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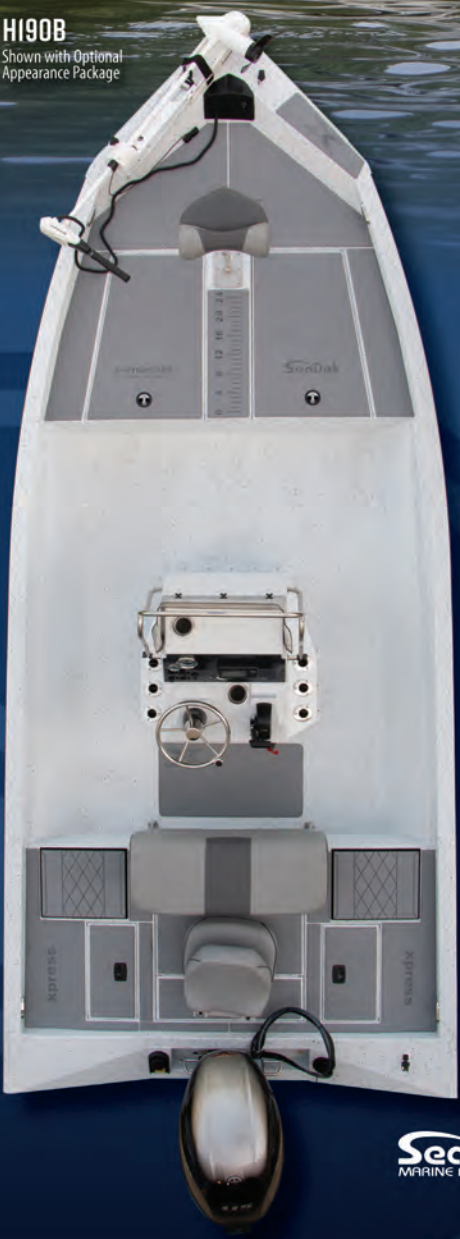
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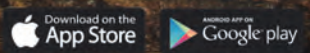
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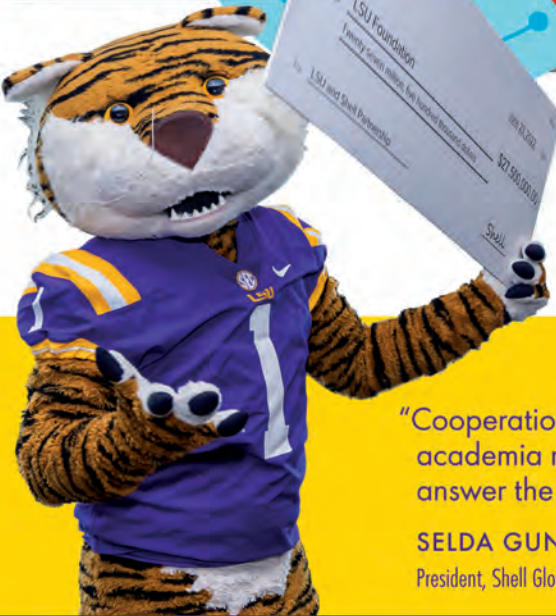
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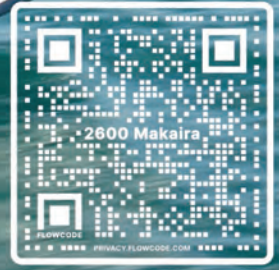
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HUNTING CAMP STORIES ABOUND, BUT TALES OF PAY- BACK JUST NEVER GO AWAY

Ever been in a hunting camp? The guys and gals, the camaraderie, the anticipation, the work, the sweat, Bourré games, hot coffee, mosquitoes, snakes, hunting in dawn's early light, dogs, early afternoon college football and, oh yes, that great camp food.

Best of all? Lifetime friends and lifetime memories.

And, if you had more than a handful of hunters — the camp in McElroy Swamp could count on at least a dozen when the dogs were turned loose on swamp whitetails — you always had one guy rivaling Natty Bumppo. You know, J.F. Cooper's immortal hero ("The Deerslayer" & "The Last of the Mohicans"), a deadly shot, and, in this case, a bona fide "swampateer."

We had one, maybe two... or three.

Then you always have a cartoonish character, an Elmer Fudd, he of "wras-cally wabbit" fame, the guy who came back to the camp with out-ra-gous

stories of his adventures either on his trek to his deer stand, or something he saw while he was there (and, we feared, most times in his dreams while he dozed there).

Our "Elmer" primed himself for a ruse so memorable our camp scribe spent 30 minutes documenting its details.

IT STARTED FAR AWAY

It started hundreds of miles away on a dry, dusty expanse of mesquite in South Texas. Quail hunting meant walking miles behind dogs, and running into all sorts of critters (javelinas, roadrunners) we don't find around here — and antler sheds by the dozens.

Aha! My mind grinned at the prospect. Here in front of me was a pair of sheds from a 10-point buck side-by-side so it was easy to know they came from the same whitetail.

I thought of Elmer!

The bump in the road was how to get

these things into my bag and make the pre-9/11 airplane trip home.

The next step was to make sure one side, a 5-point antler, was set in just the right place where our Elmer would find it on his ramblings.

The results were immediate: Elmer returned after dark with a story to stagger the imagination, especially when all of us hunters knew a 10-point buck — a McElroy 10-pointer — was as rare as finding a rhino tromping through the palmettos.

Our Elmer swore he'd seen this deer last season, and had hunted him hard — obviously to no avail.



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.

ON PATROL

He said he'd seen that season's hookings far up a small water oak sapling to believe the massive buck continued to patrol around the right-of-way near his stand.

Furthermore, our Elmer believed he'd seen his newfound quarry show his rump while disappearing into a thicket in that day's fading light. The most unbelievable part of his telling was that nobody in the camp fell out on the floor in uncontrollable fits of laughter.

All that remained was to place the other shed near enough to his stand to make him believe the mysterious buck left sign within gun range. That worked, too, and our Elmer's recounting of daily experiences in his quest became the stuff of legend. Somehow he knew he had to take this trophy during the still-hunt only season before our season with dogs would run his ghost deer in front of a another hunter.

To this day, no one has told. And yet, the story didn't end there. There was payback.

Later that season, we decided to make a rare mid-week afternoon hunt with dogs in a seldom-hunted part of the swamp. There was a big 8-point bedeviling us – yes, he made fools of our Natty Bumppos – and our crew was determined to enjoy a hearty venison sauce piquante after the next Saturday morning hunt.

Release the hounds! I was set up perfectly. Knowing where this buck ran made it easy to find the just-right spot, and when the pack of walkers began the push, their yelps turned into a chant signaling the pack was on a hot trail.

THERE HE IS

The buck appeared on a full run, and the shooting lane was when this big swamp buck cleared that big willow about 40 yards to my front.

As I had hoped, that happened. Safety off, the antlers cleared the tree, squeeze the trigger. BOOM!

WHAT?

The buck kept running. Didn't even break stride.

Payback was a one-inch vine, an undetectable through-the-scope barrier between bullet

and target. The shot was so clean it cut the vine in two.

Then I made a mistake: I knew somebody, in post-hunt analysis and know-ing I fired a shot, would ask how I missed.

So, I cut the vine and brought back the two pieces of wounded wood to ex-plain the miss.

The camp's camo-clad pundits didn't miss this chance.

Now, 20-something years later, the mounted trophy of two pieces of a vine still hangs on the camp wall amidst all the trophies of our mounted swamp giants.

The agony is answering our visitors' continued questions about this rare display.

Payback has its own particular brand of hell. ■

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A GOOD SEASON

OPINIONS MAY VARY, BUT EARLY SEASON TEAL DIDN'T DISAPPOINT

By Kinny Haddox

It's not who you are, it's where you are. And on what day you are there. That pretty much sums up the first days of Louisiana's 2022 teal season.

"Honestly, there was some great hunting on opening day followed by poor days for some. And then it was exactly the opposite for others," said Jason Olszak, Waterfowl Program Manager for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. "Some guys limited out and some shot zeroes and it was pretty much the same around the state. I guess the best way to describe it overall is 'average' because it wasn't real bad and it wasn't real good. We are still early in the migration and there's a lot more time to push more birds down, especially by the November season. If I had to pick the best spot, I'd say it was the southwest parishes. They did pretty good."

It almost sounds like duck hunting, doesn't it?

A GREAT PLACE

One hunter who found the hunting on opening morning was Zach Gassie of Addis. He and his hunting friends hunted in a pond area outside Eunice and while things started a little slow at daybreak, they picked up in a hurry.

"As daybreak came, we were getting in one or two at first, then a few bigger groups started to show up," he said. "But soon, we

had some really big groups and we had 36 teal in about an hour of shooting. It was a great place. A great hunt and great times."

Gassie and his friends had sprayed the lillies in the middle of the pond a couple of weeks ago where they were going to hunt because they were so thick there was no place for the teal to land. They opened up a couple of pockets and that's where the teal headed.

There were a lot of factors leading to the success of their hunt. There was plenty of water and vegetation and there were quite a few birds in the area. When people started shooting in the rice fields, lots of teal started heading to spots like where he was hunting.

One hunter who is hunting every day of the teal season is Dale Bordelon of Effie. He reports the same thing.

"Opening weekend it wasn't so good, but man it has picked up and we are having some good hunts," Bordelon said. "We've hunted over in Avoyelles Parish and then over in Jennings. I'm going back up to central Louisiana closer to home soon. There's a bunch of teal moving and even though we aren't limiting out every day, we are getting four, five, six apiece. It's a good season."

Nobody enjoys the teal season more than Bordelon, and one reason is he still preserves the past and mixes it with the present. He hunts with his old Winchester 1897, hand-carved cypress root decoys and his own hand-made bamboo teal call.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Zach Gassie and his hunting buddies grabbed a quick limit of teal and then kicked back to finish off a great day by telling tales and having fun.

BIRDS STARTED MOVING

Olszak reported the best overall shooting in the southwestern portions of the state, but it wasn't every day he said.

"Some folks got one or two on opening day, then got a limit the next day or so," he said. "Success increased as people started hunting and the birds started moving around."

Overall, after opening day, there weren't many zeroes in that part of the state.

One area that had surprising results was the Catahoula Lake area. The lake was high from recent rains and the vegetation was almost all covered up. In the recent aerial survey, there weren't even enough birds there to count. But when the birds started flying, they started looking for more water and that's what they found there."

Teal season success is more than just the birds, he said. Of course you have to have teal, but the guys that put in some work, didn't get impatient and leave too early and shot well, they had success, he said.

"Nobody wants to hear it, but it's the truth. It was literally hit and miss," he said. "Take that any way you want to. I'd expect it to be that way through the special teal season."

The 2022 season runs from September 10-25 for blue-winged, green-winged and cinnamon teal with a limit of six per hunter. ■



Dale Bordelon with his special gear and a limit of teal taken by him and his hunting partner.



Photo courtesy LDWF

YOUNG LOUISIANA HUNTERS PLACE AT REGIONAL EVENT

The Louisiana Youth Hunter Education Challenge (YHEC) Gold Junior Team won the 2022 Central Regional YHEC championship and the Gold Senior Team finished second in the event held in Bentonville, Arkansas, in July.



LOWER SPECKLED TROUT LIMITS?

LWFC RECEIVES REPORT THAT TROUT NUMBERS CONTINUE DECLINE

A By Joe Curtis
 nglers enjoying recreational fishing for Louisiana's spotted seatrout, most commonly called speckled trout, may face changing requirements on length and daily bag limits. Jason Adriance, marine fisheries biologist for Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, spoke to commissioners about the requirements Thursday, Sept. 1, at their regular monthly meeting. Adriance told commissioners in their March meeting, Fin Fish Task Force members endorsed a 13 1/2-inch minimum length and 15-fish bag limit recommendation.

"(Spotted seatrout) stock is still overfished," Adriance warned LWFC members Thursday.

According to the 2021 LDWF stock assessment, Louisiana's speckled trout stock has been overfished since 2016. Adriance explained overfishing of stock happens when the spawning biomass is too low. Overfishing occurs when anglers remove too many out of the population to replenish the stock.

"We're still at a point where we feel we need management actions," Adriance said.

Recreational catches of spotted seatrout have taken "a little bump" upwards from last year, according to the biologist. So far this year, anglers have harvested on average two fish and discarded on average two spotted seatrout during fishing trips. Ages of the female fish caught were two years old with only 15 percent of fish older than three years.

"There has been slightly more harvested," Adriance said. He also added the 1.8 million angler trips so far this year is down from previous years.

WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN NEXT

What can anglers expect if new regulations are officially proposed? According to LDWF, a notice of intent (NOI) will first be brought before the Commission at a regular monthly meeting. The Commission will take public input on the NOI during a monthly meeting and possibly vote whether to approve the NOI as is or with modifications based on discussion and public input. Once the NOI is approved, public comment will be accepted for approximately 40-45 days. LDWF will also hold public meetings and publish a press release.

After the public comment period has closed, the NOI and public comments are transmitted to and reviewed by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment as part of the Legislative Oversight process. During the Legislative Oversight process, these committees have 30 days to consider a hearing. After this process is complete, the NOI will go back for final commission consideration. Final rule becomes effective when it is published in the Louisiana Register.

MENHADEN REPORTING

In other action, commercial menhaden (pogie) fisheries may have to report daily catch data directly to LDWF instead of sending information to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). LWFC Commissioners passed a NOI that would require the monthly reporting.

The proposed rule is mandated by Act 759 of the 2022 Regular

Session of the Louisiana Legislature.

"That proposed rule requires electronic data monthly from the industry beginning May 2023," Adriance said. "That data is for each set. Act 759 requires the LWF Commission to enact regulations that mandate detailed reporting at the individual set level by the commercial menhaden reduction fishery. The data collection would begin with the 2023 commercial menhaden season.

Under the rules, data would be sent to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and the House Committee on Natural Resources and the Environment beginning on February 10, 2024, according to the NOI. The only difference in the new requirement is that LDWF will receive the data directly. In the past, NOAA received the data and then would send LDWF data, according to Adriance.

Ben Landry of Omega Protein spoke to LDF Commissioners in support of the NOI. "We support this NOI. It is very similar to the captain's daily report that we have been providing to NOAA for 50 years," Landry said.

That isn't enough, according to sports fishing interests, who say the pogie boats should be moved further offshore to prevent damage to the coast's fragile ecosystem and to reduce thousands of pounds of "bycatch" of speckled trout and redfish which are killed and go to waste. Changes in reporting isn't expected to make this controversy go away.

OTHER STATES ARE TAKING BIG STEPS

Louisiana isn't the only state having issues with menhaden fishing. Some states are taking much harsher steps in preserving menhaden numbers. Maine's Department of Marine Resources announced an end to menhaden commercial fishery this season on Aug. 28.

It was anticipated that an increase in effort would occur within Maine's menhaden fishery for the 2022 season due to recent legislative action to develop a limited entry license for 2023 with a landing requirement of 25,000 pounds. However, Maine has landed 170 percent more pounds of menhaden in 2022 than in 2021, and 250 percent more pounds in 2022 than in 2020. To date, that is 15.8 million pounds under the small-scale fishery."

According to a news release from the Maine Department, the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic menhaden allows for Maine to harvest roughly 2.2 million pounds. Maine fisheries experts determined that it is necessary to take emergency action to end the commercial fishing season to prevent unusual damage to the menhaden resource by exceeding available quota. ■



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Another black eye for the pogie industry off the Louisiana coast — an abandoned net full of dead fish just off Holly Beach.



WANTON WASTE

Photos courtesy CCA

Abandoned pogie net full of dead fish discovered near Holly Beach

An From Staff Reports
abandoned commercial pogie net floating in the Gulf of Mexico loaded with an estimated half a million pounds or more of dead fish has sparked the latest controversy over the lack of control of the industry and given yet another black eye to fishing near the Louisiana coast.

“Over the weekend, Coastal Conservation Association received numerous reports and photos of what appeared to be an

abandoned menhaden net just south of Holly Beach in Cameron Parish,” said David Cresson, the group’s Executive Director. “In the photos we received, the net looks full of pogies and other species. We also received numerous reports of dead redfish, drum and other species found in the water and on the beaches.”

MORE THAN THEY COULD LIFT

CCA reported the incident to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries soon after receiving the photos.

“Today (Sept. 14) at LDWF’s Finfish Task Force Meeting, a task force member asked if there was any information available about the incident, Cresson continued. “A representative of Omega Protein was on hand, and reported to the taskforce that the net is owned by Omega. According to the representative, the net contained about 900,000 pogies weighing an estimated 500,000 lbs.

“There was no estimate given on bycatch (other fish accidentally trapped in the nets). The representative reported that the net was cut loose after the crew realized it contained more fish than they could safely harvest.”

Those who witnessed the abandoned net full of dead fish speculated that the water where the net was originally was too shallow for the big pogie boat to reach it without running aground. A concern of conservation-minded fishermen is that if these kinds of things are happening with the spotlight on the industry, what has been going on when nobody is looking. Cresson said it is important to document events such as these.

“Please continue sending your photos and videos when you see these activities near Louisiana’s shorelines and beaches, or when you encounter fish kills. Send them to us and send them to your state senator and representatives,” he said. “We must continue to shine a light on this industry and the damage being caused to our fisheries, our coastal wildlife, and our critical habitats.”

An estimated half million pounds of fish shown here were abandoned in this pogie net off the Louisiana coast.



Photos courtesy CCA

INEXCUSABLE WASTE

Cresson wasn't the only one that was shocked and angry over this latest example of undocumented waste.

"It's inexcusable to see this kind of waste off Louisiana's coast," said Chris Macaluso, Marine Fisheries Director of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and a regular contributor to *Louisiana Sportsman*. "Making it more troubling is that the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries thinks the half a million pounds of dead fish in this abandoned net is insignificant. Just like they believe the 10,000 or more breeding sized redfish the department estimates the pogie boats kill every year is insignificant.

"These are not insignificant incidents. Louisiana is the only state that does not have a catch limit or a meaningful restriction on where these boats can operate. These companies need to be held accountable for the damages they are doing to our fisheries. The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission and some of our elected officials must take seriously the concerns of the conservation-minded sportsmen of this state and enact some meaningful restrictions on the two foreign owned companies that are mining nearly one billion pounds of vital forage from our waters every year and damaging our shallow habitats.

"Enough is enough," Macaluso concluded. "Recreational anglers are disgusted by this activity and they have every right to be."

Louisiana is the most lightly-regulated state in the nation when it comes to pogie harvests and both legislative efforts and efforts to get the LWFC to change have been futile to date. ■

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DOUBLE SURPRISE

KAYAK FISHERMAN HAS TO LOOK TWICE AT 10.2 POUND LUNKER BASS

By Kinny Haddox
Brad Case of Florence, Miss., isn't a regular on Lake D'Arbonne, but as a member of the Louisiana Hurricanes Kayak Fishing Team, he was there Friday, Sept. 2, to practice for a Saturday tournament against a kayak team from Georgia.

Case has been to D'Arbonne before and he always heads as far north in the lake as he can to get away from the crowds. He put his kayak in at Gills Ferry and eased down to what locals call the "mixing hole."

He's always liked D'Arbonne, but around 8 a.m., he got to like the lake a whole lot more. After a somewhat amusing encounter with a bass in the grass, he managed to hook the big fish and land it. When he got it on board and got over what he was looking at, he weighed in the fish at 10.2 pounds. It also had a 19 1/2-inch girth and was just a mark shy of 26 inches long.

A MEMORABLE CATCH

It was the fourth 10-plus pounder he's ever caught, but the retired Army veteran won't forget the story behind this one any time soon.

"I started working around the islands and I could see some bass blowing up on the inside edge of the grass line, but I couldn't get one to hit a frog to save my life," he said. "I kept trying and tried some other baits when I finally put on a Gambler Easy

Brad Case got this big 10.2-pound bass in his kayak and then got a selfie before turning it back into Lake D'Arbonne.



Case's lunker came just a notch under 26 inches long.

Swimmer and cast it out. I let it sink a few seconds and started to reel, but I felt like it was hung on a big clump or grass. I started pulling hard and I felt it move a little bit like it was coming to me. I reeled up the slack and it kept doing the same thing.”

Finally, he “pulled the lure free from the grass” and made another cast in the same spot, making the same retrieve. Only this time, there was no grass there.

“I couldn’t understand it and I was just about to reel the bait in when I felt the same thing again,” he said. “There was no hit, just a heavy feeling and I decided maybe this was not grass. She had apparently followed it back out toward the boat and was looking for it. I set the hook and the rod bent double. But the rod started bobbing and it went to the bottom like it was a big catfish.”

A REALLY NICE BASS

The fish swam toward the kayak, then under it and Case grabbed the net and sat down, thinking he just might keep this big catfish to eat. But when it broke the water a few yards from the kayak, it was no catfish.

“It rolled on the top, but didn’t go crazy. I could tell it was a nice bass,” he said, adding it just swam up on its side and into the net. “Then I looked down and saw it was a really, really nice bass. I held her in the net in the water and took a couple of pictures, got my scale and board ready and lifted her in the boat. Oh man, it was a really, really nice bass. I couldn’t believe it. Not this time of year. The bass was kind of sluggish and I think it had something to do with the 80 degree water. And she wasn’t very fat. She would have probably weighed 12 pounds in the spring, maybe more.”

He took the measurements and a few more photos, then released her back in the same spot he caught her. He texted a couple of teammates that he had landed a really nice one and they texted back comments like “nice log” or “another big stump.” Then he sent the pictures and they were all excited.

CATCH AND RELEASE

The Louisiana Hurricanes didn’t do too well in the tournament on Saturday, but Case got a pretty good consolation prize. And he set up someone else for the same thrill.

“Some people ask why we release fish like that,” he said. “There’s an easy answer. I got pictures. I got measurements. I got the memory. There are plenty of smaller crappie and bass to eat. Why would I go chop that fish up? I want to know I can possibly give another person the enjoyment of catching that fish, maybe even a 9-year-old kid who could catch it and that would change everything for them.” ■



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The advertisement features a collage of five photographs: a green boat on a beach, a blue boat with a Yamaha outboard motor, a fisherman in camouflage gear on a boat, a large bass on a boat, and two men on a dock with a boat.

Cole Burton, 5, (left) and Clay Burton, 7, started raising worms to fish with and now they've gone in to business.

FOR THE LOVE OF FISHING

JACKSON PARISH BROTHERS WORM THEIR WAY INTO LIVE BAIT BUSINESS

W By Glynn Harris
hat do you do when you love fishing so much you build an earthworm bed so you can have worms for fish bait and the numbers start growing rapidly? According to Clay Burton, you start selling them.

"We started growing worms for us to fish with and they started multiplying so fast, we decided maybe we ought to try and sell some," Clay said. With that declaration, Burton Boys Worms business was launched this past December and it has grown rapidly this year.

A NEW VENTURE

So, who are the Burton Boys? I learned about them and their enterprise while sharing lunch with Carl Burton, their grandfather and a long-time friend. I met the boys and their parents recently at the Ruston Farmer's Market where they had set up shop with their fishing worms.

Their dad is Dusty Burton and their mom is Kristy. They live in the Quitman area of Jackson Parish.

"We got to thinking about what we might want to get the boys as an extra special Christmas gift," Kristy explained. "We love to



fish and had ordered some European night crawlers, worms that are different from the Canadian night crawlers. The Canadian variety require refrigeration otherwise they don't survive. Not

so for the Europeans which can tolerate temperatures between 50 and 80 degrees.

"Our fishing worm supply started growing so fast there was no way we could use them all so we decided to introduce the boys to the corporate world by setting them up in a business of growing, marketing and selling the earthworms. We have business meetings every week in order to plan and discuss how to turn their endeavor into a profitable venture."

Clay has a vision problem, amblyopia, commonly known as "lazy eye" and it was his idea to use some of the profits of

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Cole (left) and Clay using Burton Boys Worms to catch big bream.



the business to help others with similar problems.

"I have to wear special glasses for my eye condition and I want to use some of what we make by selling worms to help other kids who have the same condition and may need some help to get glasses," Clay said.

WORM FOOD

How do you raise enough earthworms to satisfy your fishing needs with enough extra to put on the market?

"Our worm nursery consists mainly of peat moss with some dirt added," Clay said. "We feed the worms such things as banana peels, egg shells, cardboard and grain."

Kristy came up with the idea that in order to attract potential customers, there has to be an attractive presentation of the product.

"We found someone who came up with the design for the containers that are attached to each box of worms. The design features the two boys – one wearing glasses – in a circle surrounded with the logo "Burton Boys Worms."

The young growing business has already attracted the attention of at least one tackle shop owner, K&M Bait Shop in Farmerville, where the products are available for sale. They hope other bait shops will soon follow suit.

Oh, one other thing of interest are the ages of these two budding entrepreneurs. Clay is 7 years old and Cole is 5 years old. ■

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LOUISIANA HUNTER HONORED BY BOONE AND CROCKETT

B From News Reports
 aton Rouge hunter William C. Jenkins harvested a monstrous Alaskan brown bear and was recognized for his accomplishment during Boone and Crockett Club's 31st Big Game Awards celebration in Springfield, Missouri.

Since 1947, the triennial Big Game Awards program recognizes the biggest heads, horns, and antlers from North America accepted into Boone and Crockett Club's records from the previous three years.

Jenkins's Alaska brown bear officially scored 28 7/8 points by a panel of judges and ranks second for the 31st Awards period. Hosted by Bass Pro Shops, Cabelas and Centennial Sponsor Federal Ammunition, events were held at Johnny Morris' Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium.

While many Louisiana sportsmen venture far from home and take trophies on hunting and fishing trips, it is a rare accomplishment to achieve this prestigious award.

"The Big Game Awards celebrations only happen every three

years and we are honored to host the sportsmen and women who have found such success in the field," commented Boone and Crockett Club president James F. Arnold. "Our congratulations to William for their magnificent Alaska brown bear and even more so for their commitment to Fair Chase ethics and wildlife conservation."

