25 dual-sided posts allowing you to hang up to 50 frogs by their line ties.

It offers easy identification and access to frogs when an angler needs a quick bait change and gives them a quick view of all their available frogs to make the best choice for the situation.

The new Plano EDGE frog box is a must for anglers who fish for bass with frogs.



ZEBCO BULLET 20 SPINCAST REEL

Tens of thousands of fishermen caught their first fish on a Zebco. It's one of the oldest products around, but almost every year, it gets a bump up in technology. This year is no different as the new Bullet 20 has been remastered in a smaller size, making it perfect for a variety of finesse techniques including small jigs, inline spinners, and lightweight lures. The Bullet 20 provides phenomenal speed with its ability to pick up 28.9 inches of line with each turn of the reel handle. Forget the \$15 Zebco combo you bought your kids. This one has a suggested selling price of around \$110.

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SPIDERWIRE DURABRAID HI-VIS YELLOW

Want to know the best line on the market? Good luck.

There's no way to answer that question because there are too many great choices. But this line was voted Best of Category for Fishing Line at ICAST. Engineered to be 25% stronger than conventional braided lines thanks to its use of gel-spun polyethylene, it has top-of-the-line abrasion-resistance ideal for fishing around rocks, docks, boat hoists, heavy vegetation, and timber.

BERKLEY SLOBBERKNOCKER

For two years in a row, Berkley and Pure Fishing captured the Best of Category for freshwater hard lures, this year with this aggressively named bait. Slobberknocker means to get hit extremely hard, and that's what bass do to this innovative bladed jig. It provides versatility and ease of use with its ability to deflect off cover and rip through vegetation as the sizable blade delivers increased flash and water disturbance.

The Garland Mayfly showed early in product testing that it will land big slab crappie.

BOBBY GARLAND'S MAYFLY CRAPPIE BAIT

The Mayfly is a 2.25-inch insect-profile design that stays true to Bobby Garland's reputation of product innovation specific to crappie fishing. This new soft-plastic bait is loaded with features appealing to multiple senses crappie rely on for feeding. Plus it just looks good to fishermen. Its distinctive silhouette serves the species' focus on vision and sight. And flexible appendages and tail produce vibrations that crappie can "hear."

The lure's light fish-oil enhancement satisfies smell and taste. Collectively, these features bring the Mayfly to life. It was designed to trigger strikes from stubborn crappie that have been brought to light thanks to forward-facing sonar's popularity in crappie fishing. It comes in a variety of colors.

BERKLEY POWERBAIT POWERSTINGER

Berkley continued on a roll with its second 2022 Best of Category, this time for Freshwater Soft Lure. The PowerStinger is a





The Slobberknocker is designed to bust bass out of heavy cover.

HUMMINBIRD MEGA LIVE IMAGING TARGETLOCK

In a fishing world dominated by electronics, you would expect some new developments in trolling motors and depth finders. MEGA Live Imaging TargetLock from Johnson Outdoors Marine Electronics didn't disappoint, winning the Best of Category for electronics. TargetLock makes it more simple for anglers to use the Minn Kota Ultrex trolling motor and Live Imaging, allowing independent trolling motor control and movement of the depth finder transducer as it locks onto waypoints. It's designed for the serious angler who invests in serious electronic gear setups.

LEGEND TOURNAMENT BASS ROD – ST. CROIX ROD

Picking a fishing rod is like picking a fishing bait. There are so many it is hard to choose. But this rod series was voted as Best of Category for freshwater fishing rods at the show by media and retailers. The next generation of Legend Tournament Bass is the latest in St. Croix Rod design, materials, and angler recognized feedback. From specific handles, lengths, powers and actions plus new materials, this rod comes in several models for spinning or baitcasting. ■

swimbait, but it is uniquely designed to work with a bladed jig as a trailer as well as just a stand-alone swimbait. Using trailers on bladed jigs isn't for every application, but the bulk of that combination is aimed at big bass with big appetites.

Such is the case with the PowerBait PowerStinger, recommended as a bladed jig trailer, long and slender where it won't affect the natural action of the jig. It can also fit the bill as a stand-alone swimbait. These lures also come in the super natural looking patterns that won Berkley awards last year for its PowerGilly.

THE BEST OF ICAST: SALTWATER ➤

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THE BEST OF ICAST: SALTWATER

CRABBY NEW LURE CLAWS ITS WAY TO THE FOREFRONT OF ICAST HONORS

Let's face it. Fishing lures are the quarterback of your angling equipment team. They get in on every "play" and dictate the action. They get most of the credit when you win (i.e. catch a fish). They get most of the blame when you don't.

So it's no wonder that among all the new saltwater products on display at the 2022 ICAST show in Orlando, Florida in July was an innovative inshore fish lure, the Best of Category winner in saltwater soft baits. It's the Z-Man Kicker CrabZ. It's hard not to bite on a new bait!

CRABZ'S LIFELIKE PROFILE

Daniel Nussbaum, President of Z-Man Fishing Products, explained the thinking behind the new bait.

"Crabs spend a lot of time scooting along the bottom, but they also swim throughout the water column on top and at mid depth. When they come off the bottom they are swimming sideways and the first thing you notice is that big trailing claw. Its lifelike profile with some good action is what makes this bait."

So many inshore gamefish love to eat crab that this is a multi-use lure, even though it was designed specifically with redfish in mind. The difference, Z-man says, is the action. There are a lot of crab imitation baits on the market, but this one adds super action. During testing, they caught every kind of fish imaginable. This new bait was designed to mimic a crab swimming sideways, as a crab often does to get away from predators. The

lure is 3 1/2 inches long and has segmented legs, large eyes and protruding antennae. The keeled belly of the bait keeps it upright yet shimmying on a smooth straight retrieve. It comes in 10 color patterns and works well on a ProBulletZ, SnakelockZ or ChinlockZ jighead.

Here are a handful of other new saltwater products for 2023 to be on the lookout for:

PENN AUTHORITY SPINNING REEL

And of course, a good bait isn't good without a rod and reel, so there are plenty of new choices there, too. One of the most intriguing and promising, according to members of the outdoor press and sporting goods buyers, was the new Penn Authority reel. It will be available on the market in September.

Penn's new Authority spinning reel features an IPX8 waterproof rating, CNC Gear technology with a stainless-steel gear train and pinion gear, and Leveline slow oscillation system. The 12+1 bearing system delivers a smooth retrieve, and the Dura-Drag generates maximum drag pressure. Authority will come in sizes ranging from 2500 to 10500 and cost from \$499.95 to \$599.95.

LIVETARGET LIVE SHRIMP

Naturally, it's hard to turn attention from baits when there are so many great ones. That's why this lure was voted the Best of Category for saltwater hard lure.



This tabletop full of new Penn Authority saltwater spinning reels will put lots of saltwater fish in trouble.

16.5 pounds, right?

But most fishermen want to know the score, so this new net is a great, easy way to do that. It's the first all-in-one fish net, scale and ruler for fresh and saltwater anglers. It has a scale that will go up to 30 pounds and can allow you to catch, weigh and release a fish quickly. With a built-in 30 pound scale, anglers can now quickly get the weight of a fish and release it without having to handle it and hang the fish on a handheld scale.

It works like this. Scoop up any fish up to 30 pounds, remove the hook and turn on the scale. Hold the net still in a vertical position with the net portion down to record the quick weight of your fish, then release it back in the water.

BUBBA SALTWATER MULTI-FLEX FILLET KNIFE SET

Bubba knives have swept the fishing industry off its feet in recent years and the trend is continuing. Bubba's Saltwater Multi-Flex Interchangeable Knife Set features an easy-to-use squeeze-and-slide mechanism that allows you to switch between blades quickly depending on what you are cleaning or cutting. There is a Flex-Change locking system that keeps the blade safe and secure.

Anglers can quickly change from one or two different full-tang blades, a 9-inch serrated flex and a 9-inch stiff blade, and Bubba's non-slip grip handle along with a watertight hard-sided carry case.

Most "live shrimp" lures are soft lures, but this one has a hard plastic body with lively plastic legs. The real difference is a swing-weight system that allows the lure to fall through the water column with a horizontal profile. On retrieve, the weight wobbles and gives the shrimp a wobble. Anglers can customize the rate of fall and wobble using two interchangeable weights. Live Shrimp come in two sizes and eight colors.

THE FRABILL WITNESS WEIGH NET

You'd think the last thing anglers want in the boat is a landing net that is also a tattle-tail. I mean, there's nothing like landing a "20 pound redfish" and then your net telling everybody it's just

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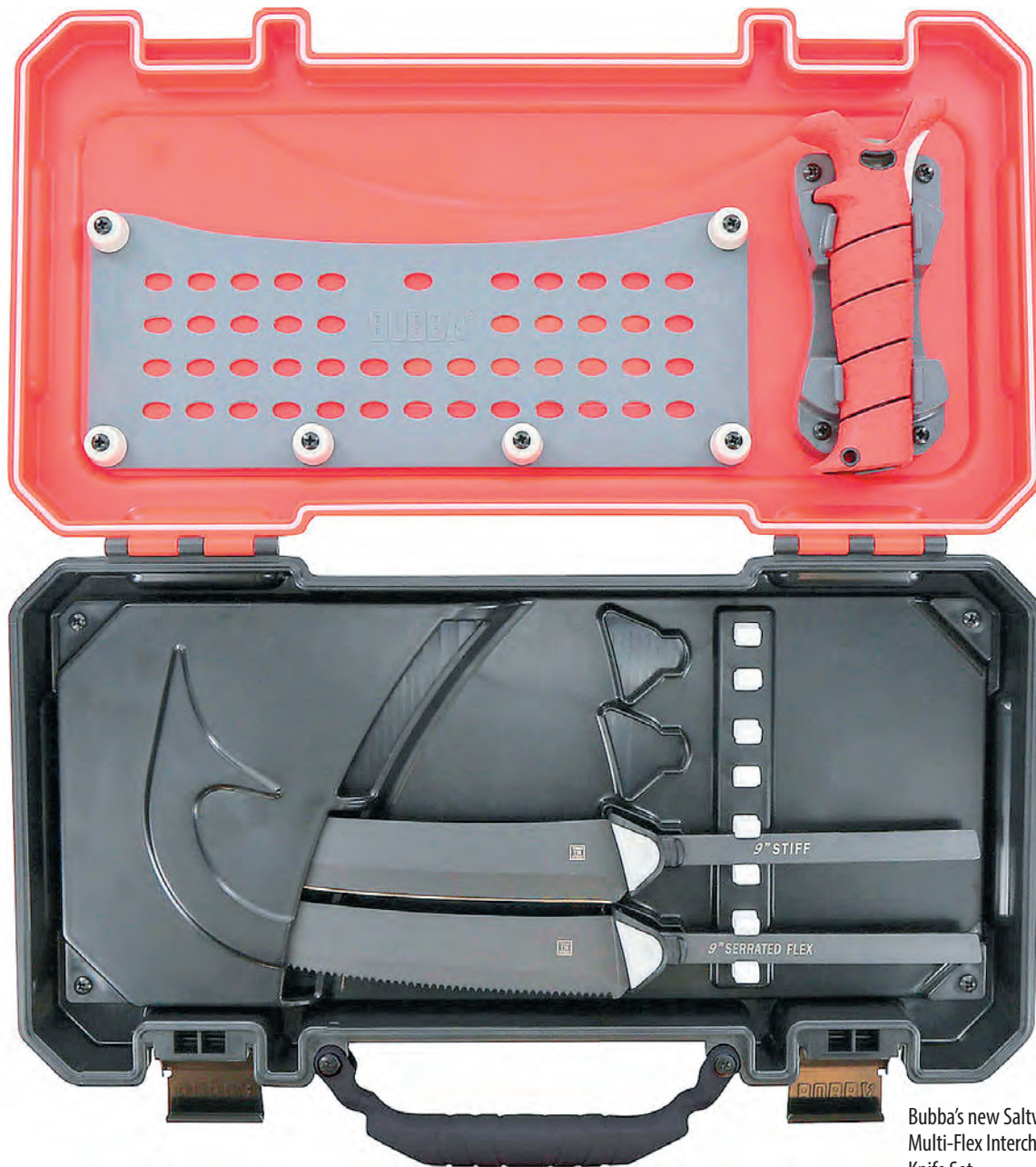
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Bubba's new Saltwater Multi-Flex Interchangeable Knife Set.

EMMA BEAN'S PESKY COOLING RELIEF THERAPY

Let's face it. No matter how much suntan oil or bug spray you use, you are going to mess up one day and get a sunburn or bug bites. And while Emma Bean has a lot of products to prevent those type of things, when it does happen, they've come through with a new one.

Emma Bean's Cooling Relief Therapy gives almost instant cooling relief for sunburn, bug bites, itching and even sore muscles and minor aches and pain. Their newest topical application product contains a mix of Arnica, Camphor, Menthol and Tea Tree Oil.

UGLY STIK CARBON INSHORE ROD

Not everything has to be pretty to be good. Ugly Stik has proven that for years. The brand has put out tough and durable fishing rods for years and the new Ugly Stik Carbon Inshore Rod was voted Best Saltwater Rod at the latest ICAST gathering.

The latest Ugly Stik features a heavy duty 100% graphite blank, with a lightweight, well-balanced rod with increased sensitivity. There are nine models, including both spinning and casting. The icing on the cake is the one-piece stainless steel Ugly Tuff guides that eliminate insert pop-outs. The handle is cork on the fore grip for touch and a shrink tube rear handle for extended durability.

SIMMS SOLARFLEX GUIDE COOLING HOODIE

There are two things that can cut a fishing trip short in a hurry. First, of course, is the fish not biting. Second is getting so hot you can't enjoy being out there. Saltwater fishermen know that feeling during a long day on the water, which sometimes lasts from sunup to sundown.

The value of staying comfortable and as cool as possible is why Simms Solarflex Guide Cooling Hoodie won the Best of Category for Warm Weather Technical Apparel. The hoodie offers maximum sun coverage and cooling power with a three-panel hood and a built-in gaiter. Integrated with cooling fabric technology allows the hoodie to stay cool to the touch even at mid day. It offers UPF 50 Sun protection value and has a large zippered back pocket. ■

Emma Beans Pesky Cooling Relief Therapy can bring relief for outdoor stings, burns and soreness.



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THE 2022 FISH OF THE YEAR WINNERS

T From News Reports
 wo well-deserving Louisiana anglers were presented with the Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association's (LOWA) prestigious Fish of the Year Awards 2022 at the LOWA annual conference awards banquet in Thibodaux, La., on Aug. 6, 2022.

Annually LOWA honors the anglers voted by the LOWA Fish Records Committee to have had the most significant catch in the previous year in both Rod & Reel and Fly Fishing Divisions.

Winners for the 2022 LOWA Fish of Year are:

Rod & Reel Division: Ella Douglas of Thibodaux, La., was presented this coveted award for her feat of landing with a 25.80

Dog Snapper caught in the Gulf of Mexico, a new state record.

Fly Fishing Division: Nicholas Vlahos of Youngsville, La., was presented this coveted award for his feat of landing a 3.01 Florida Pompano fishing out of Breton Sound, a new state record.

Anyone desiring further information about the winners can contact LOWA Fish Records Chairman, Lyle Johnson at fishrecords@yahoo.com.

The Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association has been the curator of the Louisiana State Fish Records since 1940.

For further information about LOWA and the Fish Records, you can visit www.laoutdoorwriters.com. ■



Ella Douglas of Thibodaux won the Fish of the Year award for landing a 25.80 Dog Snapper in the Gulf of Mexico.



Nicholas Vlahos of Youngsville won his Fish of the Year award for the new state record 3.01 Florida Pompano he caught out of Breton Sound.

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POGIE CONCERNS UNRESOLVED

CCA SAYS LOUISIANA IS "THE WILD WEST FOR MENHADEN INDUSTRY"

This aerial photo, although blurry, shows the kind of extreme damage that pogie harvesting causes in shallow water near the coast.

P From News Reports
 ogie boats continued to pound Louisiana's beaches and shorelines this summer and Louisiana is still the "Wild West for the menhaden industry," said David Cresson, Coastal Conservation Executive Director and CEO.

Cresson outlined concerns and yet another call for action around the lack of protection of Louisiana's natural resources in a "Pogie Update" to CCA members and media Thursday, August 18.

"The only possible conclusion is that the industry just doesn't care," Cresson said.

"All summer long, massive pogie ships have been seen harvesting in the shallow waters off Louisiana's beaches and shorelines. Sometimes, the boats have been spotted making sets, using their giant purse seines, inside the shallow bays and inlets off of Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes, churning up bottom sediment and netting millions of pounds of critical forage and bycatch. Not surprisingly, there are countless reports of dead redfish and other species left behind.

"Daybrook Fisheries (Empire) and Omega Protein (Abbeville and Moss Point, MS) remove nearly 1 billion pounds of menhaden and tens of millions of pounds of bycatch from Louisiana's shorelines each year. Earlier this week, multiple menhaden vessels



Photo courtesy CCA

were observed operating within ¼-mile of the coast. Sadly, this was not a surprise, as it has been a common occurrence along our coast in recent years," Cresson said.

"Remember that the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission thought a ¼-mile buffer (excluding Breton Sound, which apparently is not important enough to protect at all) was an

adequate step to address the problems those boats are causing," he said. "The industry promised, in formal testimony, to adhere strictly to the buffers established coastwide. But, even though the buffer is grossly inadequate, the menhaden industry refuses to abide by it.

"I spoke recently to a charter captain from Plaquemines Parish who told me that he's never seen the boats as close to shore as they have been this year," Cresson went on to say. "They're closer than ever this year, setting in places where the water is 5-6 feet deep," he said. "Nothing can survive what happens when these boats set their nets. All that's left when they leave is muddy water and dead fish. I have received similar calls from many others.

"Yesterday morning, Capt. Travis Lovell of Dularge reported seeing Omega ships 'running right over' the Pickets Artificial Reef, in 6 to 7 feet of water.

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Remember, these pogie steamers draft between 6-12 feet of water. They likely damaged the reef habitat that CCA, LDWF, and our partners spent millions to build a few years ago... a reef that provides a home for speckled trout, redfish, oysters, and various marine species and has become an extremely popular spot for recreational anglers."

When the menhaden industry says they "go where the fish are," they apparently mean what they say, without regard for the damage they might inflict, Cresson added. Aerial footage shows the damage being done to the sea floor by enormous menhaden steamers as they corral schools of menhaden into their purse seines. This is a common occurrence in Louisiana's territorial waters."

Mississippi enacted a full 1-mile buffer across their entire coast where pogie harvest is restricted. Advocates in Virginia are working to remove the harvesters from state waters, where they have caused enormous damage to local fisheries.

"Meanwhile, despite overwhelming support from the public, the Louisiana House of Representatives and the Senate, political roadblocks have stalled meaningful pieces of legislation aimed at reasonable regulation in Louisiana waters," Cresson said. "Thanks to Rep. Joe Orgeron and many others, the actions of these companies and how they operate in Louisiana waters are being brought out of the shadows and into the light. But real change in Louisiana has proven hard to come by."

Cresson cited a report out of Virginia where, "Omega admitted to killing and releasing roughly 6 tons of redfish (about 12,000 pounds) in a single netful a few weeks ago," leading to a dead fish spill that closed a state park. "One wonders how (or if) the incident in Virginia would have been reported had it not occurred near a state park and caused the closure of a crowded beach.

"The most recent data shows that more than 70% of the entire Gulf of Mexico menhaden harvest occurs within 3 miles of the Louisiana coast. (up from 54% in 1998)," Cresson said. "As much as 300-400 million pounds comes from Breton and Chandeleur Sounds alone. Historical bycatch studies performed by on-boat "observers" admit they have trouble estimating what is being harvested and

don't count any dead fish left in the water. Are we to believe that concentrating effort close to shore, with known limitations of bycatch observations, that there is no reason to investigate the trend of increased pressure within Louisiana territorial waters?

"The real issue is our lack of understanding of how taking about a billion pounds of forage from Louisiana's waters impacts other fish and wildlife species, and how this style of harvest might impact our fragile habitats."

Cresson said sportsmen can help by continuing to send photos, videos and e-mails when they see these activities near Louisiana's shorelines and beaches, or when they encounter fish kills. CCA and the Gulf Menhaden Coalition will continue their commitment "to righting this wrong and pursuing reasonable solutions to this problem," he said.

You can contact CCA Louisiana at 225-952-9200 or send email to david@ccalouisiana.com. ■

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STOP!

HELP PUT AN END TO BOATING ACCIDENTS, FATALITIES IN LOUISIANA

Editor's Note: All across the state, outdoorsmen are dying in boating accidents. It is happening on everyday trips on the water. It is happening in places like Toledo Bend, Lake Pontchartrain, Cross Lake, Blind River, Calcasieu Lake, False River, the Intracoastal Waterway and more. Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Secretary Jack Montoucet has sent this urgent message to Louisiana boaters:

Louisiana, please take note. So far this year there have been 22 fatalities in boating accidents in the state. There were 26 in all of 2021 and 24 in 2020. As Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, I feel compelled to yell "STOP!"

What we need to do is not complicated.

Wear a personal flotation device, although the old name, "Life Jacket," gets the point across better. Great swimmers, not wearing a life jacket, have fallen into the water and drowned because they were injured in the fall or were swept away by a strong undercurrent that defeated them. A life jacket could have made the difference.

According to the United States Coast Guard (USCG), in 2020, 86% of the nation's drowning victims were not wearing a life jacket.

Driving a boat and consuming alcohol is a deadly mix. Stop. Alcohol use is the leading known contributing factor in fatal boating accidents, according to the USCG.

Folks, be mindful that sitting or standing on any portion of the deck of a vessel that is not designated for seating, no matter how much fun it is, can be very dangerous. Boats regularly encounter waves or vessel wakes and occasionally hit submerged objects, and factor in speed, now you have an increased the risk of being thrown overboard.

LDWF offers boating safety classes (<https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/boater-education>) around the state. These classes are mandatory for anyone born after January 1, 1984, who wants to operate a watercraft over 10 horsepower. But, we want all boaters to take the course.

USCG's 2020 statistics found that, 77 percent of deaths occurred on vessels where the operator had not received boating safety instruction.

Understand that every boat, even the trusted one you are driving or riding in, can be unsafe in a split second because of negligence, another boater or suddenly troubled waters.

Please folks, be wise. Care about yourselves and the people around you by adhering to safety protocols — wear a life jacket, boat sober, do not ride in a vessel if the captain is impaired, and take a boater safety class. These measures can help you, your loved ones and friends return home alive. ■

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■ By Don Shoopman

**IT'S LOOKING LIKE A
NON-TYPICAL SEASON
FOR LOUISIANA
DEER HUNTERS.**

2022-2023 WMA DEER PREVIEW

Perhaps the biggest issue facing deer hunters this season stems from last season. The first positive Chronic Wasting Disease case in Louisiana was found in an adult buck shot this past winter on private land in Tensas Parish.

The National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa, confirmed the positive case that was reported to the public the first week of February. Louisiana became the 29th state to detect CWD, even though it was only one deer.

With that in mind, according to Mitch McGee, Monroe Region biologist supervisor since 2016, LDWF will increase free testing for CWD at sites on Buckhorn Wildlife Management Area in Tensas Parish and Big Lake WMA in Franklin, Tensas and Madison parishes, the department's chosen CWD Control Area.

Deer hunters who harvest a deer on those WMAs can drop the deer's head off for testing at no cost to them. They no longer can take spinal material out of those three parishes now, McGee, a 13-year veteran with LDWF, said. According to a prepared statement earlier this year from LDWF, deer hunters are restricted to transporting deboned meat, a clean skull plate with antlers and the cape — the skin of the head and shoulders.

Southeast Louisiana's WMAs probably won't have many, if any, 1 ½-year-old deer that usually make up the bulk of the harvest, according to Bradley Breland. The Hammond Region's veteran

biologist said Hurricane Ida's storm surge took a toll on fawns that were 6 to 7 weeks old.

MAGNITUDE OF THE STORM

While nothing was documented, Breland realizes the magnitude of that storm that hit Aug. 29 caught fawns at a vulnerable time. Breland and Jillian Day, the region's biologist manager, assume the region lost the whole crop of fawns.

As a result, LDWF eliminated either-sex days with modern or primitive firearms.

