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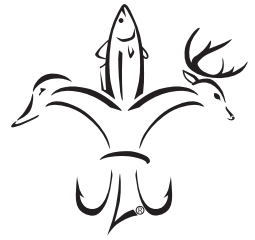


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The lure of a great turkey gobbler puts a lot of Mississippi hunters in the woods this month. Photo by Dan Kibler.



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Outdoor UPDATE with Bobby Cleveland



Bobby Cleveland has covered sports in Mississippi for over 38 years. A native of Hattiesburg and graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, Cleveland lives on Ross Barnett Reservoir near Jackson with his wife Pam. He can be reached at bobbyc7754@yahoo.com.



SPRING FORWARD AND MARCH ON

TURKEY AND FISHING BECOME THE FOCUS FOR SPORTSMEN

Well, here's your Mississippi season limit of gobblers, plus one. Hunters will have six weeks to fill their three tags this spring.

Charles Dickens had a great description of March, to which all Mississippi sportsmen can surely relate:

"March ... when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold; when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade."

Any fisherman or hunter in the Magnolia State knows what he meant.

- Turkey hunters start many a cool morning dressed in layers, only to end up sweating profusely if the hunt turns into a day-long odyssey to find a lonesome gobbler, with sweaters or jackets stuffed into their ditty bags or tied around the neck or waist.
- Fishermen, likewise, face the cold-to-hot situation, and also the often-relentless wind that makes fishing so difficult, but we continue to go because we know all species are in a feeding frenzy.

March is what March is, meaning the transition from winter to summer, torn between the seasons, without an identity. To claim it as spring — which officially begins March 20 — isn't fair, because Mississippi springs pass so quickly, like the blink of an eye.

That said, however, it is a great month for outdoorsmen, even though the deer and small-game hunting seasons are in the rear-view mirror. There is much to do in March, and this issue of *Mississippi Sportsman* sets the table.

For starters, there's outstanding fishing. Bass are in prespawm in the northern two-thirds of the state and spawning in the other third. Crappie are prespawm in all areas. Later in the month, even chinquapin bream will be on the beds. Check writer Phillip Gentry's tips for catching the elusive 3-pound crappie, and contributor Don Shoopman talks to BASS pro Greg Hackney about beating bass in high water.

Turkey season opens to the delight of a legion of men and women dedicated to the monarch of the woods. Youths ages 15 and under can start chasing them on March 8, and everyone else gets a chance on March 15. The season ends May 1. That's plenty of time to get a bird or two, or even a season limit of three. According to biologists, this is going to be a good season, and the prospects are even brighter for coming seasons. You can learn more about the hot spots in this

edition and also learn how to comply with the new mandatory Game Check harvest reporting system that starts this spring.

We've got that and more, including a look back at the top bucks taken in the 2018-19 season.

March on, *Mississippi Sportsman*. ■



Manning Moody IV, David Smessaert and Laura Manuel caught bass and bream in Perkinston.

IT'S NO SECRET:

SWIM A LIZARD ON ROSS BARNETT

What was once a secret held tight to the chest of a handful of bass anglers on Ross Barnett Reservoir is now a well-known fish producing technique on many waters of Mississippi. It's called "swimming a lizard."

It's simple: Texas-rig a 6- or 7-inch lizard — any color, as long as it's black with any color flakes, as long as they're red — and either leave the 3/16- to 1/4-ounce bullet weight unpegged or peg it on 17- or 20-pound line. Cast it as far up into sparse vegetation as possible and reel it back.

"There's not a lot of science to it; you throw it, and you reel it," said bass pro Pete Ponds of Gluckstadt, who has fished the pattern for decades on Barnett and now takes it on the road to other waters and other states. "In early March, when the temperatures hit about 50 degrees, buck bass move shallow to prepare beds. You can catch as many as you want.

"But, when the water reaches the upper 50s, like 56 or 57, that's when you see the big females move up. It's like Mother Nature flips a switch, and it's on. It's unreal, because one day you'll be in there catching a lot of buck bass, you know, 12 to 15 inches, and then the next, you go in and catch the big fish. It happens that quick."

Ponds offers some tips that can help fishermen find the big fish from the start during this sudden movement.

"I always relate this back to an area of Barnett Reservoir called Behind 7," he said referring to a big cove on the north-east side of the main lake that once sat behind a sign with the numeral 7 on it. "That is a cove with a lot of pad stems, primrose and reeds, with a ditch that enters it and runs to the back. The first few days after the surface temperature climbs above 56, I catch most of the big fish on the vegetation closest to the ditch and the drop.

"They will hang out close to that edge until they are confident the water temperature won't drop back. As the days progress, they will move up and fan out into the shallows. You've got about 10 days or two weeks to get on them before they settle down on the beds with a male. It's usually in mid- to late March,

but it can happen in the first week when we have early springs."

Ponds' biggest tip lies in boat handling, and he stresses it more with this pattern than any other.

"Boat handling and positioning is always important, but when you are in as shallow as you need to be with a swimming lizard, it's even more so," he said. "First thing, get a push pole and learn how to use it. Stay off the trolling motor as much as possible as you fish your way in and out of the vegetation. Push pole into position, and then take a break and let the water settle down. Then fan-cast the entire area before poling to the next and repeating the whole process.

"Keep your eyes and ears open to bass activity. If they move, you'll see ripples. If they feed, you'll hear them smacking. If

you detect one out of casting range, don't charge after it. Work your way in that direction. That fish will likely still be there and still be feeding when you get there. Remember, these are prespawn fish, and they'll eat when they have a chance, unless you spook them."

As with any pattern, Ponds has a backup lure tied on and ready in case the fish misses the moving lizard. He usually reaches for a Pete Ponds' Signature Finesse Swimming Jig (by Talon). It's weedless and can get through the vegetation.

"They will slam it," he said. "But it's not a search bait in this situation, because it has little to no vibration, and fish would have a problem sensing it. It's ideal as a follow-up bait, when you know where one is feeding." ■



BIGGEST BUCK EVER

Bowhunter Luke Brewster, a Virginia resident, arrowed the biggest non-typical buck ever taken by a hunter on Nov. 2 in Edgar County, Illinois. The buck has 39 scorable points and netted 320%. Only two bigger bucks are on record: both were found dead.

North American Whitetail

KIDS GET FIRST SHOT AT GOBBLERS

Harvey Graham still considers the youth turkey season, now over a decade old in Mississippi, as the best blessing adult hunters ever received.

"It is in my book, because it gives me another week every year to do what I like doing, testing gobblers," said Graham, 64, of Terry. "Look, I don't have to carry a gun to have fun. For the past 30 years, I've called dozens and dozens of birds to other hunters, mostly kids and first-time adult hunters. It's what I love doing more than anything else outdoors. I rarely kill one now, unless I'm backing up another hunter."

Graham is so hooked by the sport that he chose it over deer hunting this year.

"My doctor told me last September I needed knee replacement surgery, and I could either do it before or after hunting season," he said. "He was acting like timing

the operation to allow for deer season was what mattered. I let him know real quick that wasn't a consideration. I asked him, 'if we do this next week (mid September), could I be full speed by March 8?'

"He said I could if I did all the rehab. 'Don't you worry about that,' is what I told him, and I was serious. I didn't hunt one day during deer season, but I didn't miss a single day of rehab, and I will be ready by the start of youth season. I've got to be; my dance card is full. I've got five kids lined up that week. It coincides with spring break for most of the schools here."

Only children ages 15 or younger can shoot during the youth season. A child at least 12 years of age and under 16 years of age must have a certificate of satisfactory completion of a hunter education class to hunt alone during the season.

All youth that have not completed a

MISSISSIPPI SPRING TURKEY SEASON

SEASONS

YOUTH ONLY: March 8-March 14. Only hunters aged 15 and under can shoot gobblers, but licensed (or exempt) adults can participate in all other phases of the hunt.

REGULAR: March 15-May 1.

LIMITS: One (1) adult gobbler or one gobbler with a 6-inch or longer beard per day, 3 per spring season. Hunters 15 years of age and younger may harvest 1 gobbler of choice (any age, beard length) per day, 3 per spring season.

class must be in the presence of and under the direct supervision of a licensed or exempt hunter at least 21 years old while hunting. The licensed adult hunter must hold a valid license for the species being hunted.

All youths must participate in the new mandatory Game Check program for reporting harvested gobblers, including carrying the required harvest report card. The adult may carry the youth's harvest report card during the hunt (see feature in this magazine). ■

Hunters under age 16 get a six-day head start on their adult brethren this month as spring wild turkey season arrives in the Magnolia State.



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BATTLE AGAINST GIANT SALVINIA CONTINUES

Ross Barnett officials are waiting to see how well eradication efforts worked on salvinia.

Officials at Barnett Reservoir are anxiously awaiting the spring "green-up" in Pelahatchie Bay, where the battle against the invasive plant giant salvinia continues. That's when they'll find out how successful they were in destroying the dangerous threat.

"We know we've eliminated at least 80 percent of the giant salvinia," said biologist Ryan Jones of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, who has overseen the eradication efforts. "We have hit the stuff hard, very hard, with chemicals since August, and you can tell it, too, because a lot of it is just gone. It's no longer there. And the remaining salvinia looks poor; we've definitely hurt it. But is it dead, or is it dormant because of the winter?"

"It's to the point now where we need for

the spring green-up so we can see how much comes back. That's how we will know for sure. It's difficult to predict, and there's a lot riding on it."

Reservoir officials closed the entire Pelahatchie Bay area to boating in November. Even residents of the shoreline had to keep their boats docked or on a trailer during that time.

"For the most part, our residents and our users have been understanding, and we want to get them back on the water enjoying our great lake," said John Sigman, general manager of the Pearl River Valley Water Supply District, the state agency that oversees the 33,000-acre lake near Jackson. "We



know how important Pelahatchie Bay is in the spring, and how a lot of local businesses

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If left along, giant salvinia can take over waterways in a short period of time.



are built around fishing and recreation on the lake.

“But we’ve got a lot of time and money invested in this effort to kill giant salvinia, and aquatic vegetation specialists have told us this will be our only chance to completely kill it and eradicate it from Barnett Reservoir. We’ve committed a lot of resources to it, and we need to stay the course and see if we can eradicate it.”

PRWSD has spent more than \$100,000 in the salvinia battle, with another \$60,000 already committed to the purchase of boat cleaning stations. A controlled burn in one area that is considered a nursery for the plant was scheduled for mid-February, which should accomplish two goals: clearing the remains of other dead plant species as well as destroying a big concentration of the remaining salvinia.

The lake level was held about 2 feet below normal throughout the winter to keep the salvinia high and dry and to expose it to freezing temperatures. A native of the Amazon region of Brazil, the plant has no tolerance to freezing weather.

Sigman said PRWSD and MDWFP began discussions in January on the parameters of a plan to begin reopening the bay to boaters.

“There was nothing concrete established,” he said. “We just wanted to get the conservation started. A lot of what we will be able to do will be dictated by what we find after the green-up. It could end up as a total reopening or keeping it closed, but most likely it will be a partial reopening of some type, probably in late March or early April.” ■

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ARE YOU ANGLER ENOUGH TO JOIN THE 'DIRTY 30'?

In most cases, having your name placed on a "Dirty 30" list might not seem like a positive development, but a citation program created by Chris Bush of The Speckled Truth honoring anglers who land 30-inch speckled trout is an exception.

The program, inspired by a Virginia angler-recognition program, began Oct. 1, 2017, covering coastal states from Virginia to Texas. In its first year, 59 entries were certified as meeting the benchmark. So far, the list for 2018-2019 comprises 17 entries.

Sponsors are jumping in to increase the program's stature in its second year. Now, along with a "Dirty 30" sticker, anglers will receive a "box chock-full of tackle," according to Bush, who estimates the value at \$70 to \$80.

Anglers, however, aren't the only ones who stand to benefit

from the program. Tangible data leads to better conservation, Bush said.

"You want to have a measurable baseline," Bush said. "The more information, the better you can preserve

the fisheries."

The data already has provided some interesting insights, Bush said, such as the fact that 87 percent of 2018's trophy trout were caught on or around a new or full moon. And while catches were spread out somewhat evenly throughout the seasons, anglers were more successful using artificials from March to October.

Bush said anglers can use the growing information from the program to their advantage. "You still have to find them, but you stack the odds in your favor."

The "Dirty 30" program is free to



enter, but photos must include a measuring device. For more information on the program go to thespeckledtruth.com. ■

— Allan Schilling

ELECTION YEAR: IT'S QUIET IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE

Despite the CWD cases, Mississippi lawmakers sidestepped any contentious wildlife and fishery measures presented during the opening weeks of the 2019 Legislative Session, which is to be expected during an election year.

Of 15 bills assigned to the House Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks Committee, only one survived committee deadline for action.

In the Senate Committee, only one of 17 survived.

Neither of the two surviving bills would have any major impact on hunting or fishing. However, among the bills that failed to garner any significant support were two that would have had major impact on future deer seasons. One was related to CWD and the other to property rights. Both created an uproar in Mississippi's outdoor cyberspace.

H.B. 768 would have banned the practice of

supplemental feeding, and thus prohibited "baiting" of deer. An interesting side note: technically, it remains illegal to hunt deer with the aid of bait in Mississippi; however, regulations involving supplemental feeding make it legal to do so."

H.B. 1410 would have severely restricted hunting deer with dogs, creating in law a minimal acreage required to obtain a permit from the MDWFP to run dogs.

"There's still a chance that we could see supplemental feeding

curtailed," said hunter Robert Hays of Brandon. "The MDWFP has authority to restrict it if it deems it imperative in response to CWD. They've already banned it in the two CWD management zones, and they've outlawed the use of deer-based scent products. They do not have authority to limit the use of dogs during deer season on public land. That would require the Legislature." ■

A crew member leads a 15-foot, 2,600-pound great white shark toward the boat before it was tagged and released off Hilton Head Island, S.C. in mid-January.

HILTON HEAD BOAT STRIKES SHARK GOLD

Seven great whites, including huge male, caught on one trip

Field reporter Brian Cope of Edisto, Island, S.C., posted this story Jan. 22 on www.CarolinaSportsman.com.

Chip Michalove of Outcast Sport Fishing Charters in Hilton Head Island, S.C. and his crew caught seven great white sharks off the coast of Hilton Head on Jan. 18, the most he's caught in a single day. They tagged four of the sharks, and released all seven.

One, a 15-foot, male estimated at 2,600 pounds, is the largest-known male great white ever tagged in the Atlantic Ocean.

Michalove has hooked more than 30 great white sharks since 2015; that's when he caught his first one off South Carolina's coast. But seven in one day was epic, even for him.

"I've never dreamed of seeing that many in one day. We found this spot where there was a plethora of great whites. Like barracuda swarming a reef," he told *The Island Packet*. "We were battling great whites for more time than we were waiting for them."

The tags they used will send data back to scientists — water depths, temperatures, how often and how far the sharks move, and which areas they spend most of their time — as the sharks continue their journey.

One of the crew's sharks last Friday was a 12½-foot, 1,500-pound female. The crew caught an 8-foot male toward the end of the trip. With his crew tired and ready to celebrate, Michalove convinced them to stay for one more try. That's when they hooked the 15-foot male.

"They were beat, but I talked them into setting up the chum once more with a 'we'll give it an hour.' Thirty minutes and three Advil later, we had a hog swim up and take it," he said.