The Boone and Crockett Club began recording measurements of mature male specimens of big game species, taken in fair chase pursuit, in the early 1900s as a way to evaluate the health of the species. At the time, wildlife was in decline and the National Collection of Heads and Horns was established by Club members in 1906 and a museum was opened and dedicated "In memory of the vanishing big game of the world" and to ensure conservation of these species.

According to Arnold, The Big Game Awards is a celebration of hunters' success, but it is really a celebration of the conservation accomplishments to have huntable populations of wildlife that continue to produce record book quality animals. ■



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READER REPORT



MAX THE BEAR

MILES IN THE MOUNTAINS, COLD NIGHTS IN SMALL TENTS WERE ALL WORTH IT

Editor's Note: This is a summary of William Jenkins' trophy bear hunt.

This journey has taken seven years and four trips to Alaska to complete. I have walked many miles up and down mountains and along game trails while crossing several rivers and streams. I shivered many cold nights in small tents and small wooden structures just to achieve the task of harvesting a record brown bear.

My three previous hunts were not successful. Even though I had seen 8-foot bears within 20 and 30 yards, I chose not to harvest those animals. My goal was to take home a trophy size bear.

I landed in Cold Bay, Alaska, May 8, 2021. Greg King, my guide, was already at camp making sure everything was ready. This was the third hunt Greg has been my guide on and from past experience, I knew it would be top notch.

THE BEAR

We had a slow start. Monday, May 10, the signs were good sitting and glassing. I saw one small bear across the valley halfway up the mountain. The next two days were uneventful and Thursday the weather turned bad so we spent the day in camp. Friday and Saturday, we saw bears, but not the right one.

Sunday was a beautiful day. We left camp, walked about an hour and spotted a large bear at about 2,000 yards and headed up the valley.

"That's the bear," Greg said. "I don't even have to take out the spotting scope. He is a huge bear. Lets go!"

The boar was watching a sow, but lost interest. She walked over the ridge out of sight. The boar was at about 1,000 yards as he walked into some alder bushes and disappeared. Greg said, "He's laid down and we are not leaving till he stands up!"

For the next seven hours we waited. We walked around, had lunch and snacks and glassed the mountain. Around 5:30 p.m. the brute stood up. He walked down to the valley's edge and started browsing and wallowing in the grass. As Greg and I steadily drew closer, I stepped on some floating tundra and went waist deep with one leg. Luckily the other leg stayed on firm ground. The one leg never touched bottom. Greg reminded me to watch my step and check the ground with my walking stick to make sure I have solid footing. We worked our way to within 139 yards. The wind was perfect right in our face.

The boar was quartered away, so I was able to sit on a small dirt mound and raise my knee on the mound to use as a gun rest. My heart was beating very fast! I know this, because when I tired to view my Go Pro after the hunt, I saw a view of the sky; but heard myself breathing like I had just run a five-minute mile!

I squeezed off the first round and heard the click of a bad round. I quickly loaded a second round, aimed and fired. The bear rose, looked, and I hit him with the second round. As he was trying to get up the embankment, I got off a third shot and he rolled backwards onto the ground. We kept an eye on him, but there was no more movement.

WHAT A RUSH!

What a rush! I called my wife! She was relieved and excited! After we took pictures, Greg started skinning. Greg said he had packed out many hides over his career but both of us together were not going to be able to pack this hide four miles. We separated the hide from the carcass and walked back to camp to come back in the morning with an inflatable

raft and float the hide back to camp. We arrived at midnight.

On Monday, outfitter Richard Guthie dropped off a small inflatable raft and we walked the four miles back to the hide. The hide had to be rolled up on a tarp and pulled about 300 yards to get to a creek, which feeds into the river. It was so heavy we had to stop every 10 yards or so to catch our breath. We reached the creek, loaded the hide and all our gear into the raft. Many times the raft would bottom out and get stuck on the river bottom. We would struggle with the raft to get it floating again. As we got closer to the end of our 11-hour task, Greg told me to go ahead and get to the camp.

He said soon he would not have any control over it in the increasing current. Greg told me where to wade out in the river and be ready to catch the raft. If I missed it, it would float into the ocean and we would lose the hide. I felt like a goalie on the soccer team. As the raft approached me it was moving back and forth as the current was getting faster! There was no way I was going to let that raft get by me. I've spent too much time hunting for a trophy Brown Bear. I finally got him. No way was I going to lose him now. I caught the raft and was able to pull it to the bank.

Tuesday we moved the hide into our wooden camp structure and I watched Greg, who is also a master Taxidermist, go to work. Greg periodically sent me pictures. One was a face shot of the bear. I showed this picture to my 5-year-old granddaughter and told her I needed a name for my bear.

She looked at the picture then looked me straight in the face and said "Max!" ■

William C. Jenkins
Baton Rouge, LA



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This rut prediction is based on the timing of scrape initiation for each area, which from my years of observations, always occurs during the new moon phase.

Scrape initiation is that time when bucks will open up traditional scrape sites for the upcoming season. It's probably a result of an increase of testosterone and the bucks will not check or work the scrapes again until another month, when the major rut period begins.

Deer seasons are established based upon the breeding season of deer in a particular area. The southwest parishes of the state generally have the earliest dates and therefore open early. Area 2, one of the largest deer sections in the state, has the typical breeding season like many of the Midwest and northern deer states. November is the peak month of breeding activity in this Area. Areas 4 and 9 have December as the major month and Areas 1, 5 and 6 have a late rut in January.

Based on the timing of scrape initiation, I am predicting a 2022-23 rut with the major breeding periods occurring during the early weeks of their breeding range.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2021? >

NORMAL RUT EXPECTED THIS SEASON WITH THE HELP OF TIMELY COLD FRONTS.

■ By David Moreland

WHITETAIL RUT REPORT

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2021?

An early rut was also predicted for 2021, but based upon hunter harvests and examination of female reproductive tracts, the rut was about a month later than predicted. Now generally these days when things go astray, folks jump to blame climate change, but in this case I don't think that is the culprit. What did happen was a major hurricane. Hurricane Ida came into the state and left a path of destruction as it moved northward from the coast into the Florida Parishes.

I distinctly remember sitting in my chair that night in the Clinton area watching the storm when the power went out. I tried to contact several friends in north Louisiana to see what they could tell me about the path of the storm and then realized there was no phone service. I knew that wasn't good. While we had damage on our property, we were spared the destruction that so many received.

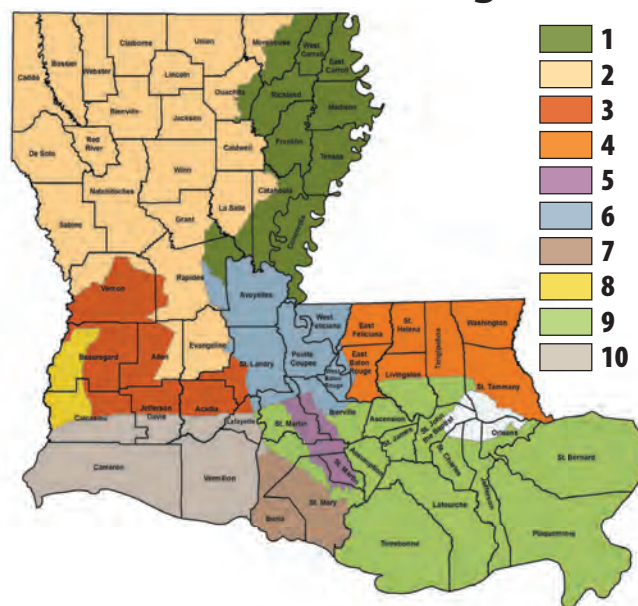
After the storm, the weather during September and October was very hot and dry. What really got my attention was the out-of-season flowering of numerous fruit tree species. Our big Red Mulberry tree leafed out and flowered again and actually produced a crop of mulberries. Pears and mayhaws also flowered along with other species of trees that leafed out again.

The storm, with its stressful weather that followed, had an effect on the landscape. I believe it had an impact on the animal ecology and was responsible for a later than anticipated rut. Of course, that's just me and what I observed.

I hunted the early season in Area 2 in Union and Bossier Parishes and experienced poor deer movement and no success. My prediction for the major rut period in Area 2 last year was mid-October. But based upon breeding dates of does from Bossier Parish that I looked at in early January, it showed that breeding began on Nov. 15, a month later than predicted. Most of my deer hunting is done in Area 4 where I live. In 2021, I had predicted the major breeding to begin in late November. The limited data I was able to collect showed it to be later. I examined a 1 1/2-year-old doe that bred on Dec. 8, an older adult doe that was bred on Dec. 20, and a 10-month-old doe that cycled and was bred on Feb. 6.

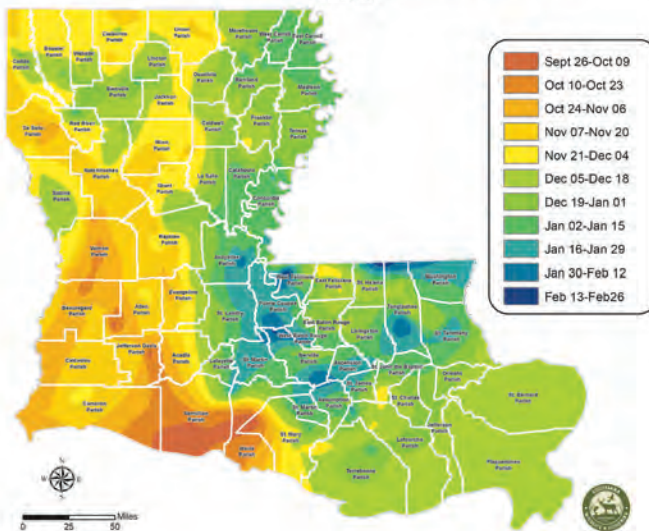
Late December was predicted for the start of Area 6 breeding and based on data from 10 does that I examined, major breeding began in mid to late January. While deer movement, particularly buck movement, appeared slow, the 2021-22 harvest report showed an increase in the deer harvest when compared

2022 - 2023 Deer Hunting Areas



LOUISIANA ESTIMATED DEER BREEDING PERIODS

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to the 2020-21 deer season. While I saw plenty of deer, my sightings of adult bucks was down. It seems they were always a step ahead of me!

THE 2022 RUT PREDICTION & SCHEDULE

AREAS 3, 7, 8 & 10

Pre-Rut

Aug. 11 - Sept. 9

Major Rut Scraping/Breeding

Sept. 10 - 24/Sept. 25 - Oct. 8

Minor Rut Scraping/Breeding

Oct. 9 - 24/Oct. 25 - Nov. 7

AREA 2

Pre-Rut

Sept. 10 - Oct. 8

Major Rut Scraping/Breeding

Oct. 9 - 24/Oct. 25 - Nov. 7

Minor Rut Scraping/Breeding

Nov. 8 - 22/Nov. 23 - Dec. 6

AREAS 4 & 9

Pre-Rut

Oct. 9 - Nov. 7

Major Rut Scraping/Breeding

Nov. 8 - 22/Nov. 23 - Dec. 6

Minor Rut Scraping/Breeding

Dec. 7 - 22/Dec. 23 - Jan. 5

AREAS 1, 5 & 6

Pre-Rut

Nov. 8 - Dec. 6

Major Rut Scraping/Breeding

Dec. 7 - 22/Dec. 23 - Jan. 5

Minor Rut Scraping/Breeding

Jan. 6 - 20/Jan. 21 - Feb. 4

IT'S JUST A PREDICTION

Therefore, keep in mind that the rut prediction is just that, a prediction.

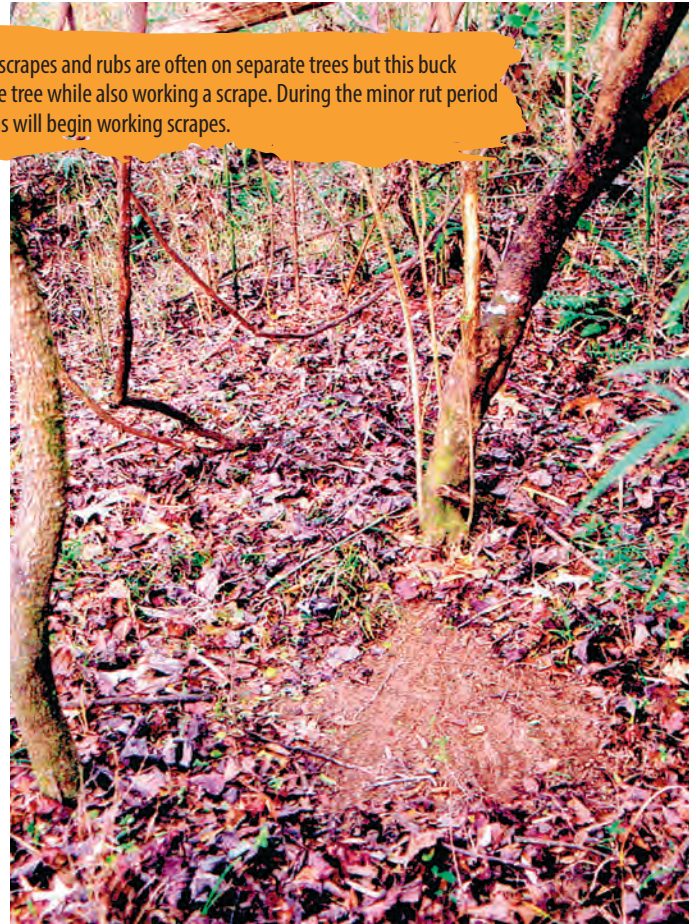
Weather conditions and changes in the landscape or habitat will affect deer movement and activity. During the major breeding period, most of the does in the population will be bred, at least 70 to 80 percent of them. During the minor breeding period the remainder of the does should be bred. Some of these deer are just young, like a road kill doe that I examined back in May.

This doe was bred as a fawn on Feb. 6; apparently it became sexually active at that time and had its first estrus cycle. Over the years, I have examined 1 ½-year-old harvested does that had fawned based on evidence of lactation, but this was the first fawn that I ever examined with a fetus in the uterus. This is an indicator of a healthy deer herd.

Both the Major Rut and Minor Rut periods are divided into a time of scraping and a time of breeding. Both periods are approximately two weeks long, although the scraping period could only last 5-10 days. Once does begin visiting scrapes and leaving their scent, the bucks will leave the scrapes and start following them. The chase is on followed by a period we often call lockdown, when the breeding takes place and deer seem to disappear from the landscape.

Now, on with the prediction.

Generally scrapes and rubs are often on separate trees but this buck rubbed the tree while also working a scrape. During the minor rut period buck fawns will begin working scrapes.



AREA SUMMARIES >

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Black staining of the tarsal gland is an indication that a deer has been urinating in scrapes.



AREA SUMMARIES

Southwest Louisiana is the early rut region of the state and the seasons open early to allow hunters to hunt during the rut. All hunters should carefully read the regulations and season literature to know the exact location, dates and limits for each area. There are several public land areas in this region and these generally have different season dates and hunting schedules.

West Bay WMA is always a good area to hunt and last year the early October hunt produced a deer kill per every seven hunter efforts, which is good. The October hunt on Peason Ridge had a deer killed per every 4.5 hunter efforts. This region of the state is best known for waterfowl hunting, but the deer population in these parishes is good as well. They do not produce the true trophy bucks, but will produce a lot of quality adult bucks. The breeding range in these areas is September thru December, but don't wait until November to start hunting or you may miss out on the best deer movement.



AUGUST 2023 Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	5
7	8	9	10	11 Pre-Rut Starts	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

SEPTEMBER 2022 Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9 Pre-Rut Starts	10 Major Rut Scraping Starts
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24 Major Rut Scraping Ends
25 Major Rut Breeding Starts	26	27	28	29	30	

OCTOBER 2022 Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8 Major Rut Breeding Ends
9 Minor Rut Scraping Starts	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24 Minor Rut Scraping Ends	25 Minor Rut Breeding Starts	26	27	28	29
30	31					

NOVEMBER 2022 Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7 Minor Rut Breeding Ends	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

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Northwest and Central Louisiana is known as Area 2 and many of these parishes have some of the state's highest deer kills. Bienville, Union, Claiborne, Natchitoches, Winn, Jackson, Rapides and Webster are in the top 10 deer kill parishes. Bossier, Sabine, LaSalle and Grant are in the top 20. It is evident that there are good deer populations in this region and the major rut occurs in November, so hunting is generally excellent. Many hunters take time off from work on Thanksgiving week, hoping to catch it at its peak over the holidays. The breeding range is October through January, but generally by the end of December, bucks are beginning to drop their antlers. Bodcau and Loggy Bayou WMAs are two great areas to hunt.

The breeding range for Areas 4 and 9 is November through February. Generally December is the peak month of breeding activity and that is the prediction for this year. For whatever reason, Area 4 has been anointed with a three-deer limit, so hunters must be aware of this. This region of the state has been hit hard by hurricanes and for some reason the biologists at



SEPTEMBER 2022 Area 2

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
						4
4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Pre-Rut Starts
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

OCTOBER 2022 Area 2

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
						1
	2	3	4	5	6	7
						8 Pre-Rut Ends
9 Major Rut Scraping Starts	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24 Major Rut Scraping Ends	25 Major Rut Breeding Starts	26	27	28	29
30	31					

NOVEMBER 2022 Area 2

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7 Major Rut Breeding Ends	8 Minor Rut Scraping Starts	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22 Minor Rut Scraping Ends	23 Minor Rut Breeding Starts	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

DECEMBER 2022 Area 2

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6 Minor Rut Breeding Ends	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

OCTOBER 2022

Area 4 & 9

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 Pre-Rut Starts	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

NOVEMBER 2022

Area 4 & 9

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7 Pre-Rut Ends	8 Major Rut Scraping Starts	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22 Major Rut Scraping Ends	23 Major Rut Breeding Starts	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

DECEMBER 2022

Area 4 & 9

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6 Major Rut Breeding Ends	7 Minor Rut Scraping Starts	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 Minor Rut Scraping Ends	23 Minor Rut Breeding Starts	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

LDWF believe deer numbers are down. However, I would suggest that they need to take a closer look at these parishes and re-evaluate the situation. Deer numbers are not down in East Feliciana and some of the surrounding parishes. Public WMAs are limited in this region and an examination of the WMA harvest data won't get hunters too excited!

DECLINE IN PARTICIPATION >

JANUARY 2023

Area 4 & 9

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5 Minor Rut Breeding Ends	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				



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The author said the story of his 2021 deer season was the right place at the wrong time. He said he just could not get on the adult bucks schedule.



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DECLINE IN PARTICIPATION

Perhaps providing more hunter opportunity on some of these areas might attract more attention. It appears that the overall trend on the state's management areas is a decline in hunter participation.

Areas 1, 5 and 6 are the trophy buck areas of the state and this is due to a combination of soil, agriculture and bottom-land hardwoods.

It also is the area of late breeding and it is not uncommon for hunters to find active scrapes in the woods during February and March in many of these parishes. Unfortunately, one case of CWD has been discovered in a small portion of Area 1, which has resulted in LDWF taking action to prevent its spread. The area of precaution for CWD includes portions of Tensas, Madison and Franklin parishes and hunters should know the detailed rules and regulations for hunting in this area. The primary focus of LDWF is to prevent the spread of CWD into other

regions of the state. The western mountain states have been dealing with it since 1967, and it is a problem we do not need in Louisiana. If you look at the map of the CWD outbreak in the U.S., what began as a problem in one deer pen in Colorado, has become a national problem.

I attended a recent legislative hearing regarding the CWD ban in Tensas, Madison and Franklin parishes. All of the legislators wanted to know when would the ban end, how long will this last? Well, the basic answer is it does not end, once you get it, you have it, and it does not go away. Look at the CWD map; the problem just expands and gets worse. Consequently efforts to contain the disease must be made.

This is an agriculture region with bottomland hardwood and batture land, the river's actual active floodplain, and there is no need to bait, in my opinion. Hunters can plant and hunt over food plots. However, if the disease expands from here into the piney woods, hunters will be facing troubles because of the popularity of baiting.

NOVEMBER 2022 Areas 1, 5 & 6

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8 Pre-Rut Starts	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

DECEMBER 2022 Areas 1, 5 & 6

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6 Pre-Rut Ends	7 Major Rut Scraping Starts	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 Major Rut Scraping Ends	23 Major Rut Breeding Starts	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

WHITETAIL RUT REPORT

Many hunters around the state will use deer scents and urine when hunting and the state has enacted specific rules and regulations to address this. Hunters should be aware of this when purchasing these natural deer lures for hunting and use only approved products. It is up to us to do our part and help prevent this serious disease from expanding further into the state.

Hopefully my predictions will provide you with some insight as to the best time to hunt. Some will say that any time someone can hunt is a good time, but I can say with confidence that there are times when you are just wasting your time. The deer are just not going to move! Hunt hard and be safe; share your success with others and help teach the next generation of hunters how to hunt the right way. ■



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.

JANUARY 2023 **Areas 1, 5 & 6**

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5 Major Rut Breeding Ends	6 Minor Rut Scraping Starts	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20 Minor Rut Scraping Ends	21 Minor Rut Breeding Starts
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

FEBRUARY 2023 **Areas 1, 5 & 6**

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4 Minor Rut Breeding Ends
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

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■ By John L. Brown Jr.

SADDLE UP

HARNESS SYSTEM TREE STANDS TEACH
OLD DEER HUNTERS NEW TRICKS.



Photo courtesy Tuebor Saddles

Forty years ago this month, I walked into the local hardware store in Ruston and purchased my first climbing stand.

I'd spent the summer working cattle for a local rancher and managed to save enough money for the purchase. I still remember presenting the large cardboard box to the cashier before racing home to unbox my new treasure. I can also remember being sweat soaked a few weeks later, trudging across a Tensas Parish palmetto flat in search of whitetail sign, bow in hand.

The Amacker Deer Thief on my back weighed in at a "sleek" 28 pounds, and even included two narrow straps that, when packed any distance beyond a few feet, cut into your shoulders. It was state of the art for 1982.

Fortunately, deer hunting equipment has come a long way since then. Compound bows, camouflage, trail cameras and deer stands have all gotten better and lighter.

OLD DOG LEARNS NEW TRICK

After years of searching for the perfect stand, I settled on a two-piece climber, weighing less than 13 pounds. I've always wanted to be mobile, able to walk long distances without tiring, while also being able to quickly move from one spot to another. For over a decade I used the same make and model of stand, and, until recently, had no reason to change.

But last season I hunted with close friend Dustin Brister of Ruston and noticed him wearing what appeared to be a line-man's belt. Upon closer inspection, I recognized he was wearing a tree saddle harness.

When asked, Brister claimed right away that for archery hunt-



Getting up a tree for a good shot out of a saddle is relatively simple, while not sacrificing security and safety when done correctly.

ing, his tree saddle was the absolute best approach during the whitetail rut.

“If I see a buck chasing a doe in the distance, I can climb down and be back in a tree where I saw the buck within minutes,” he said. “More importantly, I can do it almost silently. Plus, I don’t have to find a perfect tree.”

He went on to add that for early season hunts, he rarely breaks a sweat during the walk to his hunting area or during setup. He estimated his entire setup weighed in at less than five pounds.

I quickly decided to do some serious research on these tree saddles. After a few days of cruising the internet, I landed on an Indiana hunter named Scott Cronin, an IHEA and ATA certified hunting instructor, who seemed to be leading the tree saddle charge in the Midwest amongst his students.



John L. Brown Jr. has spent the last three decades producing video and television for several companies. He now serves as Director of Video Services for The Confluence Group and lives in West Monroe with his wife, Anna.

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SADDLE UP

SIMPLICITY = SAFETY

Cronin wasted little time getting straight to the point. “First, I believe the simplicity of the tree saddle makes it a super safe option for hunters,” he said. “There are no pins, chains, or ratchets.”

Cronin went on to add that many of his students also feel safer using a tree saddle versus a traditional tree stand, adding that he’s personally seen hunters unable to use fixed position stands because of vertigo, immediately feel much more confident in a saddle. Initially I found this hard to believe, but after watching Cronin demonstrate how to climb with a tree saddle, I began to see exactly what he was talking about.

After looking into the makes and models available, I slowly began to assemble the needed gear for a maiden voyage. I learned the saddle is the most important part of this setup, with higher quality models built like small hammocks, complete with lumbar support for your back. In addition to my lineman’s belt, which ensures I stay connected to the tree while climbing, I also needed a tree tether. The tether attached me to the tree once at my desired hunting height and acted as my main safety line during the hunt.

Once connected to the tree at my desired height, I would need a small platform for my feet.