Hunters who utilize WMAs will pay \$5 more this year for a WMA Access Permit. That annual fee in the past was \$15, but as of June 1 the annual fee is \$20 for resident/nonresident or five-day permit for \$5 (must be five consecutive days) for resident/nonresident. All WMA users, boaters, hikers, bird watchers, berry pickers and anglers, must pay the \$20 fee to access the 1.5 million acres of land managed by the LDWF. It was one of many license and permit price increases.

Youths 17 and under aren't required to have a WMA Access Permit. Also, the Sportsman Paradise license and Lifetime licenses cover the WMA Access Permit.

Here's a look at last year's successes and this year's outlook for Louisiana deer hunters by region.

HAMMOND REGION >



Kayden Arceneaux was hunting at Sherburne WMA on Jan. 2, 2022 when he killed this 8-point that weighed 161 pounds and had a 15 1/4-inch inside spread.



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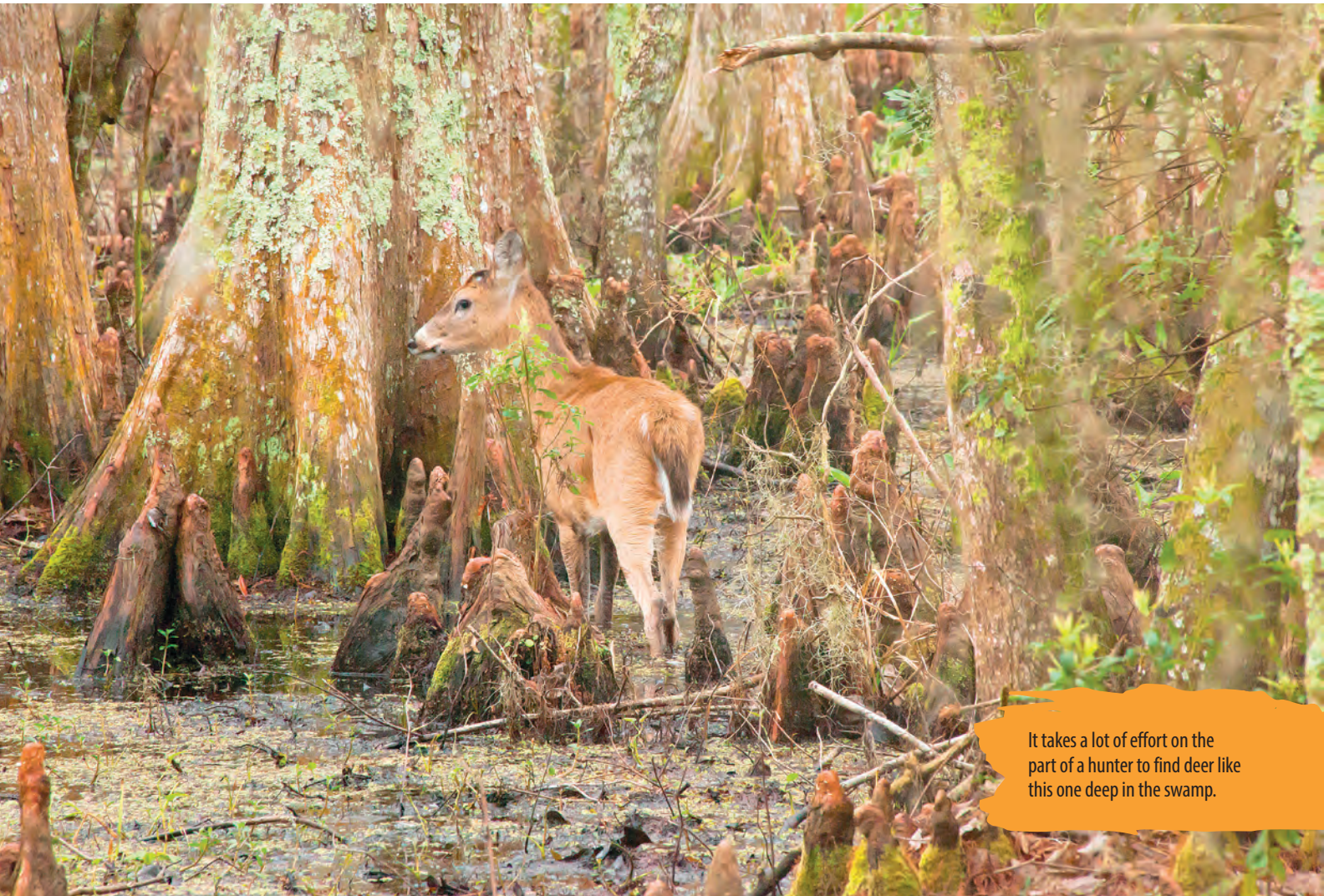
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It takes a lot of effort on the part of a hunter to find deer like this one deep in the swamp.

HAMMOND REGION

TOP WMA DEER HARVEST NUMBERS FOR 2021-22

- **Maurepas Swamp WMA:** 55 deer reported (49 bucks, 6 does)
- **Pearl River WMA:** 56 deer reported (34 bucks, 22 does)
- **Joyce WMA:** 29 deer reported (24 bucks, 5 does)
- **Tunica Hills WMA:** 35 deer reported (24 bucks, 11 does)
- **Sandy Hollow WMA:** 19 deer reported (13 bucks, 6 does)

Several Hammond Region WMAs are recovering from Hurricane Ida, which pummeled and flooded the region last August.

LDWF reacted accordingly before last season and restricted antlerless harvest to the youth weekend and archery only on Maurepas Swamp WMA and Joyce WMA, restrictions put in place again for 2022-23. Either-sex days with modern or primitive firearms are eliminated.

Nevertheless, two veteran biologists who oversee those and other WMAs in the Hammond Region are optimistic about deer hunting success this season on Maurepas Swamp WMA, Pearl River WMA and Joyce WMA.

Following a good growing season the deer hunting should be good “barring any storms or high-water events,” Jillian Day said recently.

“Maurepas Swamp and Pearl River are the two WMAs in the southeast portion of the state with the greatest opportunity for success on deer. Both areas are large and provide multiple access points, but seasonal flooding is a concern,” Day, the region’s biologist manager reported.

Bradley Breland, a veteran biologist, pointed out deer harvest numbers from last season and said, “We really didn’t see a decrease in adult deer.”

Maurepas Swamp WMA led the way despite Hurricane Ida’s impact with 55 reported deer, followed by Pearl River WMA, 56, and Joyce WMA, 29.

Day noted in her report that while Maurepas Swamp WMA is a large WMA (112,615 acres), most of it is difficult to access, which means deer there receive less pressure than smaller, more accessible WMAs.

Pearl River WMA has higher usage rates because of its proximity to New Orleans. According to Day, it is “one of our region’s most accessible areas. There are plenty of roads and trails maintained on the northern part of the WMA.”

LAFAYETTE REGION

TOP WMA DEER HARVEST NUMBERS FOR 2021-22

- **Richard K. Yancey WMA:** 301 deer reported (1 deer per 229 acres), 185 bucks, 116 does
- **Sherburne WMA:** 224 deer reported (1 deer per 196 acres), 118 bucks, 106 does
- **Thistlethwaite WMA:** 151 deer reported (1 deer per 73 acres), 95 bucks, 56 does
- **Grassy Lake WMA:** 134 deer reported (1 deer per 99 acres), 76 bucks, 58 does
- **Pomme de Terre WMA:** 83 deer reported (1 deer per 78 acres), 42 bucks, 41 does

Mother Nature in spring 2022 smiled on the Lafayette Region's Wildlife Management Areas.

How's that? For the first time in four years, wildlife didn't have to cope with flooding during the growing season. And that bodes well for 2022-23 deer hunts at Richard K. Yancey WMA, Sherburne WMA, Thistlethwaite WMA, et al.

"No flooding. That's one good thing. We didn't have any high water from any rivers," Tony Vidrine said from his office in mid-July.

The biologist manager, a 38-year LDWF veteran, has some of the state's WMA jewels in the Lafayette Region. The aforementioned WMAs boasted the top deer harvests in 2021-22.

While Richard K. Yancey WMA and Sherburne WMA were first and second in deer harvests with 301 and 224, respectfully, Thistlethwaite WMA shined as the area with the best deer harvest per acre — one per 73 acres — for a total of 151.

"And there's still a lot of deer in there, a high, high population. This should be one of the better areas to harvest a deer during the 2022-23 season and many seasons to come," Vidrine said.

Why? It's one of few areas still being logged by a timber company, one that leases the area to LDWF.

"There's a lot of good oak that a timber company likes. The whole area has been pretty much logged now, not just one particular area," he said, noting it is a popular WMA for bowhunters.

There's a tradeoff with the great understory buildup. Deer hunters have to deal with palmetto, which makes the area tough to hunt.

Nevertheless, groceries are there for animals as mast crop production has been moderate to high the past few years. Plus, agriculture lands border it.

Many deer hunters target the soybean field area in the front where big deer are seen. That area's popular, he said, but "they hunt the whole area, really."

As for Richard K. Yancey WMA, which was second in deer harvest in 2020-21, Vidrine wrote in his report June 29, "We are excited for the drier conditions (no spring flooding) on the habitat and are anxious to see how the season prospers. RYK has finally had a more than average dry year ... This allowed vital vegetation to reestablish quicker after the winter along with more acreage for the deer herd to browse and avoid predators."

LAKE CHARLES REGION >

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LAKE CHARLES REGION

TOP WMA DEER HARVEST NUMBERS FOR 2021-22

- **Fort Polk-Vernon WMA:** 499 deer reported (1 deer per 234 acres, 1 deer per 15 hunter efforts – 7,266 hunter efforts), 275 bucks, 224 does. (Closed for military training during the first either-sex weekend)
- **Peason Ridge WMA:** 465 deer reported (1 deer per 170 acres, 1 deer per 11 hunter efforts – 5,000 hunter efforts), 246 bucks, 219 does. (Closed for military training during the first either-sex weekend)
- **Clear Creek WMA:** 292 deer reported (1 deer per 180 acres, 1 deer per 15 hunter efforts – 5,242 hunter efforts), 186 bucks, 106 does
- **West Bay WMA:** 184 deer reported (1 deer per 321 acres, 1 deer per 23 hunter efforts – 4,190 hunter efforts), 108 bucks, 76 does
- **Sabine Island WMA:** 17 deer reported (1 deer per 510 acres, 1 deer per 16 hunter efforts—265 hunter efforts), 12 bucks, 5 does

Fort Polk WMA's habitat took a big hit when Hurricane Laura and Hurricane Delta, respectively, tore up the region in a two-month period in 2020. Ditto for West Bay WMA and Sabine Island WMA's terrain.

Wildlife, particularly deer, benefitted immensely from the ecological change as thick understory emerged from the destruction. Flourishing growth of early successional vegetation led to above average browse for deer.

The understory challenged deer hunters' visibility last season and will continue to do so, according to veteran LDWF biologist manager Wendell Smith. Still, Fort Polk WMA led the region's deer harvest in 2021-22 with 499, followed closely by Peason Ridge WMA's 465.

Both Fort Polk WMA and Peason Ridge WMA, used for military training, were closed during the first either-sex weekend hunt of last season compared to both either-sex weekend hunts erased in 2020-21. Smith wasn't surprised by the recent deer harvest on Peason Ridge WMA.

"I was expecting it. First of all, it's a real hardwood, upland pine and mixed forest area. It had a population buildup and it produced," Smith, who has worked 33 years with LDWF, 15 as a biologist manager, reported.

Peason Ridge WMA improved with the U.S. Army's acquisition of Cole Springs, an old DMAP area, then land bought near Kirkwood.

"In a matter of years, the area got a lot of bottomland hardwoods," he said, noting the area grew from 30,000 to 70,000 acres.

The key to any deer hunting success is scouting, which many local deer hunters do diligently.

"Do your work. Do your scouting. It'll pay off," Smith said.

Out-of-staters flock to the region's WMAs, he said. Eastern Texas deer hunters and those from upper Midwestern states take advantage of the bountiful WMAs.

"We have a successful (management) program and we put a lot of hours into the WMAs. We work hard to keep the system top-notch. We welcome everybody," he said.



Kazden Jones killed his first public land deer at Peason Ridge on Nov. 28, 2021.

MINDEN REGION

TOP WMA DEER HARVEST NUMBERS FOR 2021-22

- **Bodcau WMA:** 184 deer reported (1 deer per 183.5 acres), 99 bucks, 85 does
- **Loggy Bayou WMA:** 151 deer reported (1 deer per 42.7 acres), 103 bucks, 48 does
- **Bayou Pierre WMA:** 20 deer reported (1 deer per 139.7 acres), 13 bucks, 7 does
- **Soda Lake WMA:** 20 deer reported (1 deer per 241.5 acres), 11 bucks, 9 does

Hot and dry was the theme for the Minden Region through the summer.

The conditions were cause for some concern for Minden Region biologist supervisor Jeff Johnson, a 21-year veteran with LDWF, before the start of the deer hunting season on the region's WMAs.

"We dang sure can stand some rain. I'll put it like this. We're not under a burn ban, but it's shaping up" and possible, Johnson said in mid-July.

At the time, he said, most of northeast Louisiana was in a severe drought and half of the LDWF's Minden Region for WMAs was in an extreme drought. Also, he pointed out, last fall was fairly dry.

Browse conditions were "OK" as of July 1. But, he said later, "If it stays like this, it won't wipe out the browse. But the body weight (of deer) might not be as high."

The 21-year LDWF veteran biologist also is hopeful the mast

crop is improved over last year. It was fair last year, he said.

Dry conditions would make some WMAs more accessible to deer hunters.

Bodcau WMA's deer harvest topped his region last season with 184 deer taken, followed by Loggy Bayou WMA with 141.

Bayou Pierre WMA and Soda Lake WMA are the region's archery-only areas. He has said in the past bowhunters favor those WMAs because they don't have to compete against gun hunters.

This year marks the debut of the newest WMA in the Minden Region — John Franks WMA. The 3,664-acre area in Caddo Parish was created June 2 at a meeting of the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission.

It was part of Soda Lake WMA previously and known as the Franks Tract.

MONROE REGION >



Randy Boyett Jr. of Houghton took down this great 9-point buck while hunting the Bodcau WMA on Nov. 19. It scored 139 7/8.

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MONROE REGION

TOP WMA DEER HARVEST NUMBERS FOR 2021-22

- **Boeuf WMA:** 497 deer reported (1 deer per 103 acres), 311 bucks, 186 does
- **Big Lake WMA:** 247 deer reported (1 deer per 78 acres) 150 bucks, 97 does
- **Buckhorn WMA:** 213 deer reported (1 deer per 53 acres), 123 bucks, 90 does
- **Bayou Macon WMA:** 94 deer reported (1 deer per 74 acres), 52 bucks, 42 does
- **Russell Sage WMA:** 76 deer reported (1 deer per 495 acres), 47 bucks, 29 does

Monroe's McGee, who we mentioned earlier in this article, and his staff are gearing up for the increased testing for CWD. McGee believes the CWD issue won't prevent deer hunters from visiting Buckhorn WMA or Big Lake WMA. Only one deer was tested positive for CWD, but it has caused a flurry of activity from deer managers. Those areas are smack in the middle of the "red zone," the CWD Control Area.

"People know the potential for quality on those areas and the

quantity of deer," McGee said.

In 2021-22, Big Lake WMA was second in total deer harvest behind Boeuf WMA, 497-247, while Buckhorn WMA was third with 213. McGee expects the three to dominate harvest reports again this season.

"Data collected at area check stations as well as harvest reports showed moderate harvest rates for all three areas. Body weights and lactation rates recorded showed evidence of good health as well as high recruitment for the future of these deer herds," McGee said.

Past management practices on the region's WMAs maintain and enhance the bottomland hardwood ecosystems, he noted. Mature hardwood trees and various woody browse plants in the understory combine for prime habitat for deer, he added.

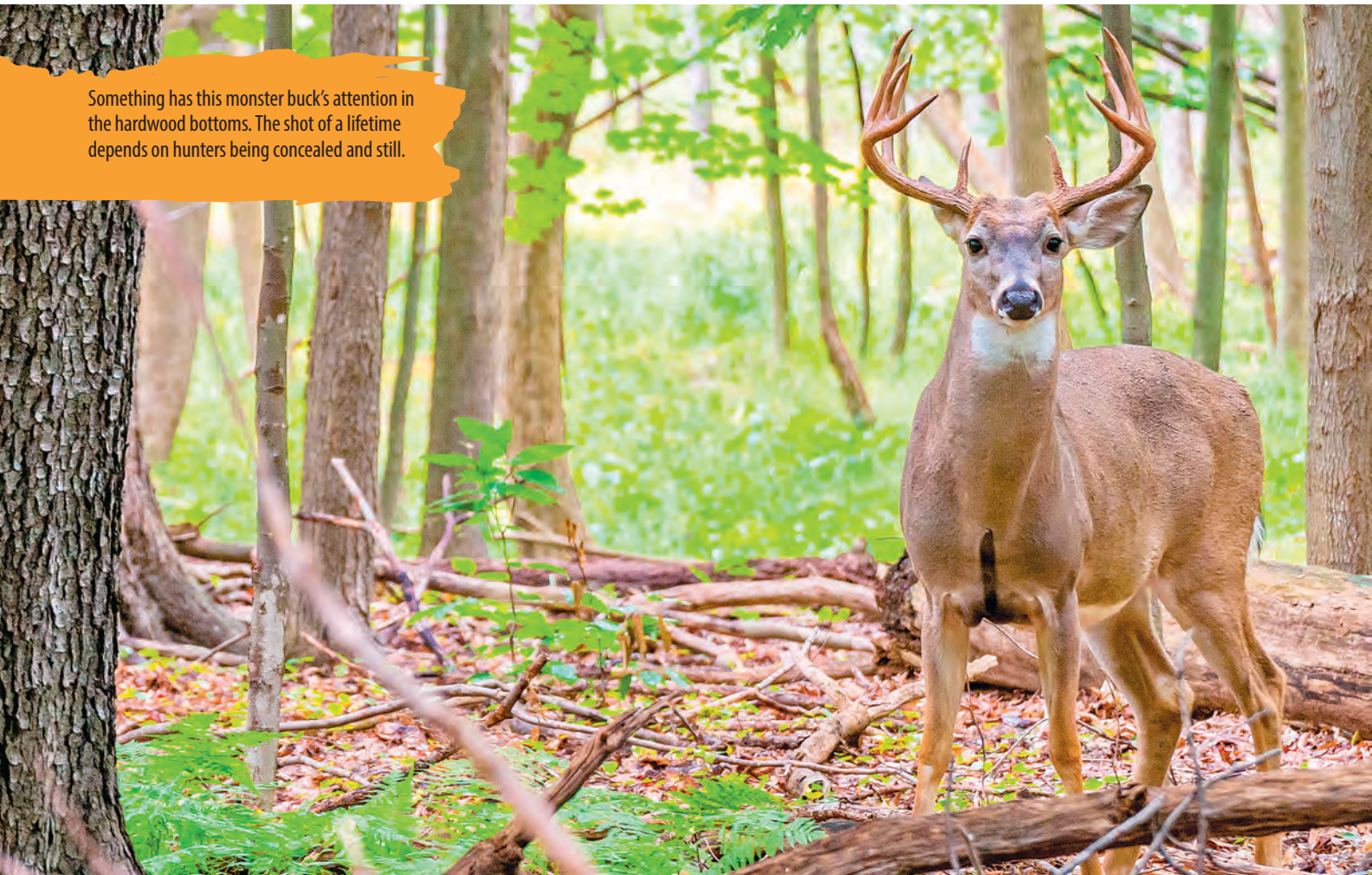
Some of the region's best bowhunting is at Big Lake WMA, where its southeast border touches Tensas National Wildlife Refuge.

What happened to Russell Sage WMA, a 38,213-acre area that gave up 76 deer in 2021-22? The deer harvest there the previous season was 147.

"It was an off year on Sage last season," McGee said, citing hurricane damage the year before and a poor red oak mast crop that impacted deer and squirrel populations alike.

PINEVILLE REGION >

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Seeing a group of deer feeding in the open during daylight hours is becoming rare, but this young buck and does aren't concerned.

PINEVILLE REGION

TOP WMA DEER HARVEST NUMBERS FOR 2021-22

- **Dewey W. Wills WMA:** 401 deer reported (1 deer per 137 acres), 202 bucks, 199 does
- **Alexander State Forest WMA:** 55 deer reported (1 deer per 100 acres), 25 bucks, 30 does
- **Camp Beauregard WMA:** 69 deer reported (1 deer per 181 acres), 42 bucks, 27 does
- **Sabine WMA:** 43 deer reported (1 deer per 176 acres), 29 bucks, 14 does
- **Little River WMA:** 12 deer reported (1 deer per 496 acres), 10 bucks, 2 does

Like the Minden Region, Pineville Region habitat and inhabitants were feeling the heat and the dry weather this summer. Still, browse conditions remained fair to good “despite the dry period” on Dewey W. Wills WMA, reported Cliff Dailey, the region’s biologist supervisor. “I don’t think it’ll have a big impact,” Dailey said. He’s hopeful this year’s mast crop isn’t impacted negatively.

He pointed out wildlife such as deer have other resources, as proved last season. Dewey W. Wills WMA’s deer harvest was 401 in 2022-23.

“Despite having a below average mast crop last year, harvest numbers remain higher than the 10-year average with lactation rates of adult does being 60 percent. These factors indicate that herd health and population are optimal for the area. Hunters should have a good opportunity to harvest a deer this season,” Dailey said in his report about Dewey W. Wills WMA.

The Pineville Region’s Alexander State Forest WMA had the region’s second-highest deer harvest last season with 55. Dailey, a 13-year LDWF veteran biologist, said browse conditions were good in the area as of mid-July.

Another plus is that timber thinning and increased prescribed fire continue to improve browse and overall habitat conditions, he said about Alexander State Forest WMA.

“Harvest numbers have been consistent for several years and herd health is good with lactation of adult does being 60 percent the last several years,” he said.

He recommended the WMA for hunters who like a mixture of pine and hardwood habitat.

COASTAL LAFAYETTE REGION

TOP WMA DEER HARVEST NUMBERS FOR 2021-22

- **Atchafalaya Delta WMA:** 45 deer reported (1 deer per *334 acres -- 1 deer per 10.8 hunter efforts)
- *NOTE: Used emergent habitat acreage on Main Delta only (not all of the WMA acreage is deer habitat, a large portion of the WMA is open water)
- **Salvador/Timken WMA:** 9 deer reported (1 deer per 3,552 acres, 1 deer per 14.3 hunter efforts – 1 deer per 14.3 hunter efforts)
- **Pass-A-Loutre WMA:** 3 deer reported (1 deer per 4.7 hunter efforts**)
- **NOTE: Not all of the WMA acreage is deer habitat, a large portion of the WMA is open water

Atchafalaya Delta WMA's youth hunts for deer are favorites among young hunters. Those youngsters ought to love the schedule for 2022-23.

Vaughan McDonald, a 17-year LDWF veteran, and Lance Campbell, a 26-year veteran with LDWF, said youth hunts last season were handled differently than in the past. Those youth hunts will be expanded once again.

Previously, McDonald pointed out, youth hunts were conducted via lottery with assigned hunting spots on the Big Island. Last season and going forward, he noted, all youth hunts will be allowed using either shotgun loaded with buck shot or archery equipment on the entire Main Delta for the first two weekends of October.

During those two October weekends, the entire Main Delta is closed to all other hunters, plus, the Big Island is closed to all hunting other than youth deer hunting Oct. 1 through the last day of the youth deer seasons.

While the overall deer harvest was down in 2021-22, mostly due to Hurricane Ida's devastating effects in late August, Atchafalaya Delta WMA's harvest of 45 was only two less than 2020-21, McDonald wrote in his report. He expects this season to be the same because habitat conditions there are similar to the last two seasons. The way things are shaping up

in the preseason, hunters "should have ample opportunity to harvest deer at Salvador and Pass-a-Loutre WMAs," according to McDonald. Both areas felt Hurricane Ida's wrath.

Going into 2022-23, habitat conditions on those two areas are very similar to the previous two years. The biologist pointed out last summer browse availability in the freshwater marshy areas is mostly herbaceous with the exception of some woody browse species along the spoil banks. ■



Don Shoopman moved to the Sportsman's Paradise in 1976, and he and his wife June live in New Iberia. They have two grown sons.

SPORTSMAN SHOWCASE >

Brittany Jenkins took this public land 8-point on Jan. 3. It measured 127 inches.



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DEER ME; THAT'S WEIRD!

WHITETAIL ABNORMALITIES
AREN'T COMMON AND SURE
GET HUNTER'S ATTENTION.