"It was almost as wide as the boat. It's always shocking to not only see the length of these sharks, but their width and their power is just incredible," he said. ■

— Brian Cope



CWD COUNT UP TO 12

MORE INFECTED BUCKS FOUND DURING SEASON

Confirmation of nine more cases of chronic wasting deer in two neighboring northern-tier Mississippi counties brings the total count to 12 cases in the Magnolia State.

Since deer season began — when more deer were sampled via hunter request — six cases have been confirmed in Marshall County and three in neighboring Benton County. Both are adjacent to the border with Tennessee, where wildlife officials have confirmed a hot spot for the disease that affects cervids, like white-tailed deer.

The Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency has confirmed more than 90 CWD cases

this year in the combined border counties of Hardeman and Fayette, which are across the border from Mississippi's Marshall and Benton counties.

Mississippi's first case of CWD was confirmed in the last week of the 2017-18 deer season, February 2018 in Issaquena County. A second confirmation came in October from Pontotoc County, about 50 miles southeast of Holly Springs, the town closest to where six CWD cases were confirmed this year.

A second deer from Issaquena County was confirmed as CWD-positive in October before the first case was located in

Marshall County. In the two months since, five more were confirmed in Marshall plus the three in Benton.

The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks has tested 7,098 deer since the hunting season opened on Oct. 1. Hunters were responsible for most of the samples tested, according to Russ Walsh, executive director of MDWFP's Wildlife Bureau.

"The hunters deserve a tremendous amount of credit for responding," he said. "We greatly appreciate the hunting public for participating in this process." ■

Hunting/Fishing
SCRAPBOOK



Luke Sides, 13, killed this nice buck with his Mission bow on Oct. 8, 2018, in Desoto County. The big buck scored 143.5.



Gretchen Tisdale, 11, of Mandeville, La., shot her first deer Nov. 10, 2018, on family land in Claiborne County. She loves spending time in the woods with her dad. After seeing some good deer at the end of last season and not being able to get a shot, she was eager to get in the stand this fall. She dropped this 5-point at about 70 yards with a 300 AAC Blackout.

On Nov. 29, Hunter Jensen, 11, hunted alone for the first time in one of the stands he and his dad put up in Woodville. He made an excellent shot at 181 yards to drop this 116-inch 10-point. It was his final buck tag filled for the 2018-19 season. He took his first deer with a crossbow, a 7-point, on Oct. 11 and then shot a 126-inch 11-point buck on Nov. 7.



Leland Koestler, 12, killed this 128-inch 8-point on his grandfather's farm in Tunica County on Dec. 28, 2018.

GOT PICS? We want 'em

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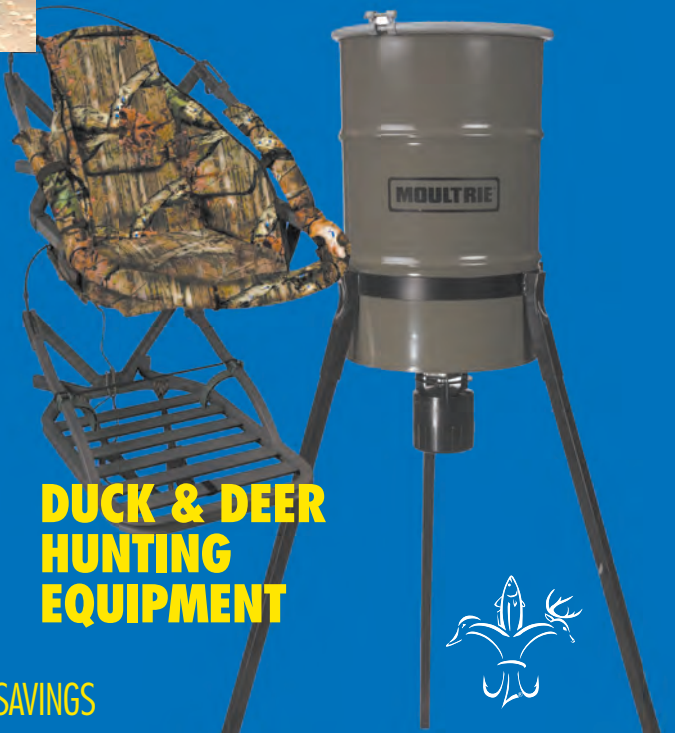
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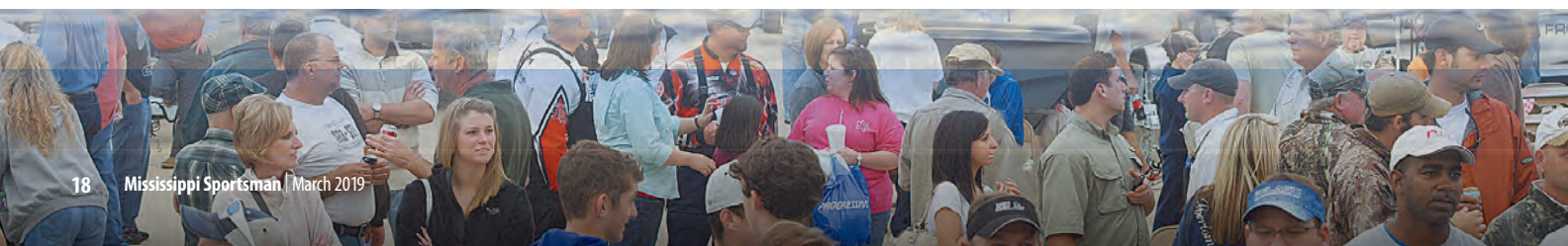


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**OUTLOOK FOR MISSISSIPPI'S
SPRING WILD TURKEY SEASON IS
PROMISING ACROSS THE STATE,
WITH SOME REGIONS EXPECTED
TO HAVE AN AWFUL LOT OF
GOBBLERS TO TRY AND FOOL
THIS SEASON. ■ BY BOBBY CLEVELAND**

Bring on
the toms!



The bottom of the bluffs, with the first hint of daylight appearing over the crest, was a perfect place to stop and listen for a gobbler to announce his presence.

“Fixing to hoot,” said my hunting partner, Keith Partridge, a former guide from Terry. “Be listening.”

With that, he put his hands to his mouth to help direct the call and released a pretty fair rendition of an owl. He hooted to the beat of “Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you?”

As the notes bounced off the ridge farther and farther down the line, we listened. Finally, we heard a distant gobble.

“Sounds like he’s on the ridge, about halfway to the back,” I told Partridge. “I can’t believe it’s only one.”

Partridge shook it off.

“That’s just to wake them up,” he said. “Check this.”

He belted out another series of hoots, this time louder. He didn’t get in the second part of “Who cooks for you?” before he got an answer. This gobble was closer, judging by the volume.

And, it didn’t stop. A gobbling domino effect ensued.

Gobblers started coming from farther down the ridge. One gobbled, and the next one down gobbled back.

Then the next.

When it reached the end of the ridge, near Bayou Pierre, the dominos started falling back up the ridge toward us.

“Got to be 10 or 12 different birds,” I said.

“At least,” said Partridge, “at least 24 or 25 gobblers, total down and back.”

A distant crow opened up, and the gobblers continued from the ridge. It was quite a show, the kind I’d driven two hours just to hear.

Then, a gobble thundered from the opposite side of the bottom, near the swamp. When that bird roared, all the rest shut up. There would be no more gobblers from the ridge.

“That’s the one,” Partridge said. “That’s the one that will end up breaking our hearts before this spring is over. He’s the boss bird, and he’s roosted on the edge of the big field on the other side. He’ll fly down right in the middle of the field, out of gun range and he’ll wait for the hens to come to him, strutting and gobbling and eating in between.”

"The way I see it, we got two choices.

"We can go after him, waste a few hours while he's with his hens, and then go home empty handed," he said. "Or we can go find one of these subordinate gobblers and settle for a 2-year-old, too horny for his own good, and probably be done in an hour. What you think?"

Not being picky, I had a quick answer.

"Any one will do," I said. "Let's get it done."

Ten minutes later, we were sitting on the edge of the big field, against the ridge, settled against trees just inside the wood line. We had two hen decoys deployed, and when the first rays of sunlight reached them, Partridge started calling with a few soft yelps.

A bird gobbled from behind us. Then another. Then another. They liked the man's calls.

We were in a good spot, between the gobblers and the decoys in the field. Partridge yelped again, slightly louder.

The gobblers responded again.

"I think it's three of them, roosted close together," Partridge said. "Let's see if we can get them stirred up."

He increased his call volume in a different rhythm and got the answer he wanted. The first bird gobbled, and the other ones doubled down on top of him. I cut my eyes over at Partridge and saw his smile before he lowered his face mask.

"This is going to happen quick," he whispered, and all the while the gobbles continued, until...

The boss bird opened up far across the bottom, shutting up the three gobblers we had talking.

"Doesn't matter," Partridge said. "They're coming. Get ready. They will just show up, and unless they gobble again, we'll have no idea where."

I saw them first, three white heads coming through the brush to my right, appearing like bobble-head toys, about 75 yards away. They had decided to come in from our flank. Instead of alerting Partridge, I waited until they went below a rise and eased around to get my body and gun in position, knowing he'd see me move and get the message.

"I see them," he said. "Wait until they reach the decoys, and then you take whichever one is on the right, and I'll take one of the other two."

Two minutes later, we were standing over two flopping gobblers, watching the third one running like a demon back to the ridge.

It was 6:58 on the first Saturday of the season — which had opened two days earlier — and we were done. After a short celebration, we were headed to Jackson for the St. Paddy's Day parade.

GOING OFF SCRIPT

Wouldn't it be great if all opening day hunts stuck to the script, with a happy ending? You go. You locate. You set up. You call. You shoot. You go home.

It's rare, yes, but it does happen, or at least should, for every hunter at least once in his or her hunting career. We wouldn't want it every hunt, because then it wouldn't be the great sport that it is, an obsession rooted as much in frustration as in celebration.



FACING PAGE: Concentrating on 2-year-old gobblers early in the season and letting the big boss have his fun for a couple of weeks is often a good decision. **BELOW:** A couple of good hatches should have resulted in plenty of gobblers to go around this spring in Mississippi.

Most of the frustration, Partridge said, is hunter-inflicted, and he pointed to the aforementioned hunt as an example.

“How many hunters do you think would have macho’ed up and gone after the dominant gobbler that morning?” he said. “In my early days, I’d have done that, and I’d have gone home empty handed, thinking, ‘It’s OK, I learned something today that I can bank and use later as the season progresses, and I will eventually learn how to kill that bird.’”

“There’s nothing wrong with that mindset, either. It’s up to the hunter to decide why he’s there, hunting for a kill or hunting for the experience,” he said. “Knowing the dynamics of the turkey population on your hunting property is critical. That morning, I knew we had enough 2-year-old birds to go and have success, leaving me the rest of the year to play with that old gobbler. I knew we had a lot of hens, too, which would keep the boss bird busy for weeks. It took over half the season before he was desperately looking for hens. That’s when I got serious about him and was able to beat him.”

Fact is, Partridge said, beating a boss gobbler early in the season when his harem is full is always a long shot. Any early season success you might have with such a bird will involve luck, ambush or — God forgive us — baiting with corn or something illegal like using a centerfire rifle at 200 yards.

While there is a sprinkling of older, wiser and more stubborn gobblers throughout Mississippi, the best news for turkey hunters involves what’s to come, especially for the north and Delta regions.

FORECAST GOOD FOR MOST UP NEXT >



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FORECAST GOOD FOR MOST

Adam Butler, the turkey program coordinator for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, has good news for many hunters in Mississippi, based on data gathered through the agency's annual spring gobbler hunting survey and the summer brood survey.

"It appears that turkeys are on the upswing across almost the entirety of Mississippi," he said. "Some of that will be beneficial this season, and some of it will be of more impact in future seasons, like 2020. The good news is that there's something good for most areas to take away from the data."

Butler listed some of the key points of the forecast:

- "The 2018 hatch was increased over the previous year, which means most hunters should see more turkeys in the woods this spring. This was especially true in nearly all of south Mississippi, a good chunk of central Mississippi, and most of the lands up and down the Mississippi River between Vicksburg and Memphis. These areas all saw an extraordinary hatch that should yield substantial population increases, but keep in mind the gobblers from last year's hatch will be jakes this spring, and therefore, won't pay many dividends to hunters this year — but do set things up nicely for 2020 and beyond."
- "Based on the spring gobbler hunting survey, jake sightings in the northern third of the state were up last spring, meaning this part of the world should have plenty of 2-year-olds running around this spring. Same for lands along the Mississippi River. Both of these might be hot spots for 2019."

continued on page 26

Look for the number of gobblers in the woods to be highest in the northern part of Mississippi and along the Mississippi River.



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Bring on the toms!



- “Jake sightings in central and south Mississippi were down a little last year, so hunters in those areas will probably see similar to maybe slightly fewer adult gobblers in 2019. But, again, they should have plenty to smile about due to the big influx of new birds from last summer’s hatch.”

Knowing the population is on an upswing is good, but knowing exactly the situation on a particular piece of property is critical to an

don’t feed, so we can’t simply throw out some corn and set up a camera. That really doesn’t tell you much anyway, except how many birds you may have. What I want to know is their travel patterns, strutting sites and feeding areas. If we find a likely dusting site, we’ll hang a camera there, too.”

Using cameras away from feeders makes it easier to check the memory cards.

“The best turkey cameras are those that



Trail cameras have helped more than just deer hunters; they give turkey hunters a good look at their local flock and its habits.

individual hunter’s success. That takes scouting, which in recent years has become a lot easier thanks to technological advancement.

TRAIL-CAM SCOUTING

Most modern-era turkey hunters know well the status of turkeys on their primary hunting property, usually because of encounters with them during the deer season, either by eyeball or camera.

“Until about five years ago, all my scouting was by (binoculars) to spot birds in February or early March,” said hunter Gary Townsend of Brandon. “With the advent of trail cameras, however, it has gotten easier. A lot of deer hunters remove their cameras, or at least shut them off, as soon as the season ends. We don’t, and as a matter of fact, we even add a few in places where we think turkeys travel.

“Camera scouting allows us to keep check on many areas, including some that would be difficult to scout without spooking the turkeys. We

stream photos or video to your computer or cell phone,” Townsend said. “That keeps you out of the woods most of the time, but that’s expensive, so a lot of us use more simpler and affordable cameras with cache cards. If you have them around feeders, there’s no safe time to check them, except at night, when the birds are roosted. That’s why we like them in the woods: on trails, logging roads, clearings and so forth, to see where they are going.

“We can start to pattern them from those movements, and we can get to the cams either at night while they’re roosted or, even if it has to be during the day, the odds are less in bumping them than around a feeder.” ■



Bobby Cleveland has covered sports in Mississippi for over 40 years. A native of Hattiesburg and graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, Cleveland lives on Ross Barnett Reservoir near Jackson with his wife Pam.

A NEW DAWN: GAME CHECK MANDATORY IN 2019

Ever wondered just how many hunters have such good luck on their first day — or any other day — in the turkey woods?

Beginning this year, wildlife officials will know, thanks to the new mandatory turkey harvest-reporting system known as “Game Check” being implemented by the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) for the 2019 spring season.

For the first time, successful turkey hunters must report their kills by 10 p.m. the date of harvest. This should pay double benefit of keeping hunters mindful of the limit and providing instant information for biologists.

“We will learn so much more than we have in the past,” said Adam Butler, the turkey program coordinator for MDWFP. “Everything we’ve learned from hunters to this point has been voluntary, and we’ll still depend on their input to our spring gobbler survey. Game Check will give us real-time results.”