The platform serves as my standup foot base area, allowing me to pivot, anchor, and lock into position for observing and shooting. Finally, I would need a set of steps or “mini sticks” as saddle hunters call them. The steps would allow me to climb

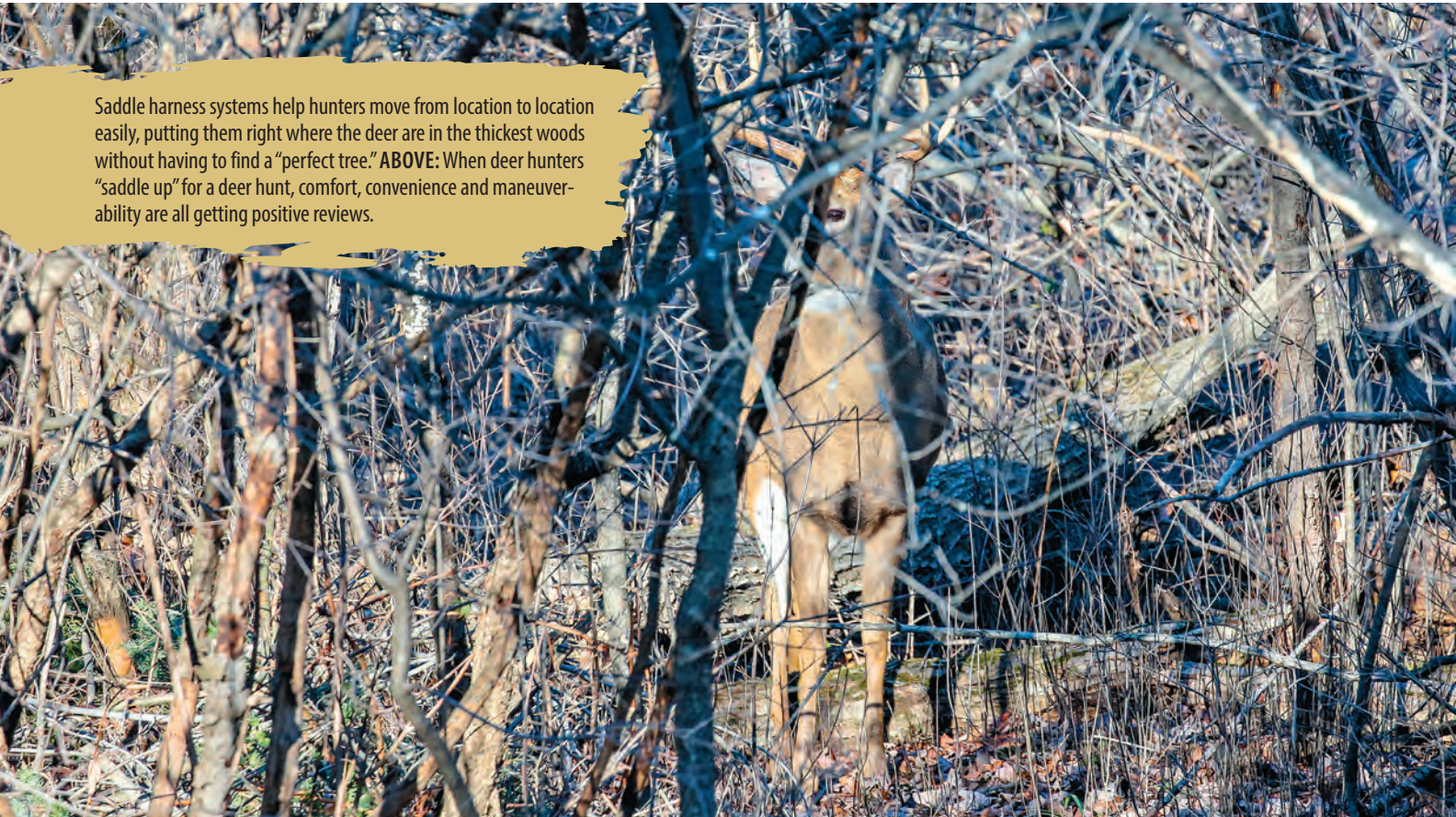


Photo courtesy Tuebor Saddles

trees with little or no limbs. The Novix brand steps I purchased are 17 inches each and allow for more foot room when climbing and hanging. It only takes three or four of these step sections to reach a height of 15 feet or more.

THE LEARNING CURVE >

Saddle harness systems help hunters move from location to location easily, putting them right where the deer are in the thickest woods without having to find a “perfect tree.” ABOVE: When deer hunters “saddle up” for a deer hunt, comfort, convenience and maneuverability are all getting positive reviews.





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THE LEARNING CURVE

The first few times I climbed a tree in my backyard, things didn't go as smoothly as I anticipated. Having spent my entire life shooting a bow from fixed position stands, there was a learning curve involved. It took me several "dry runs" in order to learn how to best position myself, the platform and my mini steps.

In addition, I quickly figured out that as a right-handed shooter, shots to my right required some maneuvering. With practice I eventually became confident not only taking those shots, but moving almost completely around the tree. Using the steps was easy and after I learned how to position the footrest, I was able to stay comfortable for extended periods of time.

MORE BENEFITS

I quickly began to see even more benefits to saddle hunting, including that now I no longer needed to find the perfect tree for my climbing stands. In fact, the saddle allows me find trees that place me well within confident shooting range of trails or heavy sign.

In addition, facing the tree allows a hunter to stay better hidden from approaching deer. The saddle also enables hunters to use large or small diameter trees. Again, no more searching for the perfect tree. After practicing several times, I also took note

of just how quietly I was able to climb. Tree saddles are super quiet, made of fabric, void of moving parts or exposed metal.

But perhaps the biggest benefit of a tree saddle will be for the public land hunter. The light weight gives hunters the ability to walk long distances without becoming worn down from carrying heavy climbing stands. In addition, you no longer must worry about someone stealing your stand or being able to tell where you've hunted.

And if you hunt public land, you know there are rules as to what you can and can't do. For example, some areas don't allow hunters to cut or prune limbs. A tree saddle allows you the ability to hunt high or low while staying concealed, without removing limbs.

Tree saddles aren't for everyone or every situation, but they certainly can make you a more versatile and mobile hunter with a little practice. With so many options on the market, you can build your own tree saddle setup that will put more deer in front of you. ■

Taking trophy deer in the woods, like this one killed by John Brown, is a challenge, but the new tree saddle harnesses can give you a distinct advantage in some cases.



TREE SADDLE INFORMATION

Although ladder stands are just gaining in popularity, there are already several companies making them and various products to go with them.

Check the sites below out and you may be well on your way to finding out this is the new trick that you need in your deer hunting pursuits.

And, as always, put safety first, become familiar with your new equipment and practice before you go on a real hunt.

Here are some sites where you can learn more about saddles:

- Trophyline – trophyline.com
- Tethrd – tethrdnation.com
- Hawk – hawkhunting.com
- Tuebor Saddles – tueborsaddles.com
- Novix – novixoutdoors.com

Also, try an internet search for “tree saddles” to find more websites, videos and information. ■



A close-up view of one of the popular models of hunting saddles.

Photo courtesy Tuebor Saddles

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HOW TO SET UP YOUR BOW

THIS TRIED AND TRUE METHOD WORKS EVERY TIME

Throughout my bow hunting career, I have refined my process for setting up a bow. And I continue to do so even today. That being said, the basic procedure is still the same as it always was.

By sharing how I approach this, I can hopefully save some of you many of the pitfalls that I have encountered along the way.

Certain steps must be followed in a specific order if you are to be successful. Failure to do so often results in frustration, additional work, and even total failure. I highly recommend that you consult a pro shop if you are not completely knowledgeable about and/or comfortable with the adjustments needed.

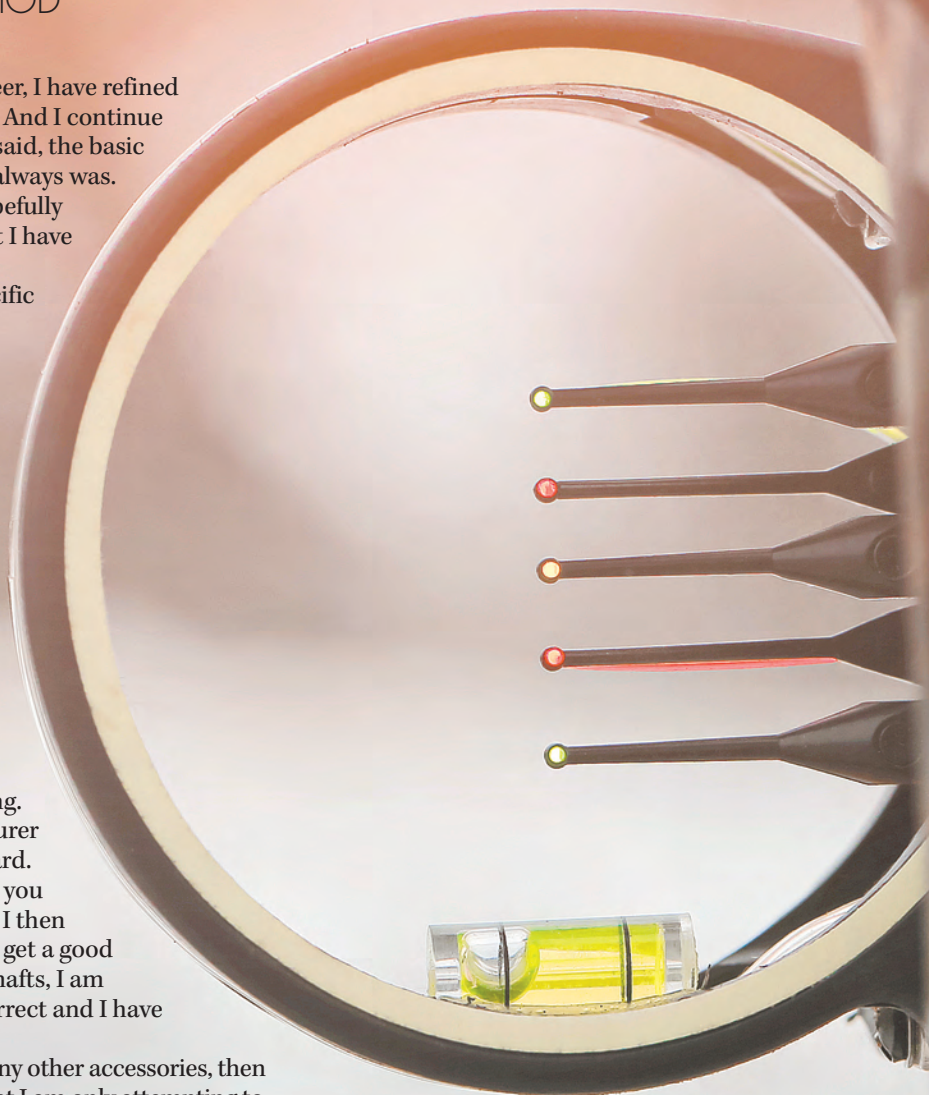
After unboxing a new compound bow, I first assess it for any shipping damage. Next I make sure that both the string and cables are in their respective tracks on the cams.

If all looks well, I first mount the arrow rest to the riser. After that, I adjust the rest for center shot and tie on the nock loop, squaring it to the arrow rest. Next I check the cams for proper lean and timing. This varies by both model and manufacturer and is most easily checked on a draw board. Most pro shops will perform this step for you for a reasonable fee. Assuming all is well, I then proceed to the paper tuning rack. If I can get a good paper tear with both fletched and bare shafts, I am then confident that my arrow spine is correct and I have achieved straight arrow flight.

The next step is to mount the sight and any other accessories, then I proceed straight to the range. At this point I am only attempting to verify that my tune is perfect. I sight the bow in at 20 yards using practice points. Then I use a fixed blade broadhead to check my tune.

Hunters are mainly concerned with how accurately our broadheads fly. Perfect setup, arrow flight, and proper form lead to perfect broadhead accuracy. We owe it to the animals we hunt to accept no less.

By shooting a broadhead-tipped arrow (at a broadhead target of course), and then following with a practice-tipped arrow aimed at the same spot, any flaws in your tune will be revealed by variations in their points of impact. The two arrows should strike the target in the same spot or very close together. Any other result is less than acceptable. The list of issues that can lead to variation here is endless. Professional help makes this much less frustrating to diagnose.



Sighting in your bow should be done in a controlled setting, before you take aim at wild game.



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.

NEED HELP?:

Setting up your bow can be tedious, but it's a necessary part of archery hunting. If you're not comfortable with any steps involved, it's always best to consult with a pro shop.



Don't wait until the last minute to get your bow ready for hunting season.

Once I have both my practice tips and broadheads flying to the same point of impact, I level all of the axes on my bow sight. This ensures ultimate accuracy at varying ranges as well as steep uphill or downhill shot scenarios. I then remove the sight and begin breaking in the bow at a 5-foot shooting distance.

Removing the sight eliminates the urge to aim and allows me to focus on my shot process. The male brain was not designed to multi-task, and if the sight is on my bow it only distracts me from focusing on proper form and shot execution.

After around 500 shots, I retune the bow, straighten out my peep rotation, remount my sight, and repeat the broadhead flight test. Only once that is perfect, do I finish sighting in my bow. Now I know my sights will be set for the season, and I probably won't have to repeat this task. I generally do this over several days, rather than trying to cram it into one shooting session. Tired muscles lead to inconsistency, which can be frustrating when fine tuning a sight.

Each year I see countless customers come crashing in at the last minute before leaving for a hunt in an all-out panic because their broadheads aren't flying well. This could have easily been avoided by following the steps outlined above. This is a tried and true method that has stood the test of time. Hopefully it can help some of you avoid this during your own bow hunting journey. ■

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TIP!

You can serve this roast warm with a deli mustard or keep as a cold cut. Either way, it's absolutely delicious on a sandwich.



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 gallon water
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 5 bay leaves
- ¼ cup sugar
- ½ ounce sodium nitrate (Instacure No. 1 available on Amazon)
- ½ cup sea salt
- 2 tablespoons cracked black pepper
- 1 tablespoon mustard seeds
- 4 cloves garlic (roughly chopped)
- 1 tablespoon thyme
- 1 tablespoon caraway seeds
- 1 Two pound (approximate) venison roast

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:

- Dutch oven
- Container large enough to house the brine and the roast

TIP!

This corned venison is the perfect complement for wild game hash served for breakfast.

PREPARATION:

1. Place all ingredients, except the roast, in a Dutch oven and bring to a boil.
2. Turn off the heat and cover. You will want to let this brine cool back down to room temperature in order not to cook the roast.
3. Trim your roast and place into a bowl large enough for it and the brine. The roast should be covered completely. Cover. Refrigerate.
4. Let the brine work its magic for one

week in the refrigerator.

5. Remove the roast from the brine and rinse completely.
6. Place roast into a Dutch oven and cover with water.
7. Simmer for 3-4 hours on your stove top.
8. Remove from the Dutch oven and let cool.
9. Slice thinly and store refrigerated.

WISEEYE ON THE PRIZE ➤



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

When a buck like this one walks by the WiseEye, it not only takes a picture, it analyzes all kinds of data and can track that specific deer's movements and habits. **INSET:** This WiseEye camera mounted on a tree is keeping up with wildlife activity and compiling detailed data to aid hunters.

WISEEYE ON THE PRIZE

WILDLIFE DATA CAMS WILL EVEN TRACK INDIVIDUAL TROPHY DEER

D By Kinny Haddox
 eer trail cameras have come a long way. In fact, one fairly new camera that is the brainchild of several Louisiana entrepreneurs isn't even called a game camera at all.

"We call it a wildlife data cam, because that is what it is," said Darryl Monk, CFO of WiseEye Technologies based in Denham Springs, La. "It goes way beyond just taking pictures. What we have is a camera that takes pictures, collects data and then takes that data and loads it into a software system that we created. It instantly analyzes it and basically patterns and predicts the best times for you to go deer hunting, especially if you are targeting a single animal like a big buck.

Who would have ever thought that deciding when to go hunting would be answered with, "Why don't you ask your game camera?"

The way the system works is that the camera takes pictures, then uses software

that sorts them between deer (even bucks and does), turkey, predators, people or even vehicles. When the camera takes a picture, it sorts it into a folder and sends it straight to the camera owner's phone within a matter of seconds. The options are almost limitless.

Here is the bottom line. WiseEyeTech has developed Species Recognition Technology. They use this technology in their trail camera management system called HuntControl. You can even pattern an individual animal with HuntControl. It's easy. Every time you see a photo of the animal you want to track, click on the tag button and assign the animal a tag. The more you tag that animal, the more accurate the results.

WiseEye software can compile that information with weather forecasts, wind direction, moon phases, barometric pressure and the like and tell hunters the very best time to hunt that specific animal.

"Say a guy is working for a living and is

limited in days off," Monk said. "We can take his photo data, combine it with weather predictions and other factors and at some point, tell him that hey, Thursday afternoon of this week looks like the best time to harvest this deer."

HuntControl also gives hunters access to many charts and graphs to illustrate the deer movement on their specific camera. New charts are being added often to help see deer activity by hour, day, week, month, temperature, wind speed and more.

The first time Monk explains it to hunters, he says their response is almost always the same.

"They can't believe that there is something like this out there to help in deer hunting, or any type of hunting for that matter," he said.

It is all based on a 10-day forecast of how the buck is moving and all those other factors.



Photos courtesy WiseEye

The camera has taken off like a rocket ship with commercial operations, like the big ranches that have clients paying thousands of dollars for hunts, where they need as much data as possible to ensure their clients are successful. And, Darryl said, it is especially useful for hunters who are working and have limited time off to hunt. It can help them determine the very best times to go and be successful. And they can make the best use of their time.

The company is family owned and operated by Monk and his brother, Harold, who serves as the CEO. The system is the brain-child of Harold's son-in-law, Jason Ray. They live in the Central/Pride area.

They have been developing the system for more than a dozen years and have actually had them on the market for four years now. They sell through major retailers across the country and on their website.

There are two versions of the camera. The only difference is that one camera has dual antennas to get a little better cellular service, especially in more remote areas. The second version is called the Mini and only has one antenna. Both cameras have exceptionally high quality lenses and generate top quality photos, which is a necessity for the software to properly sort the information.

The dual antenna model retails for around \$299 and the mini version for around \$199.

You can learn more about the company and the cameras on their website, wiseeyetech.com, or their Facebook page. ■



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HUNTER OF THE MONTH

Audrey Gunn

Twelve-year-old Audrey Gunn killed her first buck on Oct. 11, 2021 in north Bossier Parish.

ANGLER OF THE MONTH

Eli Malley

Eli Malley, 10, caught this nice largemouth bass on a July afternoon in his backyard in West Feliciana Parish. He was using a bream he also caught as bait.



HUNTERS HAVE A BUFFET
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HUNTING GROUNDS.

■ By John Flores

SQUIRREL GRAVY



There were just a few remaining stars left in the sky as twilight gently nudged them away while my son, grandson and I quietly walked along a levee to a grove of live oak trees on Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge.

It was opening day of the 2021 squirrel season and though it was Oct. 2, with an ever so slight tease of fall in the air, we knew by 8:30 it would start warming up and take us back to summer again.

This little expedition to hunt squirrels started out with a call from my son a few days before the opener when he said, “Dad, I want to take Eli squirrel hunting. Do you know a place where we can all go?”

He sort of caught me off guard, as several years prior I gave up our hunting lease and no longer had a place to take them. It only took me a few seconds to regroup and I said to him, “Sure. We’ll go to the refuge.”

Bayou Teche is public land close to the house, an easy place to hunt, and literally full of squirrels. What’s more, it would be a great location to expose a 5-year-old to hunting.

“If that works for you,” I told him. And with that we had plans for the upcoming Saturday opener.

Quite honestly, in the state of Louisiana there are thousands of public acres where small game hunters are able to hunt squirrels. Many of these are listed in the Small Game Forecast elsewhere in this month’s edition of *Louisiana Sportsman*.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries maintains 1.6 million acres of Wildlife Management Areas. Kisatchie National Forest has some 604,000 acres. Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge, where we decided to hunt, is made up of 9,028 acres and is one of 23 national wildlife refuges in the state.

PUBLIC ACCESS

What more can Louisiana’s small game hunters ask for? Across the state, there’s plenty of public access, a large squirrel population, a liberal bag limit of 8 squirrels per day and a season that runs from the first Saturday in October to the last day in February.





were working over the acorns pretty good and dropping more than they were eating. Every few seconds you'd hear a hollow thump sound much like the beat of a snare drum, when the acorns hit the palmetto bushes below.

FIRST TIME IN THE WOODS >



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.



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Five-year-olds are inquisitive. Taking a kid hunting preserves a hunting heritage in generations to come. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Gray and fox squirrels eat hard mast, fruits, insects, eggs, buds, bark, roots and fungi.



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Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Small Game Program Manager, Cody Cedotal, said there is suitable habitat for squirrels found throughout the state and harvest rates are typically low, thus, the reason for the long season and unchanged bag limits over the years.

There are two common species of squirrels that hunters harvest annually in a variety of habitats, the gray squirrel (*Sciurus Carolinensis*) and the fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*).

In describing the differences between the two species besides the obvious color variation, Cedotal said, "Gray squirrels seem to be more habitat generalists and can thrive in a wider variety of locations. Fox squirrels generally spend more time on the ground than gray squirrels and tend to use more open forests with sparse understory for the most part.

"And, although gray squirrels do forage on the ground," Cedotal continued, "they tend to stay in the forest canopy more and typically select sites with relatively dense and/or understory cover. Both species use cavities in live or dead trees as dens, whereas leaf nests are used for resting, escape cover and rearing young."

By the time my son and I got situated in the twilight beneath a couple of old growth live oaks, we noticed the gray squirrels were already in the upper reaches of the canopy. The little grays



Live oak acorns like these are food both fox and gray squirrels can't resist.

FIRST TIME IN THE WOODS

Being his first time in the woods, my grandson was taking all of this action in. His smile reflected someone who was clearly enjoying the various stimulations that have to be experienced to internalize. When my son shot and killed our first squirrel of the morning, we could have left the woods right then and there. It was pretty much mission accomplished as far as introductions go for my grandson.

One thing we noticed right away was how quickly the gray squirrels went right back to foraging in the canopy again. That seemed to be another difference between gray and fox squirrels worth expounding on.

One of my good friends from work, Tony Guillory, grew up hunting squirrels around Pine Prairie. Pine Prairie is located above I-10 and about a 45-minute drive due north of Crowley. According to my buddy, they hunted both gray and fox squirrels in his region of the state. In sharing our opening day hunt, he agreed it wasn't uncommon to find a spot where you might find several gray squirrels.

He too had experienced grays being less cautious to what's going on below, especially if you were well concealed.

Guillory said, "John, back home we found that grays seemed to like thicker stands of trees that have lots of leaves and undergrowth. Sometimes it was hard to walk through. But, sure enough you'd shoot a gray, and a few minutes later, when things died down, they'd come right back, and you'd shoot another one. For fox squirrels, we'd have to walk a bit more and hunt more open woods on hilly ground. The thing is, once we shot at or killed a fox squirrel, we pretty much had to go find another spot to sit, because they weren't coming back — at least not for a long while."

Cedotal mentions that there's no shortage of food sources for squirrels and expounded on how their numbers are directly linked.

Cedotal said, "Gray and fox squirrel's diets are similar and consist of hard mast, fruits, insects, eggs, buds, bark, roots and fungi. Squirrel populations and harvests are highly dependent on year-to-year habitat conditions, especially food availability. This is the primary driver of reproduction and population increases or decreases."

From small game harvest surveys, both hunter participation as well as harvest numbers have been fairly constant the past three seasons. There were an estimated 52,200 squirrel hunters estimated in 2018/2019, 48,600 in 2019/2020, and 53,700 in 2020/2021.

Those hunters harvested an estimated 703,900, 682,700, and 737,400 squirrels respectively the past three seasons, according to LDWF data.

The Louisiana Big and Small Game Harvest Survey for 2020-2021 estimated that squirrel hunters hunted 328,600 days. Moreover, 69 percent of those squirrel hunters hunted at least 1 to 5 days last year.

On opening day last year, we didn't stay in the woods too long because dad didn't want to ruin a 5-year-old's first hunt. It's best to dole out those experiences in small doses at first, as youngsters often have short attention spans.

However, because the particular spot we hunted appeared to be loaded with squirrels, I made a hunt the following weekend and scored a limit of gray squirrels in short order.



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REGULATIONS

One of the things hunters need to be aware of when hunting on public land is they need to get very familiar with various “refuge” regulations. NWRs require the use of non-toxic game loads when hunting small game on these refuge systems.

This can be problematic, because most non-toxic (steel shot) game loads are designed for waterfowl. Most of the waterfowl loads you find on the shelf come in No. BB, 2, 3, and 4 shot loads, where most squirrel hunters use No. 6 lead shot when hunting on private lands.

When squirrels are 30 to 40 yards up in a tree foraging and the leaves are thick, they can be difficult to bring down. Two loads I recommend for squirrel hunters who hunt on National Wildlife Refuges are Kent’s TealSteel that comes in No. 5 shot size and Hevi-Shot’s Hevi Teal that comes in No. 6 shot size. Both of these rounds are 12-gauge, 3-inch loads and are much like shooting any of the high-brass No. 5 and No. 6 lead loads we grew up with before non-toxic shot became a thing.

Other shot to consider is Winchester Super X Expert High Velocity Steel Shot. In a pinch last year, I used 12 gauge 3-inch 1 1/8-ounce No. 4 shot loads for squirrel on Bayou Teche.

Be aware, when it comes to steel shot loads, try and stock up early. Due to COVID and subsequent supply chain issues there have been shortages of non-toxic waterfowl loads the past couple of hunting seasons.

It’s also important to note that state WMA and NWRs have



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specific regulations concerning check in, permits and game harvest reporting. Prior to hunting any of our state’s refuge systems, take time to read and learn about specific regulations. It may spare you a long conversation with one of our LDWF Enforcement guys and turn what otherwise was a good day in the woods into an aggravated ride home.

With plenty of public land across the state, an overall under harvested squirrel population, and a generous bag limit there’s no reason you shouldn’t be in the woods hunting squirrels this month. It just takes a little planning. ■



**WMA SMALL GAME
FORECAST SEES LOTS OF
SPECIAL POSSIBILITIES.**

■ By Don Shoopman

A SQUIRREL OR TWO A PIECE

A dedicated veteran game biologist recently said it's special that Louisiana has enough public lands where, say, a man and his 6-year-old grandson on his first squirrel hunt, can step into the woods for an easy chance to bring home at least two squirrels each.

Why two? Well, keep reading.

There are four Wildlife Management Areas, big and small, in the state that fit the bill based on results from the 2021-22 season. One of them is Dewey W. Wills WMA in the LDWF's Pineville Region. Of course, there are many days that hunters take lots more than two. Limits aren't unusual.

Here's the rest of the story.

Cliff Dailey, the region's biologist supervisor who has been with LDWF since 2009, was talking about the squirrel hunting opportunities available in the state while discussing the outlook on his WMAs for the upcoming 2022-23 season. Many of his peers have said the same thing each summer for years when they talk about their annual WMA reports for readers of *Louisiana Sportsman* magazine. Last season's numbers are acquired from hunter reports, check-ins and self-clearing permit information.

Dailey's top WMA is Dewey W. Wills WMA, where 6,721 squirrels were reported harvested last season. That's a 2.1 average

per hunter effort on the 63,984-acre WMA that spans LaSalle, Catahoula and Rapides parishes.