■ By David Moreland

Photo courtesy Gerry "CJ" Parker

It seems like the 2021-2022 deer season produced more than its fair share of abnormal looking deer in the Louisiana Sportsman circle of deer hunters.

And here we are getting close to yet another season for hunting whitetails in Louisiana.

Last season, bucks with palmated antlers, cactus bucks and velvet bucks were harvested by deer hunters who reported these strange deer to the magazine staff. Also harvested were piebald deer and deer with ivory hooves. There was even a “unicorn” deer.

While many weird things are showing up these days, I don't think the Covid pandemic or climate change can be blamed as the cause of this. Genetics is the common explanation for some of these anomalies. Accidents can explain some of the other weird findings.

Anomalies can show up at any time, but for the most part, they are uncommon or even rare. Disease issues can also be the cause for a strange looking deer. I remember receiving a photo of a deer that had a large tumor on its brisket area that made it appear as if it had swallowed a basketball. Deer with a mouth that looks as if it has a baseball on one side of its jaw is an animal suffering from a food impaction, known as lumpy jaw, and is caused by an arterial worm.

LDWF has a wildlife disease unit with wildlife veterinarians who are always interested in hearing about your strange findings so don't hesitate to contact your local biologists and ask them about abnormal looking deer.



An abnormal hormone imbalance gave the famous Sammy Walker buck its very large non-typical rack. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** A cactus buck does not lose its antlers due to a hormone malfunction. They just keep growing and growing, never losing velvet.

ABNORMAL ANTLERS

Antlers are a buck's crowning glory, so I will begin my discussion with them. The Boone and Crockett and Pope and Young scoring systems were designed to score deer with typical antlers. When the scoring began, it was soon evident that some deer develop abnormal antler growth, so a Non-Typical antler category was developed to document these deer, since they are entirely different from bucks with typical antlers.

Non-Typical antlers do occur in the wild in Louisiana, but are not as common as bucks with typical antlers, but they always attract attention! Really large freaky looking non-typical racks are common on game farms where they are managed to produce these antlers. Non-typical racks can be a result of genetics and heredity. Some non-typical growth is due to accidents that damage the pedicel, the bone that the antlers grow on, or when the buck is in velvet and growing antlers are damaged. Fences, vehicles, downed timber and much more can cut or break the growing bone resulting in a rack with abnormal growth.

There is documentation of adult bucks in Louisiana that never grew antlers. This problem generally occurs during the



Killed in Iberville Parish in 1959, the Walker buck is a product of a hormone imbalance. This unusual trophy was not accepted for entry into the Boone & Crockett Club because of its abnormal antler development.

early embryonic stages of development and the pedicel bone for whatever reason, never develops and the buck will never grow antlers. It is often associated with intense flooding on the habitat and the does are over-stressed from it.

The reverse of this is a doe that has antlers. During my outdoor career I have only seen this two or three times. Usually the antler development is small but I am aware of one doe that produced a rack with eight points. While such cases are rare, it does happen.

Generally the doe is fertile and still can produce fawns. Does with antlers are caused by abnormally high levels of testosterone in her system.



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



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Bucks can also have higher than normal levels of testosterone and produce really abnormal antler growth. The Sammy Walker Buck is probably the most famous of Louisiana bucks with this condition. The Walker Buck had an abnormal hormone imbalance and produced a very large non-typical rack. Because of the hormone imbalance the buck was not accepted for entry into the Boone and Crockett scoring system.

Bucks with palmated antlers that appear moose-like in appearance show up periodically. Jackie Hay killed a fine palmated specimen in East Feliciana Parish last season. I was blessed to have killed one years ago but not as large as Hay's buck. Such antler growth is a result of genetics and may show up in other bucks in future seasons.

You may have heard the term cactus buck at the hunting camp. These are really strange looking racks that somewhat look like a mass of coral or desert cactus with a bunch of knob-like velvet structures. These bucks have experienced testicle problems of some sort and do not produce testosterone which regulates antler growth. The antlers on the buck are never shed and always stay in velvet; winter freezes will damage the soft antler material, creating this strange look. Scott Cobb killed such a buck last season. It could be considered a true textbook cactus buck.

Chris Fontenot killed a nice Basin buck on January 4, 2022 that was still in velvet. The tarsal glands were black, an indication that it had been working scrapes and it was chasing a doe, so I would assume its testosterone level was ok. There were some strange things happening in the woods following Hurricane Ida last year and this could be just one of them. I would classify this as a velvet buck and not a cactus buck. Generally velvet bucks are killed during the early archery season, before the velvet is shed.

PELAGE COLORATION

Hunters should be familiar with the reddish-brown coloration of deer in the summer. This summer coat is shed in the fall and replaced with the brownish-gray winter hair. The thick winter coat provides good insulation for the deer during cold winter weather.

True albino deer are rare. These deer are white, have pink eyes and grayish hooves. There is a deer herd on the Seneca Army Depot in New York that has a large herd of white deer. These deer were protected and the end result was a large herd of white deer. A white deer that is not a true albino will have brown eyes and is referred to as a leucistic deer. The condition of albinism is a recessive genetic trait. Protecting such deer will increase the chances of inbreeding, thereby increasing the number of such deer. My friend Scott Durham had a few pictures of an albino deer that was on his property near Liberty, Miss., and this is the only wild albino I know of.

The opposite of a white deer would be a melanistic deer, one that has very high levels of the melanism pigment. These black deer are extremely rare and I have never seen one. When LDWF managed the Jackson-Bienville WMA, there were deer that would be brought to the check station that had a dark black line that ran from the head to the tail. It made for an attractive



Photo courtesy Jackie Hay

Jackie Hay harvested this palmated deer on Dec. 20 while it was chasing does on private land in East Feliciana Parish.

hide and no doubt was a result of genetics.

A piebald deer, one that is both brown and white, the degree of color splotches can greatly vary, is more common than an albino deer, but the frequency that it occurs is still low. I was hunting years ago on a tract of land in East Feliciana Parish during the early bow season. I saw something that was brown and white coming down a ridge toward me and my first thought was "what is a goat doing out here?" It was a piebald fawn that stopped out in front of me and was shortly joined by its normal colored sibling. Then the normal colored doe arrived.



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**DEER ME:
THAT'S
WEIRD!**

That's the only live piebald deer I have seen. A few years later, a piebald buck was killed on this property and I have no doubt it was the fawn I saw. This is unusual because the general thought is that most of these white colored deer stand out so much that they are easy prey for predators. I have over the years received several photos of hunters who have killed piebald deer.

Sometimes this lack of melanism, black coloration, will affect the hooves of deer. I killed a doe one year in West Feliciana with white hooves on one front leg. Brent Robertson killed a nice 9-point buck in Mississippi last season that had what he referred to as ivory hooves. These would certainly make for an interesting key chain or ornament of some type.

Often times these deer will have a Roman Nose, a condition where the bridge of the nose is bent upward. I have killed some runty bucks that have had this condition. Another strange condition that deer can have is an anomaly of the lower jaw known as brachygnathia, shortness of the lower jaw giving the deer the look of having an overbite. The first real racked buck I ever killed was 4 ½ years old and had this condition!

As I stated at the beginning, LDWF can help you understand or explain strange looking deer so don't hesitate to contact them. Also be aware of the CWD issue and work with the department on this serious problem. Be safe and always share your success with those that have needs. ■

STICKS & STRINGS >



Photo courtesy Christopher Chase Fontenot



This south Mississippi buck harvested by Brent Robertson of Lamar County had giant ivory hooves. **ABOVE:** Christopher Chase Fontenot killed this nice buck in full velvet and sans testicles on Jan. 4, 2022 in the Atchafalaya Basin, Area 6.



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Lush fields separated by the highway made it easy to pattern deer during the author's Wyoming hunt.



EARLY LESSONS STILL PAY DIVIDENDS

IT'S ALL A PART OF THE BOWHUNTING JOURNEY

Early in my bow hunting career, after several years of bow hunting Mississippi, I had managed to take only a few hard-earned does. So when I received an invite to hunt the early season in Wyoming, I jumped at the chance.

This trip would offer a much better opportunity to both see and shoot a buck due to more plentiful animals that would pattern easier. The anticipation was almost more than I could stand. Little did I realize how many lessons I would learn on this week-long trip out west that would stick with me throughout my journey as a bow hunter.

We arrived in Kaycee, Wyoming a few days prior to the Sept. 1 archery opener. Our host was a rancher named Stuart Gosney.

Stuart reminded me of Curley from the movie *City Slickers*. A man of few words, the ones he did say often carried a lot of weight. Stuart owned a huge swath of land along a river bottom which was loaded with both whitetail and mule deer. I had shipped my Summit climber out ahead of time. And my dreams were filled with big bucks meandering carelessly under my carefully placed stand.

The first rude awakening? The few straight trees that existed were rarely located close to deer trails or obvious sign. We had to hunt from ground blinds or fixed homemade pallet stands. I was

at a loss having only archery hunted from portable elevated stands in the past.

Another lesson (one that has stuck with me long since) was the inherently nocturnal nature of buck deer. Even though we were hunting an area with little to no pressure, the bucks were often headed to bed as dawn's first light broke the horizon. This was easy to observe because the alfalfa fields the deer were feeding in at night lay on one side of the road. But the hills they bedded on lay on the other.

DIFFICULT HUNTING

The extra visibility afforded by the more open terrain allowed us to really pattern deer. But the hunting was tough because they were staying at higher elevations. It took several days to figure out why, and it was another lesson in deer behavior. The mosquitoes were almost unbearable that year, and they were biting us and the deer so much it was miserable. By staying at elevation, the deer were avoiding the mosquitoes. But that meant difficult



Mule deer were easy to pattern, but difficult to reach because they stayed at high elevations.

hunting for us.

With deer not traveling very far from their beds to feed, it was nearly impossible for us to intercept them along their travel routes. On the last morning of our hunt, Stuart relocated us to the top of the mountain. We had to drive almost 15 miles around using rough dirt tracks to get ahead of the deer as they returned to their beds. Another lesson learned — literally getting the extra mile.



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.

SUCCESS!

As dawn broke, I found myself on the ground nestled into the root ball of a fallen juniper tree facing a cliff that dropped off into the river bottom. I was set up in white shale rock with scattered junipers making for narrow, but open, shooting lanes. After an hour of nothing, I heard shale rock rolling down the hillside and turned to face a mule deer doe at about 3 yards.

She wheeled and ran toward her bedding area just as I saw a buck's velvet-covered antlers break the cliff's edge. He too ran, but I drew anyway. I knew he hadn't seen me, and I'd read that mule deer often stop to look back. As he skidded to a stop in the loose shale rock, my sights settled just behind his shoulder. My Muzzy broadhead found its mark. I was literally convulsing I was so excited. I anxiously awaited Stuart's return so we could track my deer and recover it.

After about an hour, Stuart returned. We followed a short blood trail to my heart-shot forkhorn buck. Although he wasn't very big, he was a true trophy to me. One of the coolest moments of my hunting career was when Stuart took me aside, cracked open two beers, and told me, "You done good son." Stuart rarely gave attaboys, and I was happy to get one.

Hunting other parts of the country will not only broaden your hunting skills, but will also often teach you lessons that can be applied to your home hunting grounds.

It's all part of the journey. ■

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HUNTER OF THE MONTH

Preston Landry

Preston Landry, 13, with a limit of woodcock he got in December at Sherburne with the help of Velcro, a 2-year-old pointer.

ANGLER OF THE MONTH

Casey Gary

Casey Gary of Scott fishes at least four times a week. His favorite fish to catch is sac-a-lait, but while he is looking for sac-a-lait he likes to try for bass also. This post-spawn bass he caught at Cow Island Lake in Butte Larose weighed 5.5 pounds.





**SOLID ADVICE ON HOW
TO JOIN THE LIST OF
SUCCESSFUL TEAL
HUNTERS.**

■ By John Flores

ADVANTAGE TEAL

In late August, before the last notes of the accordion have faded, the lyrics of a French two-step song have been sung, and the Gueydan Duck Festival Queen has been crowned,
BLUE-WINGED TEAL HAVE ALREADY MADE UP THEIR MINDS TO HEAD SOUTH.

And because of their purposeful migration, perhaps there is no other place in the entire United States where there is as deep and rich a tradition for teal hunting than in Louisiana.

Number-wise the long-term average of teal that typically arrive by the first week to 10 days in September is around 227,000 birds statewide. And as such, some 92,000 Louisiana waterfowl hunters go to the marshes and rice fields annually to hunt them.

As recently as 2018, teal numbers arriving in the state plunged to a paltry 59,000 estimate, a number that was the lowest on record. However, since then, their numbers have somewhat rebounded.

During the 2021 Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries September aerial survey, 281,000 blue-winged teal were counted; a count that was 24 percent higher than their

long-term average.

Yet, no matter how many teal are spread across the state annually, there are some hunters that tend to be more successful than others. Over the years they've hunted teal, they've also learned a few things. Little tricks, if you will, that have helped them put in many limits of birds on their game straps.

Three of those hunters are Johnny Wink from Jones in Morehouse Parish, Dale Bordelon from Deville in Avoyelles Parish, and Jack Cousin from Gueydan in Vermillion Parish.

North to south, whether agricultural fields, ponds, lakes, swamp, or marsh, these waterfowlers have made lasting impressions on those that share a blind with them. Moreover, they offer these thoughts and tips to novice or seasoned duck hunters who are looking for an edge or just maybe wanting to try something new.





The author with a few ducks shot during last year's early teal season. OPPOSITE PAGE: A group of four happy hunters after a morning hunt.

seen a lot of teal fall into the decoys following a fusillade of shots from those he has guided. The reason for that is knowing when to call the shot.

“Let me tell you, I have watched countless-countless videos and television shows where these people wait until it’s too late to start shooting,” Wink said. “Teal are flying jet crazy and they’re boogie-boogie-boogieing and the people start shooting. By the time these ducks are about mid-ways over the decoys, it’s too late — they’re gone.

“Let’s say you’ve got your blind set up where the ducks will pass in front of you, and you’ve got ducks coming in from your right to your left. You have got to be able to predict what those birds are going to do. I want to call the shot before they’re over the first decoy to my right.”

Wink admits sometimes you’re going to lose, but more often than not, by the time everybody gets up, teal are in what he refers to as the ‘meat hole’ right out in front of the blind.

“They’re in that meat hole in the middle of the decoys versus at the outer edge going away from you,” Wink said. “You can shoot three times — boom-boom-boom — instead of maybe twice at birds already 30 to 40 yards out, past the decoys.”



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

WHEN TO SHOOT

Johnny Wink, owner/operator of MegaBuck Duck Guides since 1974, was inducted in the Louisiana Chapter of Legends of the Outdoors Hall of Fame in 2019. For 47 seasons, he has

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Cousin recommends using lighter shot sizes, like HEVI SHOT TEAL, during the early teal season.

HUNT WHERE TEAL LIKE TO BE

Another member of the Louisiana Chapter of Legends of the Outdoors Hall of Fame is Dale Bordelon, owner/operator of Bayou Beast Game Calls. At 61 years of age, Bordelon is popular on social media for his many videos that not only celebrate the Cajun culture, but also strive to maintain some of the older traditions he learned growing up; some as far back as a 100 years or more.

Bordelon duck hunts out of a handmade dugout pirogue that he made himself. He also utilizes his own hand carved decoys as well. In short, from equipment to the shotgun he uses, his style of hunting is reminiscent of an early twentieth century character right out of a scene from the 2013 movie *Savannah*.

Bordelon started hunting blue-winged teal in 1979 around Catahoula Lake. And, when it comes to teal, he also says there are places they prefer to be.

Bordelon, who hunts both public and private land, said, "We sometimes hunt these birds in a field in only about 3 to 4

inches of water. We kill 2 to 1 more birds in shallow water than deep water. So, I'm looking for shallow-shallow water. That's where we hunt ducks if possible. In the lakes, you might have a good day today and you might not have another good day for five days. In that field, everyday it looks like you get some action. So, that's the first thing I look for."

Public lands like the Atchafalaya Delta WMA, which are tidal, are prime spots for targeting shallow water areas. This particular WMA has 3,250 acres of limited access areas where no motorized boats are allowed. By doing a little preseason scouting waterfowl hunters who walk in dragging a pirogue and decoys, can utilize Bordelon's tip to their advantage, rather than hunt open water with one of the various surface drives.

From rice fields to pastures, shallow water areas can be found all over said Bordelon.

"Last year I went all around Elton and all over, and we made some good hunts," he said. "We hunted a cow pasture one day after a big rain and those ducks were loaded up in that pasture. But, shallow water — that's what I look for. It looks like every-

one who's got a little pothole, they do very well, especially when it's shallow."

WHEN HIDING FROM TEAL

Jack Cousin is a state and national waterfowl calling champion who makes his living as a full-time guide in southwest Louisiana. Jack's reputation as a caller precedes him, where few go home disappointed after spending a morning in the blind with him.

Concealment is a critical part of waterfowl hunting. And, when it comes to blinds, Cousin is meticulous about this aspect whether a pit blind, A-frame, layout, or simply hiding in grass alongside a levee.

The question is, is concealment as critical with teal as it is with other ducks and geese? Cousin actually feels perhaps not, with maybe one exception.

"You still have to be still!" he said. "I mean concealment is not as important for teal hunting as it is with duck or goose hunting, but you still need it. When you're hunting in September, obviously compared to November through January everything is green. So, even if you're not in the most concealed blind, or even if you're just levee hunting and they're working, or you see them buzzing around, you definitely need to keep real still."

Essentially, Cousin said a hunter may be able to sit on top of a levee without any vertical vegetation with teal moving and patrolling around and still get away with being exposed compared to other waterfowl just by remaining motionless.

TO CALL, NOT TO CALL, AND MOTION DECOYS

Whether you're hunting teal on private or public land, if you listen close enough, chances are the calling you'll hear off in the distance will probably sound like a mallard. Not that that matters mind you, the question is do you need to call teal at all during the September season?

The answer is simply that it depends. In some cases it may help. In other cases calling doesn't affect the outcome not one iota.

"You can kill teal with a regular mallard call, but I love to use a teal call," Bordelon said. "My thing is, when we hunt in Catahoula we use a loud call, because you can see teal at a distance. In other words a long ways off. Once we get 'em turned towards us, we hit 'em aggressively with teal calls. We hit 'em with a high pitch — 'kak-kak-kak-kak' — and we just stay on it."

By contrast in the rice fields, where Cousin mostly hunts. He has mixed feelings about calling.

"Calling I don't think plays as much of a vital role when hunting teal," he said. "You don't have to be a proficient teal caller — I don't think — to kill teal in September, but it does help. There's a few times when you can really turn them with a call and actually see it happen and you know that it was calling. But, I think between having mojos or some kind of motion de-coy out and knowing how to blow a teal call a little bit, is key too."

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CONSIDER WHAT YOU SHOOT

One of the things many waterfowl hunters don't think of when going into the September teal season is the fodder they're blowing out of the ends of their barrels.

Often times Cousin said, guys show up to hunt teal using the left over No. 2 shot size that they used on ducks and geese the previous year. And they're shooting teal at 20 yards or less.


"There's plenty of people that shoot their six teal in a box of shells," Cousin said. "It happens all the time. But, if you shoot No. 4s at big ducks, get No. 6s for teal. For me, someone who is an average shot, it makes a huge difference when you put a

higher percentage of steel shot in a pattern. Plus, the smaller shot doesn't tear up the meat as much."

SAFETY AT ALL COSTS

The early September teal season is a harbinger for the up and coming big duck season in November. What's more, guys tend to get pretty cranked up about hunting teal and are ready to do some shooting by the time this particular season rolls around.

Generally, whether hunting with friends or guiding a group of hunters, there are multiple people in the blind. And, this is where safety comes in.



Besides blue-winged teal, hunters often kill a few green-winged teal during the early September teal season and on rare occasion even possibly cinnamon teal. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Jack Cousin returns from picking up a few teal following a volley of shots from hunters.



“During teal season, I’m extra alert and more aware of everybody and what’s going on during the hunt,” Cousin said. “Whether hunting in a pit blind, an A-frame blind, or sitting on buckets brushed up along a levee, you’re hunting in a confined space. You need to have that one guy or leader — one person — to call the shot at all times. Because that way, everybody is on the same page when it’s time to go and not time to go.”

Cousin emphasized the importance to make sure everyone knows where the shooting lanes are and where you’re trying to shoot them every time, which is out over the decoys.

“It’s aggravating and dangerous,” Cousin said. “You want to make sure everyone knows this is where we’re all looking, so there’s not this guy in the back trying to make a crazy shot when they’re flying 40 miles per hour.

“When they make that swing with the wind right behind you and they almost take your hat off because you didn’t see them coming, somebody always wants to swing the opposite way and

make a huge motion to shoot them. You’re never going to kill them like that and most likely they were going to come back. It’s just tough sometimes.”

Not everyone who hunt waterfowl are the same age, sex, size, or even in the same health.

“I’ve not only got to think about the birds, but I’ve got to think about the abilities of my customers,” Wink said. “I’ve got women in the blind, I’ve got kids in the blind, and I’ve got old people that just can’t get up like they did in their prime. The number one thing is to keep everybody safe in the blind.”

Teal season runs from Saturday, Sept. 10, 2022 through Sunday, Sept. 25, 2022, with a daily bag limit of 6 and possession limit of 18 this year. With a little bit of luck and adding some of these tips, here’s hoping you’ll be putting a few blue-winged teal in the roasting pot. ■

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT ➤



Photo by Brian Cope

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: WOOD DUCK

COLORFUL DUCK WITH A MULLET IS POPULAR AMONG WATERFOWL HUNTERS

The wood duck (*Aix sponsa*) is one of the most colorful ducks in the U.S. and is second only to the mallard duck for popularity among waterfowl hunters. It has many unique characteristics.

Male wood ducks have iridescent plumage in a variety of colors, red eyes,

and a unique white flare down its neck. Females are less colorful, having white rings around their eyes and a white throat. Both have crested heads, resembling mullet hairdos.

Wood ducks are also known as woodies, woodro, swamp duck, Carolina duck, squealer, and summer duck.



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.

Considerably smaller than mallards, wood ducks are known as medium ducks. Unlike most other ducks, woodies feature sharp claws on their webbed feet, allowing them to perch in trees, which they are very fond of doing.

They are found in a variety of habitat, included wooded swamps, lakes, ponds, creeks and marshes. Their range includes the eastern U.S., southern U.S., the west coast, and some parts of Canada and Mexico. Very small numbers of them have been observed in Great Britain, where they are called escape ducks or escapees. While most ducks nest on the ground, wood ducks nest in the cavities of trees, usually close to water.

WAKE UP EARLY TO HUNT WOOD DUCKS

Snakes, squirrels and birds of prey also nest in tree cavities and because of that, many communities, hunt clubs and landowners erect nesting boxes with predator guards for woodies. These ducks readily take advantage of the nesting boxes, which they line with feathers and other soft materials.

Only about 25 percent of wood ducks are migratory. The reason is a bit of a mystery to wildlife biologists. Some begin their lives as year-long residents of a place, then turn migratory later in life. Some never migrate and some migrate every year of their lives.

Another unique characteristic of wood ducks is that they can produce two broods in one season. They are the only North American ducks that do this. The females lay between 7 and 15 eggs, which incubate for about one month before hatching.

Hunters wishing to bag their limit of woodies need to get an early start. These ducks are known to fly at first light, then not again until the very end of the day. They often seem to appear from thin air, whistling ja-eeee ja-eeee ja-eeee and do-weep do-weep as they fly. When not nested, they spend their time on the water or on land looking for food, which consists mainly of berries, acorns, seeds and insects. ■

Considerably smaller than mallards, wood ducks are known as medium ducks. Unlike most other ducks, woodies feature sharp claws on their webbed feet, allowing them to perch in trees, which they are very fond of doing.

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MUDDY PAWS >



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MUDDY PAWS

Bryan Beatty



A young dog working on water marks and steadiness with the assistance of a gunner and bird thrower, enabling the handler to focus on the dog.

SOCIAL STABILITY

EFFECTIVE WATERFOWL RETRIEVERS MUST BE ROCK STEADY TO DO THE JOB

One of the great things about waterfowl hunting is that it's a social pursuit.

A big part of the appeal is that it is not so much of a solitary pursuit like deer hunting where the hunter is mostly solo. We live for those hunts where things line up just right. The ducks work in like they were on a string and when "Get 'Em" is called, the blind is rewarded with the splash of ducks hitting the drink. Though that is the stuff we all dream about, a retriever that has not been trained and prepared to do the job can turn it into a nightmare pretty quick.