The reporting system should go well beyond the obvious goal of helping hold hunters to the limit, and it doesn’t take a biologist to see the statistical and educational possibilities to be gleaned from it.

Biologists can match harvests to the weather and calendar and do it by regions, and it can all be done without putting each hunter through an ordeal, such as a physical tag or visiting a check station.

The process is simple enough. Each hunter must have in his or her possession while hunting a harvest report card, either one provided by the MDWFP or made by the hunter — an adult

can carry one for a child. On it, each bird killed must be immediately listed before it can be transported. Then, before 10 p.m. on the day of kill, the bird must be reported to the MDWFP, which will be possible either through an MDWFP smartphone app, online at the MDWFP.com web portal or by phone.



Bobby Cleveland

Now that he's dead and on the ground, Mississippi hunters need to report their gobblers before 10 p.m. on the day of the kill.

"By having the deadline at 10 p.m., it gives hunters in some rural areas more time to find a signal for their phones or to get home to a computer," Butler said. "It gives the hunter flexibility."

Hunters will be provided with a harvest confirmation number that must then be added to the hunter's harvest report.

Voila! Done, and the hunter is in complete compliance.

Failure to comply can be costly. It results in a Class III violation, which upon conviction carries a fine of not less than \$25 nor more than \$100. The court can also add a penalty of \$25 for each bird/animal involved.

The expensive part comes in the form of an administrative fee imposed and collected upon conviction: not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 for first offense, \$500 to \$1,000 for a second or subsequent violation. ■

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THREE KEYS TO GETTING A KID A TOM

By Bobby Cleveland

A BLIND, DECOYS AND SHOOTING STICKS WILL HELP YOUNGSTERS TAG THAT FIRST BIRD

When Mississippi's youth turkey season opens on March 8, a veteran hunter who has introduced two sons and many other youngsters to the sport says accessorize for success.

"I've learned over the years that there are three things that are vital for success when hunting with children — a blind, decoys and shooting sticks," said Revel Rawlings of Ridgeland. "I'd rate them in importance in that order, starting with the pop-up-like tent blinds to the shooting sticks.

DON'T START BLIND; SET ONE UP NOW

"The one you absolutely have to consider is the blind," Rawlings said. "Little ones have a tendency to move a lot, and I'm not talking about the mistakes that adults make like turning a head or something like that. They get restless and will move.

"Inside a blind, it's like a tent. Kids can even crawl around or play with a video game and be concealed. And a great thing about the modern pop-ups is that they are quick and easy to deploy and take down and light enough to pack in and out and to move from area to area during a day."

SHOOTING STICKS PROVIDE STABILITY

Rawlings, a longtime member and former president of the Greater Jackson Chapter and the Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, said shooting sticks are more about helping the youth be prepared.

"You think about how long that you sometimes have to hold a shotgun up in shooting position while working a gobbler, and you know how tough it can be for an adult," Rawlings said. "Now think about how tough it would be for a youngster. The shooting sticks can take the weight of the gun off the young hands.

"Plus, the sticks provide another anchor point to help the child aim at the gobbler. I've been turkey hunting for over 30 years and I still get excited and nervous every time I call a bird into shooting range. I've seen the excitement that children experience when a big gobbler comes in strutting and gobbling. The shooting sticks are important in helping them get past the shakes."

DECOYS AREN'T JUST FOR WATERFOWL

Decoys outdate blinds but basically serve the same purpose. Having a decoy in the open, away from the children but in shooting range, can keep a gobbler's focus away from the hunters.

"That's true but these days, with the realistic decoys like we have on the market now, including gobblers, they can bring a gobbler right on in," Rawlings said. "And when you're dealing with youngsters, you need to have something to keep them interested."



Getting a youngster off to a good start in the turkey woods can be one of the great deeds that any adult can put on his hunting resume.

Brian Carroll



2018-19

DEER OF THE YEAR

Mississippi hunters brought down some mighty impressive whitetails in the season that recently ended. Here's a look at a few of them.

Deer hunters in Mississippi are blessed with some of the best habitat in the Southeast, the rich, alluvial soils washed down hundreds and hundreds of miles along the big river corridors, perfect building blocks for producing big bucks.

During the 2018-19 season, hunters proved again and again that the Magnolia State can spit out some deer that would be impressive anywhere in North America.

A handful of writers for *Mississippi Sportsman* have cataloged the hunts and hunters that were on the right end of the bows and rifles when Judgement Day arrived for big bucks across the state. Bobby Cleveland, Glynn Harris and Dan Kibler all contributed original stories that were shortened for this roundup of giant whitetails. For complete stories, visit www.ms-sportsman.com/bigbucks



ITTA BENA HUNTER HITS THE WHITETAIL JACKPOT

Heath Hodges of Itta Bena killed this 217-inch non-typical monster on land in Leflore County on Dec. 3.

Heath Hodges of Itta Bena was just one of a half-dozen hunters in his neighborhood of Leflore County that knew about a huge, non-typical buck roaming the fields and woods.

He wasn't even the first to have the buck in range; a bowhunter couldn't get a shot at 35 yards during the 2017 season. Hodges had seen the buck three times without getting a shot and had it in several trail-camera photos.

But Hodges' luck changed the afternoon of Dec. 3 on a tract that borders family farmland.

"I got on my stand around 2:30 that afternoon, and after getting settled in, I picked up my grunt call and rattling horns and periodically called and rattled. Before long, two does came by me, walked past and actually bedded down 25 yards from me. They stayed there about 30 minutes," said Hodges. "I

guess he was responding to my rattling and grunting; he was headed right to where he'd heard it, which put him in front of me at 25 yards. I eased my gun up, squeezed the trigger, and he ran about 20 yards before piling up."

Hodges' buck was huge, with 20 scoreable points, including a long drop tine. The inside spread was 19¾ inches, the main beams 26 and 27 inches. The rack scored 217½ inches as a non-typical.

DEER OF THE YEAR

Barrett Van Cleve's huge archery buck was taken on Oct. 1, 30 minutes after the season opened.

A GREAT KICKOFF

Barrett Van Cleve's season was made in the first 30 minutes on opening day of archery season, Oct. 1, near Woodville.

That's how long it took him to arrow a fantastic 14-point buck that carried more than 157 inches of antlers, a buck he was very familiar with that carried the nickname "Footloose."

"In all my years, I've never had a situation so perfect that I had confidence going to the stand that I was going to be successful," Van Cleve said. "I knew where he was sleeping. I knew where he was eating. I knew the trail he was using. He was consistent. I had the (trail-camera) photos documenting his life, and it was the same day after day."

Van Cleve had a lock-on stand in a tree overlooking the trail through a food plot to a stand of hardwoods where Footloose bedded down every morning. A few min-



utes before daylight on Oct. 1, the buck showed up, right on schedule.

"Footloose was coming up a rolling ridge that passes bow range from my tree to a hardwood bottom near his bedding area," Van Cleve said. "A large cherrybark oak was blocking my view of his final daybreak stroll towards my lock-on.

"When he finally emerged from behind the tree, I was already standing in position, bow in hand, slightly shaking and breathing heavily."

Two does were in the food

plot when Van Cleve drew on the buck at 29 yards. But the buck turned slightly, and he had to wait about a minute-and-a-half for him to turn back and give him a shot, this one at 27 yards. He buried the arrow through the buck's vitals. Footloose bolted but didn't go very far; Van Cleve found him easily.

The buck's rack, a main-frame 5x4, grossed 157½ inches. It sported tines as long as 11½ inches, was 19¾ inches wide inside, and had bases that measured more than 5½ inches in circumference.

"I KNEW WHERE HE WAS SLEEPING. I KNEW WHERE HE WAS EATING."

PIPELINE TROPHY

Kade Lott of Valley Park got a chance to kill a huge buck in Sharkey County last fall because, well, youth was served.

Lott's father, Brian, put his 14-year-old son on a stand overlooking a pipeline where he'd seen a big buck on Nov. 3. Because it was youth season, Kade Lott could use a rifle; his father was limited to a crossbow, and the buck had been several hundred yards away when he'd seen it.

On Nov. 10, Kade Lott took the pipeline stand, and at 5:15, his father heard the crack of a 7mm-08.

"I texted him '???' and he replied with 'BIG BUCK!!!'" Brian Lott said.

The son wasn't kidding. The pair found the buck in the woods, not far from where Kade Lott had taken the 120-yard shot.

A typical 10-pointer, the buck scored 156 inches gross. It had main beams measuring 24 and 23¾ inches, an 18-inch inside spread, and tines reaching 11 and 10¾ inches. It weighed 238 pounds and was aged at 5½ years.

"I don't think we'll ever forget that day, either one of us," Brian Lott said.

Kade Lott, 14, took this huge 10-pointer in Sharkey County on Nov. 10.



MORE BUCKS >

A PRESENT FOR DAD

Nathanael Reeves of Southaven got the drop on a huge buck in DeSoto County last year, but he called in his father, Rick, to deliver the coup de grace.

The buck was a big, 16-pointer nicknamed Samson that the pair had known for several years — and that Nathanael missed in 2016. During the 2017 season, Reeves said the buck's rack carried 19 points, and it carried around 300 pounds on its huge body.

The Reeves figured from trail-camera photos they had that Samson had passed his peak and was much smaller last fall. That didn't stop them from targeting him on a local WMA, despite the buck's ability to stay hidden.

"Nathanael figured him out," Rick Reeves said. "He's the best hunter I know, and the best outdoorsman I know. He put me on this buck just like he put me on a big brown trout in Arkansas. He thinks like a deer and like a fish. He's just good outdoors."

On Nov. 18, Nathanael put his father

in a stand in a area where he'd gotten a trail-camera photo of Samson the week before, tending a doe.

"He slipped in quick, and when I saw him through my scope, I knew immediately it was Samson," Rick Reeves said. "I only had a second. He was quartering away, so I aimed a little back, hoping the bullet would cross through the vitals."

He pulled the trigger, then watched Samson take off.

"Last year, I purchased a new rifle, a Ruger American in 6.5 Creedmoor," Reeves said. "I shot two deer last year with ballistic points. They destroyed the vitals but left no blood trail. I like a blood trail, so this year, I switched to a bonded bullet."

But Samson left no blood trail this time, either. Rick Reeves called his son, who came through.


"I called Nathanael, and he came to help. He is a good tracker, and I am not," he said.

Nathanael found Samson.

Rick Reeves of Southaven killed this huge 16-point buck on Nov. 18 in Desoto County.








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Drew Burton spent two months focusing his hunting efforts on this 173-inch Humphreys County buck.

HAIL CAESAR!

Last fall, Drew Burton played Brutus to a huge, Humphreys County buck he nicknamed "Caesar."

Burton spent two full months, hunting the buck almost every day, before he finally killed him at a distance not much greater than Julius Caesar was from his attackers in Rome 2,000 or so years ago.

Burton got trail-cam photos of a huge 10-point buck on Oct. 12. He guessed he'd either kill the buck right away, before hunting pressure was a factor, or he'd have to wait for the rut in December to make the buck drop its guard.

Burton knew from the buck's pattern that he'd have to have a wind from the north to hunt him. He didn't kill him the one day in October when he had

conditions in his favor, and he worried constantly throughout a week-long trip to Kansas in mid-November.

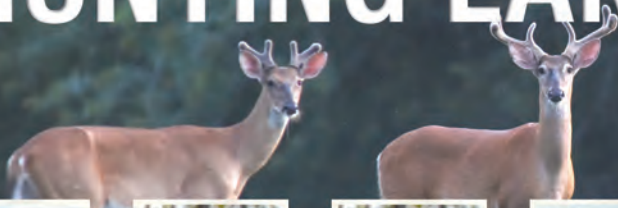
He was set up in a ground blind on Dec. 12 when a doe emerged from the woods, with Caesar on her trail at around 4 p.m. The doe and buck headed in his direction, and he had no shot until the buck was almost in the ground blind with him. He fired when he got an opening, and the buck crashed to the ground right in front of the blind's window.

The buck was obviously worth the effort. It measured 173 inches, a main-frame 5x5 with two sticker points. The buck was 18½ inches wide, with tines measuring as long as 11½ inches.



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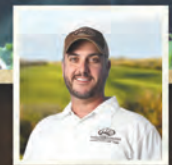
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A BUCK, NOT A DUCK

Blake Caruso killed this 191-inch buck on a WMA in north Mississippi on Dec. 13.

Blake Caruso finished exams and left Mississippi State University on Dec. 12, headed first to a duck hunt in the Delta, then home for Christmas break.

His trip was interrupted, however, and it was the most-timely interruption ever, resulting in a 191-inch buck.

Caruso's older brother, Dustin, had seen a huge buck on a WMA in north Mississippi the family has hunted for several years. Dustin, who was leaving his home in Greenwood for a business trip, showed Blake on a map where he'd seen the buck, arranged for a friend to loan him a .35 Whelen rifle, and sent him into

the woods.

"He had found this long gas-pipeline opening along a creek and said if I could go in there and find a good tree, that's where I needed to be," Blake Caruso said.

The next day, he found a suitable tree and climbed up, prepared to stay all day. At about 3:30, two does walked out, then a third, and the third had an admirer on her tail — his brother's huge buck.

The four deer started across the pipeline, but only three made it. When the buck cleared some trees on one side of the pipeline, he squeezed the trigger and watched the buck "hump up" and

struggle off, mortally wounded, to fall almost within sight.

The enormous buck has been measured by several people, and the gross non-typical score has consistently been around 191 inches. The buck has a 5x5 main frame with double brow tines on both antlers and two more sticker points on each G-2. The main beams were 25% and 25 inches, with the longest tines, measuring 10% and 11%. The bases were 6 inches in circumference, and the mass extends to the end of the beams with the last legal measurements 4% and 4% inches.

A REAL BULLWINKLE

Same buck. Same gas pipeline. Same stand. Same rifle.

Different result.

Mason Nooe of Flowood is thankful that things worked out much better on Dec. 22, 2018, than they did on Dec. 31, 2017.

Nooe shot a big, palmated buck on New Year's Eve of 2017, but he didn't recover him. The shot apparently was not a fatal one.

This past Dec. 22 was the first day Nooe was able to hunt on family land near Pelahatchie in Rankin County. He climbed into the same stand on the same gas pipeline that morning, and the woods were filled with deer running to and fro. He even passed up a nice 8-pointer, deciding it needed another year to grow.

Around 8:15, a doe trotted out into the pipeline,

"She was flicking her tail and looking back behind her. I knew immediately something was up, so I got my gun ready, and by the time I got the scope dialed down from 12 to about 5 or 6, he came barreling out," Nooe said. "Same buck as last year, from the same stand on the same field, only this year he was a lot closer and came out from the opposite direction. They were about 65 yards away, which is why I had to dial back the scope.

"He turned and ran up the pipeline away from me, and I think he was trying to get an angle on her to cut her off in the woods," Nooe said. "I had to stop him so I made a couple of grunts with my throat, and it didn't faze him. Then I whistled as loud as I could, and he stopped, gave me a good quarter-



Mason Nooe's big, palmated buck survived a wound from his rifle in 2017 before being killed on Dec. 22, 2018.

ing away shot at 80 yards.”

At the report from his .30-06, the big buck piled up on the spot.

Nooe hasn't had the buck scored yet, but he said that because of the palmation of the antlers, several circumference measurements will be in the 10-inch range.