There are other WMAs across the state that yielded an average of two squirrels per hunter effort in 2021-22. They are:

- Big Lake WMA, a much smaller public land at 19,231 acres in Franklin, Tensas and Madison parishes, gave up 2.4 squirrels per hunter effort, 3,984 total, last season.
- Richard K. Yancey WMA in Concordia Parish, its 70,872 acres even larger than Dewey W. Wills WMA, boasted the highest squirrel harvest in the state last season with 7,879 in the bag and an average of 2.6 squirrels per hunter effort.
- Attakapas Island WMA in the Atchafalaya Basin, accessible only by boat, had 542 squirrels taken off its 27,962 acres (Iberia, St. Martin and St. Mary parishes) in 2021-22 for a 2.0 squirrels per hunter effort.

Louisiana's small game hunting season for squirrels and rabbits begins Oct. 1 and ends Feb. 28. This *Louisiana Sportsman* report from seven regional biologist supervisors or biologist managers can assist residents and non-residents who want to choose one or more WMAs to hunt small game successfully in 2022-23.

The forecast shows lots of special possibilities.

HAMMOND REGION >



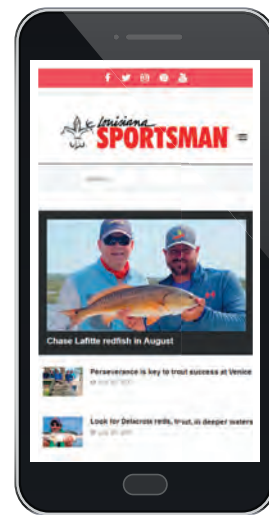
Hunters have to be quick on the trigger to get a shot at a moving rabbit when they race across open ground, especially when a pack of rabbit hounds is on their trail.

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HAMMOND REGION 2022-23 OUTLOOK

Top WMA Squirrel Harvest Numbers 2021-22

- **Pearl River WMA:** 904 squirrels reported, (0.6 squirrels per hunter effort)
- **Maurepas Swamp WMA:** 395 squirrels reported, (2.9 squirrels per hunter effort)
- **Sandy Hollow WMA:** 100 squirrels reported, (0.5 squirrels per hunter effort)

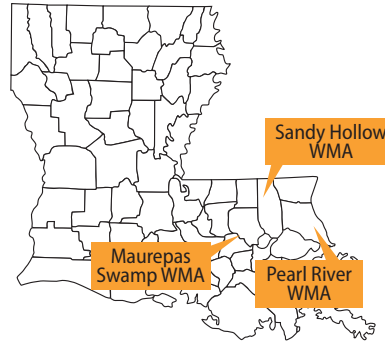
Top WMA Rabbit Harvest Numbers 2021-22

- **Maurepas Swamp WMA:** 95 rabbits reported, (3.3 rabbits per hunter efforts)
- **Sandy Hollow WMA:** 11 rabbits reported, (0.1 rabbits per hunter effort)

Post-Hurricane Ida squirrel hunting success last fall was fair at best on two Hammond Region WMAs, but last year's mast crop production was below average for all species surveyed in southeastern Louisiana, according to WMA supervisor Bradley Breland.

The lack of hard mast production was attributed to Hurricane Ida's passage starting Aug. 29, according to Breland. The dropoff in mast production probably resulted in poor body conditions for squirrels leading up to the late winter/spring breeding season and may result in below average production, he reported.

Maurepas Swamp WMA, where 904 squirrels were harvested in 2021-22, was one of the region's heavily hurricane-impacted areas with large amounts of timber uprooted along the spoil



banks. It made access difficult and subsequently reduced squirrel hunting pressure. Ninety-five rabbits were harvested last season despite the hurricane's devastation on Maurepas Swamp WMA.

Breland noted that Sandy Hollow WMA, which gave up 11 rabbits in 2021-22, is managed as an upland longleaf forest with intensive, prescribed burns that result in a grass/forb understory that, coupled with recent timber harvest operations, make prime rabbit habitat every year.

LAFAYETTE REGION 2022-23 OUTLOOK

Top 5 WMA Squirrel Harvest Numbers 2021-22

- **Richard K. Yancey WMA:** 7,879 squirrels reported (2.6 squirrels per hunter effort)
- **Sherburne WMA:** 2,427 squirrels reported (0.9 squirrels per hunter effort)
- **Grassy Lake WMA:** 745 squirrels reported (1.7 squirrels per hunter effort)
- **Attakapas Isand WMA:** 542 squirrels reported (2.0 squirrels per hunter effort)
- **Pomme de Terre WMA:** 542 squirrels reported (1.2 squirrels per hunter effort)



Gary Rodgers takes a squirrel from his Mountain Cur Judd on a hunt last season.

Top WMA Rabbit Harvest Numbers 2021-22

- **Sherburne WMA:** 217 rabbits reported, (0.3 rabbits per hunter effort)
- **Attakapas Island WMA:** 113 rabbits reported, (0.9 rabbits per hunter effort)

Rabbit hunters harvested 217 rabbits last season on one of the popular WMAs in the Lafayette Region.

Don't be surprised if more rabbits are taken from Sherburne WMA in 2022-23. A higher harvest won't surprise Tony Vidrine, Lafayette Region biologist manager and 38-year veteran with the LDWF.

"We seem to be seeing more rabbits," Vidrine said from his office in mid-July.

He attributes that to the lack of flooding this past spring and drier conditions since. The combination enhanced cover and available browse for rabbits, he wrote in his report June 29.

Since heavy flooding a few springs ago, rabbit hunting pressure has decreased significantly on all his region's WMAs, he wrote. That has given the rabbit population a chance to rebound.

Sherburne WMA should lead the rabbit harvest on Lafayette Region WMAs, according to Vidrine. Some timber harvesting there has improved habitat for rabbits and other wildlife.

"Timber harvest ... has been down for the last few years due to the timber market. If we ever get back to harvesting timber on the WMAs, we should see improvements in the rabbit populations on many of our WMAs," he noted.

The 2022-23 squirrel hunting outlook is bright for the region, which had average mast crop numbers last year that shouldn't be a detriment to squirrel populations on five popular WMAs led by Richard K. Yancey WMA.

Nearly 8,000 squirrels were harvested last season at RKY WMA. What makes it so popular for squirrels and squirrel hunters?

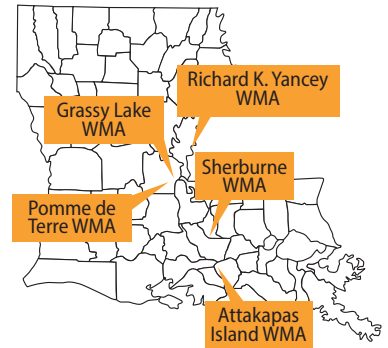
It's a huge WMA, spanning nearly 80,000 acres, with oak stands plentiful. Mast production has been good the past

several years, thus paving the way for good squirrel reproduction, according to Vidrine.

"Hunters have had good success squirrel hunting on this area in the past and we expect the same good success during the 2022-23 season," he reported.

Some of the most consistent squirrel hunting action is on Attakapas WMA, which receives little pressure.

"Attakapas is only accessible by boat, but those hunters who do utilize this area have good success," Vidrine said about the area that has few acorn-producing oaks but enough other mast-producing trees to keep squirrels settled in that habitat.



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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.

LAKE CHARLES REGION 2022-23 OUTLOOK

Top WMA Squirrel Harvest Numbers 2021-22

- **West Bay WMA:** 60 squirrels reported, 302 hunter efforts (1 squirrel per 1,909 acres, 1 squirrel per 5 hunter effort)
- **Fort Polk-Vernon WMA:** 49 squirrels reported, 136 hunter efforts (1 squirrel per 2,154 acres, 1 squirrel per 3 hunter effort)
- **Clear Creek WMA:** 39 squirrels reported, 136 hunter efforts (1 squirrel per 1,348 acres, 1 squirrel per 4 hunter effort)
- **Sabine Island WMA:** 35 squirrels reported, 52 hunter efforts (1 squirrel per 247 acres, 1 squirrel per 5 hunter effort)
- **Peason Ridge WMA:** 12 squirrels reported, 75 hunter efforts (1 squirrel per 619 acres, 1 squirrel per 6 hunter effort)

Top WMA Rabbit Harvest Numbers 2021-22

- **Clear Creek WMA:** 49 rabbits reported, 110 hunter efforts (1 rabbit per 1,703 acres, 1 squirrel per 2 hunter effort)
- **West Bay WMA:** 31 rabbits reported, 139 hunter efforts (1 rabbit per 1,909 acres, 1 squirrel per 5 hunter effort)

You can't hit what you can't see.

An old Washington Senators power pitcher's words come to mind after hearing veteran game biologist Wendell Verret talk about squirrel hunting prospects on at least two WMAs in the Lake Charles Region.

Walter Johnson (1887-1946) uttered that quote about opposing hitters trying to make contact with deceptive pitches. It's apropos before squirrel hunting starts in Louisiana for Sabine Island WMA and West Bay WMA, typically two choice areas to bag squirrels.

Smith, a 33-year LDWF veteran who has been the region's biologist manager since 2007, said Sabine Island "is loaded with cat squirrels." However, beaucoup trees were knocked down there during Hurricane Laura's passage in 2020.

"Problem is, when it knocks trees down they grow back with vines, all the early successional vines and growth, it's pretty hard to see squirrels. If you can

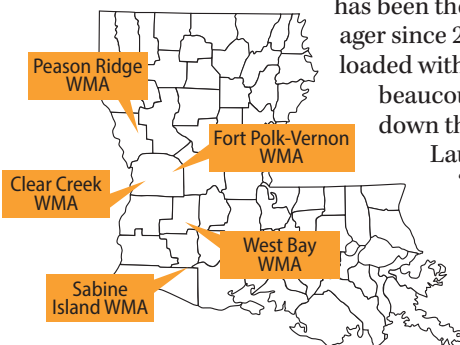
find a place you can see ...," Sabine Island WMA is the area to hunt, Smith said.

"You get under a hardwood tree, you can see up. The problem is getting to a clearing with other trees," he said.

It gave up only 35 squirrels in 52 total efforts in 2021-22, one year after the hurricane hit. That was the fourth-highest harvest in his region.

Smith called Sabine Island WMA, actually two islands accessible by boat only, the most underutilized WMA for squirrel hunting in Louisiana.

West Bay WMA's 60 squirrels taken in 302 total efforts last sea-



Ty Thompson bags a squirrel with help from his hunting dog, Little Buster. Squirrel hunting is where most young hunters get their start in the woods.

son led the Lake Charles Region, followed by Fort Polk-Vernon WMA, 49, and Clear Creek WMA, 39. West Bay WMA trees suffered the same fate during Hurricane Laura as Sabine Island WMA, so visibility is limited there, also, according to Smith.

Fort Polk-Vernon WMA is another good option, if the military doesn't have it closed for training exercises.

Smith anticipates squirrel populations to bounce back on all with ample mast crops, which he and his staff survey in late September.

"I expect they're going to eat good this year and reproduce," Smith said. "It's going to be all right. It's going to be a good year."

Clear Creek WMA is a top choice among rabbit hunters, he said about the area where 49 rabbits were harvested in 2021-22.

West Bay WMA was next with 31. It's a popular destination among rabbit hunters because of its lacework of logging roads and ATV trails in which they run rabbits with dogs.

As a side note, Smith pointed woodcock hunters who use dogs to try Clear Creek WMA. It's adjacent to Sabine River bottomland where woodcock eat and roost.

MINDEN REGION 2022-23 OUTLOOK

Top WMA Squirrel Harvest Numbers 2021-22

- **Bodcau WMA:** 960 squirrels reported (0.99 squirrels per hunter effort)
- **Loggy Bayou WMA:** 232 squirrels reported (0.73 squirrels per hunter effort)
- **Soda Lake WMA:** 131 squirrels reported (0.92 squirrels per hunter effort)

• **Bayou Pierre WMA:** 25 squirrels reported (0.43 squirrels per hunter effort)

Before the end of July, as dry as it was in northwest Louisiana, the Minden Region's biologist supervisor predicted squirrels would have the upper hand with their ears going into the 2022-23 season.

"If it stays dry, the squirrel has the advantage. Crunch. Crunch. Crunch," Jeff Johnson said, describing how a squirrel hunter would sound the alarm when he or she walks across dry terrain.

"Unless you wear socks. I don't know if you want to do that, though," he said with a chuckle. But late summer rains gave the whole region a good soaking, so that shouldn't be a problem now. In fact, hunters may need bigger boots if they are crossing small ditches and drains.

The 21-year LDWF veteran and hundreds of squirrel hunters had been hopeful late summer rains would alleviate drought conditions in approximately half of the Minden Region and it looks like they got their wish. It makes us realize that forecasting the weather is not much easier than forecasts for squirrel hunting.

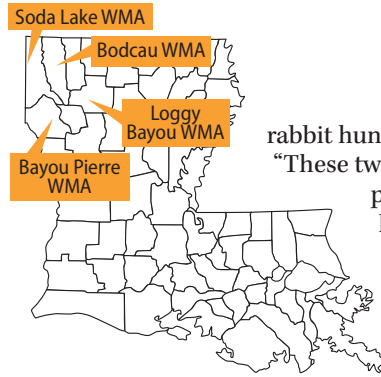
Bodcau WMA has the most potential for squirrel hunting success this season, he said. He touts its mix of bottom-land hardwood to upland areas with mixed pine hardwood timber and hardwoods along upland drains that provide various mast-producing species, i.e., good options for squirrel hunters.

Also, he pointed out, Bodcau WMA opens for squirrel hunting with dogs earlier than other WMAs.

However, he reported, "The mast crop wasn't spectacular last fall, but it was better than the previous year, so hopefully that will equate to better squirrel numbers for the upcoming season."

Loggy Bayou WMA, where last season's squirrel harvest was 232 compared to 960 for Bodcau WMA, features bitter pecan, overcup oak and willow oak in the lower areas and water oak in the upland areas, he wrote.

Johnson favors Loggy Bayou WMA over Bodcau WMA for



rabbit hunting potential in 2022-23. "These two WMAs consistently produce the most rabbits harvested out of the WMAs in the Minden Region. The numbers aren't incredibly high, but all things relative, these are usually the top two," he wrote.

Despite the earlier drought, food and cover for rabbits were in "good shape" at the time. After the rains, it was even better.

MONROE REGION ➤

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MONROE REGION 2022-23 OUTLOOK

Top WMA Squirrel Harvest Numbers 2021-22

- **Big Lake WMA:** 3,984 squirrels reported, (2.4 squirrels per hunter effort)
- **Boeuf WMA:** 1,955 squirrels reported, (1.5 squirrels per hunter effort)
- **Russell Sage WMA:** 770 squirrels reported, (1.06 squirrels per hunter effort)
- **Buckhorn WMA:** 456 squirrels reported, (2.26 squirrels per hunter effort)
- **Bayou Macon WMA:** 387 squirrels reported, (1.88 squirrels per hunter effort)

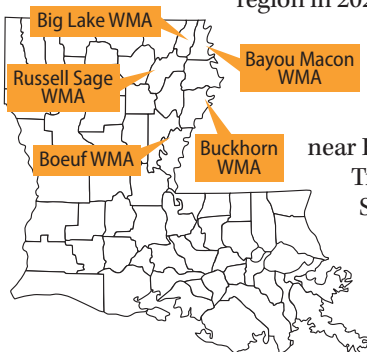
Top WMA Rabbit Harvest Numbers 2021-22

- **Russell Sage WMA:** 45 rabbits reported, (1.18 rabbits per hunter effort)
- **Big Lake WMA:** 43 rabbits reported, (1.48 rabbits per hunter effort)
- **Buckhorn WMA:** 31 rabbits reported, (1.4 rabbits per hunter effort)
- **Boeuf WMA:** 23 rabbits reported, (0.37 rabbits per hunter effort)
- **Bayou Macon WMA:** 1 rabbit reported, (0.5 rabbits per hunter effort)

Mitch McGee, biologist supervisor since 2016 for the Monroe Region, is hopeful that “decent” weather this past spring means improved mast production on the region’s WMAs for fall 2022.

McGee, a 13-year veteran with LDWF, said hurricane damage in fall 2020 resulted in a poor red oak mast crop that impacted squirrel and deer populations last season on Russell Sage WMA, as well as other areas in the Monroe Region. The squirrel harvest was “down a little bit” to 770 on Russell Sage WMA.

However, 19,231-acre Big Lake WMA led the way for that region in 2021-22 as there were 2.4 squirrels per hunter effort killed for a total of 3,984. Many of the area’s squirrels traditionally are bagged near Hog Lake, around Buckshot Trail and off Roaring Bayou. Squirrel hunting with dogs is very good on Big Lake WMA, McGee has said in the past.



(Left to right) Logan Spillers, Karson Cruse and Weston Jeane after a successful rabbit hunt in Beauforegard Parish.

As for rabbit hunting success, hunters should be optimistic because the region’s WMAs didn’t see as much flooding as in the previous few years, McGee wrote in his report June 21. That bodes well for the rabbit population in the region, as well as ample rainfall across the dense reforested areas that offer great rabbit habitat — beaucoup ground cover with briars.

Russell Sage WMA’s rabbit hunters harvested 45 (1.18 per hunter effort) in 2021-22. Big Lake WMA was a close second with 43 rabbits harvested.

These areas went through the drought this summer as well, but got pounded by heavy rain leading into the fall.

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Capable of holding ice for several days in even the hottest weather, the KULA's sturdy handle design makes it easy to carry. The smaller, single latch keeps the lid secure and allows for one-handed opening and closing while keeping the cold inside.

It's easy to haul into the dove field where it doubles as a seat, and it's just as easy to carry onto the beach, the

river banks, the pier, kayak, paddleboard or the boat.

The interior floor gently slopes to the center where the drain plug is located, so the melted ice quickly drains while sitting upright.

The padding on the lid makes it nice for sitting or standing, and the textured feet keep it from sliding while in the boat or truck. The attached bottle opener is a nice touch.

The KULA is available in 5-gallon and 2.5-gallon sizes and numerous colors.

For more info, visit: boteboard.com



THERMACELL MR300 FISHING BUNDLE

We've hauled them to the deer stands for decades. And now Thermacell makes it easy to carry our favorite anti-mosquito device to our favorite fishing holes.

The MR300 Portable Mosquito Repeller Mossy Oak Fishing Bundle comes with a multipurpose clamp and a belt clip, so you'll always find a place to secure it. This package also includes a 12-hour fuel cartridge and three 4-hour repellent mats.

The MR300 offers a 15-foot zone of protection against skeeters. This

new addition to the company's product line uses the same proven, battery-free, scent-free, mess-free and DEET-free technology that we've all grown accustomed to from Thermacell products.

Add Thermacell's new Multi-Insect Repellent Refills and you'll chase off the black flies and no-see-ums as well as mosquitos.

Don't put up with pesky insects. Get the MR300 and focus on more important things, like catching fish!

For more info, visit: thermacell.com

GATORZ EYEWEAR DELTA M4

The Delta M4 from Gatorz Eyewear offers full coverage with its squarish frame and large lenses. It's the perfect combination of comfort, function and style.

Heat-treated for strength and durability, the hand-crafted aluminum frames are easily adjusted, including at the temples and nose, to conform to your face, providing a comfortable fit for a piece of gear that's essential for enjoying the outdoors no matter what the sun's mood is. The construction offers unmatched durability.

High-quality TRURAY lenses give 100 percent UV protection and are available in several polarized styles and numerous colors applicable to any outdoor situation or activity. The anti-scratch lens coatings

offer worry-free wear and crystal clear vision. The dual 5-barrel hinges are made of stainless steel and securely riveted in place. Gatorz are made in the U.S.A.

For more info, visit: gatorz.com



PINEVILLE REGION 2022-23 OUTLOOK

Top WMA Squirrel Harvest Numbers 2021-22

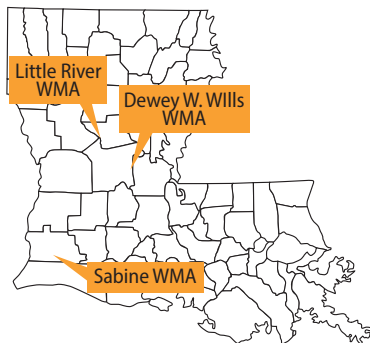
- **Dewey W. Wills WMA:** 6,721 squirrels reported (2.1 squirrels per hunter effort)
- **Sabine WMA:** 222 squirrels reported (1.6 squirrels per hunter effort)
- **Little River WMA:** 275 squirrels reported (0.92 squirrels per hunter effort)

Top WMA Rabbit Harvest Numbers 2021-22

- **Sabine WMA:** 59 rabbits reported (0.9 rabbits per hunter effort)
- **Dewey W. Wills WMA:** 43 rabbits reported (0.2 per hunter effort)

Cliff Dailey, who appreciates the fact a grandpa and his young grandson can average two squirrels apiece on one of his region's WMAs, said a sub-par mast crop last year might lead to smaller squirrel harvests this season. That's not a limit, but it is enough to make for a really fun trip and learning experience.

"Based on what we had last year and to be able to make an inference on what the squirrel population will be this season, I don't think it'll crash.



(But) I don't think there'll be an abundance of squirrels because of poor mast on the landscape," the Pineville Region's biologist supervisor said from his office in mid-July.

Dailey noted last year's statewide mast crop was the poorest on record overall since the mast survey program began in Louisiana. That development typically leads to a smaller population of squirrels the following season.



Turner Bowser of Bluff Creek, La., pictured here with his brother Ty and sister Bristol, owners of Hooks and Heritage, harvested his first rabbit on Feb. 5, 2022.

"I expect the average harvest to decrease during the 2022-23 season," he wrote in his report. He based that on last year's mast production.

Dewey W. Wills WMA is his pick for the most potential this season in the Pineville Region. He said overcup, willow and nuttall, the area's primary oak species, are undisputed favorites on the menu for squirrels.

Dailey also pointed out the huge area has a new Small Game Emphasis Area this year that totals 1,700 acres adjacent to Hunt Road south of the Diversion Canal. Hunters can bring their dogs to train June 1-Aug. 31 and hunt rabbits the first part of the season Oct. 1-Nov. 20.

It's one of the few WMAs in the state with the designation.

Sabine WMA is a close second for squirrel hunting action, he noted. He advised squirrel hunters to stick close to hardwood zones along creeks and drainages there and focus on oak, hickey and beech trees. Improvements to the walking trail system there allows easier access to the public. That's also a plus for those taking younger hunters with them.

Sabine WMA's rabbit hunters bagged 59 rabbits in 2022-23. It's Dailey's top pick for rabbit hunting action this season. He advises rabbit hunters to check out a large portion of the area that has undergone a clear cut or thinning over the last three years, a practice that provides an avenue of escape cover and early successional food plants.

Dewey W. Wills WMA has prime habitat along roads where plenty of sunlight penetrates and promotes growth of thickets. Rabbit hunters also should look for areas that have been logged within the past five years. The habitat there is great for rabbits.

COASTAL LAFAYETTE REGION 2022-23 OUTLOOK

Two Coastal Lafayette Region WMAs are squirrel hunting destinations that were beat up badly by Hurricane Ida that hit the region last summer.

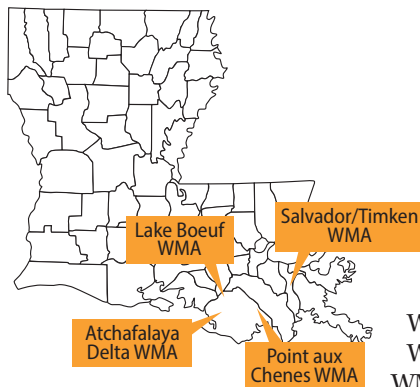
Squirrel hunting season opened a little more than a month later. There were fewer hunters who harvested fewer squirrels, victims of the significant timber damage that impacted mast production, on Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA. And hunters' time was also limited because of taking care of their own cleanups and repairs after the storms. Because of that reporting numbers were a bit bleak.

Ten squirrels, or 0.22 squirrels per hunter effort, were bagged on Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA in 2021-22. There was no report on the squirrel harvest numbers for Lake Boeuf WMA, the region's other squirrel hunting WMA.

For comparison, in 2020-21, 165 squirrels were harvested on Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA and 14 squirrels bagged on Lake Boeuf WMA.

Squirrel hunters who head to Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA hunt only on the Point Farm Unit behind Montegut Middle School. Squirrel hunting efforts cover the entire Lake Boeuf WMA, which is accessible only by boat but offers good opportunity for those squirrel hunters who want to make the trip.

Vaughan McDonald, the region's biologist manager who has been with LDWF 25 years, expects squirrel hunting success on both areas to be low this season.



Rabbit hunting efforts on all of the coastal WMAs are at their best in the marshy environments of Pass-a-Loutre

WMA, Point-aux-Chenes WMA and Salvador/Timken WMA as well as the prime habitat on Atchafalaya Delta

WMA and Lake Boeuf, both accessible by boat only.

The harvest was barely fair at best on the areas last season because of Hurricane Ida's impact on the southeastern part of the region (Pass-a-Loutre WMA, Point-aux-Chenes WMA and Salvador/Timken WMA).

McDonald expects the overall rabbit harvest to be on par with last season.

Based strictly on numbers, he wrote in his report July 1, the most rabbits should come from Atchafalaya Delta WMA followed by Lake Boeuf WMA.

Wherever you hunt, always put safety first, not only in the woods, but going to and from your hunting grounds as well. ■

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Bobwhite quail spend more time on the ground than in the air. The white facial and throat patches distinguish males from females.



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: BOBWHITE QUAIL

THEIR NUMBERS HAVE DECLINED, BUT ARE STILL HIGHLY REGARDED

Bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*) are small birds that prefer walking more than flying. They are native to many areas of the U.S., including the southeastern states. Bobwhites are the only members of the quail family that naturally inhabit the southeast.

These birds are mostly reddish-brown, and have small amounts of black, brown, gray and white throughout their bodies. They each have a dark stripe originating at their beak, running through the eye to the base of the skull.