The point is that a retriever needs to be rock steady and only goes on command despite all the excitement of calling, gunfire, splashed birds and the enthusiasm of the hunters high fives and such.

First off, an unruly dog that breaks puts itself and the hunters in danger. Second, they can flare birds before they are within range by moving around. Third, a dog that breaks on a bird will miss the other birds that were downed on that flight. This leads to having to direct the dog to the birds it didn't see which burns time and may cause other interested ducks in the area to flare from

the spread.

MARKS AND BLINDS

There will be times when the dog did not see the bird even when steady (obstructed view) and it will have to be handled to it via voice, whistle and hand signals. This is called a blind retrieve which we will cover in the next column. For reference, a "mark" is a bird the dog sees, a "blind" is one it did not.

Teaching steadiness from the beginning is the way to avoid these issues and it is non-negotiable. The dog only goes when told. "Breaking," as the term is known, is also a lot harder to correct if a dog has been able to get away with it before in the past.

Teaching the concept is fairly easy, it just takes repetition. Your dog should already know "sit" by voice and hopefully by whistle, which is one sharp blast with the dog at heel or out away from you. "Stay" comes into the mix after they have "sit" mastered. Some trainers and handlers combine both commands with "sit," meaning "stay," until directed to move. I started out using both so that's what I stick with. When the dog has a firm grasp, move to having the dog at heel

while you are sitting on a shell bucket or swivel chair to start. It'll be easier to control the dog when down at its level. From there, you can move to working from a standing position.

PRACTICE WITH PATIENCE

With the dog at heel, have a helper throw a bumper. A young dog is going to be excited, so having them on a short leash or holding onto the collar ensures the dog can't break. After the "mark" hits the ground or water, wait for the dog to calm down before sending it. Releasing the dog while it's wound up teaches it that it's okay to be overly excited and it will still get the retrieve. You want eager, but also calm.

Start with singles until the dog is steady then move to doubles with a 3-5 second gap between when the bumpers or dummies are thrown. The delay is to give the



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



Training with a group ensures the dog gets plenty of repetition on longer and multiple marks as well as the handler getting insight from others.

dog enough time to see where the bumper fell and “mark” it before focusing on the next bird. Now is a good time to use a gun, broomstick or whatever you have handy to teach the dog to follow the gun. They’ll learn that the gun points out where the bird is coming from and key on it. Follow the thrown mark with the gun just as if it were a real bird all the way to the deck so your dog follows it. Keep the distances and cover short to start off, then work in a third mark along with adding cover and distance. Blanks, poppers or even a starter pistol being shot adds realism to the whole process and helps keep the dreaded gun shyness at bay.

Teaching steadiness and marks is work, so joining a retriever club or forming a training group with some friends ensures the

dog gets enough repetition, especially with longer distances. They figure out quickly that you can only throw a dummy so far and will start to stop at that distance. As I’ve mentioned before, I’ve learned this through experience.

A great dog will get its owner invited on more hunts than they can possibly go on, so keep that in mind with all of this as an incentive to keep working. From then on, it’ll be good times! ■

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DAN DEWITT

QUIET INFLUENCE ON LOUISIANA OUTDOORS IS NOTHING SHORT OF AMAZING.

Chances are unless you live in his home area, you may have not heard a lot about Dan DeWitt of Dry Prong, even if you are a hunter and a fisherman. Many people's ventures in the outdoors garner them a lot of attention, glamor and notoriety, but DeWitt's pursuits of his outdoor passions have been rather quiet.

But his contributions have been huge. His experiences are vast and varied.

He has spent most of his life as a professional hunter, an outfitter and guide managing 50,000 acre ranches in west Texas, hunting deer in 23 states, elk in Wyoming and Colorado, turkeys and other wild game in 32 states in the USA. He has guided and hunted in Africa on several occasions and has studied wild game and their habits for several decades. DeWitt was one of the professional hunters that helped exterminate a rogue elephant that destroyed a village in Mozambique.

DOUBLE GRAND SLAM

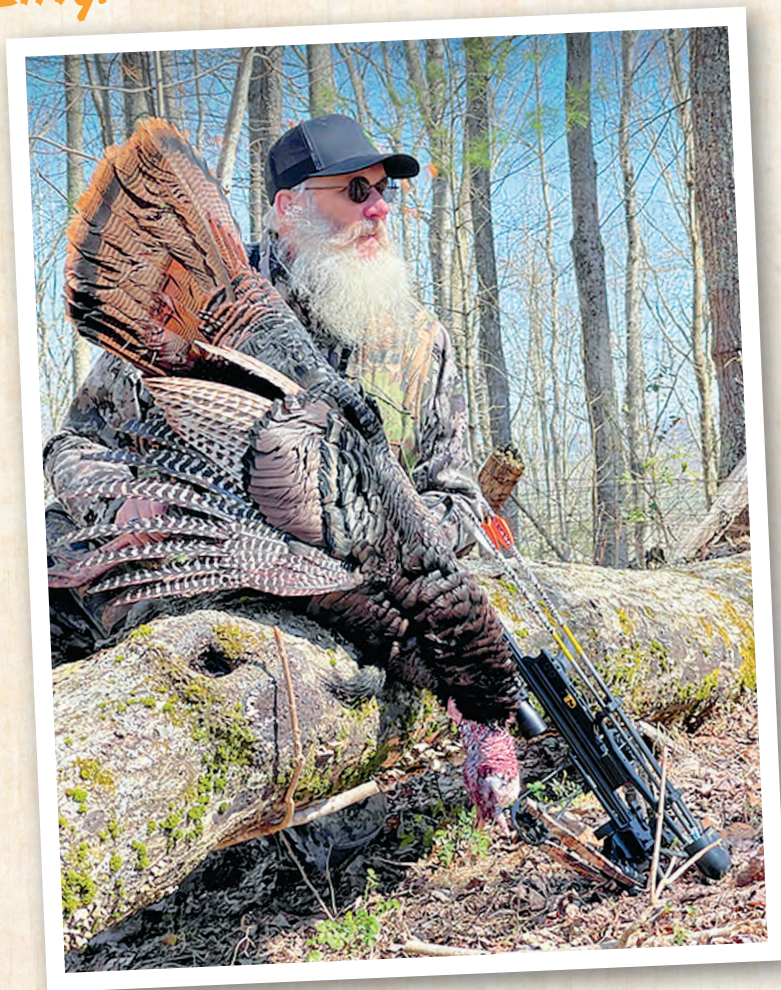
DeWitt is one of few hunters to kill a turkey double grand slam in a single season. His passion for the outdoors carries over into helping others as well. He founded Preachers Need Friends Too ministry, an organization to carry preachers hunting to help give them rest and relaxation away from their ministries.

Because of his numerous accomplishments and contributions to the outdoors and experiences that most men and women could only dream of, he was inducted into the Hall of Fame.

DeWitt grew up the son of an American Indian from the Creek Tribe, whose grandparents were orphaned on the Trail of Tears and adopted by the DeWitt family in Louisiana. He has an immense amount of respect for all animals, learned from an early age to "live off the land," use the wind, the moon phases, the topography of the land and the habits of wild animals to become a very successful hunter.

He's also put his extreme knowledge of hunting into making some new products that help others, especially deer hunters. His Rook'em Juice, C-Mor-Deerz attractant and Cuzz's Cooter Juice are popular products of his business, Old Indian Tricks, LLC. You can learn more about them online at oldindiantrick-sllc.com.

"Our products are 100% synthetic and are NOT based on urine no matter what anyone tries to claim," he said. "Synthetic scents, like perfumes, have an infinite shelf life according to the



experts; however, our manufacturer recommends that it should be approximately five years to ensure its integrity.

"For best results they should be kept out of direct sunlight. Like anything else used in hunting they are only one tool and just a part of helping a hunter attract deer. Remember, like perfume, a little goes a long way, so be careful to not over use them or they may become offensive to the deer instead of acting as an attractant or catch the curiosity of the deer."

One of DeWitt's passions is teaching new and old hunters alike how to set up and use mock scrapes for hunting. To learn more, you can join the private Facebook page Mock Scrape Nation.

“ I really enjoy getting the youth involved. For the past 17 years I have held summer camps with groups like the NWTf and local 4-H groups that teach kids of all ages proper hunting methods.

SIMPLE WISH

DeWitt has a simple wish for what he wants his legacy to be in the outdoors.

“Helping as many people as I can to achieve success in hunting. That’s important. Especially the first timers,” he said. “I want to be remembered maybe not as being the best, but for loving and enjoying it more than anyone else.”

DeWitt has earned that honor.

“I really enjoy getting the youth involved,” he said. “For the past 17 years I have held summer camps with groups like the NWTf and local 4-H groups that teach kids of all ages proper hunting methods. I have taken over 150 kids, and adults on their first successful hunts.

He has done so many things over the years, it’s hard to pick a favorite. But he can narrow it down.

“There are many that I love,” he said. “Stalking an animal close enough to shoot with a bow; tricking whitetail deer at their own game with mock scrapes; hunting dangerous game in Africa like Cape buffalo, crocodile, hippo, elephant and the big cats; chasing turkeys all over the USA, especially on public land; you name it I love to hunt it.

“There is lots more. Elk and mule deer. Oh, and don’t forget bears,” he laughed.

If he has one piece of advice for new hunters, it’s simple. Follow the guys who made a living hunting, not producing TV shows, he said.

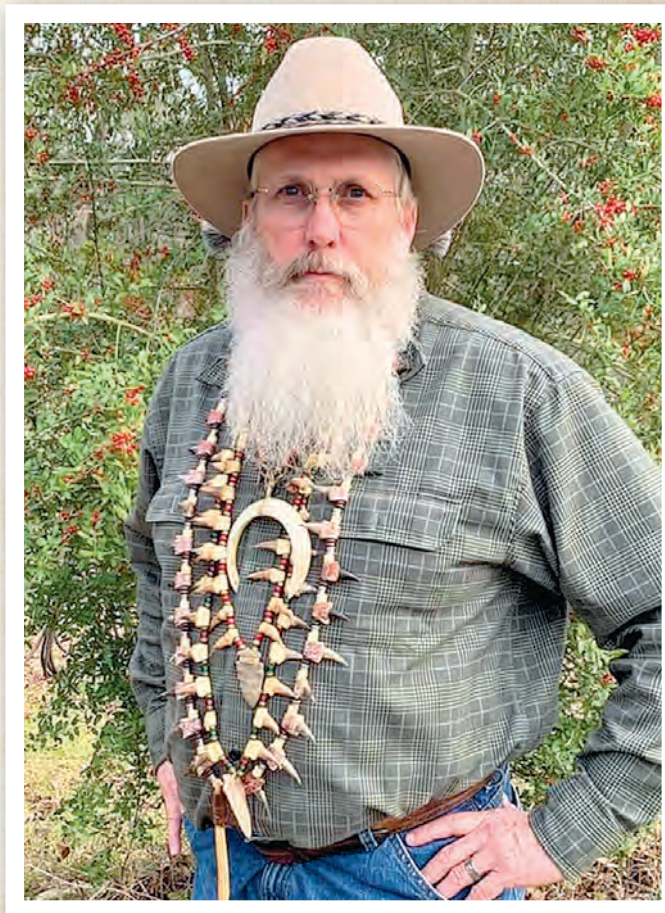
DeWitt has a few people he always thanks. First, his dad, for sharing it all with him. Second, Preston Pittman for giving him his first opportunity in the industry and then, everyone who believed in him enough to take a hunting adventure with him. ■

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.

ON TARGET >



EDITOR'S NOTE: "On Target" is a new feature to include shooting sports in our monthly youth outdoor sports coverage.

BENTON'S O'DONOHUE SHOOTING FOR THE STARS IN YOUNG ARCHERY CAREER

Like many other teenage girls, Savannah O'Donohue enjoys art — sketching or painting — and advanced tap dancing.

What separates her from most is her unbridled passion for shooting a bow and arrow and her quick mastery of the sport. The Benton Middle School eighth grade student is an undisputed national champion and a silver medalist representing Louisiana on the international stage at age 13.

From the beginning, which included a fourth-place in nationals as a fourth grade student, the young teen has said simply, "It's a lot of fun."

O'Donohue's archery career nearly never took off. During Stockwell Place Elementary School's P.E. class, Suzanne Hill gave third graders a piece of yarn to help teach them 11 steps of archery. Her mother mistakenly believed it was a trinket she picked up at



Savannah O'Donohue has been coached by Chip Hemphill and his wife, Kathleen Hemphill, who own Hoot & Holler Training Academy JOAD Club in Bossier City. Savannah's archery interests led her to the academy.

Savannah O'Donohue, 13, of Benton wore the red, white and blue on June 1-5 as a U.S. Archery Team member at the Youth Pan American Championship in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. She claimed a silver medal.



school and tossed it.

The young girl went through the trash, an early sign of how important archery would become. Then she tried out for the school's archery team and didn't make it in 2017.

She tried the next year and made it. She hasn't looked back and strives to improve each year, recently teaming with Charli Long and Madison Hammersla to propel Benton Middle School to an unprecedented third straight NASP Eastern National Bullseye Tournament title in mid-May in Kentucky.

PRAISE FOR COACHES

O'Donohue is quick to praise coaches who have guided her — Hill, Benton Middle School's Terrie Streetman, Autry Lowry and Sherrie Malone, and Hoot and Holler Training Academy's Chip and Kathleen Hemphill in Bossier City.

"The hardest thing for me was the mental aspect. I had (and have) very good coaches . . .," she said, noting coaches helped her with that part of the sport.

O'Donohue, the daughter of Scott and April O'Donohue, really grabbed the sport's attention in May by winning the NASP Eastern National Bullseye Tournament in Louisville, Kentucky. She scored 295 of 300 to top all 2,054 middle school girls in the field. She also tied the highest score for all ages of 5,352 females in the tournament, which prompted a shootoff against a high school senior with five arrows at 15 meters. After each scored 48, the title came down to a single arrow shootoff. The Louisiana teen's arrow thwacked into the target just off the X to make her the first overall champion from Louisiana in the 20-year history of NASP.

She also helped BMS win the National Archery in Schools IBO 3D Eastern Nationals the same weekend with a 283 out of 300.

One month later, O'Donohue notched a 292 of 300 at the Scholarship Shootoff NASP Open/Championship in Kentucky. Between those two national events she took advantage of an invitation and trained for the Youth Pan American Championship in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She simultaneously practiced with her Genesis compound bow for school competition and her Hoyt compound bow for the Pan Am Games in Canada, where nine countries participated in June.

O'Donohue finished the qualifying round in fourth place, which determined seeding for elimination rounds. The 13-year-old

Benton Intermediate School archers congratulate Savannah O'Donohue after the Benton Middle School seventh grader won the NASP National Championship. Savannah is the first overall national champion from Louisiana in the 20-year history of NASP.



competed up one division in the 15- to 17-year-old group.

"This was her first international competition and first at the 50-meter distance," her father said. "Her ranking would eventually pit her against the No. 1 seed and top-ranked youth archer from Mexico. After 15 scored arrows, the two archers were tied and the shoot boiled down to a one-arrow shootoff. O'Donohue remained calm and shot inside the Mexico archer's arrow for the win."

She went on to face the only remaining archer for the gold and finished second. That whet her appetite to elevate her game even more.

OLYMPIC SIZED GOAL

"I'd love to go all the way in archery. I would love to shoot in the Olympics," she said, noting a change has to be made first.

The International Olympic Committee could make that possible by including compound bows. A recent proposal to the IOC was made by World Archery for compound bow inclusion at the 2028 Summer Olympic Games. Currently, only Recurve Limited's are allowed in the Olympics.

Her ultimate goal is to introduce, coach and teach youngsters the sport, just as she was in the fourth grade by Hill.

Halfway through 2022, she already had enjoyed a year to remember.

"What amazes me is her drive and determination this past year," her mother said. "She has matured so much with her training and her focus. She has just really grown up."

"It's been pretty remarkable," her father said. "Also well-deserved. Me and her mother watch her put in the work to achieve. It's not remarkable knowing how hard she works at it.

"I won't speak for her mother but it's amazing to see the things she can do when she's shooting. I see her in practice and putting in work. She shoots that score in practice."

Her parents took up archery after their daughter did. So did her maternal grandfather, Ricky Leger. They try to keep up with her but, her father said, "It's very humbling to line up with her and try to shoot with her."

Practice? Many days she unleashes as many as 400 arrows, 15 shots at a time, her mother said. Two-hour practices are the norm, according to her father.

Early in her career, practices were at a warehouse her father owned, she said. Since then there are two practices a week with the team at Benton Middle School and more practices at Hoot and Holler's facility 20 minutes from their Benton home.

Scott O'Donohue is a New Orleans native and April is from Rayne. They met in Lake Charles and moved to the Bossier City area in 2012 before relocating to Benton.

Many tournaments lie ahead, none more than the upcoming Vegas Shoot, the largest, most prestigious indoor archery tournament, scheduled in February.

And, oh, she has to qualify this fall for the team at Benton Middle School. Based on her current performance, that shouldn't be a problem. ■

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HOW SPORTSMEN COOK

Nathan Justice

Alligator, the other white meat! Prized for its leather, alligators were almost hunted to extinction in Louisiana. Louisiana and many other states now have a thriving population that is managed through hunting regulations and is a true conservation success story.

According to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the Louisiana alligator population has topped two million. Now, that's a ton of cowboy boots. And it's also a lot of good eating!

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But one thing you won't find on your local restaurant's menu is an alligator eggroll! The dish is sure to get your taste buds popping as you reach for seconds! And when you put them on the table, they won't last long.

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4. Roll the egg roll wrapper to meet with the last corner.

PREPARATION: Makes 16-20 egg rolls

1. Combine the ground alligator, minced fresh jalapeños, minced green onion, salt, paprika, black pepper, cayenne, garlic powder and Worcestershire sauce until mixed thoroughly.

2. Heat a skillet on medium to high heat. Add the ground alligator mixture and cook until brown ensuring that all liquid has evaporated. This should take approximately 8-10 minutes. Once the alligator meat is cooked, set aside to cool.

3. While the alligator is cooking, remove the cream cheese from the refrigerator and allow to come to room temperature.

4. When the cream cheese and alligator come to room temperature, approximately 10 minutes, combine the cream cheese, alligator, cooked bacon, and minced pickled jalapeños in a mixing bowl until mixed thoroughly.

5. Quarter and deseed the whole pickled jalapeños into spears and reserve for the egg rolls.

6. Next, lay out your egg roll wrappers and spoon approximately 2 tablespoons of the alligator mixture on wrapper and place a jalapeño spear on top.

7. Then, roll your egg rolls and fold as you would a burrito ensuring that all the filling is sealed inside. This should yield 16-20 egg rolls.

8. While you're rolling the egg rolls, heat the vegetable oil in a frying pan or Dutch oven to 350-375°F.

9. Once the oil has reached 350°F, fry the egg rolls in batches for 3 to 5 minutes or until crispy and golden brown. Remember, the meat is already cooked, so you're just frying to crisp up the egg roll wrapper.

10. While the egg rolls are frying, combine the pepper jelly and rice wine vinegar with a whisk until you achieve a sauce consistency.

11. Serve the egg rolls with the pepper jelly sauce and your favorite adult beverage. These are sure to be a hit at your next party!

INGREDIENTS:


- 1 Pound of Ground Alligator
- 1 Cup of Cooked Crispy Bacon
- 1/8 Cup of Minced Fresh jalapeños
- 1 Cup of Minced Pickled jalapeños
- 4 Whole Pickled jalapeños
- 1/8 Cup of Minced Green Onions
- 8 Ounces of Cream Cheese
- 1 Pound of Egg Roll Wrappers
- 1/2 Tablespoon Salt
- 1/2 Tablespoon Paprika
- 1/2 Tablespoon Black Pepper
- 1 Teaspoon Cayenne
- 1 Teaspoon Garlic powder
- 1 Tablespoon Worcestershire Sauce
- 2 Quarts of Vegetable Oil

PEPPER JELLY DIPPING SAUCE:

- 1/2 Cup of Pepper Jelly (home-made or store bought)
- 1/8 Cup of Rice Wine Vinegar



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



Most anglers head to Calcasieu Lake south of Lake Charles hoping to catch monster speckled trout, certainly one of the best places in Louisiana to accomplish that goal.

Roughly 12 miles long by nine miles wide and surrounded by flat wetlands, the massive shallow system known locally as Big Lake offers little protection from howling winds. The open waters of the 50,000-acre lake can churn with white-capping waves muddying the water on a breezy day. Fortunately, anglers can find numerous other places in the estuary to catch a cornucopia of both fresh and salty species.

“In the open waters, we can’t fish when we get strong winds,” said Tom Adams, Jr. of Fishing Tom Guide Service, (318-675-9114, www.fishingtom.net) who runs two lodges combined into one in Sulphur. “Most people know Big Lake,

but we also fish the marshes and bayous between Big Lake and Sabine Lake.”

The Calcasieu Ship Channel runs 40 miles north from the Gulf of Mexico to Lake Charles, touching Big Lake and other waterbodies in the estuary. Along the way, it bisects the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. To the west, the GIWW merges into the Sabine River on the Louisiana-Texas line. The Sabine River flows into Sabine Lake, another excellent fishery for giant specks and other species.

**MARSHY
WILDERNESS >**



**THIS AREA'S OFTEN-IGNORED
MARSHES PROVIDE ANGLERS
A FULL PLATE.**

■ By John Felsher

A FULL PLATE.

SOUTHWEST

SMORGASBORD

MARSHY WILDERNESS

From the GIWW south to the Gulf of Mexico, a vast marshy wilderness beckons anglers between the two major lakes. Sabine National Wildlife Refuge conserves nearly 125,000 acres of the pristine marshland punctuated by numerous impoundments, bayous, canals and ponds. In the marshes between the lakes, anglers can catch anything that swims in fresh or salty Louisiana waters with little competition. Recreational anglers can fish the refuge from March 15 to October 15 each year. The refuge opens for waterfowl hunting during the season. For more on fishing the refuge, see www.fws.gov/refuge/sabine.

"We usually don't see the boat traffic in those marshes and bayous as someone would see in the two lakes," Adams commented. "Many different species hang out all together in the same places. It's not too salty for freshwater species and it's salty enough for many saltwater species to survive in it."

Fresh water comes down primarily from the Sabine River into the northwestern portion of the marshes where it mixes with salty water coming up from the Gulf through the Calcasieu Ship Channel. The incredibly blurred demarcation between the two environments blends and moves constantly. This fertile mixing of both sweet and saline worlds creates a piscatorial gumbo hosting a multi-

tude of diverse species feeding upon the same prey.

Largemouth bass can tolerate up to about 10 parts per thousand of salinity. Blue catfish can tolerate salinity better than most other freshwater species. Redfish and flounder can live in pure fresh water. Most other salty species tolerate varying salinity levels.

VARIETY OF SPECIES

"We routinely catch both saltwater and freshwater species in the marshes," Adams said. "We might catch 15 or more different species in one day. We use the same techniques to catch all those different species."

What someone catches in a particular spot on any given day, or even hour, largely depends upon water levels and flow as dictated by tides and wind. Anglers might catch mostly bass from one spot early in the morning, but more redfish and speckled trout later in the day at the same spot, or perhaps land all three together.

Predatory fish, particularly redfish and bass, commonly feast upon the best forage from both worlds, often at the same time and place. They gorge

In many tidal waters, anglers can catch salty and freshwater species at the same time in the same place.



themselves on a rich smorgasbord of sweet species such as shad, shiners, crawfish and sunfish or munch marine morsels like crabs, shrimp, coahoos, menhaden, mullets, croakers and uncountable other creatures.

“Fishing for redfish is a lot like fishing for bass,” said Stephen Browning, a Bassmaster Classic pro who also fishes for redfish. “Anything a bass will eat, a redfish will eat and vice versa. In brackish water, it’s not unusual to catch bass and redfish on the same lures in the same places.”

To entice bass and redfish, anglers can use most traditional temptations. Both species frequently hit topwaters, spinnerbaits, bladed jigs, spoons, crankbaits and various natural baits. Anglers also catch them on various soft-plastic attractions. Redfish devour bass jigs sweetened with craw trailers because they mimic crabs. Flounder slurp plastic worms, fished either Texas or wacky style.