“Both sides are palmated like a moose,” Nooe said. “I killed a 10-point out there a few years ago, but it wasn't anywhere near this class of a buck.”

THIRD TIME IS THE CHARM

Daniel Dorner, an attorney from New Orleans, wasn't really planning to hunt the day after Christmas at his family's deer camp in Claiborne County. He really just went up to help get the camp ready for a visit from several family members.

But his father talked him into hunting that afternoon, and when the day was done, Dorner has 163 reasons he was thrilled this his decision — 163 inches of deer antler.

Dorner, 26, got in a stand he'd put up around Thanksgiving after getting trail-cam photos of a special buck. He was in his stand at 2:30, and that afternoon, his buck trotting through the woods, nose to the ground, at about 80 yards. He picked a spot to shoot with his .270, and he squeezed off a miss. The buck ran a few more steps and stopped, and Dorner missed with his second shot. A third shot presented itself, and finally, this one hit home.

A main-frame 8-pointer, the buck scored 163⅞ gross inches, with main beams longer than 27 inches that came within an inch of the tips touching.

“I've seen a few like that, but never that close,” he said. “We've had pictures of other deer with that characteristic, so maybe we have it in our gene pool.”

“It had 6-inch bases and carried it all the way out, with only the final measurement below 5 inches at 4½,” Dorner said. “We aged him at 6½, but he only weighed 175 pounds. One trait of our deer there is that the big antlers have small bodies. The heavier, 200-pound-plus bucks never have big racks.”



Taken Dec. 26, Daniel Dorner's Claiborne County trophy grossed almost 164 inches.

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MORE BUCKS >

Augusta Smith outdid her son with this 165-inch buck, taken Jan. 14 at the same Wilkinson County hunt club as his.

LIKE MOTHER, LIKE SON

Records are made to be broken, right? But the owner of the original record might not be too pleased when somebody throws more touchdown passes, hits more homers or makes more 3-point baskets.

Don't put Turner Smith of Flowood in that category. On Dec. 29, he killed a 12-point, 164½-inch buck that was the biggest ever tagged on his hunt club in Wilkinson County.

His record stood 16 days, until a 165-inch 10-point buck was killed on club property. And Smith was overjoyed: it was his mother, Augusta Smith of Natchez, who broke his record.

For those of you who can add three-digit numbers in your head, that's 329% inches of antler for the same family trophy room.

Turner Smith struck first. His brother had seen the buck during archery season, out of range, and the Smith's had plenty of trail-camera photos of the buck during the 2018 season.

"I usually only bow hunt but on this deer, as big as it was, I decided to take the gun," Turner Smith said. "We've killed a lot of good deer at our club, which the members own, and a lot of 150-class bucks, but we've never topped 160.

"It was the first time in my life that I have done that, deciding to get so involved with just one buck, but that's what I did," said Smith, 33. "I went all in on this buck, and once I did that, it was all I could think about."

He made a map and marked every spot where the buck showed up on a trail-camera photo, and he noticed a small, hardwood bottom in the middle of the action. He hung three trail cameras in the area on Dec. 6 and immediately had photos of the buck. He hunted the buck 10 straight days, hidden in a ground blind made of bamboo and palmettos.

Finally, the morning of Dec. 29, the

buck showed up, and Smith busted him with his .270.

The 12-point buck was a main-frame 5x5 with a sticker point on each antler, a 15-inch inside spread and tines as long as 11 inches, plus thick, heavy bases.

Two weeks later, Augusta Smith did her son even one better, hunting over a T-shaped food plot the afternoon of Jan. 14. Riding to her elevated box blind at 2:30, she spooked deer out of almost every field she passed, then jumped a couple out of her food plot.

Several does and yearlings wandered back into the food plot, followed by an 8-point buck — followed by a much bigger buck, which stopped to graze about 90 yards away.

"When he raised his head maybe to swallow I could see his antlers and I said, 'OK, wow, that's him.' I couldn't shoot right away because he was walking right toward me. He kept coming and I had to wait for him to turn. Finally, at 70 yards, he did and I shot. He spun and went straight down," she said.

Augusta Smith's buck had 25-inch main beams, 10-inch tines, an 18½-inch spread and good mass. The deer weighed just 168 pounds. ■



Turner Smith of Flowood killed this 164½-inch trophy in Wilkinson County on Dec. 29.

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Finding a concentration of rubbed trees can give a hunter an idea where a buck that survived the season might have a bedding area.

WHITETAIL SCOUTING STARTS NOW

WITH DEER SEASON IN THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR, TAKE A LOOK

By Jeff Burleson

Hopefully, this past deer season resulted in trophies for many hunters and plenty of venison for many more. Just as they do every season, a few mysterious bucks evade the sights of the serious hunters and survive. For some hunters, thinking about outsmarting a trophy buck ends on Jan. 13 or Feb. 15, depending on where you hunt in Mississippi, but post-season scouting is a tremendous way to understand where big, mature bucks reside and why they show up in these areas.

Mature bucks live into maturity because of their keen senses. Without their premier sense of smell, deer would never reach maturity. Post-season scouting allows hunters to detect the patterns of big bucks on their property and to prepare for the following season without crippling chances during the season.

Too often, hunters scout heavily during the preseason and the hunting season itself. Mature bucks will quickly change their travel patterns when too much unnatural disturbance occurs within their core areas. Post-season scouting allows hunters to unravel the story and prepare for the next season without the worry of moving a buck out of any area.

Feb. 1 is the prime day to start scouting for next year across most of the Magnolia

State. While specific bucks frequenting an area will probably not be around next fall, hunters can locate the key areas that attracted the mature bucks. Finding areas with heavy doe use will coincide with buck sign. For simplicity, does need adequate food and water adjacent to cover in areas with little human disturbance.

Start investigating major food sources, including heavily-used food plots, mast-production areas, agriculture fields, and other major food sources. Observe the level/direction of tracks and major/minor travel lanes entering and exiting feeding areas. Closely observe the minor travel routes paralleling the major travel routes. These minor travel routes are generally used by bucks over does. Follow these travel routes to bedding zones, noting accumulations of rubs and scrapes within these areas and identifying possible staging areas and landscape funnels between each of these destinations.

Note the travel trails used by mature bucks with large rubs and thick tracks. These rub lines typically have a pattern to them and will be used by other bucks the following year.

Bucks rub trees to establish dominance within an area and to mark their bedding area. Bedding areas utilized by bucks will be peppered with rubs on almost every

available sapling/tree within thick cover. Knowing bucks' bedding areas is important.

While food plots and feeding areas are often targeted for stand locations, the staging areas and funnels are more productive for daylight encounters, but they are a little tricky getting to without causing too much commotion.

Mature bucks will not arrive at feeding areas until after nightfall as hunting pressure increases. Identify the staging areas and funnels, closely-observing buck sign and sites for potential stand locations. Look for trees overlooking natural shooting lanes for stands where you can have quick and easy access during the season. Don't choose stand locations immediately adjacent to bedding areas, which are sacred — especially for mature bucks. Early in the season, while pressure is low, deer will bed on the very edge of the cover. Make sure stand locations are far enough away from the bedding areas to prevent spooking these deer while entering and exiting the stand.

As good ambush locations are found, erect stands and clear/trim shooting lanes and hunter access routes to reduce disturbance during the deer season when disturbance needs to be low as possible. Take note of how to approach stands with the wind coming from different directions. ■

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HACKNEY'S HIGH-WATER TIPS

When spring reservoirs and river systems are a-flood, here's how a top-drawer bass pro responds.

BY DON SHOOPMAN

Greg Hackney isn't intimidated by high-water conditions or even flooding when he fishes for bass in the spring.

A 45-year-old pro bass fisherman from Gonzales, La., Hackney has enough confidence and expe-

rience to get bass to bite under those conditions. Based on the way the table is being set for late February and March, high water or flooding will be the norm in many bassing locales across the southeast, including major river systems and reservoirs.

>



Greg Hackney said high water spreads bass out, and finding a concentration of fish can be difficult.

Those conditions make bass harder to find, Hackney, the 2014 B.A.S.S. Angler of the Year, admitted. He said such conditions are easier to overcome on a reservoir than in a river system where the overflow spreads out. At times, it can be like finding a needle in a haystack.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Hackney said the key is to find and fish the highest spots in a reservoir or river system.

At Toledo Bend on the Texas-Louisiana border, for example, he said a prime place to target spawning bass is clean ground covered by rising water in a stand of pine trees providing shade in an area that has no brush. Also, look for flooded clear cuts or fire lanes where sunlight penetrates. Otherwise, he said, target inundated bushes and buck brush, keeping an eye out for a big tupelo gum or cypress tree in the bushes or, if there isn't one, a bush that sticks out from others.

In river systems, find high spots that aren't affected by the current. After all, the Mississippi River starts in



Great soft-plastic baits to present bass in flooded conditions are (top to bottom): a Strike King rodent, a Strike King flipping tube and a Strike King Sexy Frog.

Minnesota and winds through the heart of the country to the Gulf of Mexico, he pointed out. That flowing water is as cold as ice, or close to it, so get away from it, he advised, noting that high spots will warm more quickly.

Often under those conditions, he's had success traveling to the lowest part of the spillway, or he fishes on the Stephenville, La., side, the Lake Verret area.

WHEN TO GO

During the spring spawn, bass anglers "don't have to be out there at the crack of daylight" for obvious reasons, Hackney said. Of course, the air temperature is colder at sunrise, but once the sun gets high in the sky, the water temperature climbs.

"Roll out about 9," he said. "Afternoon's the best. The warmer the water, the better the bite."

If you do fish in the early hours of the day, he said, make slower presentations to the bass.

WHAT TO THROW

A horizontal bait such as a white Hack Attack spinnerbait is his favorite while bass are on the move before and after the spawn.

When bass "lock down" to spawn, they "guard the ground," so pitching and flipping are effective. Females stick around longer when the water is in the high 50s or low 60s. If it's warmer, the girls tend to leave earlier. Hackney's go-to baits at this stage are

a Strike King Rodent, Strike King Rage Bug, Strike King Lizard and Strike King Flippin' Tube.

After eggs hatch and the fry are high in the water column, it's time to offer a KVD Sexy Frog or a Hack Attack Pad Perch and a Strike King buzzbait. You know it's time to throw those topwaters when the gnats are bugging you to no end, it's humid with no wind and the barometric pressure's low, he said.

THE TOP COLORS

Water color is everything in picking the color of a soft-plastic bait for high-water situations.

Odds are, water in the backs of creeks feeding reservoirs will be stained in March. Hackney goes strictly with black/neon soft plastics. When the water's brown, he likes brown.

"You want a bait to look natural. You want bait to look like you see swimming in the water," he said.

When the water is clearer, he turns to green pumpkin and Alabama bug.

However, Hackney also said he has caught bass on Strike King's "doubleheader" colored soft plastics "in every state that bass exist." It's half watermelon/red and half green pumpkin. ■



Don Shoopman is an outdoorsman who fishes for freshwater and saltwater species mostly in and around the Atchafalaya Basin and Vermilion Bay. Don, who moved to the Sportsman's Paradise from Missouri in 1976, and his wife June Boutte Shoopman live in New Iberia. They have two grown sons.

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Paul Elias

"Don't pass up fishing the trunks of the cypress trees, since the bass may bed up against the trunks or the knees," Paul Elias said.

MARCH BASSING AT BOGUE HOMA

GO SLOW AND COVER WATER COMPLETELY WITH THREE GO-TO BASS BAITS

Editor's Note: Knowing what lake to fish, which places your chances are best for catching bass, and which lures have proved successful in the past on a lake at the time of year you're fishing often can take you from fishing for bass to actually catching them.

Bogue Homa, near Laurel, kicks off some of the best bass fishing in Mississippi for prespawn, spawning and post-spawn bass in March, when bass start into the sparse dollar pads. Numbers of big largemouths, some 9- to 10-pounders, live there. But in late spring and summer, Bogue Homa's vast aquatic vegetation makes determining where to fish difficult.

DOLLAR PAD PAYDAY

In March, you can reach where the bass are spawning with your boat and your lures. I generally fish depths of 4 feet or less. I'll have three rods rigged and laying on my casting deck with: a 3/8-ounce chartreuse/white buzzbait with a chartreuse blade and a trailer hook; a 3/8-ounce black/blue bladed jig with a black/blue trailer; and a 6-inch Mann's lizard, black with a blue tail.

Bogue Homa has numbers of stumps and a boat lane. I'll take the center boat lane going east to the back end of the

lake to fish the clearest water. You even may spot some bass on their beds before you cast to them. I prefer to fish the east bank, since the west bank has numbers of underwater ditches coming into the lake, and the water will be more stained.

• **Buzzbait.** Fish it on 50-pound bass braid on a 7.5:1 gear-ratio reel and a 7-foot medium-heavy rod to catch the biggest bass. Bogue Homa has numbers of stumps. I'll target small clumps of dollar pads where the bass will spawn in and around them. Often, underwater stumps will be mixed in with the dollar pads. If the dollar pad patches aren't too thick, I'll swim the buzzbait through those patches. Next I'll cast the buzzbait repeatedly on the left side, the right side and the back side of those pads. You'll catch a good percentage of the bass on the trailer hook.

• **The bladed jig.** If I don't get a bite, I'll lay my buzzbait rod down, pick up another 7.5:1 gear ratio reel with a 7-foot,

Chartreuse/white buzzbait



medium-heavy rod rigged with a bladed jig and repeat the same casts.

• **Lizard.** Next I'll pick up a 7-foot-6 rod rigged with the lizard on 20-pound White Peacock fluorocarbon with a 1/8-ounce weight and make the same series of casts over, around and through that same dollar pads.

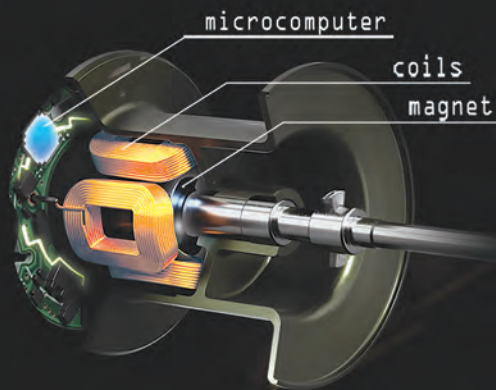
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Bladed jig with plastic lizard trailer

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LUNKER LINES

Paul Elias

SLOWLY BUT SURELY

Using three different baits is a much-slower process of fishing than most anglers like. Many will take one or two lures, cast each lure about twice and, if they don't get bites, move on to the next patch of dollar pads. However, when those big ladies come



"The weather at the beginning of March may be chilly, but the bass will begin moving up to spawn," Paul Elias said.

in to spawn, I've learned to slow down and thoroughly fish each clump of pads with these three lures until I get a bite.

The stumps may make moving from one clump of pads to the other difficult, but that ½-mile from the lake's back end on the eastern side is the best bassing in March and may require four hours to cover thoroughly.

Once you get about 200 yards from the back of the lake, you also can start casting to the bank and retrieving these same lures back to the boat. If the water's up, fishing around the cypress trees and knees in that shallow water can produce big mama bass spawning around the trunks. You may see a bass move in the pads or around the cypress trees and knees. Even if they don't bite, mark those sites as waypoints, and return to fish there a couple of times during the day. If you catch a male bass fishing the dollar pads, return there later. That male bass preparing the bed means the female can't be far.