It is easy to distinguish bobwhite males from females. Males have prominent white patches on their throats and just above the dark facial stripe. In females, those areas are light brown or tan.

The average adult bobwhite quail weighs between 5.6 and 6.3 ounces. Their name comes from their most-recognized call, which sounds like “bob WHITE!”

In the wild, their average life span is less than a year.

These quail live similar to turkeys in that they spend the majority of their time on the ground, and prefer walking

as their main mode of travel. They are, however, very capable of flying, and are known to burst into flight at great speed when approached by hunters and other predators.

Like turkeys, bobwhite quail lay eggs in ground nests.

Bobwhite quail utilize heavy undergrowth as their main habitat, and can be found along hedgerows of fields, vegetation in pine-hardwood forests, grasslands and open pines.

Their main food source as adults is seeds, nuts and berries, but breeding females also eat insects. For young quail, insects make up the vast majority of their diet until turning to seeds, nuts and berries once they are about 16 weeks old.

Quail populations have declined greatly throughout the south in the past several decades. Changes in forest habitat and in agricultural practices are responsible for much of their decline. Almost every meat-eating animal — and even fire ants — prey on quail. The deck is clearly stacked against these small birds, but small wild populations still prevail.

Bobwhite quail are highly regarded as

game birds, but most hunting for them is done on preserves that raise the birds in controlled settings, then release them in the wild just before each hunt. They are hunted with dogs which sniff out the birds, alert the hunters to their presence, then flush the birds into flying.

In Louisiana, Fort Polk WMA and Peason Ridge have good quail habitat, but make sure you check regulations and open dates carefully.

Hunters often refer to bobwhites as “Gentleman Bob.”

These birds spend much of their time in groups of 8 to 20 birds called coveys. When roosting, they form circles, with each bird facing outward. This allows them to detect threats from all angles, which will prompt the whole covey to take flight at once. ■



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.

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 Dec. 17 - Jan. 15	Oct. 8 - Nov. 13 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	8	24	
	Dec. 17 - Feb. 28			
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

	EAST ZONE	WEST ZONE	
DUCKS*, COOTS & MERGANSERS	Nov. 19 - Dec. 4 Dec. 17 - Jan. 29	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])	EAST ZONE Nov. 5 - Dec. 4	WEST ZONE Nov. 5 - Dec. 4	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.
CANADA GOOSE SEASON	Dec. 17 - Jan. 29	Dec. 17 - Jan. 1 Jan. 9 - Feb. 5	The daily limit for Canada geese is one per day, with a possession limit of three.

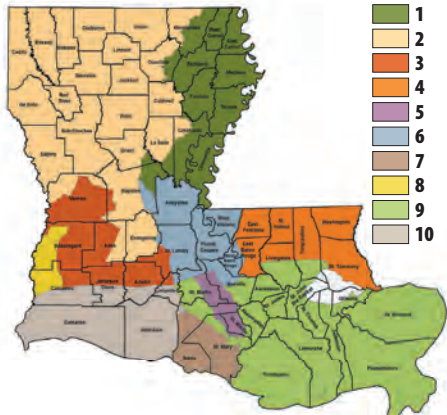


	EAST ZONE	WEST ZONE	
CONSERVATION ORDER FOR LIGHT GEESE	Dec. 5-16 Jan. 30 - March 5	Dec. 5-16 Jan. 2-8 Feb. 6 - March 5	No bag or possession limit. See pamphlet for more detail.

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	

JERRY ANTLEY

CEDAR HILL HAS MIXED BUSINESS WITH PLEASURE FOR DOWNSVILLE HUNTER.

Somewhere in the quiet, winding backroads of Union Parish sits a modest shop with no fancy signage or facilities. The fact that you just about have to be lost to find it fits right in with the whole story.

Inside the shop is the office, headquarters and part of the manufacturing facilities of Cedar Hill Game Calls and Camo Cord, LLC. Sitting behind the modest desk is Jerry Antley, a legendary but quiet icon in the world of turkey hunting. Magazines, papers, photos, and gear are stacked all around. All of them have one thing in common: turkeys.

"I love turkey hunting and I love helping others talk about turkey hunting," Antley said. "It's why I got into this business."

SCRATCH BOX

Among dozens of turkey related calls and equipment is his major "trophy." It isn't made of plastic and doesn't have shiny figures or a plaque. It's a small, neatly packaged Little Scratch Box, the signature product of Antley and his company. Although he has branched out into other wildlife calls and has a multitude of turkey calls, it's the Little Scratch Box that put him on the map. And keeps him there.

That and his other accomplishments in the outdoors also put the Downsville resident in the first class of the Louisiana Legends of the Outdoors Hall of Fame. He is also a member of the National Legends Hall as well. And deservedly so.

Where he lives is quiet. His work location is quiet. And he's quiet, until he starts talking turkey. Then things liven up quite a bit.

"I'm greatly honored to be a member of the Legends Hall of Fame nationally, but it's special to be inducted in my home state of Louisiana as well," Antley said. "Our little company accomplished so much. I'm just glad to see it recognized and turkey hunting in general get recognized. Who would have thought?"

CALLING EXPERT

The Little Scratch Box is a small version of the bigger scratch boxes and calls that most turkey hunters use. But the Little Box fits in your pocket. When you are lugging arms full of gear into the turkey woods, that's a big plus. It's great for close distance calling and can make a beautiful purring sound that drives Big



Toms crazy.

Handmade from 100% pure cedar, it requires CH13 chalk. Antley has calling down to a science. And eagerly shares with others. Spend 10 minutes in a room with him and the call and you feel like you are ready to enter the world championship.

"Use your chalk generously and hold the striker stick between your thumb and middle finger. Gently drag the beveled edge of the striker at a 45 degree angle over the thin edge of call," he said. "Just practice a few times. You will soon make this one of your favorite calls!"

Antley has a long resume in the outdoors. Antley is the owner and founder of Cedar Hill Game Calls and Camo

“*Our little company accomplished so much. I’m just glad to see it recognized and turkey hunting in general get recognized. Who would have thought.*”

Cord, LLC and runs the company with his son, Randy. He has traveled extensively marketing the calls and volunteering with turkey organizations.

But he does mix his personal and business life — almost totally. He has been a National Wild Turkey Federation volunteer most of his adult life; a former Grand Champion Louisiana turkey calling champion; former Grand National Turkey Calling Championship judge and was the 2016 Union Parish Chamber of Commerce Businessman of the Year. Nobody knows for sure, but wouldn’t be surprised if, while most of us just yawn a couple of times, Antley doesn’t cluck and give a little purr every night before he goes to bed.

LIFETIME TURKEY HUNTER

Antley is a lifetime turkey hunter, including registering a Grand Slam harvest of all four U.S. subspecies of wild turkeys (Eastern, Osceola, Rio Grande and Merriam’s). Those turkeys are proudly displayed on his office wall with other game trophies.

Hitting the high points, Antley has been a member of the NRA since 1968; a NWTf member since 1977 where he was on the Board of Directors for six years; has served as banquet chairman and as an officer on local and regional NWTf groups as well and has taken over 100 turkeys.

“Words can’t describe this,” he said. “This is the most humbling thing that ever happened to me outside of my faith in Jesus and my family. Antley is also grounded in his faith as a member and leader of the Mt. Ararat Baptist Church and his faith has guided him to and through all his accomplishments.

“When I started turkey hunting nearly 60 years ago, I loved it,” he said. “I still do. I love being involved in turkey hunting in any way. I had been doing it a long time, but knew there was more. That’s why I started up the company with the Little Scratch. And I volunteered any way I could. And now, 40 years later, I’m still doing both.” ■

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



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





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-  **M240 HANG ON CLIMBING STICK**
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- OLDER RAVIN R29X SNIPER PACKAGE PREDATOR DUSK CAMO**
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SILENT COCKING, 20-100 YD RISER
REG \$2799.99 **SALE \$2519⁹⁹**

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- NEW! 2022 RAVIN R5X**
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GOOD DAYS AHEAD

BUMPER CROP OF CRAPPIE SHOULD GROW INTO NORTHSORE BONANZA.

■ By Keith Lusher

Studies show that crappie lay between 30,000 to 40,000 eggs every spring. Of the eggs hatched, it's been estimated that one to three percent of the fry survive the first month of life.

Tim Bye of Folsom has been fishing the rivers and bayous on the Northshore for over a decade and said judging by the amount of small fish he's seeing, the number of fry that survived last year's spawn was at least three percent and he wouldn't be surprised if it was pushing five percent. Bye uses a LiveScope which offers a detailed picture of what's beneath the surface.

"I am seeing large schools of 3-inch fish all over, which is something that I haven't seen before, at least not to the degree I'm seeing them now," he said.

I received a call from Bye after he first spotted the phenomenon and he shared his thoughts behind the sudden surge in small crappie this year.

"If you recall in 2021, we saw a really rainy spring that ended with the wettest May on record for the Northshore," he said. "As a result, we saw the rivers so high that the water was in the woods for weeks that month."

Bye suggested that the high water offered the newborn fry enough coverage to survive the all-important first month of life.

After hanging up with Bye, I thought about what he said and decided to dive further into his theory. My plan was to contact numerous sac-a-lait fishermen on the Northshore and to question them about what they've been seeing recently. Here's what I found.

TCHEFUNCTE RIVER

My first call was to Ray Miller of Madisonville. Miller fishes the Tchefuncte River and recalls the rains of 2021.

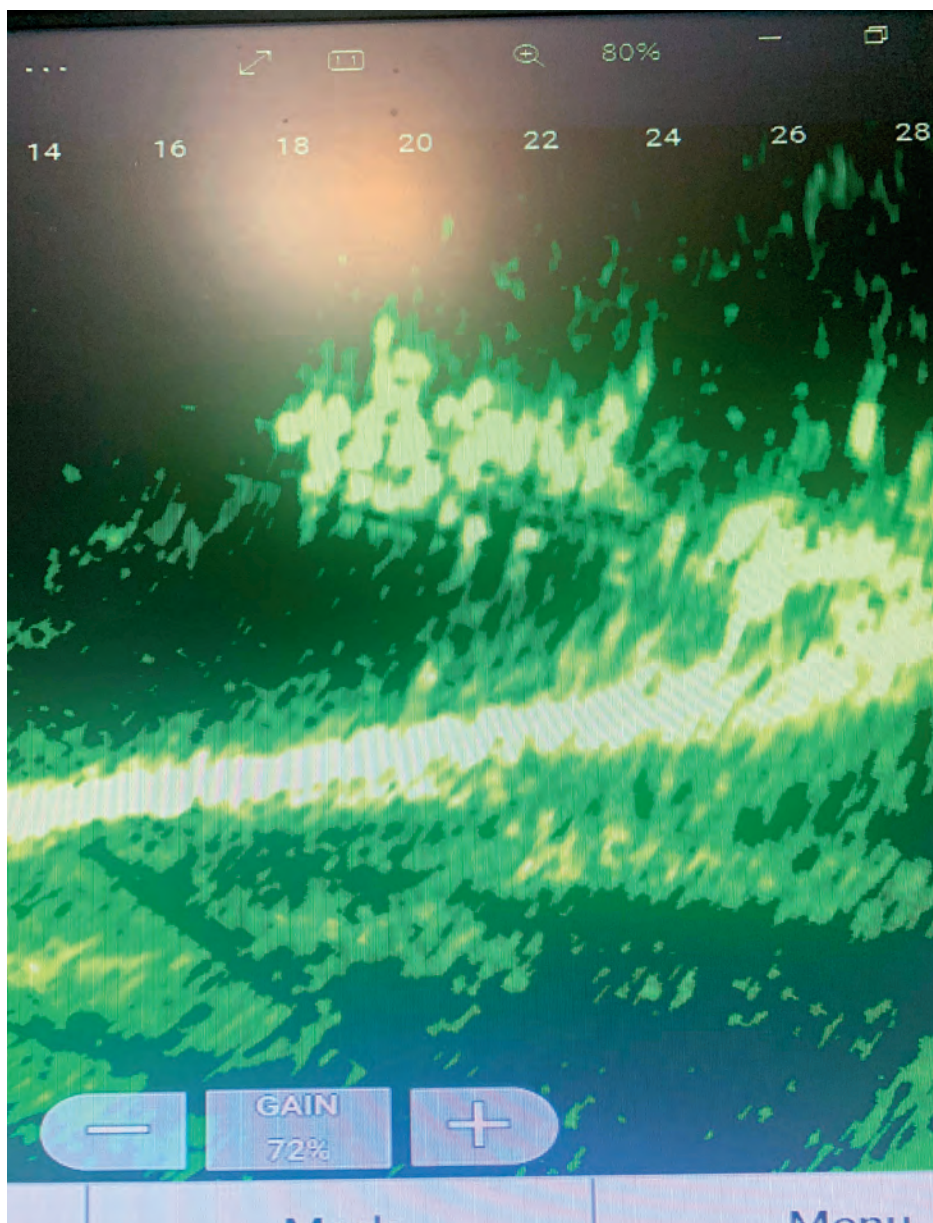
"I remember fishing during that time because the sac-a-lait were hard to come by," Miller said. "The high water made it difficult for fishermen because it was harder for them to reach the fish through the flooded brush along the shoreline."

Miller is also seeing numerous large schools of small sac-a-lait, indicating that the high water from the previous year has benefited the fry. Miller uses Humminbird side imaging and LiveScope and excitedly said, "Yeeeah buddy! I'm seeing the small fish everywhere."

While he was unable to properly assign a length to the fish, he said that they weren't big enough to inhale his bait.

"When I lowered my jig into the schools of small fish, I saw them swarming the bait, but they never hit it," he said.

The sac-a-lait veteran conceded that the increase in small fish was most likely due to the extended high water in May of last year. Miller said he's excited about the population increase in the Tchefuncte River and is catching upwards of 30 fish a trip with his largest



Forrest Green is seen here with a mess of sac-a-lait he caught on Bayou Lacombe. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Tim Bye's screen shows a school of 4 to 5-inch crappie suspended to the left of a group of larger fish to the right. This has become more common in the Tchefuncte River, according to Bye.

fish measuring 14.5 inches and weighing two pounds. His lure of choice when fishing the Tchefuncte this month is a Panfish Assassin jig in Crystal Shad color.

BAYOU LACOMBE

Forrest Green is a native to Lacombe and has fished the bayou since he was a kid. Green's opinion holds value to me since I know that he logs his trips in somewhat of an old fashioned way.

"My old Steno notebook," Green said. "It's still got the K&B price sticker on the back."

The price reads 14 cents, but its value is immeasurable when it comes to its contents. Green's logs coincide with Bye's theory and even meshed with Miller's observation that the fish aren't quite big enough to swallow a jig.

"They're all over, but we won't see them hitting the ice chest until next spring," Green said. "You talk about excited! Next spring is going to be something to write about! I may need to buy a new notebook," he joked.

This month, Green has been catching fish in the main bayou off of structure such as tree tops and stumps in over 10 feet of water. His bait of choice for October is his homemade plastics that resemble a shad.

"Green and black is the ticket this month," he said.



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BAYOU LIBERTY

Photo by Robert Gauley

Farther east, Robert Kelly is a relatively young man without much history on the bayou. But what he lacks in wisdom, he makes up for in tenacity. Kelly said he's been fishing the bayou at least twice a week and is seeing large schools of 4-inch fish which has him excited for next spring.

"In addition to catching some really solid slabs, I'm also seeing something new — giant schools of crappie," Kelly said. "I first started noticing them in June and mistook them for balls of bait at first, then I noticed the small fish reacting to my jig the way a crappie would."

Kelly said he's catching anywhere between 15-25 fish a trip but said he's had to move farther north in the bayou on account of the salinity increasing in the southern section of the river closer to Lake Pontchartrain.

"I've had to learn a few new spots upriver, but it's all good," he said.

Kelly said his primary bait this month is shiners under a slip cork with a split-shot on the line about five inches above the hook.

THE OUTLIERS

While most of the rivers are holding more small fish, there were two rivers that didn't fare as well for two completely different reasons: The Tickfaw River and the East Pearl River.

Robert and Laitin Gauley are a father-son team that fishes the Tickfaw River regularly and also operate LiveScope. Robert told me that they haven't seen any small fish after the hurricane, but oddly there seemed to be large ones that survived the pressure drop from the storm.

"I keep referring to Ida, but it's hard not to when there is a clear difference from before the storm to after," he said. Gauley said they're



Although he's not seeing many small fish since Hurricane Ida, Laitin Gauley is still catching large sac-a-lait like this on the Tickfaw River.

seeing things that he and his son have never seen, including a plethora of shad in the river these last few months. Gauley said he thinks that may be the reason why the fish are bigger than normal right now.

"I'm thinking maybe the big sac-a-lait survived and now they have more bait to eat because the shad population is huge right now," he said. The Gauley's have been having success this month with a Bobby Garland 2-inch Baby Shad in the Bone White color.



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



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John Guillot fishes the East Pearl River. “In 2021 the river was abnormally high all spring, but one thing about the East Pearl is if the water is moving too fast through the trees — those females won’t spray,” he said.

Guillot infers that the East Pearl is different from the short “run-off” rivers to the west.

“The East Pearl stretches 450 miles and has all kinds of tributaries emptying into it before it reaches us — so a really high river, especially in early spring, will result in a lack of spawning because the females know that their eggs won’t survive,” he said. “You have to remember that these fish don’t necessarily have to spawn; they can just absorb those eggs and wait for a more opportunistic time.”

While 2021 spawning conditions were horrific on the East Pearl, Guillot said 2022 is superb. “This year, the crappie had their best spawning conditions I’ve seen in seven years so we should see a ton of fish next year,” he said.

In October, Guillot uses an assortment of tube jigs but emphasizes the importance of using shiners until the colder weather arrives.

“With this heat, these fish aren’t very active and more than often I see my best results using shiners,” he said.

As is usually the case with talking to crappie fishermen, I’m always amazed at the depth of knowledge they possess from years of fishing experience. And, they are always willing to share that knowledge to help others.

And while none of the research is scientific, you can bet they are on target with their observations.



It’s safe to say that the majority of the rivers and bayous on the Northshore are seeing a bumper crop of young crappie. Add in the resurgence of shad in the rivers from a healing Lake Pontchartrain and crappie anglers should be in store for a fantastic 2023 sac-a-lait season! ■

LURE REVIEW >

John Guillot pulls a sac-a-lait to the surface in the East Pearl River. **ABOVE:** John Guillot hopes he’ll be catching more sac-a-lait in the years to come due to a stellar spawn in 2022.



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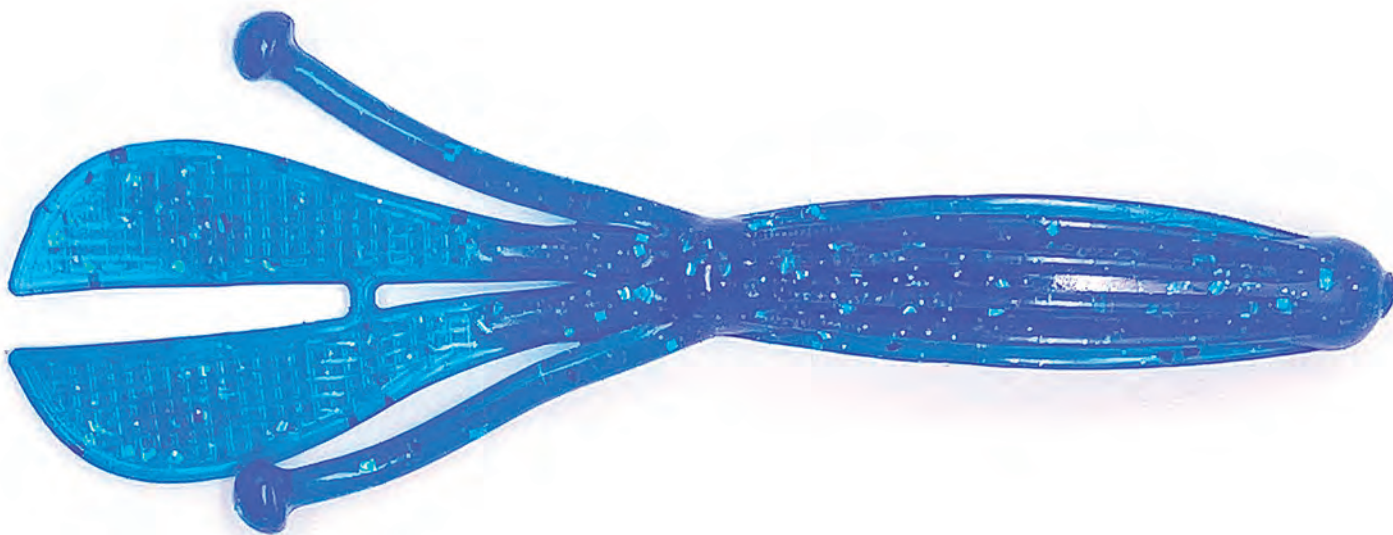


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THROWING A PUNCH

THE NEW BEAVER BALLZ WILL KNOCK BIG BASS RIGHT OUT OF THE GRASS

Tired of getting tired after a long day of punchin' soft plastics through grass mats under a 1½ or 2-ounce weight? Jeremy Norris knows the feeling all too well. The bass angler punches like there's no tomorrow.

"I punch a lot. I love to punch. The way it goes down, the violent way it goes down," he said recently about the bite, hookset and ensuing fight involved in the punching technique.

Norris realized he had to use heavier weights to get some of the popular soft plastic punchin' baits through grass or vegetation. The way the soft plastics were designed made it difficult to slide them through cracks and creases, he said.

NOTHING LIKE IT

The 47-year-old bass angler waited patiently, then impatiently, for something better to hit the market. It didn't happen. So he did something about it by making his own soft plastic punchin' baits with a specific design in mind. As he won tournaments with the new Beaver Ballz, people noticed them tied to his line on the front deck of his boat and started asking questions.

"There's nothing else like it in the world. People wanted to try it. They wanted to buy it. Colby (JaBoom Bait Co. co-owner Colby Thompson of Gonzales) was my fishing partner. I told everybody to talk to Colby," Norris said with a chuckle.

JaBoom Bait Co. was born.

That was two years ago. At first, he said, they sold small bags of the new, durable soft plastics. The demand ratcheted up as bass anglers near and far got their hands on JaBoom's Beaver Ballz.

His soft plastic punchin' creation was infiltrating mats much easier because of his innovative, patent-pending design. It caught on and caught bass below the mats.

"The next thing you know, we need 100 of these, 125 of those. It got to the point we had to invest, have production molds made," he said. "It takes a whole different type of machine. This one (Beaver Ballz) takes a five axis compared to a typical three axis machine. Vertical ribs require more moving parts. It took me over a year to get from a sketch to be able to get the mold cut to getting them in hand."

What's the big deal?

"It's ergonomically designed 'not' to

catch grass as it goes in and out of vegetation. If you look at the bait, there's so much less surface area touching anything. It works really well to get in and out of mats," he said, noting that's due to the vertical ribs, which also protect the hook point "much better than most punchin'/flipping baits on the market."

"Now I use a ¾-ounce weight. The heaviest I'll go is 1 ¼-ounce. You really don't need any heavier weight than that. Most of the time, I'm punching with a 1-ounce weight," he said.

"The most important thing is, it really does catch fish. It catches a lot of fish."

Jake Boomer of Spokane Valley, Washington, agrees. Boomer finished second for \$30,000 in a National Professional Fishing League tournament in May 2021 on the Harris Chain of Lake in Florida.

The majority of the 15 fish he weighed bit while he punched Beaver Ballz.



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.

“Hawgs” under mats and lily pads have a hard time resisting JaBoom Beaver Ballz when they’re punched through vegetation on the surface, as this happy bass angler discovered.



“It’s definitely one of the best flippin’ baits. I used a heavier weight. A lot of guys were using lighter weights. I was using ¾-ounce to get it to fall quickly. They wanted a quick fall,” said the 45-year-old owner of Alpha Angler, which manufactures custom fishing rods.

“I caught a number of fish on it, especially the ones that counted,” he said.

He punches the Beaver Ballz on a 4/0 Owner Jungle Flipping Hook tied to 50-pound P-Line Braided Fishing Line on a 7-foot-6 Alpha Angler Hitter Heavy Action Fishing Rod.

FAVORITE COLORS

His favorite colors are black/blue and Super Bug (black/blue on one side, green pumpkin on the flip side).

The 4.25-inch long lures are manufactured by Capt. Lane Zimmer of Marrero at Zimmer’s Froggiemore Manufacturing LLC. He said he still “shoots” a few himself.

“Lane helped me. He had the machines,” he said.

Norris, an analyzer technician for Valero’s St. Charles Refinery, said his soft plastics are in 38 stores around Texas, Georgia, Florida and, naturally, Louisiana.

The bait got its name because they are somewhat like other Beaver lures, but they have little balls on the end of each leg.

A Beaver Ballz’s sinking motion is designed so that after it hits the water, it helps trigger bites. When using a yo-yo motion, the bait falls erratically unlike other style baits that simply fall straight down. The erratic falling motion triggers strikes when the bite is tough or the fish are heavily pressured. It also works as a soft plastic trailer for a bladed jig.

For more information on the JaBoom Beaver Ballz and other JaBoom Bait Co. products, go to jaboombaits.com. ■

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TRYING TO GROW

TECH SENIOR IS AFTER BIGGER BASS AND REBUILDING HIS FISHING TEAM

As By Don Shoopman
a senior in his fourth year on the Louisiana Tech Bass Fishing Team, Cooper Arthur of Calhoun feels more responsibility and urgency than just finding and reeling in bass.

Arthur is president of the Bulldogs' fishing team and his mission is simple but demanding. "We're trying to grow. We're kind of rebuilding right now," the all-around outdoorsman said while wetting a line after a day at his summer job. He was fishing his "home lake," Caney Lake, approximately 20 minutes from Calhoun.

"My biggest goal is to try to get our name out there more so high schools around here (local, state and regional) will know we're here," he said.



Cooper Arthur cradles his personal best bass, a 10.82 pounder, that he caught in June 2021 at Caney Lake.