In dense grass, throw soft-plastic frogs rigged weightless and weedless. Frogs can go through or over the thickest cover and tend to provoke strikes from larger bass. Although frogs don’t usually show up on a spot-tailed marsh marauder’s daily menu, redfish blow up on buzzing frogs like a grenade detonating in the water.

“Frogs are not on the everyday menu for redfish, but a redfish will eat just about anything,” said Mike Gallo of Angling Adventures of Louisiana (877-4AAOFLA, www.aaofla.com). “If something fits into its mouth, a redfish will eat it.”

Fish sinking frogs with a steady buzzing retrieve to create surface commotion. At open pockets, let the frog sink a foot or two. With floating frogs, let it sit motionless a few moments. Then, pop it vigorously. The commotion simulates a live frog splashing across the surface.

John N. Felsher



Spoons, like this Al's Goldfish, can catch a variety of fish, including bass in marshes like those between the Calcasieu Estuary and the Sabine Estuary southwest of Lake Charles.

CRUSTACEAN MIGRATION >



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

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CRUSTACEAN MIGRATION

Nothing ignites a multi-species feeding frenzy like a crustacean migration. After a good cold snap in the fall, white shrimp leave the estuaries to head for deeper waters. Brown shrimp migrate up from the gulf to the estuaries in the spring. As shrimp move, everything follows because no predator in the marsh will refuse a shrimp snack, including bass. Largemouth will readily attack a live shrimp under a cork or a soft-plastic shrimp imitation.

“Bass absolutely love live shrimp,” Adams said. “Like trout, they want something moving. Most bass in the marsh average about one to two pounds, but anglers specifically targeting bass sometimes catch 5 to 6-pounders. Several bass clubs fish tournaments in that marsh. Some anglers have caught bass in the 8 to 10-pound range.”

On a recent trip with Adams, we caught 13 species, most of them on live shrimp under a popping cork. We also caught some blue and channel catfish, freshwater drum plus several salty species with shrimp on the bottom.

“In September and into the fall, we fish grass lines with live shrimp under a popping cork,” Adams said. “For redfish, I like to work the main bayou shorelines. I look for flowing water. Black Bayou can produce excellent action. It usually has moving water. The bayou averages about eight to 10 feet deep, but some holes drop to 14 feet deep. Redfish like to hang out in the holes as water temperatures cool in the fall. We also catch many flounder in the same places where we catch redfish and bass, especially in the fall. Flounder like a 3-inch Berkley Gulp! Swimming Mullet.”

John N. Felsher



Elizabeth Eustis shows off a redfish she caught while fishing with Fishing Tom Guide Service in the Calcasieu Estuary.

BELOW: Karen Lutto shows off a flounder she caught in the Black Lake area of the Calcasieu Estuary.



FALLING TIDE DINNER BELL

During a falling tide, dropping water levels pull baitfish, shrimp and crabs into deeper water. Bass, redfish, flounder and other species wait at the mouths of small drains to ambush anything washing down with the flow. Toss a popping cork as far upstream as possible and let it float down with the current. Pop it periodically to simulate fish striking. Around grassy shorelines, toss the rig against the current so the tide or breeze can carry it over the honey hole.

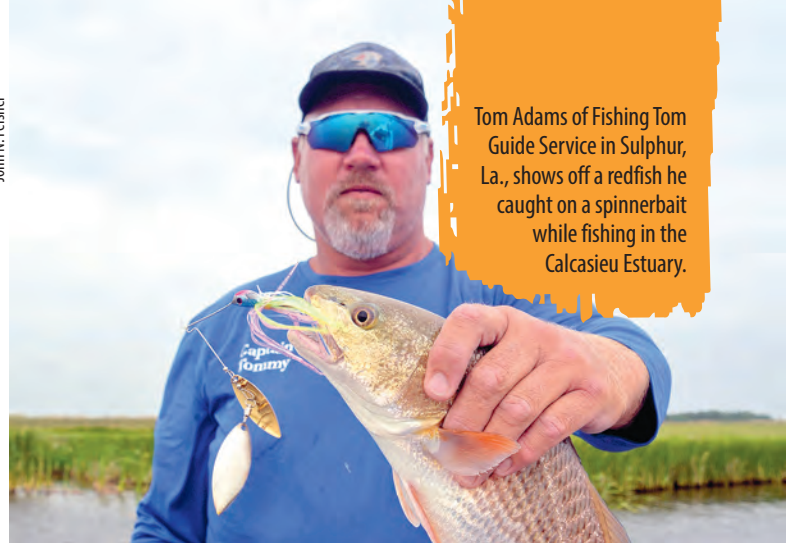
Anglers can fish a soft-plastic shrimp imitation, such as Vudu, D.O.A. or Gulp! the same way. Also try a shrimp imitation fished with as little weight as possible. If necessary, add a tiny split-shot for casting distance. As with the cork, let the current carry the bait naturally. Add just enough action to keep the bait suspended in the flowing water. Use the reel only to take in slack. Reds, trout, flounder and bass will hit such an enticement.

“Trout action depends largely on salinity levels,” Adams said. “We usually find specks closer to Sabine Lake. In the marshes, trout average about 12 to 15 inches long, but it’s not uncommon to catch a limit of 15-inch trout, especially in the fall.”

Besides the Black Bayou area, anglers can also fish the Vinton Drainage Ditch, which crosses the Intracoastal and merges into Black Bayou. The East Cut connects the north end of Sabine Lake to Black Bayou. Anglers can also fish several pockets and cuts along the GIWW.

Closer to the Calcasieu side of the marsh, the Black Lake area

John N. Feisler



Tom Adams of Fishing Tom Guide Service in Sulphur, La., shows off a redfish he caught on a spinnerbait while fishing in the Calcasieu Estuary.

produces great fishing action for salty species. The Salt Ditch runs from the GIWW to the Black Lake area and regularly produces good trout action. Kelso Bayou connects Black Lake to the Calcasieu Ship Channel. People can also fish off the bank along Highway 27.

“The waters around Black Lake are very good for redfish, trout, flounder and other saltwater species,” Adams said. “In the marshes, we never know what might grab the line, especially when we put a live shrimp on a hook. It’s always a surprise what we bring in. That’s what makes fishing this area so exciting!”

For area information, contact the Visit Lake Charles at 337-502-4358 or see www.visitlakecharles.org.

MARSH MAN MASSON >

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Todd Masson

SHRIMP SCHOOL

TAKING A FISH-EYE VIEW OF SOME OF THE TOP SHRIMPIN' BAIT OPTIONS

Every year, by the middle of summer, I'm sick to death of the heat and I pine every single moment for the magical days of autumn, when speckled trout move to the inside marshes and the crisp, cool air makes you want to spend all day in their pursuit.

As if agreeing with the English pop duo Bananarama that the season preceding it is a cruel, cruel summer, particularly in South Louisiana, Mother Nature always sends hints that the experience won't last forever and better days are ahead. Normal people see it in the changing of leaves or declining photoperiod.

We fishermen see it in the leaping of the first white shrimp.

Cruise around the marsh in mid summer, and you'll eventually spook a whittie that will snap its powerful tail two or three times to flee from your intrusion. If you adore the fall like I do, it's an event that will always bring a smile to your face.

That's because white shrimp are the food of choice of autumn speckled trout.

The crustaceans are leaving their marshy nursery grounds at the same time the specks are coming in from their summer spawns. It's a collision course that benefits one species considerably more than the other.

The prevalence of white shrimp, and speckled trout's affinity for them, is why I always try to mimic the crustaceans during the autumn. Sometimes that's with a Pop-R scurrying across the surface like a fleeing shrimp, but mostly, it's with a shrimp imitation under a Versamaxx Bolt when it's windy, or fished free-lined on calm days.

That, to me, is just the best way to find specks, particularly when I have no idea where a school might be holding.

There are, of course, a number of shrimp-imitating lures, and I wanted to compare and contrast them, so I dunked some underwater cameras in a neighborhood pool and made a whole lot of casts.

I put the resulting video on my Marsh Man Masson YouTube channel, but here's the gist of what I learned:

Vudu Shrimp — The lure falls faster than some of the others, which makes it easier to fish in a bit of a breeze and would certainly work on days when fish are keying on rapid motion. The tail of the Vudu is segmented, and that allows it to twist and turn on every twitch. Also, the legs wiggle quite a bit, as do the antennae.

Marker 54 Glide Shrimp — Glide Shrimp is a good name for this one because it moves through the water at a roughly 45-degree angle. That increases the amount of time it stays in the strike zone. The segmented tail gives it some lingering action, even after the rest of the bait stops moving, but not nearly as much as the Vudu.

Z-Man EZ Shrimpz — This one's made



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

out of Elaztech, which means it's super stretchy and can't be stored with regular soft-plastics. In the pool, the lure helicoptered down too many times, which no shrimp really does. Out of the package, it also falls really quickly, although the lure has a segmented weight, which allows an angler to easily make it lighter.

Live Target Shrimp — Out of the package, this one looks the most like a real shrimp, but in the pool, it falls much faster than the real thing. That makes it easier to work, but probably less effective than some of the other baits. It's also super stiff.

Savage Gear 3D Shrimp — This one's a bit different in that it has a weighted hook that rests in a pocket, making it mostly weedless. I didn't

know much about this lure before my pool test, but I was super impressed with it. The fall rate is excellent, and there seems to be always something moving on this lure. Its segmented tail is in perpetual motion, and the tip of the tail even vibrates a bit. I used this lure a few days after my pool test, and caught a ton of fish on it.

TKO Shrimp — This lure has very little action, but its strength is its fall rate. It's the exact same speed as a real live shrimp. Being that it's light, though, means it has to be fished more slowly than some of the others.

Marker 54 Flexible-Tail Shrimp — This one is rigged uniquely, compared to the others. It's positioned tail-first, so it moves backwards when twitched, just like a real shrimp. On every twitch in the pool, the tail folded in half before springing back out. The bait probably falls a bit faster than I'd like, but it has a rocking back-and-forth motion that I'm sure elicits strikes.

Tsunami Shrimp — This bait is scented, and its fall rate isn't the worst, but other than that, there aren't many redeeming qualities. It's a featureless stick moving through the water. There are far better options to be had.

Matrix Shrimp — This is the smallest of the shrimp,



Two artificial lures that mimic the real thing — live white shrimp.

Todd Masson

and like the Savage Gear Shrimp, it's rigged on a weighted hook. The fall rate is a bit fast, but the tail is both segmented and forked, which gives it a tremendous amount of action. It vibrates on both the twitch and the fall. You can actually feel it in the rod. ■

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Kip Plaisance with Plaisance's Tidewater Charters shows off a pair of speckled trout he caught while fishing in Timbalier Bay west of Fourchon.



TIMBALIER TROUT TIME

Focus on the wellheads, islands for end of summer specks

L By John N. Felsher
 eaving the rising sun behind us, we headed west out of Port Fourchon across Timbalier Bay, much bigger than I remember it from years ago.
 "Today, Lakes Pelto, Barre, Raccourci and Terrebonne Bay all run together," explained Kip Plaisance who guides with his son Max for Plaisance's Tidewater Charters out of south Lafourche Parish.
 "I remember years ago, when the lakes and bays were somewhat separated. We lost numerous islands over the years from erosion. People who know where those islands were can still catch fish around them."
 We headed to Casse-Tete Island, also called Hatchet Island because it looks like a hatchet from above. The cork splashed just off a grassy point with the first cast and immediately disappeared. The largest trout landed on this warm late summer day couldn't resist the squirming live shrimp.
 More trout quickly followed with Chris Holmes, Nicholas Gremillion and James "Goosie" Guice periodically adding to the box. With live shrimp, we never know what might pull on the line. We fished a couple more islands and then headed to some old

structures that once supported large tanks when I last fished these waters. Only the pilings remain now.
 "Older people still call it the Tank Battery, but the younger generation calls it the Deer Stand because part of it resembles a deer stand," Kip said. "We jump around to different wellheads in the summer looking for fish."
 Before the day ended, we put 13 species into the boat, practically everything found inshore except sheepshead and flounder. After landing several more shrimp-slurping specks, I opted for a jighead sweetened with an avocado and red paddle-tailed plastic trailer. Electric chicken also produced some good fish. Bigger trout seemed to want plastic more than shrimp.
 "With live bait, we'll catch a lot of other fish besides trout," Kip said. "Often, we'll get a little better grade of trout with plastics because we get more reaction strikes."
 At each spot, I experimented with different retrieves. Sometimes, trout hugged the bottom. In water five to 10 feet deep, I let the bait sink to the bottom. Some trout smacked the descending enticement. If not, I bounced it a few feet off the bottom and let it settle again. At other times, suspended



Chris Holmes prepares to throw a popping cork rig while fishing around an old oilfield structure in Timbalier Bay west of Fourchon with Kip Plaisance.

trout wanted baits swimming higher in the water column. I'd occasionally pause the swimming retrieve to let the lure sink a couple feet.

"When I get bass fishermen on the boat, I tell them to work a plastic a little bit faster for trout than they would a Texas-rigged worm," Kip instructed. "If people want to take the time to fish plastics, they'll get more trout bites than live bait, but live bait gets them going faster."

Kip also free-lined live coaho minnows, using just a small split-shot to take the bait a little deeper. At one structure, he hooked a massive bull redfish and fought it to the boat. A large bull shark shot out from under the vessel. In seconds, it gobbled about 25 pounds of redfish, leaving only the head. In late summer, bull reds traditionally come into the bays from offshore to spawn.

"Big schools of bull reds usually show up around the beginning of August with the peak from mid-August through September," Kip said. "In late summer, we also get a

cobia run.

"In late August or September, trout begin moving back into the inland bays and marshes toward Leeville or Golden Meadow. Then, we fish the islands and wellheads toward Lake Barre."

To book trips with Tidewater Charters, call 985-637-7251. On line, see fishtidewater.com or look them up on Facebook. ■

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DELTA LURES REDFISH SPINNERBAIT

SPECIALTY SPINNERBAIT HAS BEEN THE DOWNFALL OF MANY MARSH REDFISH

Fred King knows what he will tie on and have locked in his hand a majority of the time when he's targeting redfish in the marsh around Delacroix, La.

The 51-year-old Prairieville angler, who co-owns Delta Lures, LLC, smacks the redfish on a Delta Lures Redfish Spinnerbait. That spinnerbait has been the downfall of beaucoup redfish, as many anglers have proven since King and Roy LaBorde of Independence introduced it in the mid-2010s.

"I wanted to kind of get into the redfish side of it," King said about the artificial lure manufacturing market.

While sales are good along the coast, many, many of them fly off the shelves in the New Orleans and Chalmette areas, he said.

King and LaBorde, who both lived in LaPlace when they founded Delta Lures LLC in 2011, came up with the idea for the specialty spinnerbait and helped in the design created by Cliff Pace of Petal, Miss. Pace was the 2013 Bassmaster Classic champion who fishes now with the Major League Fishing Bass Pro Tour.

AT HOME IN THE MARSH

"I love fishing the Redfish Spinnerbait in the marsh," King said. "It's one of my favorite things to catch them on. You can catch redfish and bass, even some speckled trout and the occasional flounder might hit.

The ¼-ounce Redfish Spinnerbait has a single No. 4 gold Colorado blade on a "safety pin" harness. Anglers have the choice between a .40 stainless steel wire on the standard Redfish Spinnerbait or an .51 stainless steel wire on the Heavy Duty Redfish Spinnerbait.

King prefers the .40-gauge wire because of the extra vibration on the retrieve. The HD Redfish Spinnerbait is available online only.

"I personally like the thinner one," King said. "I know some people who like to use the thicker wire so they don't have to straighten the wire up after every redfish. You get more vibration with



the thinner wire while the heavier wire holds up to redfish."

The Redfish Spinnerbait is armed with a 4/0 corrosion-resistant Mustad Ultra-point black nickel hook on a jighead with ring-necked baitkeepers on it, he said. He noted there are six ring-necks on the jighead.



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.

MATRIX SHAD

The baitkeepers hold the Dockside Bait & Tackle's Matrix Shad or Vortex Shad, ultra-popular swimbait soft plastics, firmly in place while casting, retrieving and catching. Lemonhead is the most popular Matrix Shad color while black/chartreuse is most popular in the Vortex Shad, according to King.

"My favorite color is a Green Hornet Matrix Shad," he said. "To me it looks like a mullet or something. It looks like a baitfish to me. It's more natural, so I use that one."

The Redfish Spinnerbaits are efficient in the marsh, he said, adding he retrieves them close to the top.

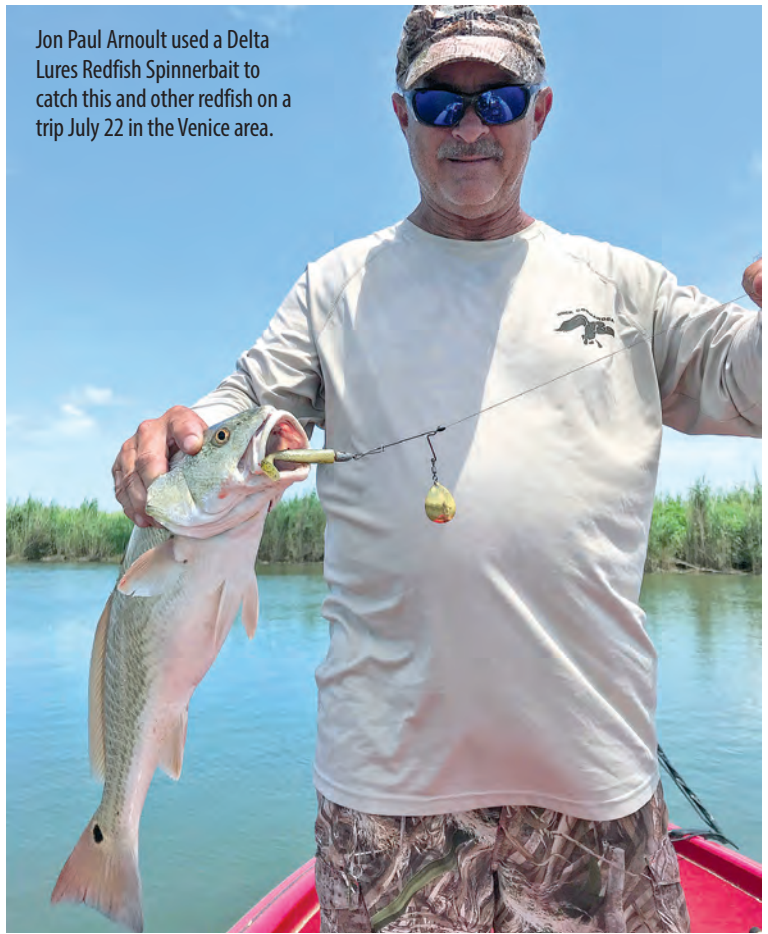
"Most of the time you're fishing 12 to 18 inches of water," King said. "When you throw it up there, you know, you're fishing shallow in the marsh."

And that's where the redfish — rat reds, slot reds and bigger — live and eat.

He knows if the redfish aren't hitting the Redfish Spinnerbait, they'll hit the Delta Lures Thunder Jig, a bladed jig also adorned with either a Matrix Shad or Vortex Shad.

For more information on the Delta Lures Redfish Spinnerbait and other Delta Lures LLC products go to www.deltalures.com. ■

Jon Paul Arnoult used a Delta Lures Redfish Spinnerbait to catch this and other redfish on a trip July 22 in the Venice area.



DELACROIX SPECKS & REDS >

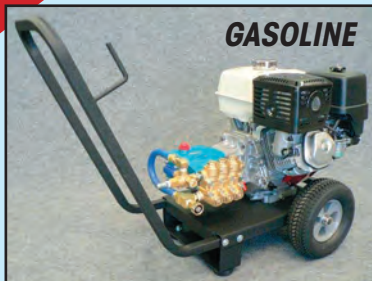
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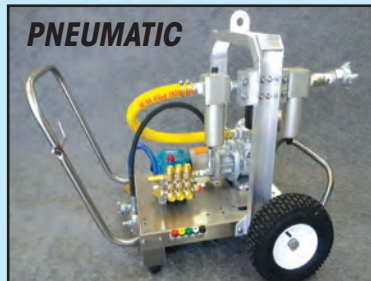
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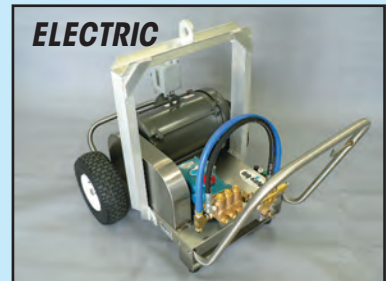
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DELACROIX IS ON 'GO'

Specks, redfish are at the starting line to race toward interior waters

A By Rusty Tardo
According to veteran Charter Captain Nick Rando (504-281-8287), September begins the annual fall transition, when trout start the trek from their outside spring and summer spawning grounds into the large outer bays and lakes. It's a cycle that repeats itself every year. The outside waters are higher in the salt content the fish need for spawning. But this month an old, innate instinct kicks in, drawing them towards the interior waters.

Rando said the transition also means the fish will be scattered, so anglers will have to do the old stick-and-move tactic to put together a good box.

"You'll still be able to find some good fish at the usual summer spots," Rando said. "Stone Island, Iron Banks, the Compressor, the Black Tanks, the Wreck and all the way out to Breton Island. The rigs and structure in Bay Eloi holds fish, and the Long Rocks are consistently producing good catches of mixed fish.

"You probably won't limit anywhere, but you can pick up a few here and a few there, stick as long as they're biting, and move when they stop," he said.

BIG FRINGE BAYS

Rando said he'll also search the big fringe bays this month, looking for birds and for good current lines around points.

"I can tell you I'm seeing more bait in the Delacroix waters right now than I've seen in a long time," he said. "As I run through the bays, I see shrimp jumping all over, so any minute we're going to hear of great action on both specks and reds. I expect it to crank up in areas like Lake Campo, Oak River Bay, Bay Crabbe, Bay Lafourche and all along the edges of Black Bay and over to Four Horse Lake."

Rando said since the waters are so full of white shrimp right now, the trout and reds will be gorging on them. That means you'll want to stock up your baitwell with the live ones before leaving the dock.

"I've also been catching a lot of fish on those Boom-Boom Shrimp, fished about 3 feet deep under a 4-Horsemen cork," he said.

He said reds should also be patrolling the interior, where gold spoons, spinnerbaits and live shrimp under a cork will attract the bite.

September is looking good, so let's hope and pray for a quiet tropical season. ■



Capt. Nick Rando caught this 44-inch redfish in Oak River Bay on live shrimp under a 4-Horsemen cork.



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POWERHOUSE BASSING

■ By Don Shoopman

THOMPSON BUILT
LSU-S INTO THE
STATE'S TOP-RANKED
COLLEGE TEAM.



Charles Thompson III of Bossier City is building a bass fishing powerhouse at LSU-Shreveport. That was the word earlier this year from a respected veteran bass angler in the Shreveport area.

IT CHECKS OUT.

The championship building claim is hard to argue after 2021-22, Thompson's second full year as coach of the LSU-S Fishing Team. The Pilots finished the season ranked 20th nationally by the Association of Collegiate Anglers after starting the season unranked. They are the only Louisiana college ranked in the Top 25.

During the early stages of college bass fishing, the LSU-S club team was ranked No.1 after the 2014-15 season by Bassrankings.com. The Pilots boasted two two-man teams then. When Thompson took over, four student anglers were participating. For the upcoming season, he said, 18 will be on the LSU-S Fishing Team.

Those Pilots include Levi Thibodeaux of Chackbay, a Thibodaux High School graduate who Thompson signed Oct. 22 in Decatur, Alabama, after Thibodaux won the inaugural Bassmaster High School Combine on Wheeler Lake, and Marlee Churchman, the first female to sign with the Pilots after a sterling career at Captain Shreve High School.

"I'm a daddy. I knew I was going to recruit a young lady. Marlee was the one," Thompson said, noting he and his wife, Lashonda, have a son, Deyon, and three daughters, Jessica, Rhyann and Lalia.

A PLACE IN HISTORY

Thompson holds his own place in history as the only African-American coaching a college bass fishing team in the U.S.

A year ago, Thompson also signed Khristian Rousseve from Edgard, a West St. John standout who became the second black student/athlete in the country to earn a bass fishing scholarship.

Thibodeaux, Churchman and Rousseve fit the mold for what their coach wants on the team at LSU-S. His emphasis is on character, on passion for the sport and on recruiting high school bass anglers mostly from Louisiana.