You'll catch lots of males weighing from 1½ to 2 pounds.

but last March, I caught two 9-pound bass using these techniques and fishing the eastern section of the lake. Since I released them both, they still should be there to catch this spring. ■



Paul Elias, of Laurel, has fished 15 Bassmaster Classics with career winnings of over \$1 million, including one Bassmaster Classic Championship. Elias also holds the current record for a four-day BASS tournament weigh-in with 132 pounds, 8 ounces, on Falcon Lake in Texas.



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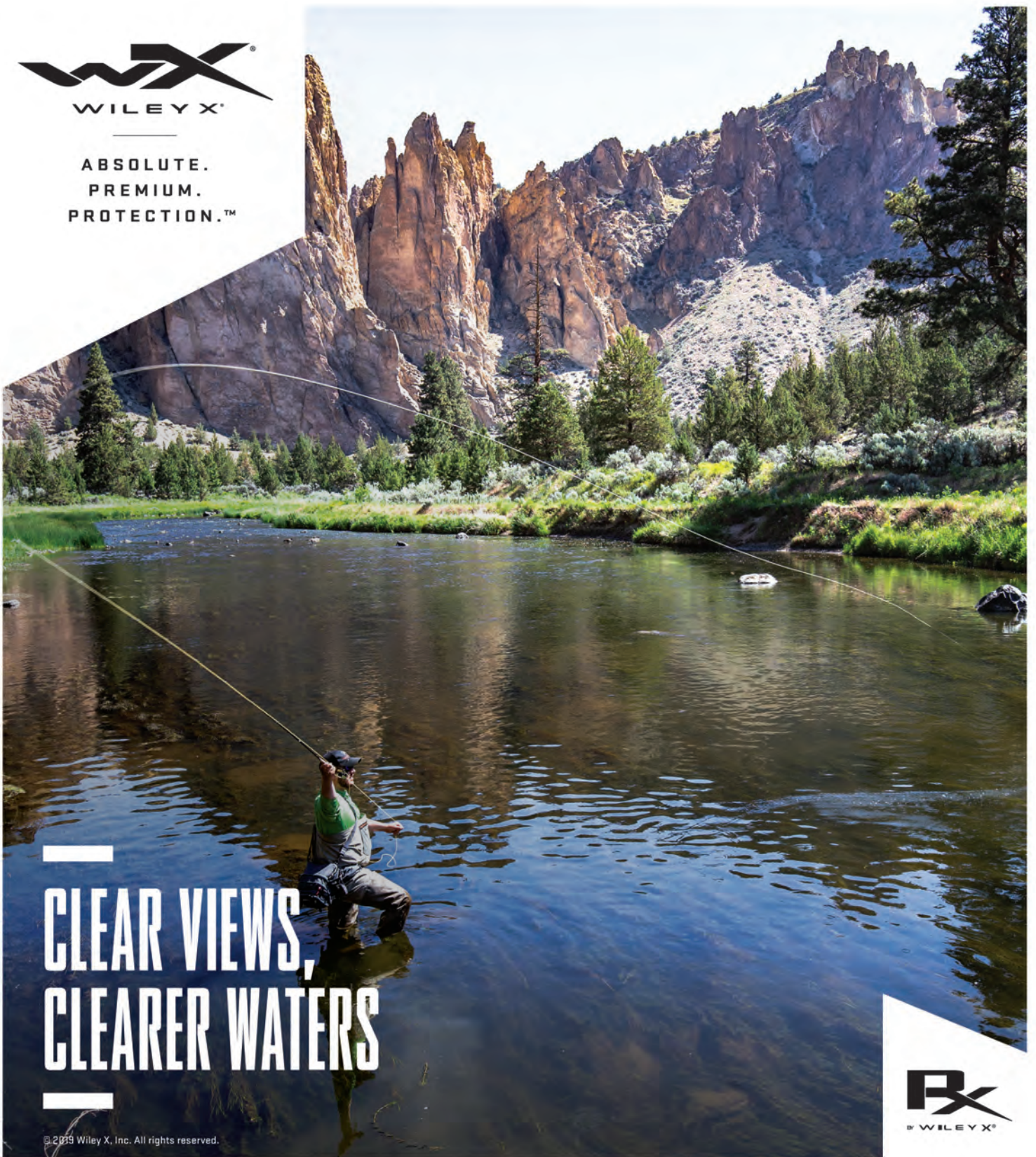
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LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman



TIE ON A BLACK LABEL

MISSISSIPPI PRO'S HAND-CRAFTED Balsa CRANKBAITS ARE SQUARE-BILLED, BASS-CATCHING CREATIONS

Cliff Pace's Ricochet Jr. crankbait is a square-billed balsa plug that's dynamite on bass.

Artist at work. That's what a sign should read in the shop at Cliff Pace's home in Petal, Miss., where he makes the Black Label balsa crankbaits that have been catching bass from the Atchafalaya Basin and Lake Verret in south-central Louisiana to waters in neighboring states and across the United States.

His craft is a labor of love, a hobby that blossomed into a business while he maintains a high profile as an accomplished professional bass angler.

"I do various things in the tackle industry," Pace said, including providing lead casting for leadheads in spinnerbaits, vibrating jigs and jigs, among other things, and distributing his handmade balsa crankbaits

"I've been building lures my whole life. I was building these just for me. Ten or 12 years ago, there weren't a lot of great

square-billed crankbaits on the market. About 2014, I started building them for myself," said Pace, 28.

They have been effective many times in Louisiana, including a tournament a few years ago in the Atchafalaya Basin when Pace used a Ricochet Jr. model around cypress trees to catch many of the bass he weighed in a Bassmaster Central Open in which he finished 12th with 32 pounds, 15 ounces.

Now Pace is taking his game and his Black Label balsa crankbaits to the new Major League Fishing Bass Pro Tour this year.

"There's a big difference between a balsa crankbait and a plastic crankbait. There's definitely a time and place for both," he said.

When it's time for a balsa crankbait, Pace and the rest of the world's bass anglers can tie on the Black Label balsa.

"I've used them throughout my career,

even before Black Label existed," he said. "A lot of people over the years, I'd give the bait to who wanted them. A lot of people saw them or borrowed one, or I gave them to a tight-knit group of people. Since then, it has grown. A lot of tackle stores started carrying them. I do enjoy building these, and I enjoy the feedback from fishermen."

And there has been plenty of positive reaction to the Black Label balsa crankbaits since they went on the market in 2014. The line includes the Ricochet and Ricochet Jr., the CBS2 and CBS2 and Slim crankbaits, and the Tease, a topwater bait with twin props.

Pace gets his balsa wood from South America. The baits, he said, are all different in reaction and shape "to fit the fishing conditions you come across for different times of the year," noting his favorite is probably the Ricochet Jr.

Pace makes it clear the balsa crankbaits

aren't hand-carved, although he used to carve his own back in the day. However, after they are cut from a machine, each of the next 50-plus steps are in his hands.

First, he drills a hole and inserts a ballast weight. Then, he seals the bait completely. After that, he applies a primary base coat of white paint.

If he is painting a bold bluegill pattern, a popular color combination, the process — sprayed with Polytranspor airbrush paint — begins with a scale pattern through a mesh. The bait is sprayed with chartreuse top to bottom, leaving the belly white, and an orange throat is applied under the nose.

After that, he sprays baby blue on the cheeks, then uses a stencil for the tell-tale vertical bream bars. He applies brown paint down the center of the back, followed by an iridescent green scale effect over the brown, a stencil to make the black gill and then a center black line down the length of the back.

After eyes are applied, the final application is the target dot on the side.

Then the O-rings and premium black nickel treble hooks are added to complete the balsa crank bait.

For those who want to watch the painting process, go to <https://youtu.be/pDg8fZEnoyU>.

It's a painstaking process that takes 14 days, start to finish, to allow paint to dry. In a two-week period, without interruption, he can build approximately 500 baits. He builds them between tournaments and during the offseason. With a jam-packed



COLOR MY WORLD:

Painting a crankbait, even with a state-of-the-art airbrush paint, is a process that takes many, many steps and coats of paint to give the bait a perfect finish.

schedule in March, none will be built.

"All in all, when compared to most balsa baits, they're very durable. They're built to be as durable as I can possibly make them," he said.

Also of interest, the wire harness that runs through the body is stainless steel, so it won't rust, he said.

For more information, visit www.blacklabetackle.com. ■



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.



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TRY THREE BAITES FOR MARCH BASS

JIGS, SPINNERBAITS, C-RIGS ARE TOPS

By Dustin Wilks

Nothing gets you fired up like the anticipation of bass fishing in March. There is no better opportunity to get on lots of giant pre-spawners and catch them on a variety of lures.

Three patterns have always seemed to be among the best to fish in March.

First, Carolina-rigged lizards are great baits for probing points and other structure at any depth leading into spawning areas. With fish moving every day this time of year, you never know for sure what depth they'll be. The Carolina rig maintains contact with the bottom at all times and can clue you in fast. They were really popular several years ago and are kind of out of favor now, which sparks my interest in the technique.

Second, spinnerbaits are at their best in March if the water comes up, gets some color to it, or if it is windy. Since March is nearly always windy, spinnerbaits should be considered a top choice. Always fish big laydowns or pole timber in the back of pockets with this bait. If the water is in the bushes, watch out! You could be in for the best fishing of the year with a spinnerbait. Pay special attention to flooded, dead

brown grass we call "hay." I use double willow-blades in sunfish or natural shad under normal conditions. If the water is muddy, then I go with double Colorado blades. I like the half-ounce size best.

Finally, flipping jigs in shallow heavy cover will net you your share of lunkers this month. Remember, bass are always on the move in during this prespawn phase, searching for food and a good place to spawn. When they venture shallow, they'll stop in heavy cover to rest and feed. Nothing gets in and catches them better than a jig. You might even discover there is an early spawn going on, especially if there are flooded willows around.

When jig fishing, you need to use heavy line and rod to get them out of the cover. I like to use a 7-foot-6 Daiwa LT flipping rod with 7-to-1 Zillion reel for most of my flipping, paired with 20-pound test fluorocarbon — or 65-pound braid if you're a braid guy.

For flipping jigs, most fishermen use a fairly heavy weed guard to avoid snags and a sharp, strong hook. I start with a $\frac{3}{8}$ -ounce jig and will go up to as much as an ounce to penetrate the predominant cover. If you are fishing mostly logs, a



Dan Kibler

ABOVE: Don't miss the chance to fish any laydown tree you find in the water during the March prespawn. **INSET:** It's tough to beat a spinnerbait when the water is dingy to muddy in the early spring.

$\frac{3}{8}$ - or half-ounce jig will work fine most of the time. I like several types of trailers. For smaller jigs, I choose Culprit's new Tailgate special. For large jigs, you'll find me still using some of the larger pork rind trailers.

Swimming jigs can also be deadly in and around heavy cover if the bass are more suspended. I mostly use a quarter-ounce swim jig and a grub or small trailer. Some fishermen even use swimbaits on the back for a different action. I use with the same flipping rod and line when swimming jigs.

These are just three of the lures I like in March. You can throw the whole tackle box at them this time of year. Bass are feeding and moving into new areas, so they are susceptible to being caught on anything. Stick with the best lure for the conditions and for your confidence, and you will be rewarded with great catches. ■

CATCH THAT 3-POUND SLAB

By Phillip Gentry

LANDING A HUGE CRAPPIE TAKES SPECIAL PREPARATION, FROM YOUR FISHING HOLE TO THE WEATHER TO YOUR EQUIPMENT. SO MAKE SURE EVERYTHING IS IN ORDER WHEN THAT BIG GIRL GRABS YOUR OFFERING.



OF ALL THE PLACES TO CATCH CRAPPIE, MISSISSIPPI MIGHT BE THE BEST BET FOR CATCHING A SLAB THAT WILL TOP THE 3-POUND MARK.

Like catching a 10-pound bass or killing a record-book deer, you have to go where the big ones live, but don't expect one to jump in your livewell. You have to figure out your quarry's pattern, and when you find the right spot, have the right tackle and right baits.

Kent Driscoll, pro staff manager for B'n'M Poles in West Point, has been catching crappie all over Mississippi since he was a kid. He is well known in both local and national crappie tournaments; he has caught dozens of crappie that topped 3 pounds, and he has even put together a pattern of when, where and how to catch them.

"First, you gotta fish where the 3-pounders live, and that's real simple in this state; you start in late February in the southern part of the state and move north as the weather and the water warms," he said.

While his tactics and baits are going to be virtually the same through his entire trek, Driscoll said he would start in mid-February at Eagle Lake in Warren County on the Mississippi-Louisiana border. By the first of March, he's going to move to Washington Lake in southern Washington County or Lake Whittington in Bolivar County.

"You've got to hit Whittington at the right stage in the spring when it's got stable water, because it's tied to the Mississippi River," said Driscoll. "Washington is not, so it's going to be good to go regardless of whether the river is flooding or not."

The middle of March will find Driscoll at Grenada Lake, the self-touted home of the 3-pound crappie, and with good reason — the lake produces a number of large white crappie every spring. Driscoll said he would spend the entire month of April at Lake Arkabutla in DeSoto and Tate counties.

His final pick would be any private waters that don't get fished much and hold big crappie.

"Look at this recent world-record crappie caught last year in Tennessee," said Driscoll. "There are tons of small to medium waters out of the limelight, and if you have access to them, you need to be fishing them during March."

Regardless of the lake he's fishing, Driscoll recommends slow-trolling or spider-rigging. He'll use as many poles as are allowed and push baits off the front of the boat.

"Unless I'm on Grenada, which limits you to three poles, I'm going to have eight 16-foot B'n'M BGJP rods sitting in my Driftmaster rodholders," he said. "You want to use big jigs. I'll run two ¼-ounce Pro-Built jigheads on each rod. The jigheads are gonna be either orange, pink or green, and I'm going to have either a big Muddy Water or Southern Pro umbrella on the jighead."

continues on page 54



Long poles pushed off the bow of the boat offer pinpoint depth control without spooking wary fish.

Kent Driscoll said his best day crappie fishing occurred on Grenada Lake in 2003 when his best 10 fish weighed an average of 3 pounds.

A 30-POUND BAG

Veteran angler Kent Driscoll had his best day on the water 16 years ago on Grenada Lake. Unfortunately, he was not fishing in a tournament for money or out with a television crew or outdoor writer taking photographs. He was just fun fishing and hit what he describes as the mother lode of big crappie.

"I was in the back of a creek on Grenada, and I had my poles out working a big, muddy flat that has loaded with stumps, not another boat in sight," he said.

Driscoll said the water was rising and about 3 to 5 feet deep on the flat when his rods starting going down with big fish.

"I'd catch a big one and turn around and work back through the area and catch another one; it was insane," he said. "Back in those days, you weighed 10 fish in a tournament, and my top 10 that day was 30.03 pounds. I had a 3-pound average with the five biggest crappie all weighing over 3 pounds. It was the same day I caught my personal best: a 3.6 pound slab."

Driscoll said he learned a lot that day about the habits of big crappie. He said it takes a certain amount of skill to land a 3-pound, hormone-charged fish on the end of a 14-foot pole. It also showed him that the farther away from the boat he could fish, the more likely he was to get bites from big spooky crappie.

"We didn't have 16-foot poles back then, so we were using 14-footers," he said. "It wasn't long before B'n'M started working on making longer poles." ■



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Driscoll favors glow baits, plastics with additives that help fish see them in muddy water, because that's where he's headed — to the upper ends of the lake, looking for water in the low 60s. He's also going to tip the artificial bait with a shiner in the 3-inch range.