ON THE MAP

Arthur, 21, has done his part in putting the Ruston university's team on the map since he graduated from West Ouachita High School, where he qualified for the state championship in bass fishing as a junior and senior. He also qualified for nationals his senior year.

Arthur and Brodie Paige, this year's recipient of Louisiana Tech's Lane McGaha Memorial Scholarship, finished 23rd in May at the Association of College Anglers National Championship at Pickwick Lake in Alabama.

They started the year with a fourth-place finish in March in the MLF Abu Garcia College Fishing Southern Conference tournament at Toledo Bend, which he deemed his favorite lake to fish. Arthur also won a Louisiana Tech qualifier tournament March 26 at Lake D'Arbonne. He'll probably pair

Cooper Arthur and Brodie Paige, fishing for Louisiana Tech, hold up the fish they caught during the Major League Southern Conference College Fishing Tournament in January 2022 at Toledo Bend.

GAME CHANGER

Toledo bass offer anglers a chance to throw the bait of their choice

A By John Dean
re you ready for the next “fun time” for bass fishing on Toledo Bend?

That would be October, and I sure am anxious to get out on the lake in what I call the “game-changer” month for several reasons. It’s a time to catch on whatever moving baits you like to throw, including topwaters.

As of now, it’s setting up to be pretty good starting in late September and through this month. I’m fairly confident the pool level’s going to be higher than it has been because of torrential rains farther up the Sabine River from Lake Fork on down to Toledo Bend. Sabine River Authority has had two generators running twice daily for two hours each time anticipating the extra water on the way.

With the water up, there’s likely to be many acres of fresh grass under water where it once was dry land, providing more cover for bass. And there are reports of more hydrilla beds in the lake, more down south — including Housen — than up north.

The recent record-breaking rainfall follows record-breaking heat the past two months in this region. It was a very hot summer, but it’s been 70 degrees several mornings and we have been looking out at fog in creeks, coves on pockets.

I CAN’T WAIT

Cold fronts are on the way and they help bring water temperatures into the mid-60s and mid-70s. I can’t wait.

I’m going to be targeting bass, not deer, this fall and winter. No hunting for me as I have a goal to catch a lake record. I’m thinking I can find that “hawg” in the “dam bowl” area.

For sure, double-digit bass will be caught this month as bass

Arkansas bass angler Mark Ray holds a chunky bass he caught by dead stickin’ a Zoom Super Fluke when the water temperature dropped into the 70s after a cold front at Toledo Bend.



move from their deep domains to shallower depths, following baitfish. Generally, that means if the pool level gets to 172. It is hard to predict, but if that happens, I’ll concentrate on 5- to 6-feet and less.

Whatever you like to do, whatever your strength, use it, keep moving and stay as close to drains as possible. Lipless crankbaits, bladed jigs, suspending jerkbaits, spinnerbaits and a myriad of topwaters, led by plastic frogs and buzz baits, that all will trigger the bites you want.

I’ll tie on shad and bream colored artificial lures unless the water’s off-colored, which it could be, particularly in the back areas of coves and creeks. If the water’s stained, oranges, reds, chartreuses and black/blue come into play.

My favorites? I like ½-ounce Rat-L-Traps, ½-ounce Delta Lures Thunder Jigs and Stanley Jigs Racket Blades, gold/orange suspending Rogues, Stanley Ribbits and Chug Bugs.

About the only soft plastic I’ll rely on in October is a Fluke-style bait. It isn’t prime time to flip soft plastics around docks and wood but it is time to flip jigs because the jig bite traditionally kicks in this time of year as the water chills. That bite gets better as it gets colder and it gives the angler a good chance to catch a big’un. I favor a ½-ounce black/blue, black/chartreuse or peanut butter-n-jelly Stanley Jig or Delta Rattling Jig.

I’ve been guiding on this lake most of my life and you’re welcome in my boat. Give me a call at (936) 404-2688. ■

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LOW WATER BASSIN'

Henderson's level may be low, but its fishing is high on one angler's list

A By Don Shoopman
St. Martin Parish lake that provides a spectacular view for Interstate 10 motorists is also one of angler Andre Cazelot's top choices to fish for bass during October.

Cazelot, a 57-year-old territorial manager for US Foods, has some prime fall bassin' areas near his home in Parks, such as the Atchafalaya Basin and Lake Fausse Pointe.

But he has plenty of confidence in another nearby large lake, even if there are some extra challenges this year.

"One place I can say I feel comfortable going blind is Henderson," he said about one of his favorite October destinations. "If we get cold fronts then the bass get more active, more aggressive."

He's fished the lake since he got into bass fishing 35 years ago, soon after he graduated from the University of Southwestern Louisiana with a bachelor's degree in business administration.

NO ROOM FOR MISTAKES

The former Louisiana B.A.S.S. Nation angler with the Atchafalaya Bassmasters had words of caution for anglers who want to point the bow of their boats on Henderson Lake waters this October. Barring unforeseen torrential rainfall or tropical disturbances unloading excessive amounts of rain on the area, the lake will be low. It will be extremely low, in fact, because of the drawdown that started Aug. 1 and ends Nov. 1.

"There's no room for mistakes when it gets that low," he said. "You've got to stay in the main chutes."

That is to avoid underwater hazards such as stumps and deadfalls. He advised boaters to navigate in the middle of the oil field canals and use two main waterways — Bay Patin and Lake Bigeux — to traverse the lake. And don't be in a hurry.

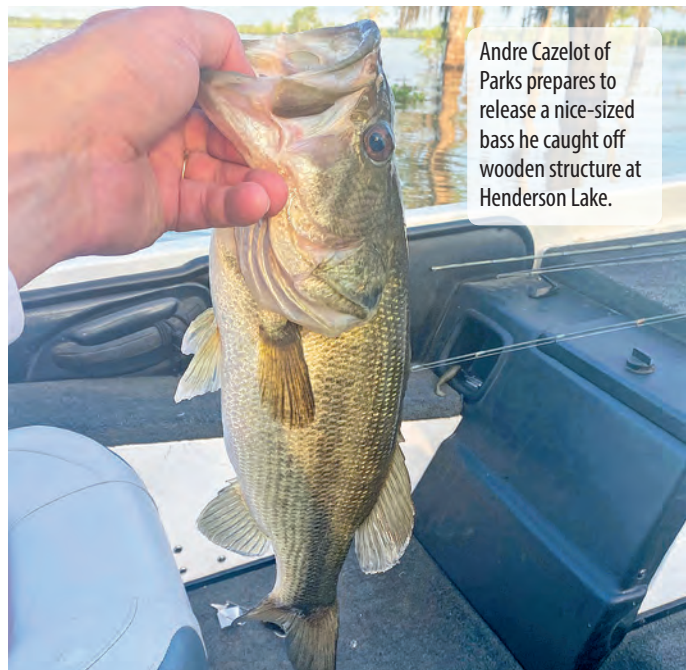
Bassin' success might be a little lower, too, during the drawdown, he said.

"It's tougher with it draining," Cazelot said. "I think some of the fish leave town, go to another zip code."

Nevertheless, a pretty good catch per angler can be 10 to 15 bass. Normally, it's much better without a drawdown in the fall. But it is still a good bet for a successful trip.

"I did have a couple days over there when they weren't draining when I'd catch 20-30 fish, at least 20," he said. "If you figure it out, you can catch them, a bunch of them."

No matter the lake level, Cazelot said he concentrates on shallow water and two of his primary areas are



Andre Cazelot of Parks prepares to release a nice-sized bass he caught off wooden structure at Henderson Lake.

Opelousas Bay and North Lake Bigeux/South Lake Bigeux. He'll also fish points in those areas.

"I'm looking for anything three feet or less," he said. "I'm looking for wood in the water not far from deep water."

During a non-drawdown October, he also fishes the flats near drains when they aren't pulling water.

Cazelot, who fishes the popular New Iberia-based Wednesday Night Hawg Fights Bass Tournament Series, consistently catches bass on three artificial lures. Those are a KVD 1.5 "Easter egg" (blue/chartreuse) crankbait, a 3/8-ounce white War Eagle spinnerbait with gold/silver tandem willow leaf blades and a 3/8-ounce Z-Man Chatterbait, mostly with a green/pumpkin skirt.

Finding a wind-blown spot where shad are piled up can pay dividends with beaucoup bites and as many bass. That's what October's all about on Henderson Lake. Give it a shot, but remember to be extra careful during the drawdown. ■

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ALL YEAR LONG

Caney Lake largemouths let anglers play hard until the buzzer

W By Kinny Haddox
hat is 29 inches long, weighs 10 pounds and is just “warming up” for the winter? It, and many more like it, are Caney Lake largemouth bass.

The new year and lunker bass time will be here on Caney Lake as they run up the score on the digital scales past 11, 12, 13 and maybe even higher. But first, there’s more “game” to play this year.

While most of the attention is on these monsters of the Jackson Parish deep in cold weather, Heath Kennedy who lives in nearby Chatham, has a secret for you.

You can catch big bass on Caney Lake all year long, including October and November.

You just have to vary your approach. Kennedy should know. He practices what he preaches. This fall he already caught one of those bass that weighed 10.0 pounds and was just a fraction below 29 inches long, “half as long as I am tall,” he said. And it was the longest bass he ever caught. It “only” weighed 10 pounds because it hadn’t had its fall feed-up yet.

They keep getting bigger this month as they start rounding up schools of shad. Anglers will start catching double-digit bass regularly this month, although they’ll get bigger as they near the spawning months.

“Yes sir, you can catch fish all year long at Caney and this month is a good month to try,” said Kennedy, a well-known big bass catcher on the lake. “The fish have been in the grass for the most part, chasing the bigger shad and beginning to feed up for winter. As the water starts getting cooler, which it is now, they start to move out to deeper water and set out on good feeding spots. That’s when they really feed. Frankly, there’s no way to tell where they will be based on the weather for the day or the date. It’s all about water temperature.

“If the water gets consistently below 60 degrees, a lot more of them start moving,” he said. “Until then, you catch them in that grass.”

While the bait — and the bass — are still in or around the grass, Kennedy said there are two ways to catch them. First, by punching plastics and jigs through the grass with a heavy weight. Second, by fishing the edges of the grass with swim baits and jigs.

“The good news is that the grass holds bait and stays warm a little longer than the open shallow water,” he said. “And we have twice as much grass now as we have had. So that’s a big plus.”

In October, the fish can make a run up to the back of the creeks if the shad go there. But right now on Caney, the grass is the key. Sometime between the end of November and the end of December, the fish will mostly transition to the deeper holes, but some stay in the grass almost all year long, he said. You just have to put in a little time and when they do go back offshore, just look for a hump or change in depth where they can stage. It doesn’t have to be a huge difference, just some sort of change where they like to travel.”

Baits like football jigs and deep running crankbaits work well in

Heath Kennedy with a skinny 10 pounder caught early this fall. That fish was released to grow bigger and there’s a good bet it will be caught again, maybe even this month.



those spots, he said. He always likes to make sure that his crankbait goes deep enough to kick the bottom. It seems like contact with the bottom or standing timber triggers the bass to strike.

And then, there’s his go-to not-so-secret weapon: a Carolina rig. “I like a smaller Brush Hawg on a Carolina rig or a Zoom lizard,” he said. “On the Carolina rig, I fish it so slow that you nearly go to sleep. The fish just like it that way. A lot of times I run into people this time of year that say the fish just aren’t biting. They are biting, you are just fishing too fast for them.”

In the next few months close to the spawn, the fish will start that cycle again, moving back to the shallows. He said it is usually a lot earlier than people think after the first of the year, usually when the water hits that 57-58 degree mark.

That “skinny” 10 pounder Kennedy caught and released recently is probably already doing something about it. This is the time of year they fatten up as much as they can. Kennedy put the bass back in the lake, as he does with all his big fish. Most other fishermen do as well, so they can grow and let others in on the fun.

“I can’t believe how many really huge bass Caney has right now and it will just get better if they will leave it alone,” he said. “The grass is tough to fish for some folks, but it is the key to the health of the food chain. If they let it grow, we will see the Caney of old in a few years. And that will include some more 14 and 15 pounders.” ■



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>.



BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

THESE TWO
PARKS ARE SIMILAR IN WAYS,
YET DIFFERENT IN OTHERS

**THIS MONTH'S
FEATURED STOPS:
POVERTY POINT
AND LAKE BRUIN**

Photo courtesy PJ Hahn

At first glance, Poverty Point near Delhi and Lake Bruin near St. Joseph don't seem to have anything in common. But upon further inspection, it's an interesting combo of fun, recreation and camping. There are a lot of ways to compare and contrast these two lakes in northeast Louisiana that have excellent Louisiana State Parks. They both have lots of water and are prime spots to fish. They both have great places to stay, boat and just relax. And they both draw people from all over the state.

But one is old and one is new. One has been in the spotlight. The other in the background. One is manmade and one is a natural oxbow. But their similarities and differences make you want to visit each one of them. And fall is a great time to do it.

There is also a lot of prime hunting near these areas and some visitors stay on the lake and visit area hunting woods to get the best of both hunting and fishing in the Sportsman's Paradise this time of year.

POVERTY POINT

The lines at the multi-lane boat ramp aren't as long as they were a decade ago. The rush to rent cabins along the shore isn't there like it used to be. And visitors are finding out there's a lot more to do in this area than just fish. In the same vein as the old country and western song, Poverty Point is not as good as it once was, but it's as good once as it ever was.

In a nutshell, there are some fantastic fishing trips here, but it's not every day like it used to be. That sums up Poverty Point Reservoir in a nutshell. Oh, the fishing is still great, but it isn't the hotspot that it was when it opened in 2005, even though it's still one of the newest spots in the state to fish. Poverty Point State Park is still a favorite of regional visitors and more. There's still almost full capacity on the cabins and campgrounds at peak times, but you can get a reservation most of the time if you plan ahead a little bit.

Poverty Point Reservoir is a 2,700-acre man-made lake set against a backdrop of the wide, flat Mississippi Delta bottomlands. It's a haven for anglers, birdwatchers, families, weekend adventurers and I-20 travelers looking to explore rural north Louisiana.



Poverty Point Reservoir is the draw for many visitors to the park who love to catch fish and eat them for supper. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** An aerial view of some of the prime camping spots at Poverty Point State Park.



Fishing for big slab crappie over two pounds is a big draw. The lake has big bass and is also a prime spot for catfish and bream. There is structure around the edges of the lake, including a growing number of piers and boat docks as the lake's shores fill up with residential homes. The main lake area is wide open, but mostly shallow. In the fall and winter, the deep spots draw big crowds as fish gather there.

Bird watchers also flock to Poverty Point Reservoir State Park. Because this section of Louisiana is part of the Mississippi Flyway (one of the main migratory routes through the continental U.S.), both native and exotic bird species can be spotted within the park. One of the best vantage points for birdwatchers is on the half-mile-long trail bordering Bayou Macon. On the trail, you may spot a black bear, which in early 2016 was removed from the federal endangered species list. Tread lightly, and be sure to safely store all food and refuse. Bear-proof containers are available for park visitors. They can be a nuisance.

Overnight visitors can rent one of the waterfront cabins. Choose from one of eight deluxe cabins or four lodges. At the park's south end, more

than 50 RV campsites are available.

Attractions outside the park tend to focus on outdoor activities. Black Bear Golf Course in Delhi is part of Louisiana's celebrated Audubon Golf Trail, and nearby Poverty Point World Heritage Site features over 3,000-year-old Native American mounds and artifacts.

The North Marina Complex features a swimming beach area, boat launch, marina with 48 covered boat slips, concession area, fishing pier and fish cleaning station. The marina complex is open daily. The rental boat slips in the marina complex are available on an annual lease basis. Lease rental fee information can be obtained by contacting the Reservation Center at 1-833-609-0686. Each boat slip provides connections for electricity and water. The general public is not allowed on the boat slips unless they are renters.

LAKE BRUIN ➤

POVERTY POINT STATE PARK

1500 Poverty Point Parkway
Delhi, LA 71232
318-878-7536
povertypointres@crt.la.gov

LAKE BRUIN STATE PARK

201 State Park Road
St. Joseph, LA 71366
318-766-3530
lakebruin@crt.la.gov



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.

STATE PARKS: POVERTY POINT AND LAKE BRUIN



Fishing the shorelines at Lake Bruin is productive and a beautiful sight.

Photo courtesy PJ Hahn

LAKE BRUIN

One thing many visitors to this park don't realize is that this spot was originally a fish hatchery on Lake Bruin back in 1928. Apparently it was pretty successful, because the 3,000 acre oxbow lake has been one of north Louisiana's most consistent fishing holes for decades.

The banks are lined with structure from cypress tree stands to fishing piers and boat houses. The park itself covers more than 50 acres and provides easy access to some of the best fishing on the lakes. If you don't have a boat, that's okay, too. Three large fishing piers, a year-round boat launch, and a boat shed for docking make things convenient for the casual or serious fisherman. Rental boats are also available.

If it's good bass fishing you want, largemouth bass fishing is popular all year round, but some of the best months are in the fall. The lake is teeming with crappie, too, and you can catch them just about any time of year. The entire length of the lake is full of bluegill bream.

If it's fishing you like, fall is a good time to go because the lake's pleasure boating activities have slowed down.

Camping here is a quiet, secluded and restful experience. Lake Bruin's day use area offers picnic tables and barbecue grills situated near the lake and adjacent to two of the fishing piers, restrooms and playground areas. A covered pavilion allows park visitors to enjoy their meals whatever the weather. Most facilities are wheelchair accessible. Overnight guests have options for places to stay. The park has 36 improved campsites with water and electrical hookup, and 12 premium sites in prime locations with pull-through convenience.

Lake Bruin State Park is located less than a mile from the Mississippi River in scenic east-central Louisiana. Lake Bruin Recreation has a drawdown underway with the lake lowered to a maximum of five feet below pool stage remaining at that level until Dec. 15, 2022. ■



LOUISIANA
State Parks

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– Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser



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OFTEN TAKEN FOR GRANTED,
OIL RIGS ARE BOOM TO FISHING
AND ECONOMY. ■ By Humberto Fontova

LOUISIANA'S OFFSHORE HONEY HOLES

MY OWN STUNTS
JOE'S CRAB SHACK

Editor's Note: Veteran Louisiana angler and writer Humberto Fontova has taken his case about the benefits of offshore oil rigs to the nation. He shares his story, views and experiences with Louisiana Sportsman readers.

"So, who you gonna believe?" smirked a dripping Pelayo while reaching for his friend's Zach's speargun. "Me? Or your eyes?"

We were helping our Florida friend Zach onto the 25 footer's fantail after his first Louisiana rig dive — and the famous quip from Groucho Marx seemed ideal.

"Who! . . . whoo!" Zach gasped while quickly pulling himself aboard, wiping his face, and jerking the writhing mangrove off his speargun shaft. "Who to believe?" he wheezed. "Who? Well both!" he finally snorted.

"I ain't never. I ain't NEVAH!...I ain't NEVAH seen so many fish! And not nearly as many BIG ones! Most of these mangroves could easily SWALLOW the ones I catch in Florida!" he said.

Two weeks earlier Zach had been scoffing. He'd heard about Louisiana's offshore fish bounty on Fox & Friends from an interview aired on Fox News with your humble servant here. He promptly called us to (good-naturedly) scoff. By the way, he wasn't the only scoffer. The hate e-mail is still coming!

SEEING IS BELIEVING

Zach's scoffing ended after five minutes under an oil platform barely eight miles from Belle Pass. Happens every time we take an "experienced" scuba diver or snorkeler on his first dive to a Louisiana offshore oil platform. Never fails.

Now, when we take our out of town friends and relatives rig fishing, we hear almost the identical gasps — except "caught" replaces "seen."

But prior the eyewitness reactions above, most of what we heard from our future rig fishing and diving guests were

scoffs and harrumphs — especially from those with a greenie ("environmentalist") streak, like Zach. I mean, here we are touting a marine habitat created by the greenie's major villain, a perceived combination of Snidley-Whiplash/Darth-Vader, known as "Big Oil."

Heck, on the ride down to Fourchon, Zach had been regaling us with stories about how some of his hot-shot fishing guide chums in the Florida Keys, where drilling is strictly forbidden, had put him on "TWO Jack Crevalle in ONE morning! And that was along with "three mangrove snapper!"

"GET OUTTA HERE!" a wide-eyed Pelayo mock-gasped. "You can't mean it dude! WOW! Sounds like one helluva fishing trip! You Floridians are obviously spoiled with all that pristine, oil-platform-free fishing in Florida!" then Pelayo lowered his voice a bit and cocked his head.

"Kinda makes me wonder why we see all those Florida license plates in our marina parking lots? Hummmm?"

But enough with the anecdotes. After all, Louisiana's fishing guides probably hear the same weekly from their out-of-state



Hard fighting Jack Crevalle are one of many popular species that thrive around Louisiana's offshore oil platforms and are targeted by offshore anglers.

clients. Instead let's "follow-the-science" as the greens love to scold the rest of us on "climate-change," "carbon footprints," blah... blah...blah.

Difference is, the following isn't bogus dreamland science. Here are some of the facts I shared on Fox that caused such a stir with environmentalists, most of whom have never seen an oil rig.

AMAZING FISH DENSITIES

To wit: a 2006 study conducted by LSU's Coastal Marine Institute (in conjunction with the U.S. Dept. of Interior) found, "Offshore oil platforms support fish densities from 10 to 100 times the densities of adjacent sand and mud bottoms."

Another study by Dr Bob Shipp, Professor Emeritus at the Marine Sciences Department of the University of South Alabama and long-time vice-chair of the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council, found that "massive areas of the northwestern Gulf of Mexico

were essentially empty of red snapper stocks for the first hundred years of the fishery. Subsequently, areas in the western Gulf have become the major source of red snapper, concurrent with the appearance of thousands of petroleum platforms."

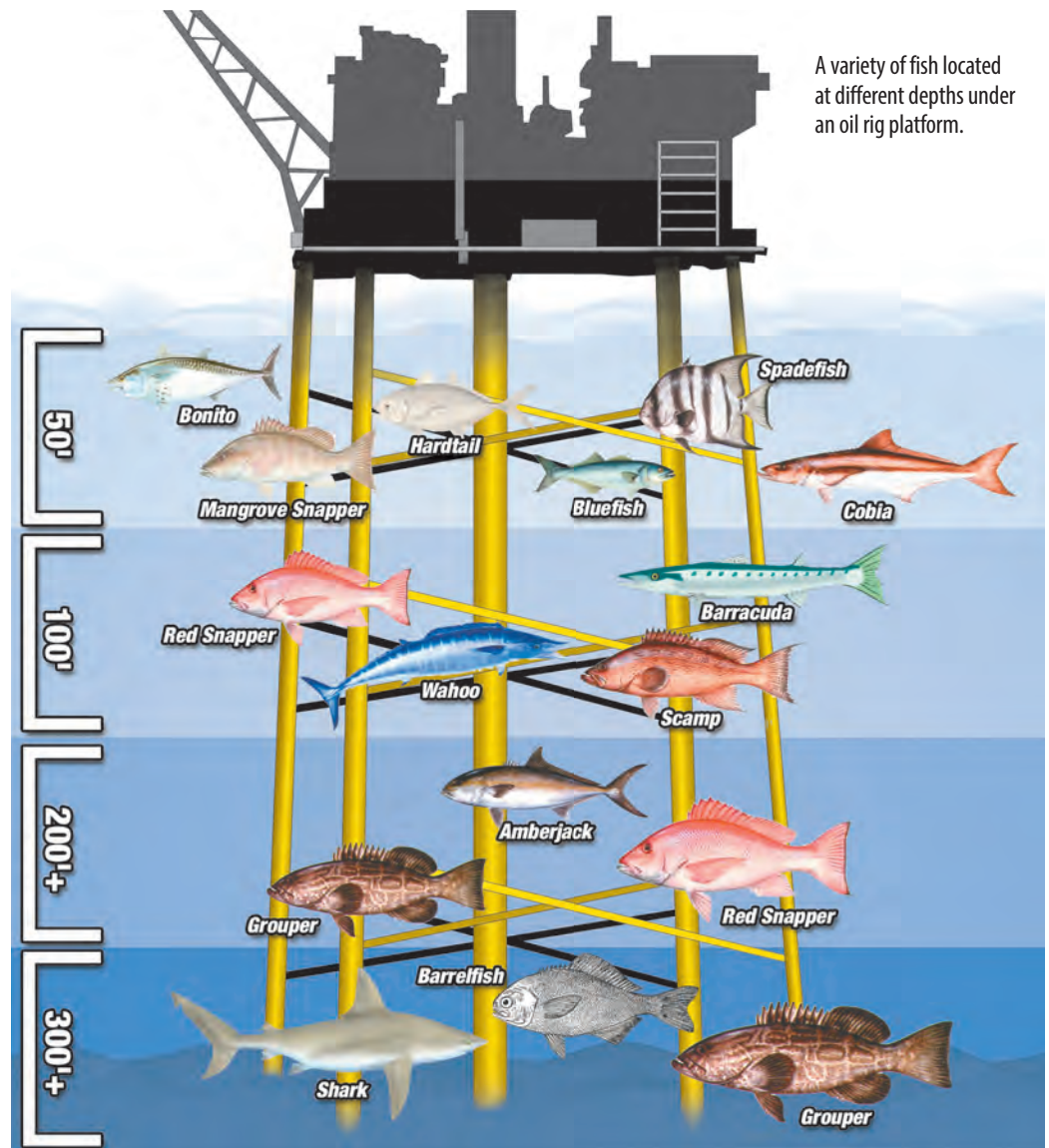
Another report by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management Minerals, a division of the U.S. Dept. of the Interior, boasted "fish densities are 20 to 50 times higher at oil and gas platforms than in nearby Gulf water, and each platform seasonally serves as critical habitat for 10 to 20 thousand fishes."

"Ten to thirty thousand adult fish live around an oil production platform in area half the size of a football field," revealed a study by Dr. Charles Wilson of LSU's Dept. of Oceanography and Coastal Science.