Tying knots? Picking artificial lures? How to use various techniques? Knowing the water?

"By the time they get to me they need to know all that. The main thing is the mindset when the bite isn't there. I don't necessarily teach them a technique. I teach more so when to apply it," he said, noting it's like a quarterback reading a defense, or pitcher reading a batter.

Thompson, 47, has a solid foundation to build on. LSU-S veteran teammates Tripp Bowman, Brother Martin, Nathan Coffman, Brayden Nichols, Matthew Nesbit, William Tew and Dawson Cowden are among today's most consistent collegiate bass anglers.

"I try to recruit local. I want to keep Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas right here," he said, adding he isn't ruling out occasionally signing seniors from, say, Alabama.



Charles Thompson, III
LSUS Fishing Coach



LSU-S bass fishing coach Charles Thompson. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** The LSU-S Fishing Team posed for a photo in mid-April at the Ross Barnett Rumble in Mississippi. (Left to right) Khristain Rousseve, Blakley Young, Jeremy Severic, Coach Charles Thompson, Ty Gentry, Tripp Bowman, Luke Batts, Bryant "Brother" Martin, Matthew Nesbit and William Tew.

BROADER PLAN

Thompson was helping high school seniors go to the next level a few years before he took the coaching job. The retired U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sergeant and his wife awarded scholarships after they moved back to Bossier City, called the VLG (The Village) Scholarship for local high school seniors with at least a 2.5 GPA with aspirations/acceptance to college or trade school. He was inspired to do that by God, he said.

Apparently, He had an even broader plan.

One day, Thompson said, he was talking to one of the guys at Bass Pro who was aware the couple helped local seniors with scholarships.

"LSU-S needs a coach," he told Thompson.

He thought about it some more. Intrigued, he contacted LSU-S. Still, he was unsure if he wanted to take it on when he interviewed.

His military background surfaced when he sat down to talk about the coaching job with LSU-S.

"I interviewed with the school. I was really tough in the interview. I said, 'If I take this job, I'm not going to baby them. I'm going to teach them responsibility, teach them to be good citizens ...,'" Thompson said. "I wanted to make sure the school was behind me in decisions I would have to make.

"The truth of the matter is, I'm a big pushover, a softie. They (LSU-S fishing team members) see that," he said, "but the kids know I have a bold line in the sand and not to cross it. We get things worked out, you know?"

The former radiology physician assistant travels the country as a clinical and device training specialist for Bracco Diagnostics Inc. He's away Monday through Wednesday or Thursday. Thompson spends time with the fishing team when he returns home.

HE GOT HOOKED >

An advertisement for Toledo Bend Lake Country. The top part features a fisherman in a yellow shirt and sunglasses holding a large bass. The text reads "ONE OF THE BEST BASS LAKES IN NORTH AMERICA" and "WATER YOU WAITING FOR?". The bottom part features the Toledo Bend Lake Country logo, the website ToledoBendLakeCountry.com, the phone number 1-800-358-7802, and social media icons for Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. The Louisiana Travel logo is also present.

HE GOT HOOKED

The once-avid, competitive and highly successful golfer was working at a hospital in Norman, Oklahoma, approximately 15 years ago when a buddy took him bass fishing. His golf days were numbered because of recurring back problems.

“I just got hooked. No pun intended. I just started fishing more than playing golf,” he said.

He fished the old FLW tour’s Cowboy Division as a Co-Angler. He was 11th overall the first year and 16th his second and final full season.

“It was pretty nice. I enjoyed it. I just didn’t have the time (to prefish) to go to the boater side,” he said.

Those weren’t the end of his tournaments. He fishes when he can in the Bossier City-based Barksdale Hawgherders Bass Club, mostly active and retired military personnel. He finished

fourth in the bass club’s AOY race in 2021. Mostly, he said, he’s at his best when he has time to prefish.

“It’s a fun little trail, mostly all ex-military,” he said.

His personal best is a 10.7-pounder he got his hands on five years ago at Lake Naconiche north of Nacogdoches, Texas. It bit on a 3.5.-inch Kietech Swing Impact SwimBait.

“I’m a junk fisherman,” he said. “I throw everything in the tacklebox. I don’t really have a favorite. I can flip. I love to throw crankbaits, buzz baits and soft plastics.”

Admittedly, he doesn’t have time for a “favorite lake.”

“Sometimes if I need to go to Benton (on business), I may go



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.



Charles Thompson III's youngest daughter, Lalia Thompson, grins after catching a good-sized bass while fishing with her father. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Charles Thompson III, left, and bass tournament partner, Gary Yates, team up to do some serious bass fishing.



to Cross Lake, Caddo or Black Bayou,” he said. “Those are kind of my favorites out of convenience.”

That the LSU-S Fishing Team is on the rise is a blessing, one that’s been earned.

“I think it’s awesome. I love it. But it’s all God’s work. I think he guides me” to develop young bass anglers, he said.

“I want to give kids a place in school, attract young men and women to school in Louisiana. That’s great. I want to help them mature and be great,” he said.

Intrasquad competition determines the top five or six two-man teams, he said, and those teams fish the entire schedule (if they keep up on his point system) with a stipend for pickup truck and boat fuel, tournament fees and lodging.

“We keep a running points system. I try to put my top anglers on the water all the time,” he said.

It checks out. ■

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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.

IT'S BASS "GUMBO" TIME

STIR THE POT WITH KAYAKS, COOL WEATHER, SCHOOLS OF BAITFISH AND FLUKES

Although it may not always seem like it, September officially brings the end of summer and hopes for cool mornings and mild days.

The doldrums of summer slowly fade and changes in nature progress as days become shorter and vegetation growth begins to slow. With lowering water temperatures, baitfish begin to school and bass become more active. Although deadly year-round, fluke-style baits really excel this time of year. Kayaks are also perfectly suited for this style of fishing.

Fluke-style baits may be the most versatile soft-plastic bass bait there is. It can literally be rigged and fished in countless ways to cover every inch of the water column, impart a variety of actions and mimic nearly any natural prey upon which bass are feeding. Flukes come in a variety of sizes, endless colors, and some are salted or scented. Their basic design is the same with a blunt nose, fatter belly section, with or without a hook slot, and a long, slim tail section, sometimes forked.

For such a simple design, these baits are a favorite among many bass anglers due to their versatility. The most popular method is to rig it weedless with an extra wide gap (EWG) hook in either 4/0 or 5/0 size. The larger gap allows the hook to penetrate further through the thick belly section, ensuring better hook-sets. When fishing near cover, the hooks can be placed to protrude horizontally along the back to avoid picking up grass or snags. It can even be lightly skinned back into the bait for extra hook protection.

ERRATIC ACTION

When used with no weight, the fluke imparts erratic action unlike any other bait. They sink slowly and any small rod twitch makes the lure jump, twist, and turn with strike-provoking action. At the end of a twitch, they slowly fall-off and glide like a dying bait fish. This fall-off is often when a strike occurs. Although these unweighted lures can be cast on a baitcaster, a spinning outfit is better suited for easy casts. This is also preferred when casting from the sitting position in a kayak as it is easier to cast with less effort.





Bass in open water are often feeding on schools of baitfish. Flukes make great baits in these conditions and can be fished throughout the water column. Tandem rigging them can be extremely effective.



Flukes are one of the most versatile and productive bass fishing baits in the fall. They can be rigged and fished in an endless variety of ways to cover virtually any situation you may encounter.

Unweighted flukes can also be fished on top of heavy cover, skipped under docks or limbs, allowed to sink to the bottom or even slowly trolled. No matter the method, stout hook-sets should be employed in order to drive the hook through the bait and firmly into the bass's mouth.

As the bait schools move into open water, flukes can be rigged in a variety of other ways. Saltwater anglers regularly use tandem or "double rigs" to catch schooling speckled trout. This method also works great to fish flukes for bass. The easiest way is to use two small swivels. Tie one swivel onto a two-foot section of monofilament with the fluke at the other end. Do the same for a one-foot section. Slide the swivel with the shorter section onto your main line and then tie the longer section to the main line. This set up helps keep the lures from tangling and allows the top lure to slide up the line.

TWO BASS AT A TIME

This rig looks like two baitfish chasing each other and is deadly when bass are feeding on schooling bait. The flukes can be rigged weightless, on weighted hooks, or small jigheads. If fishing open water where grass or snags are not an issue, rig the hooks to be fully exposed through the baits in order to increase hook-ups. It is not uncommon to catch two bass at a time using this method. If you do get two on the line, this set up lets the fish pull the baits away from each other without getting lever-

age to pull the hook.

Watch for signs of bass feeding off of points and the mouths of creeks where the bait is penned up. If possible, use the wind to drift towards the action or slowly paddle or pedal into position. Use natural colors or patterns as the bass will likely be feeding on shad. White is often hard to beat. If the surface action subsides, the bite may not be over. Fish the same area, but allow the lures to sink a bit deeper and try all depths before moving to another area.

As noted above, there are endless ways to rig and fish a fluke. Besides weightless, try weighted hooks, jigheads, under-spin hooks/heads or even nose hooked using a Screw Lock and live bait hook. Rigged Texas, Carolina, Tandem, Ned, or Neko style, the fluke can do it all.

However, sometimes, doing nothing is best.

Flukes also excel at "dead sticking" when bass are tight-lipped. Cast and allow the fluke to sink to the bottom, doing nothing for an extended period before beginning the retrieve. Although counterintuitive, this motionless presentation often entices finicky bass into a strike.

From top to bottom or anywhere in between, give a fluke a try on your next fall bass kayak outing and you won't be disappointed. ■

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Photos courtesy Chris Basey

BONFOUCA'S BEST BETS

The game is on for bass chasing shad in small cuts and canals

By Keith Lusher Jr.

September is a month that is heavily anticipated by most folks living in South Louisiana for a number of reasons. One being that it marks the start of football season. It's also a time that we enjoy a quieter house because the kids are back in school. But perhaps the biggest reason that we look forward to September is that it's usually the month when the first cool front passes through.

Chris Basey of Covington loves September, but it's for an entirely different reason.

"This is the month when the shad move back into those small cuts and canals off of the main river," he said about Bayou Bonfouca. Basey is a year-round bass fisherman and targets the rivers and bayous on the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain. September presents a chance for him to move off of the main river and start fishing more shallow.

"Oh I love it!" he said. "When the shad start piling into the cuts — I know the bass will be right behind."

A GOOD DAY

On his latest trip he was fishing Bayou Bonfouca and made his way back into a canal near Palm Bayou. It had plenty of vegetation along the shoreline and the surface was alive with action.

"I just knew it was going to be a good day when I entered that canal — I don't think three seconds went by that I didn't see shad skipping or a wake being thrown," he said.

It was early and Basey grabbed his rod with a frog tied on. "I like to start out with a frog when it's early like that," he said. "Usually my biggest fish come during the early morning hours on a frog."

After seeing an explosion between some lilies and the marsh

line, he tossed the frog onto the shoreline and worked it into the water.

"That thing wasn't even in six inches of water when he blew through and smashed it," he said.

Basey waited an extra second before he set the hook and then the fight began.

"All I could say was — 'don't come off, don't come off,'" he said. He finessed the fish through the set of lilies and then was able to boat-flip him. Basey started his day with a five pound bass and was able to catch several more between two and four pounds that day.

"All the fish were gorged with shad with some spitting them out as they flopped on the bow," he said.

SETUP

While Basey starts his day with a frog along the shoreline, it's not long until he switches over to a spinnerbait. Basey prefers a 3/8-ounce spinnerbait in white with an Indiana blade. He adjusts the color of the blade to the color of the water.

"When that water is root beer colored, I like to go with a gold blade," he said. "When it's clear water, I'll use a silver."

Basey ties his spinnerbait on to a 7-foot medium rod with a moderate tip. This allows the bass to get the fast moving spinnerbait in its mouth without it being ripped out, adding "there's a lot of forgiveness in that rod that helps me catch more fish on a spinnerbait."

WHAT TO LOOK FOR?

From the northernmost point where Bonfouca originates to the southernmost section where it empties into Lake Pontchartrain, there are 44 canals that offer anglers an escape from the main

BELOW: This big Bayou Bonfouca largemouth bass couldn't resist an imitation frog "hopping" through the grass by its hiding place

bayou. So finding a canal to fish isn't a hard task. When deciding on what cut or canal to fish, Basey has a few tips.

"Look for canals with a lot of grass along the shoreline," he said. "Also wharfs, bulkheads, and other transitions divide the shoreline."

Basey starts at the mouth of the canal where it meets the main bayou and works his way back. The farther back it goes, the better, he said. Basey works his way all the way to the back of the canal and puts together a pattern that dictates where he'll find fish in other canals.

With the shad starting to move back into the cuts this month, you can expect them to remain there throughout the winter until they move out after the spawn in the spring. ■

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BORING...OR THE BOMB?

Vertical jigging opinions vary, but it puts bass in the boat on the Bend

Vy John Dean
ertical jigging might be regarded as boring to some, but right now it's the bomb, as they say.

Traditionally on Toledo Bend, when the water drops and the temperature rises to the triple-digit mark and bunches up the baitfish, namely shad, up-and-down fishing with a jigging spoon is hard to beat. But there's something else to keep in mind that does a great job of putting bass in the boat in September.

Try vertically jigging an A-Rig. Yes. That's right. Don't cast it a country mile. You don't have to wear yourself out casting. Just punch the button and let your multiple shad-colored soft plastics drop.

Where? Target drains, channels and wood offshore in 10-12 or 20-25 foot depths, depending on where the baitfish are roaming at the time. That means you need to rely on marine electronics to find bunches of shad, what we commonly call the "baitballs".

Don't get me wrong. There are other good choices. The ½-ounce chrome Cotton Cordell's C.C. Jigging Spoons will produce bass like they have for generations of anglers on this lake. And so will ½-ounce chrome/blue Bill Lewis Lures Rat-L-Traps and shad-colored square bill crankbaits that dive 15-20 feet deep.

ANOTHER WAY, TOO

There's another way to catch bass on this lake at this time of year, but before we get into that, this is a good time how the table's being set on this border lake shared by Louisiana and Texas. The lake's pool level has been dropping, more than a foot or more lower than it was when I wrote this column.

I have a feeling it's going to go much lower before the end of August, probably near 165 based on past history. There'll be a lot of standing timber showing and some wood just under the surface, so boaters must be extra careful running the lake.

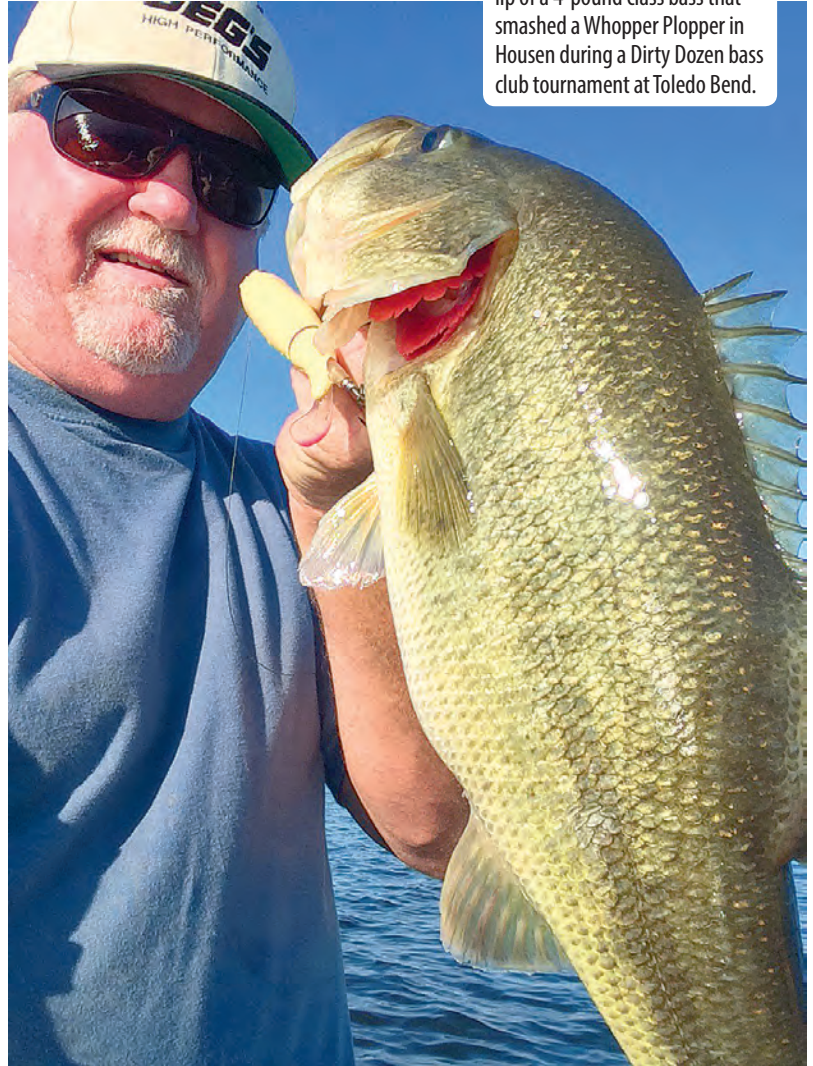
On a positive note, the last time there was a severe drought, when the water dropped into the 150s, haygrass grew like never before, literally. From the tackle shops to the coffee tables in the morning, anglers agree they're looking forward to more of the same.

As it is, we're seeing hydrilla in more places in 7-10 foot depths, so there's hope for the future after so many frustrating years inexplicably without it. More grass means more bass.

POINT THE BOW DEEP

As for September, there'll be some topwater and other shallow

Mike Randolph of Zwolle grips the lip of a 4-pound class bass that smashed a Whopper Plopper in Housen during a Dirty Dozen bass club tournament at Toledo Bend.



water fishing in the first or last two hours of the day. Other than that, many anglers point the bow of their boat to deeper water.

The bigger percentage of bites will be deep with vertical jigging and casting Traps and crankbaits. But soft plastics will come into play with the water so low, like they did for me so many years concentrating on the lip of the channel in San Miguel Creek.

The old shorelines are easily recognizable by the old, big stumps and timber that help mark the creek channel. Some of my best days on the lake happened when I fished those lips with Zoom Old Monster plastic worms in June Bug, June Bug/Red, Red Bug or Plum Apple, as well as shallow-diving crankbaits.

Have a good September of bass fishing on the lake and get ready for some good bassin' in October. The cooler it gets, the better.

If you want to catch bass in September, I've been guiding on this lake most of my life and you're more than welcome in my boat. Call me at (936) 404-2688. ■

BAYOU MAGAZILLE

A special place for buzzin', flippin' and punchin' bass

O By Don Shoopman
 ften fishermen are faced with a decision of picking among several places they can go bass fishing. But there's a special place for bass anglers to choose, especially those who enjoy catching bass on buzz baits, bladed jigs and soft plastics, either flippin' or punchin'.

The Lake Verret area, specifically Bayou Magazille, is where Clint "Red" Singleton goes to fish with his favorite go-to artificial lures and techniques in September. The Patterson outdoorsman said, sure, he'll fish the cypress trees in the lake itself whenever and wherever baitfish are present.

However, Singleton, 43, said, "Bayou Magazille's pretty good that time of year. It's usually where shad are holding fish.

"It's always better when it's moving water; always better with a falling tide than no tide or up tide. I always do better when it's a falling tide."

He's a member of the highly competitive St. Mary Elite bass club and finished in the Top 3 in 2021 competition.

CLOSER TO GRASSY

You'll see his blue and white Ranger bass boat more often than not fishing along Bayou Magazille closer to the Grassy Lake side than to Flat Lake. And first thing in the morning or during the last hour or two of the day, he'll be throwing a ¼-ounce white Mega-strike Cavitron buzz bait with a nickel blade in and around all the shady hidey holes bass love.

He'll also really work over docks and drains with his favorite buzz bait.

"It's hard to find. But they run real slow. When a fish gets it, they love it. When they got it, they got it," Singleton said.

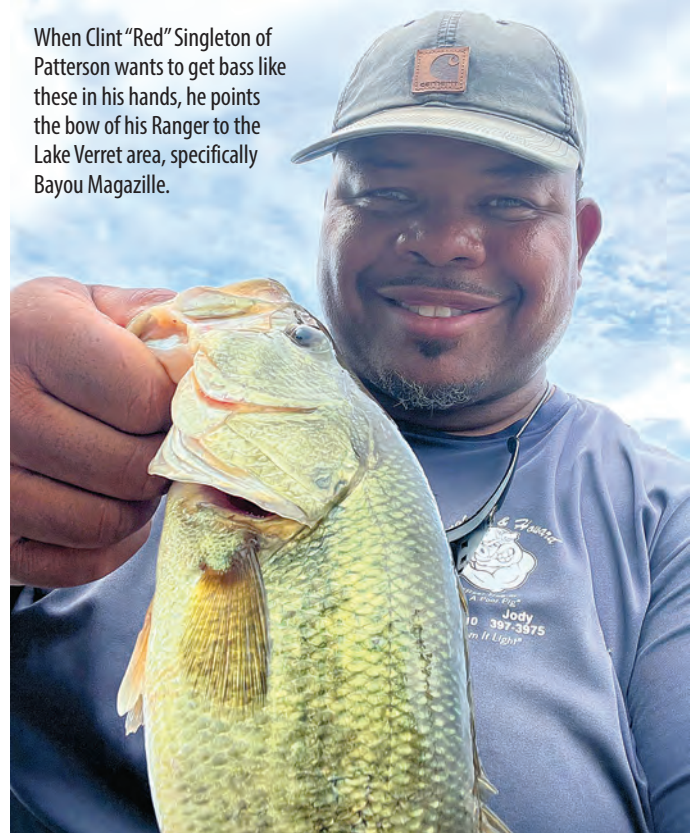
If bass lay off the buzz bait, he'll turn to flippin' a June bug/Red Zoom Speed Craw on a 3/0 hook under a ¼-ounce worm weight. He flips where cut grass is near deeper water and around the end of boat docks in and around pilings and other structures.

He stays on the lookout for vegetation mats, too.

"If I run across a mat or hyacinths I'll usually punch it," he said. "For the most part there are not a lot of mats, but if they've got some mats, I punch."

Singleton, co-owner of Singleton & Howard Cement in Morgan City, likes to punch with a black/blue or Hematoma (depending on

When Clint "Red" Singleton of Patterson wants to get bass like these in his hands, he points the bow of his Ranger to the Lake Verret area, specifically Bayou Magazille.



the water color) Reaction Innovations Sweet Beaver on a No.4 Mustad Triple X hook tied to 65-pound Beyond Braid braided line with a 1-ounce tungsten weight.

A black/blue bladed jig, his backup, is always at the ready if all else goes south. He likes a 3/8-ounce model and uses a sapphire blue Zoom Speed Craw as a soft plastic trailer.

He prefers 3 - 4 foot depths most of the time and slightly stained to stained water.

"I don't really like to fish clear water," he said. "To be honest with you, fish are really spooky (in clear water)."

As the summer wore on, he could hardly wait to get to fish it in September. ■

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Marcus John's grandson, Haiden, holds a nice Poverty Point striper.



POVERTY POINT POUNDING

Striped bass swim under the radar, but offer anglers lots of action

By Tim Johnston

Richland Parish's Poverty Point Reservoir gets its name from the nearby State historic site known as Poverty Point, dating back to almost 1500 B.C. The 2,700 acre impoundment was opened in the early 2000's and quickly gained recognition as one of northeast Louisiana's fishing hotspots.

Fishermen from all around flock to this beautiful manmade lake seeking the likes of slab crappie, bream, catfish, and double digit lunker bass, but there is one species of bass in the lake you may not know about. That's the striped bass.

THE SECRET'S OUT

West Monroe native and avid fisherman Marcus Johns recently discovered the lake to have a high population of stripers and has been making the trip north of Delhi to Poverty Point, taking advantage of his time off from work at AT&T, where he has been employed for nearly 24 years.

"In September, the stripers will stay schooled up moving around

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Crankbaits like this one are Johns' choice for the best striper action because he can get them at the right depth and keep them in the "strike zone."



the creeks feeding on baitfish," Johns said. "I'll idle over the deeper channels down imaging in 2D with my graph to locate the schools before deciding which approach to take.

"I like to have a few different baits tied on so I can make an adjustment if they change depths."

Johns said he catches most of the stripers suspended around 12 feet deep in 18-20 feet of water on a Strike King 3XD crankbait in either a chartreuse sexy shad or powder blue back and chartreuse color.