"You're looking for big, female white crappie that haven't gone to the bank yet," he said. "These fish are at their heaviest of the year, and they're just sitting out there, suspending in water from 6 to 10 feet deep."

Driscoll said the prespawn females he is targeting tend to be aggressive when they strike, but they won't aggressively chase a bait. On his tandem rig, he will tie a 3-way swivel between the two jigs so they hang about 2 feet apart in the water column. Unless conditions tell him otherwise, he'll set the upper jig to run in about 3 feet of water and the other at 5 feet. Using a variable speed trolling motor, he'll move the boat along at a snail's pace from .2 to .3 miles per hour.

"Here's the thing; those fish are pumped up on hormones, and they're worried about the weather and water temperature and water levels and finding the right place to drop those eggs, they're just sitting in the water," he said. "When that big bait comes by and almost hits her in the nose, she might just inhale it, or she might try to rip the rod out of the rod holder."

Driscoll's final advice was that these fish run in age classes. A crappie that weighs 3 pounds will be 16½ to 17 inches long.

They may not school tightly, but they'll be in the same general area, so if you catch a 2¾-pound fish, you need to dig in and work that area within 50 to 100 yards hard. ■



Phillip Gentry is a freelance outdoor writer and photographer who says that if it swims, walks, hops, flies or crawls he's usually not too far behind.



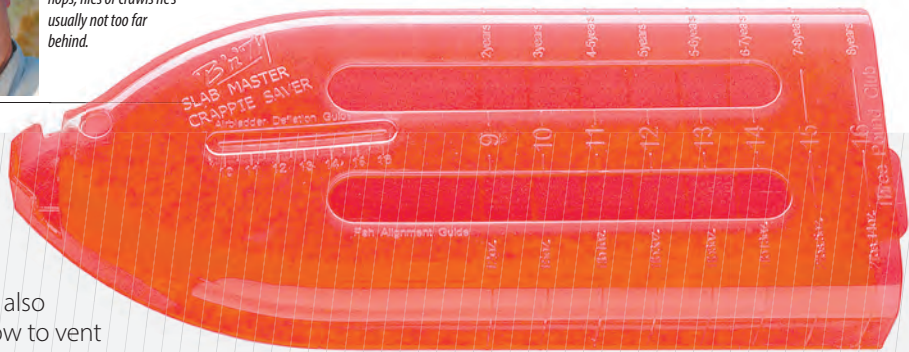
Crappie are known to loosely school by year class, meaning where there is one big crappie, there are likely to be others.

CRAPPIE SAVER

B'n'M Poles is offering a crappie-measuring device that will accommodate bigger fish and also provide detailed instructions on where and how to vent and deflate a fish's air bladder. The measuring device is named the Slab Master Crappie Saver, and it's the last crappie measuring device you'll need.

"We wanted to provide a tool that is specifically designed to help to protect our crappie fisheries," said Jack Wells, B'n'M's president. "First, it will accommodate bigger fish — those that exceed 2 pounds and are pretty frequent here in Mississippi. We've also incorporated a scale that will not only indicate the length of the fish but also help anglers determine the fish's age and weight based on statistical modeling. The third aspect is that the crappie saver will also indicate specifically where to vent the fish in order to deflate the swim bladder."

Swim bladder deflation, a practice commonly referred to as venting or fizzaing, is a coming-of-age technique that relieves the pressure of the fish's distended swim bladder and allows the fish to return to the deeper water after release by re-balancing the pressure of its swim bladder.



The practice has seen widespread practice in national bass events and has been heralded by biologists with helping to save the lives of thousands of tournament caught and released fish.

A key player in the product's design is crappie pro Ronnie Capps, who is a wildlife officer for the state of Tennessee and has a degree in fisheries management.

"When you put a crappie in this thing, it's not going to flop back out like some other measurers," Capps said. "That lets you handle the fish without damaging it so it can be weighed and released unharmed. The Saver was also designed with an air-bladder deflation guide that shows you exactly where to deflate the fish without having to guess. Naturally, it tells you how long the fish is, and it will also come pretty close to giving you its weight and age." ■

B'n'M's Slab Master Crappie Saver can measure bigger-than-average slabs and help you deflate their swim bladders for a more-efficient release.

TIPS TO LAND YOUR PERSONAL BEST

Veteran tournament angler Jeremy Aldridge of Batesville has some tips for anglers on closing the deal once they get a 3-pound crappie on the line.

Aldridge caught a 3½-pound crappie from Grenada Lake a couple of years ago during the spring when the water was low. He and partner Daniel Porter kept pushing up the Yalabusha River, not really expecting to find anything due to the water levels.

Just after crossing a shallow sandbar, one of Aldridge's poles took a deep plunge, and he wrestled the giant fish to the surface. Luck was on their side, and the pair got the fish in the net and to the boat but lost two or three other really good fish.

Looking back at experiences with large crappie, Aldridge said there are several things you can do to be prepared.

"Probably, the first instinct is to panic," he said. "Remain calm and play the fish out.

Jeremy Aldridge managed to get this 3½-pound crappie to the boat using some advanced preparation and skill.

Don't try too force it, because it's easy to tear the hook out. Try to get the fish turned around, and then work it to the net."

Aldridge said the long pole will take much of the shock, but big females are so aggressive, it's best to loosen up on the reel's drag to release some line on the initial run. If he's by himself, he uses an extendable net with a 8- to 9-foot handle.

"Our tournament net is a one-piece, 14-footer," he said. "We keep it laid between us, so it's easy to reach when we get a big fish on out at the end of a 16-foot pole."

Aldridge advises that a big, single jig is much easier to hook and land a big crappie on because there's no counter weight swinging on the line to help dislodge the hook from the fish's mouth. ■



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Bigger baits and lures will typically produce bigger early spring crappie, according to guides and tournament fishermen across the Carolinas.



David A. Brown

USE BIGGER BAITES FOR BIGGER SLABS

BIG LURES, BAITES WILL APPEAL TO BIG CRAPPIE

By Dan Kibler

Several years ago, I had the opportunity to handle a really big crappie. A local fisherman, a retired preacher in his 80s who spends almost every morning on the pier at a municipal lake, caught a 3-pound, 7-ounce slab that broke the lake record.

The fish was around 18 inches long and fat as a Thanksgiving gobbler, but what struck me most about that crappie was the size of its mouth. There was little doubt in my mind that the slab could have easily swallowed a golf ball, and it wouldn't have surprised me if he could get a goose egg back to the crushers in his throat and at least choke on a tennis ball.

That made me think about the size of baits we use for crappie, and what a couple of veteran crappie fishermen think about them.

"Have you ever looked at the mouth on a big crappie?" asked guide Maynard Edwards. "It's not that small. It can swallow a pretty good-sized bait."

"Shoot, I've caught a lot of big crappie on crankbaits, and two of the biggest I've ever caught, close to 3 pounds, were when I was trolling 3-inch grubs for stripers at Badin Lake."

Tom Sprouse, a crappie pro, said big baits mean big crappie.

"I'm a firm believer in big baits," he said. "With big baits, you weed out little fish. I know a lot of crappie fishermen believe bigger fish are more aggressive to larger baits."

"I know if you clean crappies, you'll be surprised at the size of the shad that are inside them."

"I know they're very aggressive; I've caught them with big shad tails sticking out of their mouths."

Edwards upsizes from a 2-inch to a 3-inch soft-plastic grub and the larger, off-set hooks that come on Slider jigheads.

"Most of the hooks you find on jigs are No. 6s," he said. "I've gone to No. 2, and I use the Slider head. I think they'll hold a big bait better."

Sprouse goes with a bigger bait, often adding a live minnow.

"I'll use a Kalin grub and tip it with a No. 6 minnow," he said. "Most people by No. 4 minnows, because they can get more of them per pound, but you can buy No. 6s."

"I'll use a No. 2 hook; there are people I know who will use a No. 1. If fish are real aggressive, you can get away with a 3-inch grub, but I normally thicken with a 2-inch grub and add a bigger minnow. The combination of the grub and minnow does it for me." ■

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How to

FIND GRASS THAT HOLDS PRESPAWN BASS

Look for prespawn bass to stage anywhere there's aquatic grass this month, then break down those areas for great fishing.

By David A. Brown

The Green Room; it's where the stars hang out and enjoy tasty snacks before their big performance. Same deal with bass staging for the spawn; they'll spend a lot of time packing their bellies while lounging in nature's green room — aquatic grass.

Okay, hay grass is more of a golden brown deal, but the Green Room allusion fits, nonetheless — par-

ticularly with hydrilla, which comprises the most-common prespawn staging feature. Here, hungry bass find not only the food they need — shad, bluegill, crawfish — but also warmth in the still-chilly water and the ability to belly down and relax before the onset of what will be the most stressful period of their years.

FIND THE HOT SPOTS

Having moved from their winter patterns, these plump prespawners are now making their way toward the maternity ward. It might seem like a random rumble, but nature has programmed the fish to proceed with prudence; their course will follow discernible clues.

THE DITCH — Creek arms and spawning pockets all have a main channel meandering into the shallows. These grass-lined travel routes guide fish along the same course year after year. Focus your efforts on these arteries, and you'll stay on target.

THE STANDALONES — Early grass growth often appears in clumpy form, as the vegetation gradually regenerates after winter die-off. Pay attention to your electronics and note the likely bass attractors. Mark these key spots and know that success may require multiple visits during a day. Sunlight, wind and bait movement will determine how fish set up, so if a spot looks promising, give it several opportunities to produce.

THE HAY WILL PLAY — Hay grass (aka “Johnson grass”) often grows outside the mouths of spawning area, so give this vivid, emergent grass a good look as you hunt down those prespawners. Offering strategic vertical edges, stands of hay grass often present points, cuts and contour features, much like a hard shoreline. Pay attention to these anomalies, as food-focused fish will certainly use them to their advantage.

With any of these grass scenarios, once you've established a productive or promising area, don't get distracted. Sure, you may flip one up from a nearby stump, and docks are always high-percentage spots; but stay on point and you'll fare better.





Bladed jigs are great lures to fish around aquatic vegetation for bass.

BEST BAIT

Crawfish haven't left the menu yet, but prespawn fish are far more focused on baitfish, so rake that grass with lures designed to mimic this profile. Soft-plastic swimbaits offer a strong choice, but consider your rigging options: jigheads for lower grass and deeper water; weighted wide-gap hooks for denser vegetation and/or shallow water.

Crankbaits are also standard issue for early spring fishing, and prespawn grass can really show off their allure. Keep a lipless bait and a square-bill on stand-by and alternate between

the two to snag and rip through the grass for aggression reaction bites.

Another good one: the bladed jig. Vibration, flash, lively sound — they all trigger prespawners lounging in the grass. Try different trailers — swimbaits, creature baits, stick worms — to see what profile earns those feeding responses.

The one option that few want to admit they use, but many actually do is the Alabama rig. The major bass tournament circuits ban the Alabama rig, but most regional trails allow it. For the average Joe, it's a must-have

for the prespawn season, as a cluster of baits resembles the pods of shad these big fish are seeking.

Also, an Alabama rig is as user-friendly as it gets — just cast and wind. But consider a couple of performance points. First, run slightly heavier swimbait heads on the bottom two arms to keep the rig tracking true. Also, run a larger swimbait, maybe in a different color, in the center "target" spot. This is where most fish attack, so give 'em an enticing look.



Grass beds are productive areas for targeting prespawn bass; they offer protection and ambush opportunities.

GETTIN' FRESH

Hal Schramm

These nice bass were released alive, but even low mortality that occurs for released fish may be making bass harder to catch.



WHAT IS FISHERIES INDUCED EVOLUTION?

CAN FISHING ACTUALLY CHANGE A POPULATION'S GENES

Catching and harvesting fish is a selective form of mortality — it does not operate uniformly or randomly across the population. That fishing may be changing populations has long been known in commercial fisheries, but recent research suggests that recreational fishing can also change populations.

These changes to populations are called "fisheries induced evolution" — FIE in shorthand. FIE is not a reduction in the numbers of fish or population size that occurs with overharvest. FIE is a change in characteristics of the population such as growth rate, a physiological parameter, or maybe a behavior such as movement or catchability.

FIE: NEW TERM FOR OLD CONCEPT

In commercial fisheries, in which most fish are caught in nets, capture is size selective. Fish large enough to be retained by the mesh of the net are captured and removed from the population. Smaller fish escape harvest.

If a fishing net removes fish above a certain size, it also selects for faster-growing fish. For example, a 1½-inch, square-mesh gill net may retain blue catfish larger than 15 inches. Let's say, on average, blue catfish in this fishery grow to 15 inches in 4 years. The gill-net fishery will harvest fish 4 years old and older.

But let's look a little deeper. Not all fish in a year-class grow at the same rate; growth usually looks like a bell-shaped curve, with most fish growing near the average rate, but some growing faster, some slower. The 1½-inch mesh gill net harvests by size not age. By capturing fish 15 inches and larger, that 1½-inch net, on any given day, also captures some of the fastest-growing 3-year-old cats but does not catch the slower growing 4-year-olds.

Over time, this gill-net fishery will continually select for and harvest the faster-growing fish and leave the slower growers to reproduce. Growth is affected by many factors, but it has a genetic component and, therefore, is an inheritable trait. Over time, harvest can create a slower-growing blue catfish population.

I have used growth as a rather clear-cut example of how harvest can affect a population's gene pool and affect change. Fishery scientists are learning that other traits — behaviors such as catchability and movement, size at sexual maturity, and physiology — have a genetic component and can be affected by fishing.

RECREATION FISHING RESULTS

Ten years ago, Illinois Natural History Survey fisheries scientists published the results of a study that spanned 18 years. Fish from a heavily fished population of largemouth bass were stocked into a pond and fished intensively. At the end of the year, fish were collected, and the caught fish — dubbed high vulnerability (HV) fish — were stocked into a pond for spawning, and uncaught fish — dubbed low vulnerability (LV) fish — were stocked into another pond for spawning. After growing to catchable sizes, the progeny of the HV and LV fish were marked and stocked into a common pond for angling. This intentional selec-

Research has shown fishing decreases the catchability of bass. Catch and release on populations probably will slow the process.

tion process was repeated for three bass generations.

After three generations of selection, the catch rate of the HV fish changed little, but the catch rate of the LV fish decreased significantly. And the differences in catch rate between HV and LV populations increased with each generation of selection. Conclusion: vulnerability to capture is a genetic trait.

These results have obvious implications for bass anglers, but changes in vulnerability are only one measure of the changes that occurred in the population. Other studies have suggested that catch-prone largemouth bass have higher metabolic rates, are bolder and may be less-protective nest-guarding parents. In other words, fishing can affect the population in many ways, some of which may affect the population's future fitness.

A Connecticut study compared metabolic rates of largemouth bass from two lakes, 437 and 489 acres, that had been open to fishing for 70-plus years to those

from nearby similarly aged lakes, 114 and 529 acres, that were closed to fishing. The resting metabolic rates of the unexploited bass populations were 6-percent higher than the exploited populations. The study indicated FIE can occur in more typical fisheries in larger lakes.

In a second study, Connecticut researchers moved bass from the unexploited and exploited populations into a 25-acre lake that was intensively fished. After the bass spawned, genetic analysis revealed the translocated bass bred with the resident bass. The conclusion: bass from an unexploited, HV population will breed with exploited, LV bass.