"The fish biomass around an offshore oil platform is 10 times greater per unit area than for natural coral reefs, such as in the Flower Gardens Federal (Dept. of the Interior) Coastal Sanctuary," Dr Wilson's study also found.

Yet another study by LSU's Sea Grant college showed that

A variety of fish located at different depths under an oil rig platform.



70 percent of Louisiana's offshore fishing trips target these platforms. The same study showed 50 times more marine life around an oil production platform than in the surrounding Gulf bottoms.

An environmental study (by apparently honest scientists) revealed that urban runoff and treated sewage dump 12 times the amount of petroleum into the Gulf of Mexico than those thousands of oil production platforms. And oil seeping naturally through the ocean floor into the Gulf, where it dissipates over time, accounts for seven times the amount spilled by rigs and pipelines in any given year.

FLOWER GARDEN REEFS >



Humberto Fontova has hunted and fished obsessively in Louisiana for over 45 years. He's the author of four books and a frequent commentator on national media. For more details visit www.hfontova.com.

FLOWER GARDEN REEFS

The Flower Garden coral reefs lie off the Louisiana-Texas border. Unlike any of the Florida Keys reefs, they're surrounded by dozens of offshore oil platforms. Some of these have been pumping away for over 60 years. Yet according to G.P. Schmahl, a federal biologist who worked for decades in both places, "The Flower Gardens are much healthier, more pristine than anything in the Florida Keys. It was a surprise to me," he admits. "And I think it's a surprise to most people."

"A key measure of the health of a reef is the amount of area taken up by coral," according to a report by Steve Gittings, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's science coordinator for marine sanctuaries. "Louisiana's Flower Garden boasts nearly 50 percent coral cover. In the Florida Keys it can run as little as 5 percent."

These are stories you will never hear in the mainstream media.

Mark Ferrulo, a Florida "environmental activist" uses the very example of Louisiana for his anti-offshore drilling campaign, calling Louisiana's coast "the nation's toilet." Well, Mr. Ferrulo must not know that Florida's fishing fleet must love fishing in toilets, and her restaurants serving a lot of what's in them. Back before snapper were highly regulated, many of the red snapper you ate in Florida restaurants were caught around Louisiana's oil platforms. We used to see the Florida-registered boats tied up to them constantly. Sometimes us locals could barely squeeze in.

In brief, "villainous" Big Oil produces marine life at rates that shames the greenies' wondrous Earth Goddess Gaia.

That this proliferation of seafood in the Gulf of Mexico came because — rather than in spite — of the oil production rattled many environmental cages and provoked a legion of scoffers.

Fish on! An angler's rod bent over at Louisiana offshore rigs is a common sight.

BUG-EYED AGAIN

Amongst the scoffers were some Travel Channel producers, fashionably greenish in their views. They read these claims a few years ago in a book by your humble servant titled, "The Helldiver's Rodeo" — that Publishers Weekly hailed as "highly-entertaining!" (Ted Nugent's blurb certainly didn't help against their scoffing!)

The book describes an undersea panorama that (if true) could make an interesting show for the network, they concluded, while still scoffing. They scoffed as we rode in from the airport. They scoffed over raw oysters, grilled redfish and seafood gumbo that night. More scoffing through the Hurricanes at Pat O'Brien's. They scoffed even while suiting up in dive gear and checking the cameras as we tied up to an oil platform 20 miles in the Gulf off the southeast Louisiana coast.

But they came out of the water bug-eyed and indeed produced and broadcast a Travel Channel program showcasing a panorama that turned on its head every environmental superstition against offshore oil drilling. Schools of fish filled the water column from top to bottom — from 6-inch blennies to 12-foot



sharks. Fish by the thousands. Fish by the ton.

The cameras were going crazy. Do I focus on the shoals of barracuda? Or that cloud of jacks? On the immense schools of snapper below, or on the fleet of tarpon above? How 'bout this — whoa — hammerhead!

We had some close-ups, too, of coral and sponges, the very things disappearing off Florida's pampered reefs — a state that bans offshore oil drilling. Off Louisiana, they sprout in colorful profusion from the huge steel beams — acres of them. You'd never guess this was part of that unsightly structure above. The panorama of marine life around an offshore oil platform staggers anyone who puts on goggles and takes a peek, even the most worldly scuba divers.

"But what about the BP oil spill, Humberto?" comes the greenie retort. "Seems you're very conveniently overlooking that disaster!"

In fact, the best demolition of environmentalist bull-dinky on the BP oil spill was compiled and presented right here at Louisiana Sportsman, barely a year after the spill itself and the barrage of doom-saying greenie prognostications. The thorough — and thoroughly documented — demolition was by retired professor of fisheries and writer, Jerald Horst, from whose articles I borrow much of the following quotes and data.

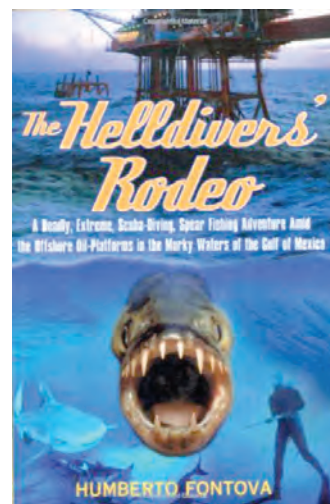
"The damaging effects of the massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico will be felt all the way to Europe and the Arctic!" a "top scientist" told a congressional panel shortly after the spill, reported CNN.

In fact, the damaging effects were hardly visible in Louisiana a few months later, according to Marine scientist and former Louisiana State University professor Ivor van Heerden, who also worked as a BP spill-response contractor and spent countless days inspecting the Louisiana coast. He found less than 1 square mile of coastal marsh had been severely oiled, mostly around Timbalier Bay. That's out of 5,300 square miles of Louisiana coastal marsh and swamp, by the way.

"There's just no data to suggest this is an environmental disaster," said Professor Van

Heerden. "I have no interest in making BP look good — I think they lied about the size of the spill — but we're not seeing catastrophic impacts. There's a lot of hype, but no evidence to justify it."

These observations came on the very heels of the spill — a mere three months afterward, making them all the more blasphemous at the time. Within one short year they'd been completely vindicated.



BOUNCED BACK QUICKLY >

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BOUNCED BACK QUICKLY

By July 2010, the “severely oiled” areas were already bouncing back.

“Van Heerden’s assessment team showed me around Casse-tete Island in Timbalier Bay,” Time magazine’s Michael Grunwald wrote back then, “where new shoots of *Spartina* [marsh] grasses were sprouting in oiled marshes and new leaves were already growing on the first black mangroves I’ve ever seen that were actually black.”

The reasons this “disaster” fizzled out are many, and were apparent to non-hack scientists from the get-go.

“People don’t comprehend how so much oil could break down in such a short time period,” explained LuAnn White, a toxicologist with the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine who also served as director of the Center for Applied Environmental Health. “But we have natural oil seeps in the Gulf, and over 200 genera of microbes that break down oil already exist there.”

“It cannot be repeated often enough,” said Horst. “Crude oil is a natural substance; it’s biodegradable. It’s a feast for microbes. And these consumed most of it from the BP spill.”

The horrid black goo that leaked into the Gulf of Mexico from the BP spill was certainly toxic — but so are broccoli, beer and salt. It all depends on the dosage. In fact, that horrid black goo

has spilled naturally into the Gulf for millenniums — at the rate of two Exxon Valdez spills annually.

Nothing normally soothes the savage beast of an environmentalist like the notion of a substance being “biodegradable.” Indeed, the term “environmentally friendly” has become almost its synonym. Well, crude oil is about as biodegradable as substances come, especially when spewed into warm, microbe-filled waters like those in the Gulf of Mexico. Hence the stratospheric dunce caps crowning so many “environmentalist” heads a mere year after “the worst environmental disaster in U.S. history.”

“Ah,” you ask, “but what about that poisonous chemical used as a dispersant for the oil?”

You probably ingested traces of this poisonous chemical compound with last night’s dinner, and other traces probably coat your pots, pans, cups, spoons and forks right now. Some people call the dispersant Corexit 9500 — and some call it soap. Essentially, it was Dawn dishwashing detergent.

“Dispersants are not very toxic,” explains Robert Dickey, director of the Food and Drug Administration’s Gulf Coast Seafood Laboratory. “They are detergents and solvents, and they become rapidly diluted. One square mile of seawater one foot deep is 200 million gallons. We added 1.8 million gallons in the whole Gulf.”

Point is: You add much higher concentration to your kitchen sink to make your dishes “safe” for your family.

Among the monster fish roaming around shallower oil platforms in state waters (within 3 miles of shore) are borderline bull redfish.



SAFE SEAFOOD

After the spill, the FDA's Gulf Coast Seafood Laboratory, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Seafood Inspection Laboratory, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals and similar agencies from neighboring Gulf Coast states have methodically and repeatedly tested Gulf seafood for cancer-causing polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH).

"Not a single sample (for oil or dispersant) has come anywhere close to levels of concern," reported Olivia Watkins, executive media adviser for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

"All of the samples have been 100-fold or even 1,000-fold below all of these levels," reported Mr. Dickey, the seafood laboratory director. "Nothing ever came close to these levels."

As mentioned, an earlier study by Dr. Charles Wilson of LSU's Department of Oceanography and Coastal Science put the scientific touche' to something fishermen had known for decades: The fish biomass around an offshore oil platform is 10 times greater per unit area than for natural coral reefs. The science is settled. ■



This big Spanish Mackerel provided a hard fight and some delicious meals. These fish smash any jig retrieved around our shallower offshore platforms. Hint: use wire leaders and black swivels to save on losing lures.



FONTOVA MAKES HIS CASE ON NATIONAL TV

Even though he only had a few minutes, Humberto not only made his point about offshore drilling and its benefit, he did it passionately in an interview with Fox News that aired on July 17, 2022.

You can still view the interview online at: www.louisianasportsman.com/fishing/offshore-fishing/fontova-argues-offshore-drilling-produces-oil-and-fish/





FINAL PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

**PROJECT TO RESTORE AND
PROTECT GRAND TERRE
ISLAND COMPLETED.**

■ By Chris Macaluso

The Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority has been working for more than 15 years to rebuild the natural speed bumps that separate the waves and storm surges of the Gulf of Mexico from the inner Barataria Basin.

In late July, the final piece of that restoration puzzle was placed with the completion of a more than \$100 million project to restore and protect Grand Terre Island using fines and settlements from the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster.

Located less than two miles east of Grand Isle, Grand Terre's reconstructive surgery began in the spring of 2021 when a dredge located approximately five miles southeast of the island began pumping sand to rebuild approximately four miles of beaches and dunes and nearly 150 acres of marsh on the north side of the island. Bulldozers and backhoes shaped the sand and mud while rock breakwaters were reinforced along Barataria Pass and installed along the north side of the island to protect restored marshes from wave action.

SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE

Construction was slated to wrap up by the end of 2021, however Hurricane Ida slammed into Grand Terre, Grand Isle and

the rest of Southeast Louisiana with unprecedented ferocity last August before the restoration effort was complete.

Fortunately, CPRA was able to allocate some additional funds to the project to offset the damage caused by Ida and restoration resumed in late 2021, said CPRA Executive Director Bren Haase.

"The restoration projects in the area that were finished before Ida hit fared very well during the storm, but the ones like Grand Terre that were still under construction did suffer some significant damage," Haase said. "Much of the sand and sediment that was pumped to rebuild beaches and dunes wound up being captured by the marsh and the rock containment behind the island and some of it stayed fairly close to the backside of the island."

Haase said restoration of barrier islands and headland beaches in the Barataria Basin began in earnest in 2006 with the Bay Joe Wise/Pass Chaland beach and back barrier marsh restoration and ramped up significantly during and after





BELOW: Pelicans gather and take advantage of part of the new beach on Grand Terre Island.

the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster. Every beach between Scofield Island near Venice to Belle Pass at the mouth of Bayou Lafourche and thousands of acres of back barrier marshes have been restored in the Barataria Basin, re-establishing the 45-mile wide boundary between the more sensitive marshes and ridges to the north and the Gulf to the south.

“Maintaining that barrier between open Gulf and the estuary is critical to fisheries production and protecting infrastructure in the Barataria Basin,” Haase said. “It’s also important to maintain the integrity of the passes between the islands like Barataria Pass and Coup Abel Pass not only to allow for tidal exchange and boat passage, but those areas are important spawning areas for fish and provide opportunity for fishing.”

Haase said work will continue and hopefully ramp up significantly in coming years to rebuild marshes north of the Barataria Basin’s restored barrier islands. Without additional marsh creation from dredging projects, sediment pipelines from the Mississippi River and the additional sediment supplied by the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion, barrier island

restoration projects and the integrity of passes are in jeopardy. Hurricane Ida made that effort more urgent and more difficult by washing away more than 100 square miles of marshes in the upper Barataria Basin last year.

“Reducing the volume of water behind the barrier islands is top priority, otherwise the islands can’t hold up to the amount of water that is trying to pass through the passes to fill in all the open water areas in the basin,” he said. “Sediment delivery projects and large-scale marsh and ridge restoration efforts, like the 500-acre marsh creation at Grand Liard and the more than 1,600 acres of marsh recently built at Spanish Pass near Venice and the sediment we will get from the Mid-Barataria diversion, are especially important if we want those barrier islands to last and we want the basin to be productive in the future.”



Chris Macaluso is the Director for the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. He is also an avid angler and duck hunter and a lifelong Louisiana resident.

A LOT OF FISH ➤



**FINAL PIECE OF
THE PUZZLE**

A LOT OF FISH

Capt. Frank Dreher guides speckled trout and redfish charters out of Grand Isle and often seeks shelter behind Grand Terre when spring and summer winds make it tough to fish beaches or other open-water areas.

“We catch a lot of fish at Grand Terre, both along the beach when the wind and waves allow as well as along the rocks behind the island,” Dreher said. “You can see the difference in the productivity of the areas where we have healthy marsh like the restored marsh at Grand Terre and East Grand Terre. There are shrimp, mullet, croakers, crabs, all kinds of food behind those islands.”

Dreher said he focuses much of his fishing efforts on areas near Grand Isle that have been restored in the last 10 years, including Queen Bess Island, Fifi Island, Grand Terre and East Grand Terre and the Caminada Headlands, more commonly known as Elmer’s Island and the Fourchon Beach.



Louisiana **SPORTSMAN** BACK ISSUES

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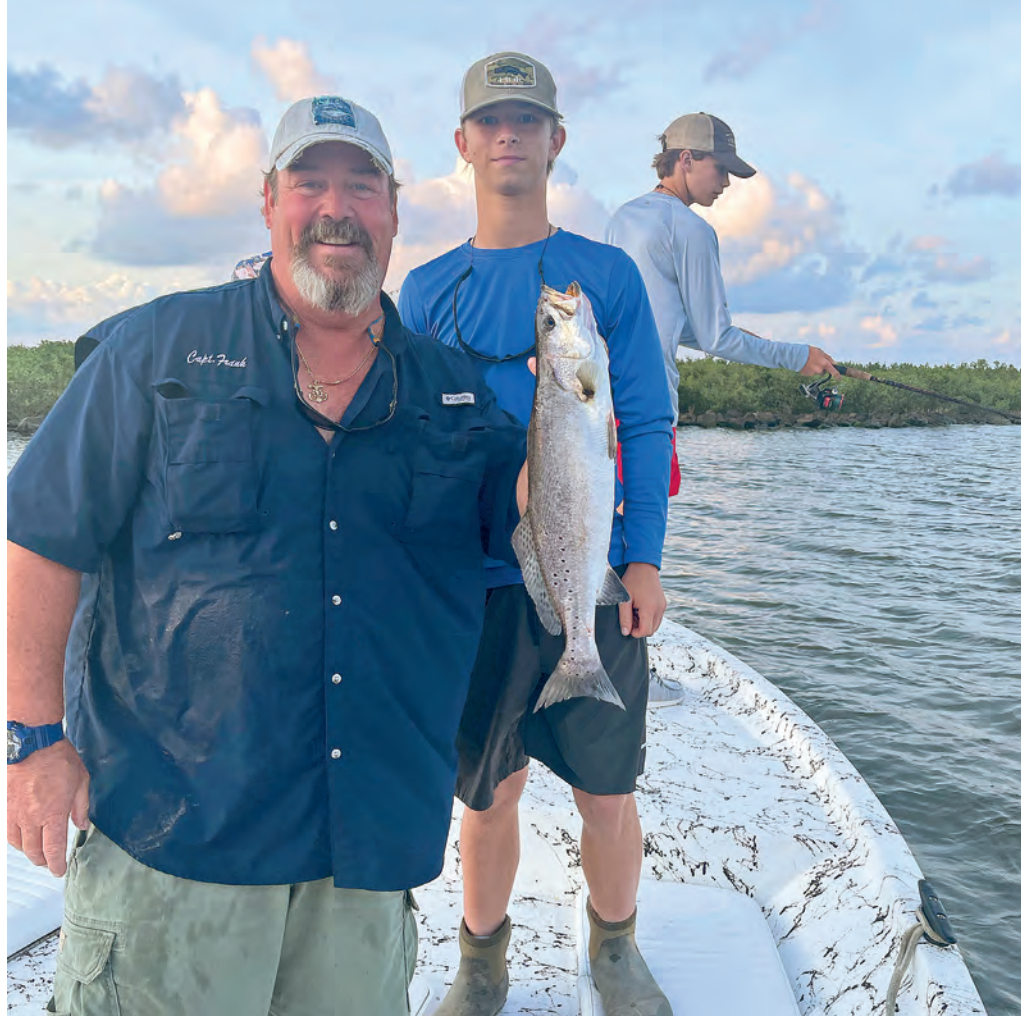


Capt. Frank Dreher behind Grand Terre.
OPPOSITE PAGE: Kerwin Dreher with a beautiful Grand Terre redfish.

In each case, restoration efforts have changed the way the fish use the habitat and how he and other fishermen approach the areas. However, once new beaches and marshes have a chance to settle and waves and tides begin to carve contours along the bottom, fishing generally improves.

“There is a lot of shallow water around Grand Terre since the restoration project and some areas where we could get right up behind the island or right next to the beach are too shallow to get to now,” Dreher said. “I was glad to see them doing the work to Grand Terre even though I knew it would change the fishing for a while. We still caught fish there this spring and summer. If not for that island and Queen Bess, we’re looking at more than 10 miles of open water to the north before we hit marsh. Grand Terre gives us a place to fish.” ■

DULARGE SPECKS >





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Capt. Bill Lake with two Dularge speckled trout.



DOWN IN DULARGE

It's a freckled frenzy as trout swarm into the lakes

D By Rusty Tardo
own in Dularge, Veteran Captain Bill Lake (985-637-3712) has followed a successful fishing strategy for decades.

"Beginning mid-to-late August and throughout the month of September, I fish for the big bull reds that hang in the deep holes and turns in Dularge's bayous," he said. "The tactic is easy; park at a turn in the bayou, drop a sliding sinker rig down to the deep bottom with cracked crab on a hook, and hold on."

Since I've personally made this trip with him on a few occasions and fished those bayous, I can definitely attest to their productivity.

The redfish bite in the bayous will continue, though it does slack off this month, but Lake switches gears in October and targets the schools of speckled trout that swarm into the big lakes.

"October is trout time," he said, "and I'm expecting a great season. I started making some exploratory trips in early September and found trout everywhere, most of them slightly undersized. But the lakes are loaded with shrimp and the trout are gorging on them so by early to mid October, those trout will be keeping size."

A TRIO OF PICKS

Lake said Lake Mechant, Lost Lake and Sister Lake are the three primary areas he'll target for specks, but anglers who venture to the coastline will still find some action out there as well.

"I'm seeing huge schools of trout in the lakes, boiling on the surface just tearing up the shrimp," he said. "Flocks of seagulls are diving on shrimp all over the lakes, so I am expecting a full bore freckled trout frenzy this month."

Lake said you'll have to weed through catfish until the water temperatures fall into the 60's, and you can expect the usual number of undersized specks, but there will be plenty of legal fish to ice down for the ride home.

The best bait is live shrimp fished 14-18" under a cork, but soft plastics under a cork or tightlined under the birds will produce also. Lake said he's catching plenty on the Berkley Cattle shrimp, the 4-Horseman Boom Boom Shrimp and the Vudu Shrimp, and double rigged H&H Beetles.

Here's a bonus tip: Reds are patrolling along the shorelines in Lost Lake and Lake Mechant, hitting gold spoons, silver spoons, black spoons, and of course live or dead shrimp fished about 12" under a cork.

Sounds like it's about time to go fishing. ■

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Some of the "EDGE" positions are underwater reef's, shoals, structures, and honey holes

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

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PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

Chris Holmes



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

HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER

KAYAK ANGLERS GLIDE BENEATH THE RADAR FOR SHALLOW REDFISH

There may be no better month to chase redfish in a kayak than October. Mild weather with predictable patterns makes it easy to get on a regular bite. Short paddles throughout the marsh can put you on spots to catch several reds without having long treks to areas far from your launch. Teal season is closed and the regular duck season doesn't open until November. Chasing reds in the shallow marsh and duck ponds is tailor made for kayak fishing.

One of the benefits of kayak fishing is the ability to quietly glide along without spooking fish. Slowly move from spot-to-spot while keeping an eye out for redfish activity. Peer around each corner looking for a tailing fish or a tell-tale "V-wake. Don't overlook any area. Cast into the smallest cut or pocket, as it just might be holding a fat red.

Although redfish prowl the marsh year-round, as water temperatures begin to drop and the days get shorter, redfish begin concentrating in shallow ponds. Find the bait and find the reds. White shrimp are still in the marsh at this time of year and remain until severe cold weather moves in during the early winter. Scan banks and watch for fleeing shrimp along shorelines where reds love to pen them up for ambush. Also, schools of small pogies and mullets are a sure sign that redfish are nearby.

SHALLOW DRAFT

Use the advantage of the kayak's shallow draft to stay close to the shore and cast parallel, rather than staying out and casting directly to the shore. Staying tight to

the shoreline where reds prowl keeps the lure in more productive water as you make your retrieve. If the pond has a duck blind, do not overlook casting at and around this structure. Odds are that there will be one or more reds holding near or under the blind.

Not all ponds are the same. Variations in their size and design can often make a big difference in their productivity. Some are more affected by tides than others. Differences in tidal flow varies with depth and bottom structure as well as the growth of submerged grasses. These features help dictate where reds are most likely to be found, and that's where you should concentrate your efforts. When choosing which pond to fish, look for areas that provide good tidal movement. Find which bank the tide is moving along and that's where you'll find the reds.

When the tide is falling, or is low from a recent mild cold front, seek out ponds that have small drains and ditches in the back where bait will be pulled from the flooded marsh. Use the kayak to get where most powerboats cannot. Reds are not shy about shallow water and can regularly be seen tailing while they grub around for food.

Ponds and lagoons with multiple entrances provide more spots to find the fish. Points, cuts and any type of structure are where you'll most likely find the reds.

BE ON THE LOOKOUT >





Redfish concentrate in the marsh during the fall. They feed voraciously and are fairly easy to catch with live bait or artificial lures. Kayaks make great platforms to get back into these shallow areas where most powerboats cannot go.



This red was caught by tossing a weightless jerkbait near an old duck blind.

BE ON THE LOOKOUT

Keep your eyes and ears peeled. When fishing these shallow areas, reds often give off their presence as their broad bodies move a lot of water. As they feed or simply laze around, wakes or visible tails can easily be seen in these calm, protected waters. The silence of kayak fishing is often broken by the sound of a red crashing bait. Stay attuned to your surroundings. It's not uncommon to encounter reds within rod distance of the kayak, but then it is often too late. Locating fish allows you to plan and make your casts before you get too close and risk spooking them.

One of the best things about this time of year is that the reds eat virtually anything that comes near them. Bait shops still have live shrimp and many also have cocahoes. While live bait isn't necessary, many kayakers prefer this almost can't-miss option. However, a wide variety of lures can be used to trick hungry reds and, of course, dead shrimp is always a favorite.

Dead shrimp on a hook or a small piece tipped on a jighead under a cork has probably accounted for more redfish caught in Louisiana than any other bait. It is a simple, inexpensive combination that is great for beginners and seasoned anglers alike.

ENDLESS CHOICES

However, if you prefer to trick them with artificials, the choices are endless. Weedless gold spoons are an all-time favorite, but spinnerbaits, topwater plugs, crankbaits and a wide variety of soft plastics all do the trick. Redfish are designed for

bottom feeding, so scented artificial baits like Gulp can provide an extra advantage.

Fall coastal redfish range from the small "rat" reds, under the 16-inch minimum, to slot reds up to 27 inches. However, don't be surprised to hook into a tackle-busting bull weighing 10 pounds or more. Fighting one of these giants in shallow water is an epic experience for kayakers.

No special tackle is necessary, but rods with a little backbone and reels with strong, smooth drags help quickly subdue feisty redfish. Kayakers should consider rods long enough so you can easily maneuver your line back and forth across the bow of the kayak. This may become necessary several times during the battle and makes it much more likely that you can successfully land a big fish.

Monofilament line in the 12 to 15-pound range is sufficient; however, some anglers prefer to use braided lines. Whether fishing mono or braid as a main line, a two-foot length of 20-30 pound mono or fluorocarbon leader helps keep reds attached during the fight. Redfish have rough mouths and large, strong, scales and fins. The heavier leader can withstand the abrasion encountered during extended fights as the red makes every effort to gain freedom.

The duck ponds are quiet and the weather is beautiful. If you are a kayak angler, the time is now to head to the shallow marshes across coastal Louisiana for excellent redfish action. ■

Anglers often expect to take big reds like this one, but more thought needs to be put into long-term management of the resource.



REDFISH BLUES

DECLINE IN REDFISH POPULATION DEMANDS ACTION - NOW!

Over the course of my fishing career, I've seen purse seines deplete redfish stocks, thanks to Chef Paul Prudhomme and his incredible ability to make a burnt piece of fish taste better than filet mignon.