"The lake has a good bit of water clarity, and they seem to like brighter colors," he said. "I'll crank it down to 10-12 feet deep then slow my retrieve so I can keep it in the strike zone longer.

"If they move deeper in the water table, I'll pick up a 1/2-ounce hair jig, mostly silver and black, but any other color combination that has that flashy appearance will work."

Johns also noted the stripers tend to bite better mid-day into the afternoon on clear and sunny days. That's tough in the summer, but gets easier temperature wise this time of year.

HEED THE WARNING

Johns warned, "You have to be careful when landing these fish. Their mouths are a lot smaller than a largemouth bass and a mouth full of treble hooks can be dangerous compared to the single hook the hair jig offers."

Poverty Point had a wind break running north and south when the lake was constructed but over the last twenty years the waves have washed the dirt away. Be very careful navigating on the east side of the lake if you are unfamiliar with this body of water.

Access to the lake can be attained by two locations. The first is the main State Park entrance located on Highway 17 on the south end of the lake. The second is the Marina on the north end of the lake and it is also on Highway 17. Both ramps have a \$3 per person fee for accessing the park or boat launch.

The daily limit on the striped bass is restricted to five per day, with no more than two over 30 inches in length. ■



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HOT YOUNG CRAPPIE PRO
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■ By Andy Douglas

TEAM Jeffries



There are a lot of crappie teams who dream of winning most tournaments they enter and making a big name in the national tournament world. That's precisely what *Team Jeffries is doing.*

They are lighting it up catching crappie and cashing checks. Hayden Jeffries and his dad, Dan Jeffries, are one of the hottest crappie teams in the country. Their success is shared due to a lifetime of living the outdoor lifestyle and the sheer determination and commitment of the 22-year-old Hayden.

"Dad brought me up in the outdoors hunting and fishing and has helped me keep my head screwed on straight," said Hayden Jeffries. "But as far as crappie fishing, I am self-taught. I have basically taught myself by spending countless hours on the water. It's been learning as you go and trial and error. I am still learning today."

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Jeffries team is from Brandon, Miss., and got their start

tournament crappie fishing with the Magnolia Crappie Club, where they have dominated, winning tournaments and points championships. They also won the state championship with the South Arkansas Crappie Club at Grand Lake in July of this year.

In late February this year, the Jeffries won first place on Lake D'Arbonne in Farmerville, La., at the Crappie Masters National Qualifier, taking home the \$10,000 first-place prize. And in May they won the American Crappie Trail Tournament on Lake Washington in Mississippi, bringing home a \$9,500 payout. They have been successful everywhere they have gone and if they aren't in the winner's circle, they've been in the money and cashing checks.

THE HERE AND NOW ➤

Keep a close eye on the national crappie fishing news. You're sure to hear of big wins soon for Team Jeffries. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Hayden Jeffries and his dad, Dan Jeffries, are one of the hottest crappie teams in the country.

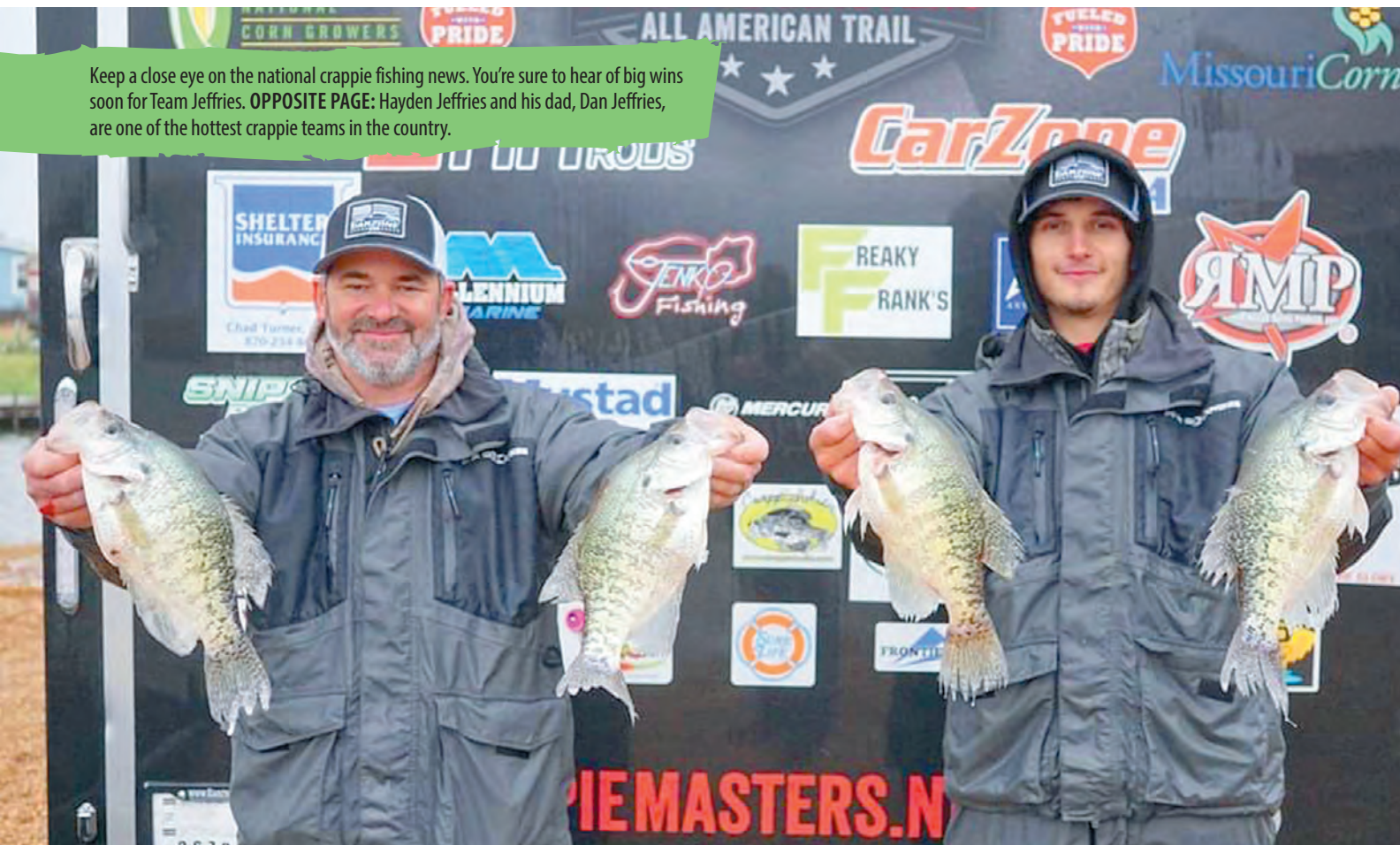


Photo courtesy Hayden Jeffries

THE HERE AND NOW

Hayden is graduating from Mississippi College with a degree in Business Administration. He's been fishing since he could walk. His dad put a baitcaster in his hand and taught him how to bass fish when he was four or five years old.

"I have been crappie fishing for about seven years, but I got hardcore with it about two years ago," said Hayden. "I own and operate a full-time guide service and book six days a week and occasionally, seven."

Jeffries' guide service is mainly on the Ross Barnett Reservoir near Jackson, Miss. If you would like to book a crappie fishing trip and spend some time with a pro, Hayden is your man. The best place to hook up with Jeffries is on his Facebook page, Hayden Jeffries Fishing.

Hayden spends as much time as possible on the water — he lives and breathes it. Even his leisure time is spent fishing.

"I may deer hunt twice a year, but when I get a free afternoon, I

will bass fish," he said. "Then again, there's nothing else like getting on a bream bed. And I also like catching a catfish or two."

WHAT LIES AHEAD

Nothing is etched in stone for Hayden when it comes to plans for the future, but he does have some things in mind.

"As of now, I will keep guiding and taking things as they come," he said. "I plan to keep pushing fishing however I can while I am young and go wherever the road leads me."

Tournaments are center stage in the immediate future for Team Jeffries.

"The plan is to fish at the National level a lot more," said Hayden. "I will be fishing the new Elite Trail that's starting up, all of Crappie Masters, and most of American Crappie Trail (ACT) if it works out. I will be at the Mr. Crappie Invitational on Table Rock Lake near Branson, Mo., in October; it's the biggest crappie tournament in the country. There's some real money involved with it — I'd like to bring that back home."



If you would like to book a crappie fishing trip and spend some time with a pro, Hayden is your man. OPPOSITE PAGE: The bite is sometimes tough in the fall, but a catch like this makes Jeffries' clients happy campers.

WHAT A PRO USES

Have you ever wondered what equipment a pro crappie fisherman puts to use? Here are a few things that Hayden Jeffries has shared that he uses when guiding and tournament fishing.

"I run a Humminbird Helix 12 GN3 for my mapping units and side imaging," he said. "A Garmin 8616 with LiveScope is what I use for live imaging. I run a Minn Kota Ultrex 112 trolling motor and two 50-pound trolling motors on the rear of the boat. My favorite rod is the 16-foot K-Rod made by Power Crappie — that's what I do all my tournament fishing with. For reels, I use inexpensive baitcast reels; some of them are Abu Garcia."

Hayden ties some of his own lures for crappie, usually hair jigs. He doesn't produce any to sell, but they are strategically made for what he needs to specifically target crappie in different lakes.

"My go-to bait is a 1/16-ounce hair jig, which I tie myself," he said. "For Ross Barnett, it would be black, pink, and chartreuse.

"I've been tying them for over a year-and-a-half. It's nice to win a tournament on a bait you've made. I won a tournament this past spring on a bait I tied by catching a 3.84-pound crappie."

Team Jeffries has recently gone with a little larger boat because of having to fish a multitude of bigger waters, purchasing a Ranger 522.

"Our Skeeter FX 20 has been a good boat and done well," said Hayden. "If you are fishing a tournament and the wind is blowing 20 miles per hour, you have to fight it and get to where the crappie are. I think the bigger Ranger will get me there."

TIPS FOR FALL CRAPPIE



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



Photo courtesy Hayden Jeffries

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Here's a 3.84-pound crappie that helped Team Jeffries capture a tournament win on Ross Barnett Reservoir.

TIPS FOR FALL CRAPPIE

It can get tricky when September rolls around when it comes to filling your creel of crappie. In August, most lakes usually have an abundance of shad, and the crappie are hitting them hard for accessible and abundant meals. This will carry over into September, making it hard for anglers to compete. Hayden offers some advice for success.

"The bite gets tough in early fall," he said. "Sometimes all a crappie has to do is open his mouth, and there's something in it. I fish for big concentrations of fish, and presentation plays a big part in catching fish this time of year."

In the fall, the big schools of crappie will be breaking up and moving into deeper water. Open water fishing using live imaging sonar (LIS) works well.

"I used to spider rig fish until I got good with the LiveScope," said Hayden. "Now, I use only one rod all the time, targeting individual fish. The LiveScope is where it's at."

Hayden's all-time favorite method for crappie is usually in the spring using a jig with a cork, especially around cypress trees or grass.



Photo courtesy Hayden Jeffries

BE ON THE LOOKOUT

Keep a close eye on the national crappie fishing news and at pro crappie tournament weigh-ins. It's a good bet that you will continue to see big wins for Team Jeffries. They are on fire and pumped up for a fall full of national tournaments just ahead.

The team is sponsored by Hook and Bullet, Power Crappie LLC: Home of Todd Huckabee Rods, BeatDown Outdoor Products, Crappie Forever, The Crappie Connection, Custom Lithium Batteries By The Mad Scientist, Car Zone USA and Southern Chase Crappie Jigs. ■

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An aerial photograph of a bayou in Louisiana. Several stilt houses are built on wooden pilings in the water. The houses are in various colors: white, light green, yellow, and grey. A line of wooden pilings extends from the houses into the water. In the foreground, an alligator is visible in the murky water. The background is a dense forest of trees.

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>.

NORTHSHORE FUN

TRIO OF NEARBY PARKS
OFFER NORTHSHORE AREA
VISITORS TRIPLE THE PLEASURE

**THIS MONTH'S
FEATURED STOPS:**
FAIRVIEW-RIVERSIDE,
FONTAINEBLEAU AND TICKFAW

South Louisiana is a widely diverse area with lots to offer people both as far as making a living and to enjoy our natural resources. In some areas, like the Northshore region above Lake Pontchartrain, populations tend to be concentrated in and around areas like Mandeville and Hammond. Fortunately there are a trio of Louisiana State Parks that also offer a quick getaway from the buzz and business of everyday life.

There's water, swamps, pine forests, hardwood forests and more to highlight in the trio of parks, Fairview-Riverside, Fontainebleau and Tickfaw. And with that diverse habitat comes plenty of great fishing, kayaking, camping and activities galore right on the edges of some of the state's busiest cities.

FAIRVIEW-RIVERSIDE STATE PARK

When it comes to real estate, the first word of importance you hear is "location." When it comes to the Fairview-Riverside State Park, few would argue that it sits among some of the prettiest real estate you'll find on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain.

The Tchefuncte River runs through the park as do several crystal clear streams. While the average outdoor enthusiast marvels at the beauty, the area also draws pro and amateur photographers alike.

And did we mention fishing? There are lots of alligators and migratory birds while ambling down the boardwalk overlooking the swamp. But there is a lot more in store. Fishermen frequently catch bass, bluegill, redfish, speckled trout and other species in the park, from shoreline or boat. Crabbing in the river is another popular pastime, and casual hikers will enjoy the trails overlooking the Tchefuncte.



OPPOSITE PAGE: An awesome view from one of the boardwalks at the Fairview-Riverside State Park.

One of the park's main attractions isn't a natural feature at all, but a historical home reminiscent of Louisiana's heyday. Otis House was built in the 1880s for a sawmill owner, later purchased and renovated by house namesake Frank Otis, and, upon Mr. Otis' death, it was bequeathed to the state of Louisiana with the request that it become part of a state park. Today, Otis House is open for tours, Tuesdays through Saturdays.

Fairview-Riverside State Park offers 101 RV campsites, with water and electrical hookups. Whether you stay the night or not, make time to visit nearby attractions such as the Insta-Gator Ranch and Hatchery in Covington, the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Maritime Museum and Research Center in Madisonville, or the Dew Drop Jazz & Social Hall in Mandeville.

FONTAINEBLEAU STATE PARK ➤



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.

FAIRVIEW-RIVERSIDE STATE PARK

119 Fairview Drive
Madisonville, LA
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FONTAINEBLEAU STATE PARK

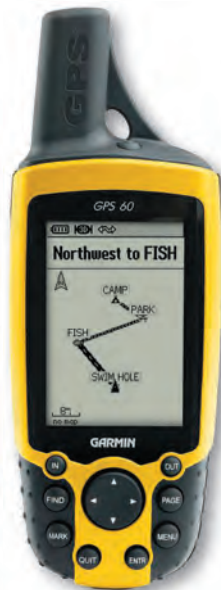
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Capt. Paul Titus is Louisiana Sportsman's GPS expert. Need to ask him a question? Go to www.louisianasportsman.com

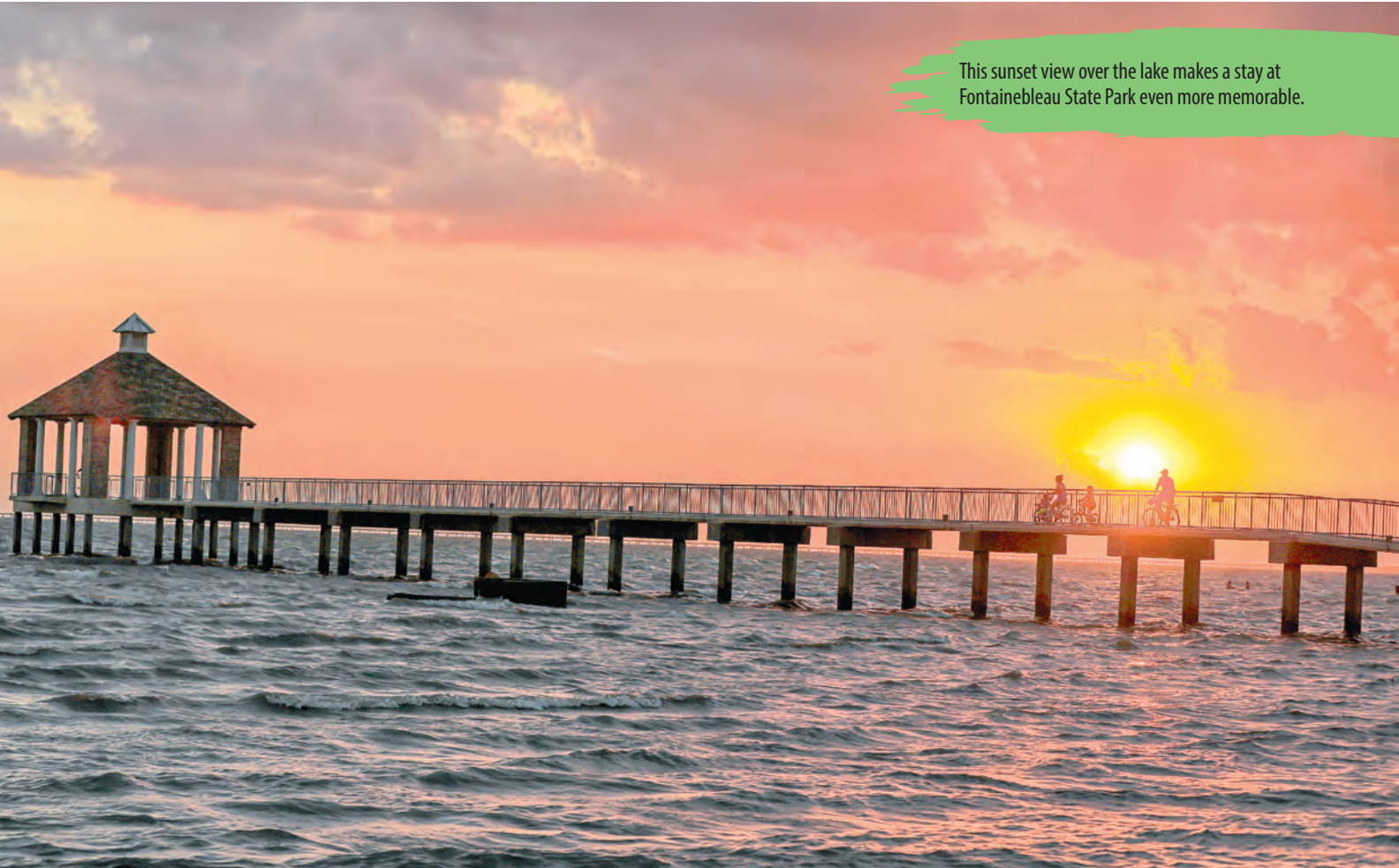


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This sunset view over the lake makes a stay at Fontainebleau State Park even more memorable.



PJ Hahn

FONTAINEBLEAU STATE PARK

Mandeville is one of the Northshore areas booming cities, but it is a short three mile trip from city to scenic getaway at the Fontainebleau State Park. It also happens to be a short drive from New Orleans, which means that within an hour after leaving the French Quarter, you can be paddling pristine streams full of native fishes and cypress trees.

There is a lot to do here, but mainly relax. And if you are into kayaking, there's no place better. The 2,800-acre park is located on the shore of Lake Pontchartrain. On a clear day, visitors can see the lake dotted with multi-colored sailboats of all sizes and types.

Relax in comfort after a day of hiking, biking and birding at one of the primitive campsites, cabins or RV sites. You may also indulge yourself with a stay at one of the park's waterfront cabins overlooking Lake Pontchartrain. A note here, Fontainebleau State Park cabins received damage during Hurricane Ida and have been closed for restoration. Please check with Louisiana State Parks for current updates.

Fontainebleau is a park with a past. It was once the site of a large sugar mill built under the direction of Creole planter and

senator Bernard de Marigny in 1829. Marigny's plantation fell into disrepair long ago, but today you can tour the brick structures that remain. You'll also learn more about the man himself inside the park's visitor center, where handmade tools and furniture are on display.

Outside the visitor center you'll find a pier stretching over enormous Lake Pontchartrain, a prime spot for sunset-watching. A man-made beach offers sunbathers a chance to catch some rays, and for younger visitors, a water playground is open seasonally.

An old rail line at the north end of the park has been converted into part of the Tammany Trace, a 27-mile path that visitors can walk, bike or horseback ride through. By the way, this and the other trails in Fontainebleau State Park offer fabulous chances to see some of the more than 400 species of birds and other wildlife that live or migrate through the park.

The sights and sounds of Mandeville and Covington are a short ride away (and for intrepid travelers, both are accessible via the Tammany Trace). Schedule a trip with swamp tour or kayaking tours in the area, or grab a bite and a brew at Old Rail Brewing Company. A short drive over to Slidell, take a swamp tour with Dr. Wagner's Honey Island Swamp Tours.

TICKFAW STATE PARK ➤



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– Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser

TICKFAW STATE PARK

When it comes to visiting Tickfaw State Park, fishermen have one favorite draw in the massive Louisiana ecosystem.

The Tickfaw River. The Tickfaw is a stream near Hammond and has plenty of largemouth bass, bream, channel catfish and blue catfish.

And just like the mix of fish in the river, the surrounding area offers visitors the sights and sounds of a cypress/tupelo swamp, a bottomland hardwood forest, a mixed pine/hardwood forest and the Tickfaw River tributaries themselves.

Periodically the park site serves the region by detaining floodwaters when winter and spring rains overflow the steep banks of the Tickfaw River. These periods of occasional flooding offer a unique opportunity to educate visitors on the importance of periodic flooding in the cycle of life that makes wetlands an invaluable habitat and breeding ground for wildlife and fisheries.

At Tickfaw State Park, you can go night hiking or listen to the swamp nightlife from the porch of your vacation cabin. Check at the Nature Center for scheduled programs. While there, view



the 800-gallon aquarium stocked with fish found in the Tickfaw River. There are also displays featuring the animals, history and culture of the area and of Louisiana. Be sure to watch the 8-minute introductory video about the history of the park area.

Bicycle, stroll or skate the interconnecting park roadways. The water playground offers refreshing fun for those not quite adventurous enough to explore the swamps and sloughs. ■



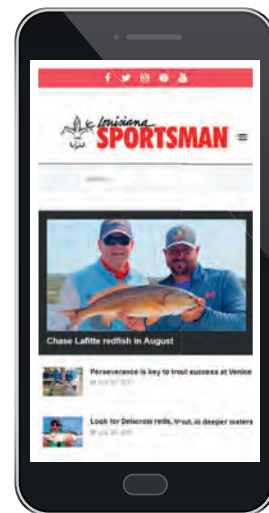
Tickfaw State Park has plenty of water and ways to see it, including this boardwalk in the park. ABOVE: Every fisherman like this youngster dreams of the same thing when wetting a line — catching the big one!