As catchability is heritable, the hybrids of the HV and LV bass should be more catchable. Intensive monitoring of the fishery will be required to verify this. In the meantime, Kansas is using this science — the broodstock for all bass produced in their hatchery are from unexploited populations.

Do the results of research on large-



mouth bass apply to other species? Probably yes, and the effects may be greater for a high-harvest fish with shorter generation times like crappie. ■



Hal Schramm is an avid angler and veteran fisheries biologist.

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SPECKLED TRUTH

Chris Bush

Jerkbaits will trigger strikes from speckled trout year-round, but they're especially productive in cold weather.



JERKBAITS CAN GIVE SPECKLED TROUT FITS

LEARN WHAT DIFFERENT BAITS DO, PICK THE SITUATIONS WHERE THEY FIT BEST, CATCH TROUT

The longer it sits, the harder they hit it.

For those not familiar with the reference, it involves casting jerkbaits and the merciless response that speckled trout exhibit after staring down its hard-plastic foe.

Although this technique can be fished year-round, anglers across many state lines utter this phrase a little more often in the presence of Ol' Man Winter. Proven repeatedly, erratic movement coupled with a brilliant flash resonates well with trout behavior, but anglers seldom embrace their true capability. I want to explore three simple facets — size, depth and action — to becoming

a more-proficient jerkbait angler and explore some brands and what capabilities they provide.

LURE SIZE

Spawned by bass anglers decades ago, jerkbaits have evolved to mirror our tech-savvy world. CNC machines replaced Buck knives and balsa wood, and as a result, offer anglers, regardless of fishery, a myriad of options. Flooded by “pro staff” marketing, the industry makes it tough for fisherman to sift through what works and what's 40-percent off.

For someone new looking to add one to their arsenal, size is the basic compo-

nent that needs extensive consideration. I personally choose jerkbaits that range from 3½ to 5 inches long, and although I've caught big trout with large bits of forage waving at me from their throats, I still feel most confident with lures in this range.

Smaller jerkbaits like the Rapala RipStop 09 (3½ inches) offer finesse presentations on calm, clear days with exceptional water clarity, while larger-profile jerkbaits like the Berkley Juke 100 present a heartier offering with a less-refined and cumbersome action. Aside from brand, which I'll suggest later, size dictates flash and action, and given water clarity (dirty or clear) and condi-

tions (windy or calm), having a variety in that range accentuates your offering.

DEPTH

Normally dictated by the size of the rigid, plastic lip positioned at a 45-degree angle on the nose of the bait, it's important to know the depth for which the lure is rated. How do you know? See the bait's packaging for details. Jerkbait like the Rapala Shadow Rap Shad present a larger offering but only get down to a max depth of 3 feet, depending on salinity and terminal tackle. Comparable in size, though, the MirrOlure L30 (MirrOlip), can reach depths greater than 6 feet, a result of a slightly larger lip. Having said that, both lure ratings fall within manufacturer specifications. Understanding that simple concept affords you to choose the right lure/profile for the job. Since the majority of fish are suspended, an angler can effectively target that portion of the water column.

ACTION

"Action" in a fishing word used loosely to describe lure characteristics. In this particular case, the action referred to is whether the bait descends, suspends or ascends after you finish your twitch cadence. Revisiting my opening comment about "the longer it sits" refers to all action types. Ascending jerkbaits like the Smithwick Rattling Rogue or the Texas Custom Lures MirrOlure Double D float back to the top, but they do so at varying rates of speed. Depending on whether fish are shallow or deep in the water column, the longer you can let the bait sit before it reaches the surface or bottom, the better chance you have at the fish responding to your presentation.

To highlight my point, on a recent trip, I found some really nice fish in about 3 feet of water holding over shell. After throwing an ascending lure (Double D) with little response, I chose a Berkley

Juke 100 with a deeper dive/ascending capability. After one great fish, little other interest was shown, so I swapped to a Rapala Shadow Rap (4¾ inches) which affords me to fish the middle column (1½ feet) with a suspending action. On consecutive casts, two above-average trout were landed and safely released.

Taking stock, I found that the longer I let the lure sit — sometimes upwards of 5 seconds — the harder they would hit it. Due in large part to water temperature, clarity and calm conditions, the trout were keyed in on small movements. Ascending or descending baits just weren't matching the fish's behavior, but like all things fishing, it varies from day-to-day.

This is the jerkbait game. If observant and confident with a myriad of lures and in tune with their capabilities of size, depth and action, you can not only catch a substantial number of fish, but at the same time, you can target bigger bites.

Hopefully this will help get you started, and as always please reach out if you have any questions. Until next time, tight

BRANDS/LURES WORTH USING

(NOT ALL ENCOMPASSING):

- Rapala Shadow Rap
- Rapala Shadow Rap Shad
- MirrOlure L30
- Bomber Long-A
- Yo-Zuri Sashimi JerkBait
- Rapala Rip Stop (09 & 11)
- Smithwick Rattling Rogue
- Strike King KVD Series
- Texas Custom Lures MirrOlure Double D
- Borbaleta LeLe
- Berkley Juke (78 & 100)
- Matrix Minnow

lines, God bless and remember take what you need and release the rest! ■



Chris Bush is a U.S. Air Force officer and a licensed charter captain. He spends his time targeting big speckled trout and sharing knowledge on his website, *Speckled Truth*.



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COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver

GRILLED DOUBLE-BACON VENISON CHEESE BURGER ROLL

The author begins to form the roll of ground venison and other ingredients before it heads to the grill for a 45-minute visit.

Jerry Dilsaver

Typically, the winter is on its way out by March, especially from the middle of the month on. There will be nice days and evenings that are just right for relaxing on the patio or deck around a small fire. This is a recipe that works well for these times, especially for a relaxed, informal dinner or snacks, and it features venison taken earlier in the year.

For outdoorsman across the southeastern states, March is sort of an in-between month. Hunting for feral pigs and coyotes is allowed year-round, but hunting is pretty much limited to turkeys for about two weeks, plus the week of

youth season. So the pace of hunting has slowed for many. Fishing has started but hasn't built into a frenzy yet. There is a big variety available, with good bass and crappie fishing abounding, but it's just starting for the year and the best fishing is yet to come.

This month's recipe includes venison, bacon and cheese. With this combination, it has to be good. Factor in that it's cooked on a grill, and it keeps adding points. While this is an excellent choice any time a light meal is in order, it is pretty close to perfect for watching college basketball, especially the conference tournaments and national

championship chase.

The name for this recipe comes from having bacon inside and outside. This is a good base and tastes fine as presented. However, it's okay to modify it to suit personal tastes. Not everyone likes everything, and folks have personal preferences on spices, dips and more. This preparation includes the option of jalapeno peppers, which some folks enjoy and others not so much. This was prepared for me and my friends for a basketball game, and all of us enjoy a little extra spice. ■

GRILLED DOUBLE BACON VENISON CHEESEBURGER ROLL

This recipe is something that just came about from wanting to do something unusual. I believe it does that, and it's really pretty tasty. Of course, it includes venison, bacon and cheese, so it had a head start on tasting good. Cooking it on the grill and enjoying a mild evening on the patio or deck is a big plus, too. Daylight savings time arrives March 10; that will allow enjoying it with an extra hour of sunlight.

As with many of my recipes, you should consider this a base and not be afraid to modify it a bit. This dish was for some of my friends who also have robust palates and enjoy a little spice, so I added some minced jalapenos. I also added a couple more spoons of Cha Sauce than listed in the ingredients. It had just enough bite to be noticed but wasn't overpowering.

The name comes from it having bacon inside and outside. I've also sliced it on the tray and melted a piece of cheese over it, so it was double bacon and double cheese. It's versatile, and there are lots of options for serving it.

One of my friends could live on burgers and his favorite way to eat this is on slider buns. It is good that way, and you can use different breads and dress the sliders any way you want.

It also can be sliced and served as the entree for a meal. Another of my friends refers to it as "the fun Bambi filet" referring to it being wrapped in bacon. This lends itself to dipping and barbecue sauces, and that is one of my favorite ways to eat it. I like to brush a slice with a light, mustard-based barbecue sauce like Trader Joe's Carolina Gold and serve it with a potato and a

salad. A baked potato or baked sweet potato is the healthiest, but I can't fault someone for having this with home fries, tater tots or regular fries. It's fun to make and hopefully it was also a memorable time getting the venison, so eating it should be a good time too.

A word of caution: don't cook this over a direct flame. The bacon drips and the flame will flare. A little close searing adds some character, but you don't want to burn it. Cook it over indirect heat, and a grease collector is a good idea. Some friends have broiling pans they have dedicated to their grills, and these allow it to get the grill flavor and separate it from the grease without flame-ups. ■

TIP!

Cooking meat dishes over an indirect flame will keep drips from causing flame-ups and burns.

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound ground venison
1 package medium-sliced bacon
½ cup bacon bits
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
1 small sweet onion,
2 tbsp Texas Pete Cha Sauce
2 tbsp Worcestershire Sauce
1 tbsp crushed red pepper
Salt and pepper
Non-stick cooking spray
Toothpicks
Grilled vegetable tray
Optional: 1 Jalapeno pepper.

Wrapped in bacon (top) and ready for the grill, then, the completed product (bottom).



PREPARATION:

Mince onion and jalapeno. Put venison, bacon bits, cheese, onion and jalapeno in large mixing bowl. Add Cha sauce, crushed red pepper, salt and pepper (to taste) and mix well.

Cover a sushi roller with parchment paper and add mixture until the roller is full (will barely go around it), then roll the mixture into a log. Cut a piece of bacon in half and cover the ends of the log. Wrap the entire log with bacon, using toothpicks to hold the bacon in place.

Heat grill to medium. Spray a grill vegetable tray with non-stick cooking spray.

Place log on vegetable tray. Cook log, turning occasionally as needed to cook all around, until bacon is done. Approximately 45 minutes on my grill.

Allow log to rest for 5 minutes. Slice in ¾- to 1-inch slices and serve while warm.

This can be served as snacks or a meal. Some folks like to have more Cha sauce, other hot sauces, barbecue sauces and other dipping sauces on the side. One popular option is to serve the slices on slider buns, with lettuce, tomato and all the fixin's. A baked potato or baked sweet potato is a healthy side, but it also goes

well with fries and tater tots. If serving this as the main course of a meal, a fresh green salad or lettuce wedge is an excellent side. ■



Jerry Dilsaver of Oak Island, N.C., is a freelance writer, as well as a former national king mackerel champion fisherman. Readers are encouraged to send their favorite recipes and a photo of the completed dish to possibly be used in a future issue of the magazine. E-mail the recipes and photos to Jerry Dilsaver at captainjerry@captainjerry.com.

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: BLACK DRUM

JUVENILE PUPPY DRUM ARE SOME OF THE TASTIEST FISH IN THE GULF

Black drum are suckers for any kind of bait involving shellfish: shrimp, pieces of crab or clams.

Black drum, *Pogonias cromis*, are a favored catch of many recreational anglers along the Gulf Coast. They can be found inshore and nearshore, and they are also abundant on offshore structure, especially throughout the winter.

Black drum are fun to catch, and most

anglers agree they are tasty at the table. They have a longish body with comb-like scales. Their color ranges from light silver to dark gray, and they have four to five vertical black bars that disappear as they age. They have small mouths and chin barbels that help them locate food.

Anglers find black drum in a wide vari-

ety of habitat. Sandy bottoms, shell-lined bottoms and livebottoms are all good choices when looking for black drum. These fish have a preference for areas with lots of natural or artificial cover. They tolerate a wide range of salinity levels and are often found in brackish water. During periods of drought, they some-

times travel upriver past the saltwater dividing line. When spawning, however, they do prefer very high levels of salinity.

Black drum are opportunistic feeders and eat small invertebrates, crabs, oysters, worms, mussels, shrimp and small fish. Anglers usually catch them on shrimp.

REGULAR ACCIDENT

Black drum are usually an accidental catch of anglers targeting redfish, flounder, speckled trout or sheepshead. However, keen anglers catching any of those species will often put their bait or lures very tight to downed trees or any other structure to up their chances of catching a black drum.

These fish don't reproduce until at least until the age of four, when they are typically about 23 inches long. They usually spawn in spring and early summer. Interestingly, black drum sometimes school up in large numbers to head to spawning areas, but other times, they trickle in solo or in very small groups.

Black drum are abundant throughout the southeast, and biologists report no concern over their numbers. They can grow quite large and have been known to live past 60 years of age in the wild.

Anglers sometimes confuse black drum with sheepshead, especially in younger fish when their vertical bars are most prominent. Young black drum are also sometimes misidentified as croaker. Nicknames include blackie, short drum, dark drum, and black croaker. ■



REGS, RECORDS:

Black drum are not currently regulated in Mississippi, so no size or creel limits exist. Discussion about this has come up in recent years between lawmakers and fisheries biologists. In 2018, a measure was introduced but not passed to set regulations on the fish. The current Mississippi state record was caught in 2005 by angler Eddie Hansen. It weighed 70 pounds, 5 ounces. The world record black drum was caught in 1975 by Gerald Townsend in Lewes, DE. The fish weighed 113 pounds, 1 ounce.

A large advertisement for Emmett's Marine. The top half features a photograph of a family (a man, a woman, and a child) on a pontoon boat. The boat is white with blue and black accents and has a Tohatsu outboard motor. The background shows a rocky coastline. The Tohatsu logo is prominently displayed in the upper right of the photo. Below the photo, the Emmett's Marine logo is shown, which includes a circular emblem with a fish and the text 'EMMETT'S MARINE'. At the bottom of the advertisement, the company name 'EMMETT'S MARINE' is written in large, bold letters, followed by the address '354 DALE TRL NE • BROOKHAVEN, MS 39601', the phone number '(601) 833-2277', and the website 'WWW.EMMETTSMARINE.COM'.

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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.

MOVE, MOVE, FOR SPECKS

Spring speckled trout will move miles to get away from muddy water because they need water with higher salinity. **BELOW:** A MirrOlure is a great search bait when hunting for speckled trout.



WHEN WATER RISES, GETS MUDDY IN SPRING, HUNT UNTIL YOU FIND THEM *By Sam Davis*

March Madness means something completely different for a speckled trout fisherman. Watching river flood-stage levels steadily climb and salinity levels drop will drive a fisherman mad.

Jimmy Barnes of Sportsman's Junction Outdoor Adventures in Long Beach avoids the madness by staying on the move.

"When the rain shuts down our bite in the bayous where my partner and I had been catching two-man limits of bigger than average trout," Barnes said, "we figured that all the freshwater, along with the warmer-than-normal water temperatures, had pushed our spring transitional period up by at least a month."

Shallow bayous holding less than 10 feet of water do not provide a layer of clean,

salty water for trout to hunker down in after a heavy rain event, Barnes said.

"Unlike some of the bayous that have good stretches of deep water with good drop-offs, the small, deep holes in the bends of the bayous we fish are not large enough to hold enough bait to support a trout's needs for any extended period, so they basically get flushed out toward the bay like they would when they start

their normal spring transition," he said.

So when the bite slows after an influx of fresh water, Barnes starts moving toward the bay until the bite picks up.

"We started checking some of our spots out closer to the mouth of the bay, closer to the front that had cleaner, salty water," he said. "The fish we did find were scattered more in smaller pods, so staying mobile and making a lot of casts was key in catching a decent box of fish.