I've seen gill nets strung across popular fishing areas, catching everything unlucky enough to swim into the web.

I've seen coastal subsidence swallow up some of my favorite fishing areas.

But I'm not sure I've ever seen a decline in a fishery population like I'm witnessing with Louisiana redfish right now.

I started noticing it two years ago, when I went two months, fishing hard twice a week, without catching a single redfish. This was during the winter, when redfish are normally a slam-dunk.

I asked other anglers if they were encountering the same thing, and the responses I got were mixed. Some echoed my concerns, while others stated

they hadn't seen much change.

I assumed it was simply related to the areas I fished, or maybe I was just in a slump. After all, just like in any sport, slumps happen in fishing.

SAME SONG

Fast forward a year, however, and nearly every angler I know across the entire Louisiana coast was singing the same verses, bridge and chorus of the blues I'd been bellowing for months.

The redfish had all but evaporated, and no one was exactly sure why.

But actually, in hindsight, those days even just one year ago were like a Thanksgiving feast compared to the crumbs on the floor we're all trying to scrape up today.

For many anglers, catching a redfish has literally become rarer than reeling in a flounder.

In Louisiana. The Bayou State. That's not supposed to happen here.

I talk to many anglers every week, and all are saying the same thing. The reds are gone.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE

One guy I know runs a lodge with multiple guides operating out of his facility. These guys target reds almost exclusively, and are quite skilled at it.

On one day last week, with good conditions, three of them returned without catching a single redfish. That would have been incomprehensible just five years ago.

Certainly the challenges facing our



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

state's redfish population are myriad — everything from ghastly habitat loss to unchecked harvest of forage fish.

Both those factors will take time to address, but there's something we can do now to help our stocks begin to recover: The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission needs to lower the recreational harvest limit.

Five fish per angler was fine when we had copious amounts of edge habitat that was like a perfect laboratory for growing one of our favorite fish. But those days are gone.

Unfortunately, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is often slow to react to obvious changes in fisheries. On the one hand, that can be good. You certainly don't want major regulation changes due to temporary blips in populations.

But the department waited years to address the decade-long decline in flounder stocks, even when every angler knew the population was in the toilet.

The commission finally approved a moratorium for this fall, but ironically, the stock has already begun to recover on its own. Anglers are reporting the best flounder fishing this year they've seen in at least the last 10.

WE CAN'T AFFORD TO WAIT

We can't afford to wait on redfish. Speckled trout can almost be thought of as an annual crop. Every spring and summer,

a significant number of 1-year-old specks enter the fishery, becoming legal to harvest. Very few specks live to see even their fifth birthday.

But redfish are not that way. They're slower-growing and they live longer. Thus, recoveries from overfishing take more time.

And unfortunately, right now, time is something we can't waste. Louisiana, let's lower our redfish limit. ■

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- 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).

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2022 OCT					BEST DAYS				LUNAR PERIODS				TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED		
POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCEL	VALUE	MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT							
Sat 1				30	1:18 pm	5:46 pm - 6:28 pm	10:54 pm	5:06 am - 5:58 am					Low		
Sun 2				39	2:23 pm	6:50 pm - 7:28 pm	11:55 pm	6:11 am - 6:53 am					Half		
Mon 3				31	3:22 pm	7:48 pm - 8:34 pm		7:15 am - 7:53 am							
Tue 4				29	4:11 pm	8:42 pm - 9:38 pm	1:04 am	8:13 am - 8:59 am					Perigee		
Wed 5				30	4:53 pm	9:30 pm - 10:42 pm	2:15 am	9:07 am - 10:03 am							
Thu 6				42	5:28 pm	10:14 pm - 11:42 pm	3:27 am	9:55 am - 11:07 am							
Fri 7				54	5:59 pm	10:51 pm - 12:43 am	4:37 am	10:39 am - 12:07 pm							
Sat 8				65	6:27 pm	11:28 pm - Midnight	5:45 am	11:16 am - 1:08 pm							
Sun 9				69	6:55 pm	Midnight - 1:40 am	6:51 am	11:53 am - 2:05 pm					Full		
Mon 10				62	7:23 pm	12:02 am - 2:38 am	7:55 am	12:27 pm - 3:03 pm							
Tue 11				54	7:53 pm	12:38 am - 3:34 am	9:00 am	1:03 pm - 3:59 pm							
Wed 12				46	8:26 pm	1:17 am - 4:29 am	10:03 am	1:42 pm - 4:54 pm							
Thu 13				42	9:03 pm	1:57 am - 5:27 am	11:06 am	2:22 pm - 5:52 pm							
Fri 14				43	9:46 pm	2:42 am - 6:22 am	12:07 pm	3:07 pm - 6:47 pm							
Sat 15				43	10:34 pm	3:30 am - 7:16 am	1:03 pm	3:55 pm - 7:41 pm							
Sun 16				46	11:27 pm	4:22 am - 8:08 am	1:55 pm	4:47 pm - 8:33 pm					High		
Mon 17				55		5:15 am - 8:57 am	2:40 pm	5:40 pm - 9:22 pm					HALE		
Tue 18				45	12:24 am	6:07 am - 9:43 am	3:19 pm	6:32 pm - 10:08 pm							
Wed 19				39	1:23 am	7:01 am - 10:23 am	3:53 pm	7:26 pm - 10:48 pm							
Thu 20				38	2:23 am	7:53 am - 11:03 am	4:24 pm	8:18 pm - 11:28 pm							
Fri 21				36	3:23 am	8:46 am - 11:38 am	4:51 pm	9:11 pm - 12:03 am							
Sat 22				44	4:24 am	9:39 am - 12:11 pm	5:17 pm	10:04 pm - 12:36 am							
Sun 23				51	5:26 am	10:33 am - 12:45 pm	5:44 pm	10:58 pm - 1:10 am							
Mon 24				59	6:29 am	11:30 am - 1:18 pm	6:11 pm	11:55 pm - Midnight							
Tue 25				62	7:35 am	12:28 pm - 1:56 pm	6:41 pm	Midnight - 1:43 am					New		
Wed 26				50	8:44 am	1:30 pm - 2:38 pm	7:16 pm	12:53 am - 2:21 am							
Thu 27				39	9:56 am	2:32 pm - 3:28 pm	7:58 pm	1:55 am - 3:03 am							
Fri 28				28	11:08 am	3:37 pm - 4:23 pm	8:49 pm	2:57 am - 3:53 am							
Sat 29				23	12:17 pm	4:43 pm - 5:21 pm	9:48 pm	4:02 am - 4:48 am					Perigee		
Sun 30				22	1:18 pm	5:44 pm - 6:26 pm	10:55 pm	5:08 am - 5:46 am					Low		
Mon 31				27	2:10 pm	6:40 pm - 7:32 pm		6:09 am - 6:51 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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HUNTING A DUST TRAIL, THE LITTLE BLUE HOUSE AND LOTS OF SQUIRREL MULLIGAN

Ever hunted a dust trail? I have. It's my fault. I should have moved quicker.

But I lingered a little too long picking up snacks and Dr. Pepper in the little store in the big curve on Hwy. 165 at Riverton (that's not there today). I almost never caught up with Byron Rogers in his old Chevy pickup.

I was in a group heading on a season-opening squirrel hunt deep in the

Caldwell Parish woods, and while I knew where to turn off the main highway, I wasn't sure which of the dozen or so gravel and dirt roads to turn on after that. I had never been where we were going. No cell phones. No GPS. No 911 address signs.

GOOD GUESSES

Fortunately, we made a couple of good guesses and there ahead, was a little

wisp of dust in the air from the pickup truck caravan in front of me. I made it to "camp," a clearing on the edge of a big timber company hardwood bottom. Back



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.

in the day, lands like these were open to the public. That was before irresponsible hunters abused the privilege and those companies found big bags of lease dollars in their woods.

Successfully hunting and finding the dust trail led to a great weekend. It was much better than the alternative, an unscheduled tryout for "Alone."

We shot squirrels. We ate squirrel mulligan. We told lies. And, as always, we watched our backs. Somehow as I tracked the dust trail, I knew in the back of my mind that Big B would slow down enough for me to catch him, or at least he would send somebody back looking for us in a few hours.

But Byron was never one for shying away from putting a Vienna sausage in your squirrel mulligan or hiding your box of No. 8 shot right before daylight the morning of the hunt.

Such was the way of the outdoor activities that I pursued with my old Forrest Street neighbor. Big B passed away about five years ago and I hope those Angels up there have adjusted to him by now.

THE LITTLE BLUE HOUSE

I recall one visit to the little "Blue House," a camp that Byron engineered, helped build and supervised untiringly.

I went on a squirrel hunt another season at the little Blue House one weekend on the banks of the Tensas River. Byron was just a half dozen weeks past having kidney surgery. It was his first outing. He was supposed to be really taking it easy. No bouncing around or anything strenuous. Part of squirrel hunting at the Blue House was climbing down an old iron ladder which looked like it came from the salvage yard at the local paper mill where we both worked. Big B would say it's where he worked and where I held a job. We went down the ladder, into an aluminum boat, across the river and up a steep clay bank to some fine, hard-to-reach squirrel woods.

But when Byron got to the bottom rung on the rusty old ladder, it broke. He went down not one foot, but about three, landing pretty hard on his feet. I looked at him. He looked at me. After a second that lasted two minutes, he broke the silence.

"I wasn't supposed to do that," he said. He assured us he was okay. More squirrels were killed. More lies told. And I'm sure somebody had a Vienna sausage in their squirrel mulligan.

Coming home from work late at night, I often found the light on down the street, where many late night talks took place about his one-time dreams to be a major league umpire or mine about being a professional bass fisherman. They stayed dreams because we had families to take care of. The discussions were entwined with more serious discussions about life.

GOOD LIFE ADVICE

When I went to work at the mill, he was a Union Chairman and I was a sala-ried "white hat," the term the "working people" had for supervisors. It could be a fairly high pressure job in a tough work environment. Two weeks hadn't passed when he came through my door and closed it.

He told me, "You didn't ask for this, but I'm going to tell you anyway. Don't get too caught up in this job or the company. Don't let it change you. Don't try to be somebody you're not. Just be Kinny and you'll be just fine," he said.



When the love of my life came to my home town for the first time, Byron and his wife, Zanona, held a neighborhood Fourth of July barbecue. I remember B took an opportune time and asked, "I know she looks good, but can she see good?"

One time, he took me way back in the Ouachita River swamp to a small but-ton willow-lined lake that had almost as many big bass in it as water moccasins. We had to maximize the power of a big-tired four wheel drive Jeep just to get there. There was only one condition — I couldn't write about it, at least not tell anybody exactly where we were. Well, I wrote about it. I didn't tell exactly where we went, but I must have done a pretty good job describing it because he told me everybody knew.

"I knew you were going to do that," he said, looking like he would have liked to hit me with one of those big pipe wrenches he used at work.

Byron was one of the good ones. A real person. He tried to act tough, and could be if necessary. But he would help anybody who was willing to try and help themselves and some who weren't. That's why he was loved by so many people. He didn't give out advice he didn't follow himself. He didn't let life change him. He didn't try to be somebody he was not. He was just Byron and that was just fine. ■



HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK

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



Brandon Rushing

Brandon Rushing with the buck he killed on Oct. 1, 2021 in Bossier Parish.



Tripp Benhard

Tripp Benhard with a 10+ pound bass!



Don Campbell

Don Campbell with the gobbler he took on April 15, 2022 in Webster Parish. It had a 10 1/2-inch beard, 1 1/4-inch spurs and weighed 23 pounds.



Hayes Thibodeaux & Ashton Toups

Hayes Thibodeaux, 8, and Ashton Toups, 8, with a 40-inch bull redfish caught at Pecan Island while relaxing on the water during Easter break. Hayes and Ashton are both 2nd graders at Dozier Elementary in Erath.



Donald, Annadelle, Charlie & Hank

Donald "Bubba" Morgan and some of his grandkid's, Annadelle Talley, 11, Charlie, 10, and Hank Morgan, 5, caught a mess of sac-a-lait on Toledo Bend.

Gavin Seely, 13, got his personal best trout, 19.5 inches, on a Voodoo shrimp under a Four Horsemen cork in Baratavia Bay.



Gavin Seely



Leeum Deshotel

On Easter Sunday, Leeum Deshotel, 8, was fishing at his grandpa's pond when he reeled in his first bass using Nightcrawlers.



Jeff Bell

Jeff Bell with a MRGO monster!



Hunter Links

Hunter Links caught his first bass that he did everything by himself. Righted his line, cast his line, set the hook and reeled him in. This bass was caught on a white KVD spinnerbait and weighed 3.9 pounds.



Colt Gauthreaux

Colt Gauthreaux was 6 when he caught his first bass out of Bayou Segnette on a popping frog lure.



Sophie

Seven-year-old Sophie was fishing with her Poppy when they caught 11 bass and 18 bluegill.

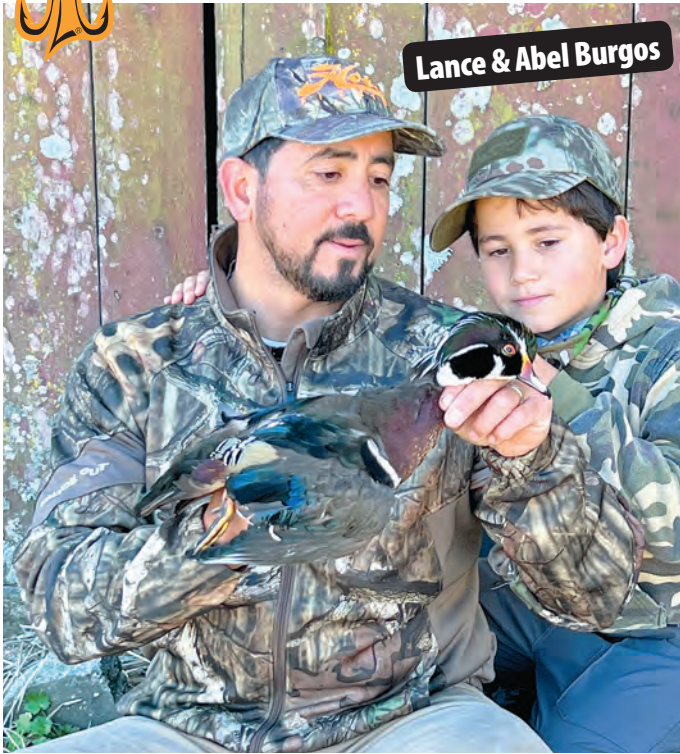


Grayson & John Spinoso

Grayson Spinoso and his dad, John, with the turkey Grayson shot with Federal Premium TSS #9 shot after his dad called the gobbler in on opening day.



HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



Lance Burgos and his son, Abel Burgos, with a beautiful wood duck taken in Charenton the last weekend of duck season.



Amelie Landry with the buck she took on Nov. 13, 2021 in Hicks, La.



Andrew Estes had a great 7th birthday trip to Marsh Island on May 29.



Seth Ortega caught this redfish from a kayak in Port Fourchon.



Braxton Hill with the gobbler he killed while hunting with his dad, Ray Hill, and grandfather, Bruce Dodd, in West Feliciana Parish on March 27. The turkey had a 10 1/2-inch beard and 3/4-inch spurs.



Cole Dabadie

Cole Dabadie caught this bass while fishing with his dad around Lake Des Allemands. The fish weighed 4.3 pounds and was caught on a small Strike King finesse jig.



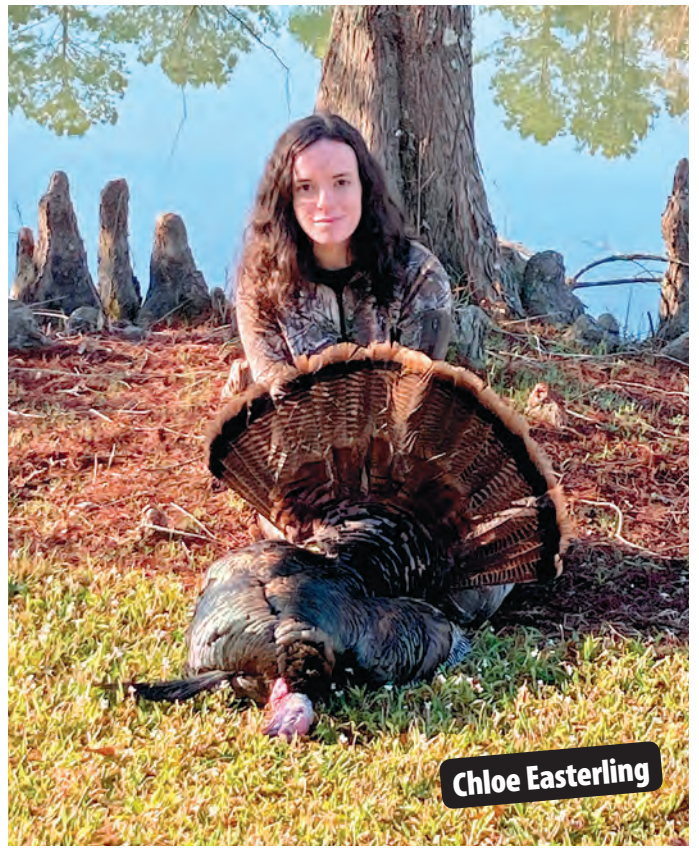
Mishka Mire Elliott

Mishka Mire Elliott was fishing Big Lake when she hooked this 30-inch red on 12-pound tackle. She was using dead shrimp on the bottom. The fish was released after a quick photo.



Jack Vaccaro

Jack Vaccaro, 7, of New Orleans shot his first deer with a Remington 270 over New Year's weekend at his aunt and uncle's property in Poplarville, Miss.

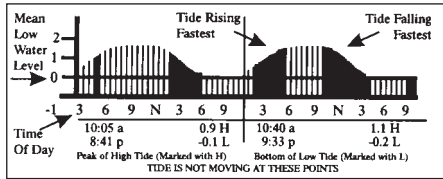


Chloe Easterling

Chloe Easterling, 15, harvested her first turkey in Washington Parish. The gobbler weighed 19 pounds, had a 12-inch beard and 1 1/2-inch spurs. Hunter Thomas was the caller. Her dad, David Easterling, was sitting with them.



How to use the **SPORTSMAN** Tide Guide



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

Tide Corrections

East Point, Grand Isle HIGH LOW

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

Calcasieu Pass, Lighthouse Wharf HIGH LOW

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

East Point Grand Isle

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 2 FQ 3:69 N 3:69 2:23 am 1.7 H 2:34 pm 0.1 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 3 3:69 N 3:69 3:33 am 1.7 H 3:44 pm 0.1 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 4 3:69 N 3:69 4:52 am 1.7 H 4:46 pm 0.1 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 5 3:69 N 3:69 6:18 am 1.6 H 5:41 pm 0.2 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 6 3:69 N 3:69 7:48 am 1.5 H 6:27 pm 0.4 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 7 3:69 N 3:69 9:27 am 1.3 H 7:02 pm 0.6 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 8 3:69 N 3:69 11:24 am 1.1 H 7:05 pm 0.9 L 11:29 pm 0.9 L
3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 9 FM 3:69 N 3:69 6:04 am 0.7 L 2:52 pm 1.0 H 4:52 pm 1.0 L 10:25 pm 1.1 H	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 10 3:69 N 3:69 7:41 am 0.6 L 10:30 pm 1.3 H	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 11 3:69 N 3:69 8:51 am 0.4 L 10:56 pm 1.4 H	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 12 3:69 N 3:69 9:53 am 0.3 L 11:31 pm 1.5 H	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 13 3:69 N 3:69 10:52 am 0.3 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 14 3:69 N 3:69 12:10 am 1.5 H 11:53 am 0.3 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 15 3:69 N 3:69 12:55 am 1.5 H 12:58 pm 0.3 L
3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 16 3:69 N 3:69 1:45 am 1.5 H 2:02 pm 0.3 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 17 LQ 3:69 N 3:69 2:40 am 1.5 H 3:00 pm 0.3 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 18 3:69 N 3:69 3:40 am 1.4 H 3:50 pm 0.3 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 19 3:69 N 3:69 4:43 am 1.4 H 4:30 pm 0.4 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 20 3:69 N 3:69 5:51 am 1.3 H 4:59 pm 0.5 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 21 3:69 N 3:69 7:14 am 1.2 H 5:15 pm 0.6 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 22 3:69 N 3:69 9:08 am 1.0 H 5:05 pm 0.8 L 11:01 pm 0.9 H
3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 23 3:69 N 3:69 5:00 am 0.8 L 12:00 pm 0.9 H 3:51 pm 0.9 L 9:53 pm 1.0 H	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 24 3:69 N 3:69 6:24 am 0.6 L 9:42 pm 1.2 H	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 25 NM 3:69 N 3:69 7:28 am 0.4 L 9:59 pm 1.4 H	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 26 3:69 N 3:69 8:28 am 0.2 L 10:32 pm 1.5 H	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 27 3:69 N 3:69 9:31 am 0.1 L 11:16 pm 1.6 H	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 28 3:69 N 3:69 10:40 am 0.0 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 29 3:69 N 3:69 12:07 am 1.7 H 11:53 am -0.1 L
3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 30 3:69 N 3:69 1:04 am 1.7 H 1:06 pm -0.1 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 31 3:69 N 3:69 2:05 am 1.7 H 2:14 pm 0.0 L	Order the Tide Guides for over 40 locations throughout Louisiana. Call 1-800-538-4355 or go on line www.lasmag.com				

Calcasieu Pass Lighthouse Wharf

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 2 FQ 3:69 N 3:69 2:45 pm 0.2 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 3 3:69 N 3:69 12:44 am 2.4 H 3:56 pm 0.2 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 4 3:69 N 3:69 1:31 am 2.4 H 5:05 pm 0.2 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 5 3:69 N 3:69 2:03 am 2.4 H 7:05 am 1.9 L 10:13 am 2.1 H 6:13 pm 0.3 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 6 3:69 N 3:69 2:28 am 2.3 H 7:30 am 1.7 L 11:52 am 2.1 H 7:14 pm 0.4 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 7 3:69 N 3:69 2:46 am 2.2 H 8:02 am 1.4 L 1:19 pm 2.2 H 8:08 pm 0.6 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 8 3:69 N 3:69 2:55 am 2.1 H 8:37 am 1.1 L 2:28 pm 2.3 H 8:57 pm 0.8 L
3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 9 FM 3:69 N 3:69 2:57 am 2.1 H 3:15 am 0.8 L 3:35 pm 2.3 H 9:44 pm 1.1 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 10 3:69 N 3:69 3:02 am 2.1 H 4:44 pm 2.3 H 10:30 pm 1.4 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 11 3:69 N 3:69 3:14 am 2.1 H 5:47 pm 2.3 H 11:14 pm 1.6 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 12 3:69 N 3:69 3:29 am 2.1 H 6:48 pm 2.1 H 11:56 pm 1.8 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 13 3:69 N 3:69 3:39 am 2.0 H 11:45 am 0.3 L 8:06 pm 2.2 H	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 14 3:69 N 3:69 12:41 am 2.0 L 12:26 pm 0.4 L 9:39 pm 2.2 H	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 15 3:69 N 3:69 1:14 pm 0.5 L 11:18 pm 2.2 H
3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 16 3:69 N 3:69 2:16 pm 0.6 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 17 LQ 3:69 N 3:69 1:06 am 2.2 H 3:25 pm 0.6 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 18 3:69 N 3:69 1:21 am 2.2 H 4:29 pm 0.7 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 19 3:69 N 3:69 1:30 am 2.1 H 5:29 pm 0.7 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 20 3:69 N 3:69 1:39 am 2.1 H 7:41 am 1.6 L 6:23 pm 0.8 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 21 3:69 N 3:69 1:47 am 2.1 H 7:39 am 1.4 L 12:33 pm 1.8 H 7:10 pm 0.9 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 22 3:69 N 3:69 1:54 am 2.1 H 7:51 am 1.2 L 1:34 pm 1.9 H 7:51 pm 1.0 L
3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 23 3:69 N 3:69 2:00 am 2.1 H 8:14 am 0.9 L 2:24 pm 2.1 H 8:31 pm 1.1 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 24 3:69 N 3:69 2:09 am 2.1 H 8:44 am 0.6 L 3:15 pm 2.2 H 9:13 pm 1.3 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 25 NM 3:69 N 3:69 2:20 am 2.1 H 9:19 am 0.3 L 9:56 pm 1.5 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 26 3:69 N 3:69 2:33 am 2.1 H 9:57 am 0.1 L 10:40 pm 1.7 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 27 3:69 N 3:69 2:46 am 2.1 H 6:18 pm 2.4 H 11:24 pm 1.9 L	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 28 3:69 N 3:69 2:59 am 2.1 H 11:24 am -0.2 L 7:46 pm 2.3 H	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 29 3:69 N 3:69 12:09 am 2.1 L 3:08 am 2.2 H 12:14 pm -0.2 L 9:32 pm 2.3 H
3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 30 3:69 N 3:69 1:13 pm -0.1 L 10:55 pm 2.3 H	3.0 ft. 1.5 ft. 0.0 ft. 31 3:69 N 3:69 2:24 pm 0.1 L	Order the Tide Guides for over 40 locations throughout Louisiana. Call 1-800-538-4355 or go on line www.lasmag.com				

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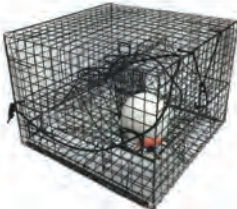
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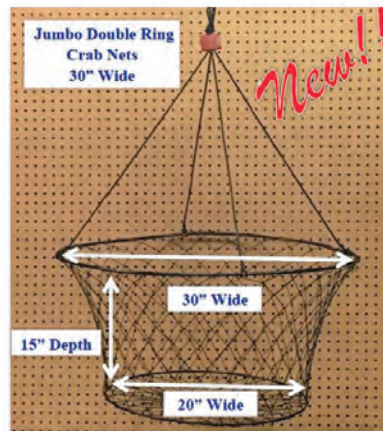
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