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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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BEST DAYS					LUNAR PERIODS				
2022 SEP					TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED				
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	VALUE	MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
Thu 1	█	█	█	31	11:58 am	4:45 pm - 6:01 pm	10:41 pm	4:11 am - 5:47 am	☾
Fri 2	█	█	█	34	1:06 pm	5:46 pm - 6:44 pm	11:19 pm	5:10 am - 6:26 am	☾
Sat 3	█	█	█	44	2:16 pm	6:48 pm - 7:36 pm ☀		6:11 am - 7:09 am ☀	☾ Half
Sun 4	█	█	█	33	3:25 pm	7:52 pm - 8:34 pm	12:05 am	7:13 am - 8:01 am ☀	☾ Low
Mon 5	█	█	█	29	4:30 pm	8:56 pm - 9:38 pm	1:00 am	8:17 am - 8:59 am	☾
Tue 6	█	█	█	31	5:26 pm	9:56 pm - 10:44 pm	2:05 am	9:21 am - 10:03 am	☾
Wed 7	█	█	█	44	6:15 pm	10:49 pm - 11:51 pm	3:17 am	10:21 am - 11:09 am	☾ Perigee
Thu 8	█	█	█	54	6:55 pm	11:37 pm - Midnight	4:31 am	11:14 am - 12:16 pm	☾
Fri 9	█	█	█	61	7:29 pm	Midnight - 12:55 am	5:45 am	12:02 pm - 1:20 pm ☀	☾
Sat 10	█	█	█	74	8:00 pm	12:19 am - 1:57 am	6:55 am	12:44 pm - 2:22 pm ☀	☾ Full
Sun 11	█	█	█	63	8:28 pm	12:56 am - 2:58 am	8:03 am	1:21 pm - 3:23 pm ☀	☾
Mon 12	█	█	█	55	8:56 pm	1:33 am - 3:55 am	9:09 am	1:58 pm - 4:20 pm	☾
Tue 13	█	█	█	47	9:25 pm	2:07 am - 4:53 am	10:13 am	2:32 pm - 5:18 pm	☾
Wed 14	█	█	█	44	9:56 pm	2:45 am - 5:47 am	11:17 am	3:10 pm - 6:12 pm	☾
Thu 15	█	█	█	46	10:30 pm	3:23 am - 6:43 am	12:19 pm	3:48 pm - 7:08 pm	☾
Fri 16	█	█	█	52	11:09 pm	4:06 am - 7:38 am	1:20 pm	4:31 pm - 8:03 pm	☾
Sat 17	█	█	█	62	11:54 pm	4:51 am - 8:33 am ☀	2:18 pm	5:16 pm - 8:58 pm ☀	☾ Half
Sun 18	█	█	█	51		5:39 am - 9:25 am ☀	3:13 pm	6:04 pm - 9:50 pm	☾ High
Mon 19	█	█	█	45	12:44 am	6:31 am - 10:17 am	4:01 pm	6:56 pm - 10:42 pm	☾ Apogee
Tue 20	█	█	█	43	1:39 am	7:24 am - 11:04 am	4:44 pm	7:49 pm - 11:29 pm	☾
Wed 21	█	█	█	41	2:37 am	8:18 am - 11:48 am	5:21 pm	8:43 pm - 12:13 am	☾
Thu 22	█	█	█	51	3:37 am	9:09 am - 12:29 pm	5:54 pm	9:34 pm - 12:54 am	☾ Fall
Fri 23	█	█	█	59	4:37 am	10:04 am - 1:06 pm	6:23 pm	10:29 pm - 1:31 am	☾
Sat 24	█	█	█	67	5:38 am	10:58 am - 1:40 pm ☀	6:50 pm	11:23 pm - Midnight	☾
Sun 25	█	█	█	69	6:39 am	11:51 am - 2:13 pm ☀	7:16 pm	Midnight - 2:05 am	☾ New
Mon 26	█	█	█	57	7:41 am	12:45 pm - 2:47 pm ☀	7:43 pm	12:16 am - 2:38 am	☾
Tue 27	█	█	█	45	8:44 am	1:41 pm - 3:23 pm	8:11 pm	1:10 am - 3:12 am	☾
Wed 28	█	█	█	33	9:50 am	2:39 pm - 4:01 pm	8:42 pm	2:06 am - 3:48 am	☾
Thu 29	█	█	█	26	10:58 am	3:38 pm - 4:44 pm	9:19 pm	3:04 am - 4:26 am	☾
Fri 30	█	█	█	25	12:08 pm	4:41 pm - 5:33 pm	10:02 pm	4:03 am - 5:09 am	☾

25 50 75 AVERAGE

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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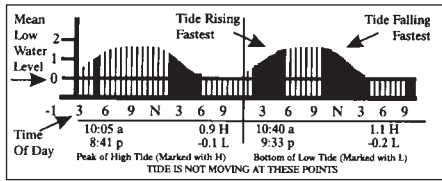
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Tide Corrections

East Point, Grand Isle HIGH LOW

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

Calcasieu Pass, Lighthouse Wharf HIGH LOW

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

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

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3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft.	1	2	3	FQ				
	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:42 am 1.2 H 12:16 pm 0.5 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 2:13 am 1.3 H 1:43 pm 0.3 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:01 am 1.5 H 2:56 pm 0.1 L					
3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft.	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	FM
	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:03 am 1.6 H 4:04 pm 0.0 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 5:15 am 1.7 H 5:08 pm 0.0 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 6:33 am 1.7 H 6:09 pm 0.0 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 7:50 am 1.7 H 7:04 pm 0.0 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 9:04 am 1.6 H 7:55 pm 0.2 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 10:15 am 1.5 H 8:39 pm 0.4 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 11:29 am 1.3 H 9:10 pm 0.6 L	
3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft.	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	LQ
	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:01 pm 1.1 H 8:59 pm 0.8 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:50 am 0.9 H 7:24 am 0.7 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:09 am 1.1 H 9:41 am 0.6 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:29 am 1.2 H 11:21 am 0.5 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:04 am 1.4 H 12:41 pm 0.4 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:47 am 1.5 H 1:52 pm 0.3 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 2:37 am 1.5 H 2:57 pm 0.3 L	
3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft.	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:36 am 1.5 H 3:58 pm 0.3 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:44 am 1.5 H 4:53 pm 0.3 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 5:56 am 1.5 H 5:41 pm 0.3 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 7:03 am 1.5 H 6:21 pm 0.4 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 8:04 am 1.4 H 6:54 pm 0.4 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 9:02 am 1.4 H 7:17 pm 0.5 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 10:04 am 1.3 H 7:27 pm 0.7 L	
3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft.	25	26	27	28	29	30		
	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 11:20 am 1.1 H 7:08 pm 0.8 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:02 am 0.9 H 1:20 pm 1.0 H 5:49 pm 1.0 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 7:43 am 0.7 L 11:23 pm 1.3 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 9:12 am 0.5 L 11:50 pm 1.4 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 10:34 am 0.4 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:31 am 1.6 H 11:56 am 0.3 L		

East Point Grand Isle

Calcasieu Pass Lighthouse Wharf

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3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft.	1	2	3	FQ					
	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:20 am 1.4 L 5:43 am 1.9 H 1:13 pm 0.5 L 8:56 pm 1.9 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:10 am 1.7 L 5:51 am 1.9 H 2:11 pm 0.3 L 11:14 pm 2.0 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:06 am 1.9 L 5:50 am 2.0 H 3:14 pm 0.1 L						
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	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:33 am 2.0 H 10:19 am 1.0 L 4:01 pm 2.2 H 10:42 pm 0.8 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:40 am 2.0 H 11:01 am 0.8 L 5:17 pm 2.1 H 11:26 pm 1.1 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:52 am 2.0 H 11:44 am 0.6 L 6:34 pm 2.1 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 5:07 am 2.0 H 12:27 pm 0.5 L 8:15 pm 2.1 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:09 am 1.4 L 5:07 am 2.0 H 12:27 pm 0.5 L 8:15 pm 2.1 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:58 am 1.7 L 5:21 am 1.9 H 1:15 pm 0.5 L 10:02 pm 2.1 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 2:13 pm 0.5 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:05 am 2.1 H 3:15 pm 0.5 L	
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3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft.	25	26	27	28	29	30			
	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:26 am 2.1 H 9:16 am 1.2 L 2:48 pm 2.1 H 9:32 pm 0.9 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:35 am 2.1 H 9:50 am 0.9 L 3:42 pm 2.1 H 10:10 pm 1.1 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:45 am 2.1 H 10:27 am 0.7 L 4:44 pm 2.2 H 10:49 pm 1.4 L	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:55 am 2.1 H 11:06 am 0.5 L 5:51 pm 2.2 H 11:30 pm 1.6 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:04 am 2.1 H 11:49 am 0.3 L 7:13 pm 2.2 H	3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:13 am 1.9 L 4:09 am 2.1 H 12:37 pm 0.2 L 9:29 pm 2.3 H			

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Harold Dean

Harold Dean with a 3.14-pound white perch he caught in Toledo Bend.



Drake & Preston

Drake Duet poses for a photo with his first deer shot on Dec. 23, 2021 and his hunting partner, Preston Pizzolato.



Seth Gaubert

Seth Gaubert of Jonesboro with a 7-pound 4-ounce bass he caught at Caney Lake on June 21



Ryleigh Wilbert

Ryleigh Wilbert with her second deer, a 13-point, taken Oct. 30, 2021 on a youth hunt in East Baton Rouge Parish.



John Dillworth

John Dillworth with a 25-inch redfish he caught during his birthday trip on July 16, 2022 with Capt. Brady Cantrelle of Griffin Fishing Charters.



Jonah Richard

Jonah Richard, 14, caught his first redfish on July 16 while on a private charter with Capt. Brady Cantrelle of Griffin Fishing Charters. He landed the 26.5-inch redfish in an area near the Goose Bayou Bridge in Lafitte fishing a 1/8-ounce plain saltwater jighead baited with a dead shrimp.



Diana Roy

Diana Roy caught this 21-pound red on a sparkle beetle fishing out of Dulac over Thanksgiving week.



Maddox Williams & Eddie Hyatt Jr.

Fishing partners Maddox Williams and Eddie Hyatt Jr. won the High School Classic on the Red River over the July 17 weekend.



HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



Jeffrey Gonzales

Jeffrey Gonzales of Braithwaite hooked this 24 1/4-inch, 8.8-pound beast in a private pond. It was caught on a Concept Baits Electric shiner speed craw and released afterwards.



Keith Brignac

Keith Brignac of Hahnville holds the 7-pound 1-ounce bass he caught at Caney Lake on June 21.



Allie Bonneval

Allie Bonneval of Raceland killed her first deer in Tensas Parish while hunting with her dad and little sister. She made a perfect shot.



Kevin Bovia

Kevin Bovia with the 9-point buck he harvested on Dec. 31, 2021 in Pearl River.

2022-2023 LOUISIANA HUNTING REGULATIONS

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

HUNTING SEASONS

SPECIES	SEASON DATES	BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT	
DOVES+	(South Zone) Sept. 3 - 18	(North Zone) Sept. 3 - 25	15	45
	Oct. 15 - Nov. 27	Oct. 8 - Nov. 13		
	Dec. 17 - Jan. 15	Dec. 24 - Jan. 22		
WOODCOCK^	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31	3	9	
TEAL (blue-winged, green-winged, cinnamon)	Sept. 10 - Sept. 25	6	18	
RAILS* King & Clapper Sora & Virginia	Sept. 10 - 25	Nov. 12 - Jan. 4	15	45
	Sept. 10 - 25	Nov. 12 - Jan. 4	25	75
GALLINULES*	Sept. 10 - 25	Nov. 12 - Jan. 4	15	45
SNIPE	Nov. 2 - Dec. 4 Dec. 17 - Feb. 28	8	24	
QUAIL	Nov. 19 - Feb. 28	10	30	
RABBIT	Oct. 1 - Feb. 28	8	24	
SQUIRREL	Oct. 1 - Feb. 28	8	24	
	May 6 - 28**	3	9	

*An extended falconry season for ducks, rails and gallinules will take place from Nov. 3 - Jan. 31. ^An extended falconry season for woodcock will be Nov. 3 - Jan. 31. +An extended falconry season for mourning doves will be Sept. 15 - Oct. 1. **Spring squirrel season is CLOSED on the Kisatchie National Forest, some National Wildlife Refuges, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property and some Wildlife Management Areas. (Check WMA season schedule)

WATERFOWL SEASONS

DUCKS*, COOTS & MERGANSERS

EAST ZONE
Nov. 19 - Dec. 4
Dec. 17 - Jan. 29

WEST ZONE
Nov. 12 - Dec. 4
Dec. 17 - Jan. 1, Jan. 9-29

The daily bag limit for ducks is 6 and may include no more than 4 mallards (no more than 2 females), 3 wood ducks, 2 canvasbacks, 2 redheads, 1 mottled duck, 1 black duck and 1 pintail. Only 1 scaup may be taken for the first 15 days of the season with 2 per day allowed for the remainder. Daily bag limit for coots is 15. Daily bag limit for mergansers is 5, only 2 of which may be a hooded mergansers. The merganser limits are in addition to the daily bag limit for ducks. The possession limit on ducks, coots and mergansers is three times the daily bag limit. Youth and Veterans only: EAST - Nov. 12 & Feb. 4. WEST - Nov. 5-6.



GEESE (snow, blue, Ross & white-fronted [specklebelly]) CANADA GOOSE SEASON

EAST ZONE
Nov. 5 - Dec. 4
Dec. 17 - Jan. 29

WEST ZONE
Nov. 5 - Dec. 4
Dec. 17 - Jan. 1
Jan. 9 - Feb. 5

Daily bag limit for light geese (snow, blue, Ross) is 20, with no possession limit. The daily bag limit for white-fronted geese is three, with a possession limit of nine. The daily limit for Canada geese is one per day, with a possession limit of three.

CONSERVATION ORDER FOR LIGHT GEESE

EAST ZONE
Dec. 5-16
Jan. 30 - March 5

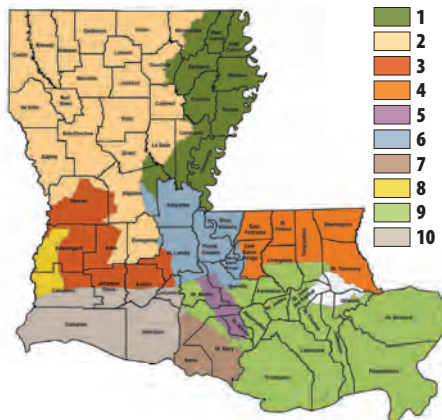
WEST ZONE
Dec. 5-16
Jan. 2-8
Feb. 6 - March 5

No bag or possession limit. See pamphlet for more detail.

Only snow, blue and Ross geese may be taken under the terms of the conservation order, which allows the use of electronic calls and unplugged shotguns, and eliminates the daily bag and possession limits. Shooting hours begin one-half hour before sunrise and extends until one-half hour after sunset.

DEER SEASONS

2022 - 2023 Deer Hunting Areas



AREA	ARCHERY (Either-sex)	PRIMITIVE FIREARMS (All either-sex, except as noted)	STILL HUNT (No dogs allowed) (All either-sex, except as noted)	WITH/WITHOUT DOGS (All either-sex, except as noted)
1	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Nov. 12 - 18 Jan. 23 - 31	Nov. 19 - Dec. 9 Jan. 9 - 22	Dec. 10 - Jan. 8
2	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Oct. 22 - 28 Jan. 16 - 22	Oct. 29 - Dec. 7	Dec. 8 - Jan. 15
3	Sept. 17 - Jan. 15	Oct. 8 - 14, Jan. 2 - 8	Oct. 15 - Nov. 27	Nov. 28 - Jan. 1 (certain areas)
4	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Nov. 12 - 18 Jan. 23 - 31	Nov. 19 - Dec. 9 Jan. 9 - 22	Dec. 10 - Jan. 8
5	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 12 - 18 (either-sex) Jan. 23 - 31 (bucks only)	Nov. 19-20, Nov. 25-27 (either-sex) Nov. 21-24, Nov. 28 - Dec. 9 (bucks only)	Dec. 10-11, Dec. 17-18 (either-sex) Dec. 12-16 (bucks only) Dec. 19 - Jan. 22 (bucks only)
6	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 12 - 18 Jan. 23 - 31	Nov. 19 - Dec. 9	Dec. 10 - Jan. 22
7	Sept. 17 - Jan. 15	Oct. 8 - 14 Jan. 2 - 8	Oct. 15 - Nov. 27	Nov. 28 - Jan. 1
8	Sept. 17 - Jan. 15	Oct. 8 - 14, Jan. 2 - 8	Oct. 15 - Nov. 27	Nov. 28 - Jan. 1
9	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 12 - 18 (either-sex) Jan. 23 - 31 (bucks only)	Nov. 19-20, Nov. 25-27 (either-sex) Nov. 21-24, Nov. 28 - Dec. 9 (bucks only)	Dec. 10-11, Dec. 17-18 (either-sex) Dec. 12-16 (bucks only) Dec. 19 - Jan. 22 (bucks only)
10	Sept. 17 - Jan. 15	Oct. 8 - 14, Jan. 2 - 8	Oct. 15 - Jan. 1	



FEDS COULD USE A GOOD RAP ON THE KNUCKLES OVER SNAPPER COUNTS

OK, so I'm old enough — plenty old enough — to remember corporal punishment in schools.

I know, perish the thought, but a sharp rap on the knuckles with a ruler was enough to enforce the ignored verbal commands that brought on a teacher's response.

Pretty sure my teachers were not mean. Far from it. They had 30 some-odd kids to teach and, well, didn't want one bad apple to spoil the whole barrel.

Knowing all that from us Baby Boomers, it's obvious none of the guys and gals who work in National Marine Fisheries Service, nor the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, nor the U.S. Department of Commerce ever faced the ire of a frustrated teacher.

Not one.

See, NMFS is part of NOAA, which is part of Commerce. It's a group of folks

who, when they work for folks elected from blue states, seem to be as hard-headed, as disruptive, as intransigent, as shameless and as single-minded as any group of bureaucrats in the history of fish and wildlife management in our country. Can I state it any more plainly?

The latest is NMFS' insistence about using its out-of-date, outmoded and archaic management system when it comes to recreational fishermen catching red snapper.

CLINGING TO THE MRIP

These federal folks want to cling to something called MRIP — Marine Recreational Information Program — a system that has long undercounted the number of red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico. It's a system that has been shown to be flawed when it came to a reasonable time frame for estimating

recreational catch of most all reef fish species not only off our coast, but also across our nation.

When Louisiana Congressional delegation and other colleagues from other states mustered enough support to fund a study, those federal dollars produced The Great Red Snapper Count.

Well, The Count showed the Gulf of Mexico had three times the red snapper as the federal (fill in the blank here) had estimated from your tax dollars that they used to count red snapper.

But don't think the restrictive annual red snapper quotas doled out from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council



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.

(a skill for the federal managers, and more inclined to the commercial fisheries sector) would triple the annual recreational red snapper quota for anglers in the five Gulf states.

SAT ON ITS HANDS

Even after The Great Red Snapper Count was verified, the Gulf Council sat on its hands for this year's allowable recreational catch until, it appears, the council's hierarchy could get its marching orders from NMFS.

Now, despite the recreational sampling systems like LA Creel, a more real time and now emulated catch estimate plan, the federal (fill in another choice word here) have come up with a plan to take those state catch-estimate systems and plug that data into the MRIP charts for "calibration."

It's a plan that could cut the annual quotas to Mississippi and Alabama by 50-60 percent with Louisiana, Texas and Florida anglers facing a similar uncertain future when it comes to red snapper.

And, who knows what other species NMFS will target.

A letter from Gulf States' Congressional delegations and others, mostly Atlantic states, to Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo outlined this department's obvious intention to ignore the new count, and Congress' long-debated and now-enacted act demanding more modern accountability from federal fisheries managers and to turn over red snapper management plans to the states.

It was clear, at least to those who've paid attention to this issue for nearly 20 years, that Congressional action would

undercut the value of NMFS when it came to red snapper. And, with revisions to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Management and Conservation Act demanded by Congress, the federal folks faced the real possibility of a devalued presence in our country's fishery management plans.

This rewriting of Magnuson-Stevens clearly told Commerce to use "the best available science" in fishery management.

IGNORING THE BEST SCIENCE

Today, NMFS' move clearly ignores that command, and that begs the question about what would happen to you and me if we did the same. Frankly, I'm fed up with the Feds!

Our state's effort has the support of both Senators and most Congressmen. Rep. Garret Graves is leading the charge.

"Red snapper is one of the most popular catches for Gulf anglers. The states have done a great job sustainably managing this important resource. States have the best available science and can make the best decisions for the species right off our coast — not someone in Washington, D.C.," Graves said.

"And, those pesky federal laws actually require the use of the best science. If NMFS's deckhands would leave their cubicles and see the repercussions of their decisions, we wouldn't need to keep having this discussion. Instead of providing common-sense proposals, they keep tying state and federal management in a regulatory knot tighter than a Boy Scout could."

Enough said for now. More later, maybe after somebody uses a ruler across some knuckles. ■

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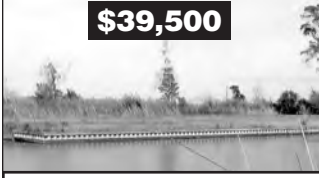


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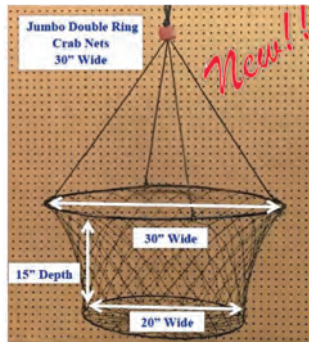
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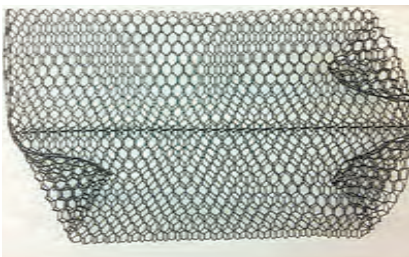
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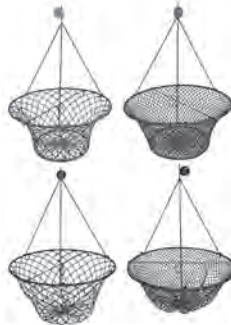
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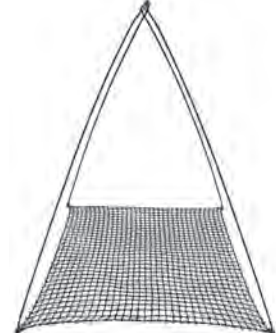
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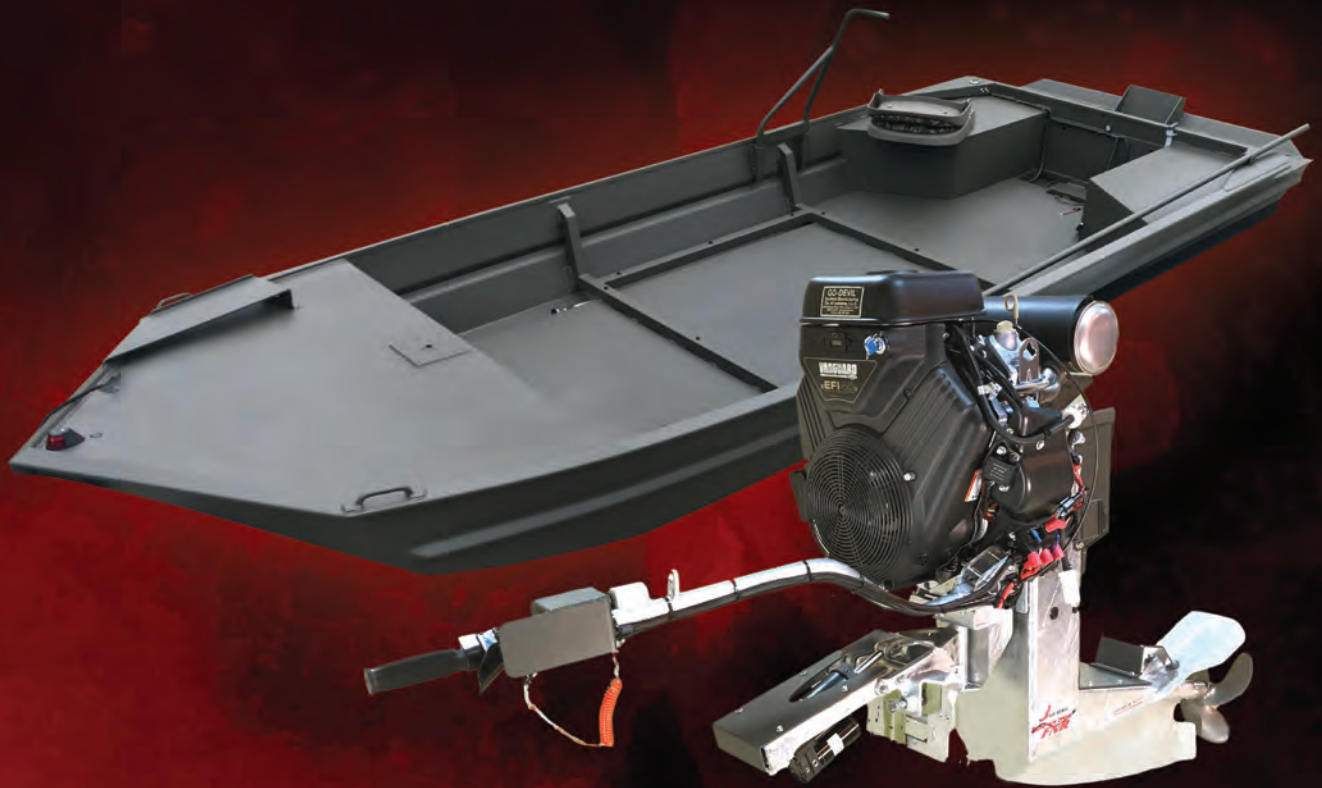
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