"We would stay on the move, tossing MirrOlure TTRs to cover as much ground as possible. When we hit some fish, we would stick the boat and sit on them casting, TTRs and Ultra Violet Matrix Shad soft plastics on ¼-ounce Hoosier Hooker jigheads until the bite quit; then we would be on the move again trying to find another group of fish."

Bait presentation is another key to success.

"We always try to fish either across or with the current and let the current drift our bait right to the fish," Barnes said. "I really like throwing my jig across and slightly upcurrent and drift it down with the current through where I feel the trout are holding, much like a fly fisherman would in a stream."

It is difficult to sit in one spot and limit out this time of year, according to Barnes. Look for clean water and fish the entire water column before moving on to the next area. If clean water is nowhere to be found, look for shallow water adjacent to deep drop-offs.

This is a difficult time of year to catch trout for even the most seasoned trout fisherman so don't get mad — get moving. ■

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TRAILER TACTICS: MAKE SURE THE SHOE FITS

By Jerry Dilsaver

One of the most-overlooked aspects of purchasing a boat is the trailer. Oh, if it's a used boat, you may walk around the trailer and look for obvious rust or problems and maybe even kick the tires, but rarely does anyone check further or ask any questions. When the purchase is a new boat, there is even less discussion of the trailer. Many folks have the opinion that if the dealer has the boat on that trailer, it is the right one.

These are rather naive ways of approaching this, and they can cause problems down the road — no pun intended. You're the person who will suffer the inconvenience of simple trailer issues and who stands to suffer the most if there is a major

incident, so you should be aware of your trailer needs and the options available to be sure you get what will service you best.

First, if you're buying new, tell the dealer how you intend to use the boat, so he can match the trailer to your plans. One of the first things to be considered is where you will be using the boat. Any material, from painted steel, to galvanized steel and aluminum should hold up well for a trailer that will only be used in freshwater. However, saltwater and brackish water are more corrosive, and galvanized steel or aluminum is better for that kind of use. Aluminum is preferred for constant saltwater use, with galvanized steel fine for occasional salt dips. Aluminum is lighter for the same strength and can help ease

the load on the towing vehicle, regardless of where the boat is used.

Once the trailer material has been chosen, the trailer must be matched for length, width and weight. Length and width aren't difficult; the boat will always be the same length and width.

Matching the capacity of the trailer to the boat's weight is extremely important, and it is where most people, including dealers, make their mistake. Unfortunately, this is also the area most likely to cause problems. Few people overestimate the weight of their boat. Most underestimate a boat's weight, often severely, and when a trailer is overloaded, there is potential for frame, axle, spring and tire failure.

The weight the trailer has to carry

includes the boat and everything that might be in it: boat, motor, fuel, batteries, safety equipment, any freshwater, fishing gear, coolers, ice and accessories. These things combine for far more weight than most folks realize.

For example, let's use a twin-engine center console, 23 to 25 feet long, as a starting point. This boat should weigh about 4,250 pounds. Two 4-stroke, V-6 outboards will add another 1,200 pounds, 200 gallons of gas adds 1,400 pounds, a pair of heavy duty marine batteries adds 125 pounds, safety equipment (including anchor, chain and rope) adds another 150 pounds, 30 gallons of freshwater adds 250 pounds, fishing gear (including cast nets) adds 250 pounds, any watersports gear would roughly be the same as fishing gear, a couple of coolers with ice, food, and drinks would add 100 pounds, ice for the fish box would add about 100 pounds, and finally add roughly 100 pounds for general accessories and miscellaneous items.

Suddenly, your 4,250-pound boat is up to 7,925 pounds and requires a trailer rated at a minimum of 8,000 pounds — much heavier than you imagined.

My personal suggestion is to have a trailer that exceeds your weight requirements a little. When you strike a nasty pothole or one of those nasty maintenance areas, the extra strength of a heavier trailer will often get you through without incident. The thing I remember when justifying the extra cost is that when something breaks, it will be me stuck on the side of the road, trying to do repairs instead of fishing.

Once you have chosen the right trailer, the boat needs to be positioned to distribute the load properly. The term used for proper positioning fore and aft is "tongue weight" — the amount of weight on the coupler, with the trailer level. To adjust this, fill up the fuel



Runners or bunks can be beefed up and shifted around the meet the needs of different boats to be towed.

tanks and load up all the fishing tackle and supplies you'll have in the boat while towing.

Trailer-hitch manufacturers, vehicle manufacturers and trailer manufacturers

all offer guidelines for their products. The ideal tongue weight is approximately the mid-point of where all the recommendations overlap. Typically, the mid-point will

continues >



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TRAILER TACTICS continued

be somewhere between 3 and 7 percent of the total weight of the boat and trailer.

Continuing our example above: the 7,925-pound boat load is on an aluminum trailer that weighs 700 pounds itself, so a 5-percent tongue weight would be 431 pounds. Be sure to check this with the trailer level. Also, when moving the boat to change the tongue weight, do it slowly. An inch or two can make a big difference in weight distribution. Move the boat forward to increase the tongue weight and backward to lighten it.

The most-overlooked part of setting up a trailer is getting it level behind the tow vehicle. This can be fudged some with light loads and single-axle trailers, but is very important with trailers that have multiple axles — and critically so on trailers with torsion axles. The tongue weight is set with the trailer level on the ground, and to maintain the correct tongue weight, you must tow the trailer in a level position. This also helps distribute to load evenly to all tires on multiple-axle trailers.

The trailer level is checked by connecting the trailer to the tow vehicle and measuring the distance from the frame rails to the ground at both ends of the trailer. This takes into consideration how the tow vehicle settles with the trailer attached. The axle(s) create a pivot point, so a change on one end will produce the opposite change on the other. Make any changes in small increments. A difference of approximately an inch is generally acceptable between the ends of the trailer. If the trailer won't balance perfectly, a slight tongue-high attitude is preferred to a tongue-low attitude. ■

FIELD NOTES



MARCH IS TIME TO FERTILIZE SMALL PONDS

By Jeff Bureson

With spring just around the corner and water temperatures on the rise, pond owners should proceed to the next level of their continual improvement program. The water tests from January and pH correction in February have prepared ponds for nutrient enrichment to fuel micro-organism growth and overall pond productivity.

Beginning at the microscopic level, fertilizer treatments promote growth of phytoplankton that are eaten by water insects and continue up the food chain resulting in big fat bream and lunker bass. A fertilized pond will provide three to four times the fish as an unfertilized pond, or 300 to 400 pounds per acre.

Fertilizer should be available throughout the growing season; a series of treatments can be made, or the pond can be treated at one time using a time-released version. Treatments should be scattered throughout the pond. The first application should be in

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Fertilizing small ponds this month will kick-start growth at the bottom of the food chain that leads to healthier fish populations, good fishing.

early March, just as the growing season begins and waters begin to warm. Soon after the fertilizer treatments and the first bloom, the water clarity will decrease. As the water clears up and visibility increases to greater than two feet, secondary treatments can begin.

The key ingredient in pond fertilizers is phosphate. Treatments should contain a high ratio of phosphate, such as 0-46-0. As a general rule, granular or powdered fertilizer can be added at a rate between five and seven pounds per acre. If liquid fertilizers are used, they should be diluted before distribution and should be prescribed at a similar ratio.

If the pH has not been corrected with limestone treatments, fertilizers should not be added. Phosphate amendments will only be effective if pond pH is approaching 7 or above. Water pH should always be corrected prior to fertilization. ■

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PLAY WEATHER FOR SPRING REDS

By Brian Cope

WEATHER PATTERNS ARE KEY TO FISHING

On cooler March days, look for redfish in slightly deeper water around dropoffs or around the deep edges of mud flats.

Brian Cope

Late March and early April are transition times for the weather and inshore fishing patterns. What that means to anglers like guide

Stephen Fields is that the fishing can be just as hot from one day to the next, but it will take some trial and error because what works one day may not work the next.

This is typical this time of year because a few days of warm weather are usually interrupted by a cold front, rain or windy weather, all of which have an impact on the fish. Fields said knowing a few strategies will keep anglers on the redfish until the weather becomes more stable.

When the wind is blowing to the point that it makes casting difficult, Fields likes to focus on docks that are protected from the wind. He finds a small creek or a stretch of shoreline that offers a windbreak, then casts to those docks, either with live bait or with a Z-Man PaddlerZ. Mud minnows have been the ticket on his most recent trips, and Fields said dragging the bait on the bottom has been the best way to entice a bite.

On a nice, warm, blue-sky



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On windy, March days, focus on docks and areas of the shoreline that are protected from direct blows.



Dan Kibler

day, Fields likes to concentrate on the mud flats. He said a lot of redfish are visible in the shallows and the edge of the shallows where the water depth begins dropping.

"They are usually at that edge of the dropoff, but sometimes they'll be shallow, so I like to anchor far enough away that I don't spook them," he said. "I see a lot of anglers go in too shallow, and they run right over the fish. Whatever you do, anchor so that you can cast tight to the bank or grass line and then drag your lure all the way to the dropoff."

When a cold front comes through after a few days of nice weather, Fields said anglers should look for deeper pockets, especially those just off the flats. He targets fish in these areas with Z-Man soft plastics and a bass lure, a LIVETARGET BaitBall Rattlebait. "This is a lure the redfish around here aren't seeing a lot of, and they respond to it really well," he said.

Fields stresses that anglers need to familiarize themselves with the areas they fish through maps as well as electronics. A lot of anglers unknowingly scatter fish out of their holes because they don't know what the terrain looks like under the surface, he said. ■

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Different models of soft-plastic frogs have their own, built-in advantages. **INSET:** Use a frog as a basic search bait in spring.

FROG TACTICS

TRY THIS GREAT SEARCH BAIT By David A. Brown

Spring brings several promises, among them: bass will eat a frog. With fish shaking off winter's chill and moving toward their spawning locations, gobbling as much protein as possible is paramount.

For an angler, the frog offers a great search bait for covering lots of water and finding key staging areas. Once you're dialed in, the frog is an easy bait with which to hit your targets.

Make the most of this high-percentage bait by paying attention to these key points.

BODY STYLES

No need to complicate this; a traditional, narrow-nose frog comes through cover best and does the best job of creating taunting displays with its subtle side-to-side twitches. When noise and splash weigh heavier in the priorities, a popping frog's concave face chugs, spits and produces a substantial bubble trail. A walking

frog needs relatively calm conditions for open-water use, while poppers perform just fine in a chop.

Specialized frogs with baitfish/panfish shapes designed to ride sideways in the water enhance the basic frog image with a forage fish ruse.

COLORS

Modern frog colors run the gamut from authentic bullfrogs to more eye-popping artistic options. Matching local forage can make a difference, so take note of any live frogs you spot and do your best to mimic their appearance.

Blacks and browns do remarkably well, but savvy anglers know that one of the most popular frog colors is white. Some say it looks like a baitfish belly from the viewpoint of a bass, but in thick weeds or dim light, anglers can visually track a white frog better. Sometimes bass quietly suck down a frog, so when the white disappears, it's time to get ready to hit him.



LEG WORK

Most frogs come standard with a set of long leg strands and, at times, this is what you want. For example, a bass may have trouble eyeballing a clean shot at your bait through a grass mat; but if he grabs those long legs, he has a better chance of sucking in the entire frog.

Conversely, when a frog's legs drag too much in open water, this may impede the walking motion. In such cases, trim a

quarter-inch at a time until you find the right length for optimal action.

For strategic effect, trim one side a half-inch shorter to make the bait swing more widely to the longer side. On the subsequent swing, that fuller side holds the frog to a shorter swing. Often, a small difference between your frog and others can be the deal closer on a pressured fishery.

OPEN UP

If you're missing too many frog bites or your fish keep shaking loose, bend the hooks outward for a wider grabbing range. In heavier cover, this broader reach obviously works against you, so keep the hooks tucked close to the frog's body and check the alignment after every fish.

FILL THE BELLY

Enhancing your frog with rattles (additional) can help you attract attention from afar. Simply remove the skirt legs, push rattle chambers through the holes and replace the legs. Also, adding lead BBs to a frog's belly makes it sit lower in the water — often advantageous when working over grass mats.

PRESENTATION PROWESS

Overhead casts are the norm, but sidearm shots help you hit those shade pockets created by overhanging tree limbs, vines, etc. Sidearm casts will also serve you well for dock fishing when skipping your frog underneath.

Additionally, we typically associate the pitching presentation with jigs and Texas-rigged plastics, but this delivery style can also work well when you're sending your frog into a tight area.

THE RIGHT RESPONSE

You can chose a goofy colored frog, throw one with raggedy legs and even work it home with a boring, straight line retrieve and still attract a bass. Right place, right time — it happens. However, regardless of how you tempted a fish



One of the most popular frog colors is white.

David Brown

into biting, this is without question the most important element of the game.

Truly a make-it-or-break-it moment, the proper hookset for a topwater frog bite requires a discipline that's often greatly impeded by the magnitude of the moment. You make your cast, work the bait, twitch-twitch-twitch-twitch-twitch-BOOM! Big splash, muscles clinch, eye widen; but what do you do?

Nothing — at least not for a second or two. The majority of missed frog bites are not the fish's fault. Sure, they miss the bait sometimes, but anglers yank away their target more often than not. It's completely understandable, but the sooner you can train yourself to forego that immediate rod yank and simply let the fish come tight on your line before crossing his eyes, the more frog fish you're going to catch. ■

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HUNTING SEASONS

SPECIES	SEASON DATES	BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT
Doves	Sept. 1-Oct. 7 (n), Sept. 1-Sept. 9 (s)	15	45
	Oct. 27-Nov. 7 (n), Oct. 6-Nov. 7 (s)		
	Dec. 22-Jan. 31 (n), Dec. 15-Jan. 31 (s)		
Quail	Nov. 22-March 2	8	
Rabbit	Oct. 1-Feb. 28	8	
Squirrel (fall)	Sept. 30-Feb. 28	8	
Squirrel (spr)	May 15-June 1	4	
Raccoon	July 1-Sept. 30	1 raccoons per party	
Rac/Opp/Bobct	Oct. 1-Oct. 31 (food/sport)	5/day, 8/party	
	Nov. 1-Feb. 28 (food/sport/pelt)	No limit	
Rails			
King & Clapper	Sept. 2-Nov. 10	25	75
Sora & Virginia,	Sept. 2-Nov. 10	15	45
Gallinules	Sept. 2-Nov. 10	15	45
Snipe	Nov. 14 - Feb. 28	8	24
Crow	Nov. 4 - Feb. 28	No limit	No limit
Woodcock	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31	3	9
Wild Turkey			
Fall season	Oct. 15-Nov. 15 (selected counties)	2 per season (may be either sex)	
Spring season	March 15-May 1	1/day, 3/season, longbeards only	
Youth season	March 8-14	1/day, 3/season, bearded birds only	

WATERFOWL SEASONS

SPECIES	DATES	BAG LIMIT
Duck	Teal only: Sept. 15-30	6
	Nov. 23-25, Nov. 30-Dec. 2	6
	Dec. 5-Jan. 27	
Geese	Sept. 1-30	5
(Canada, blue, Ross, white-fronted, brant)	Nov. 9-25, Nov. 30-Dec. 2,	Canada 3, Brant 1
	Dec. 5-Jan. 27	Snow/blue/Ross 20 White-fronted 3
Light Geese conservation	Oct. 1-Nov. 8, Jan. 28-Feb. 1, Feb. 3-March 31	No limit

DEER SEASON

ZONE	ARCHERY	PRIM WEAPON	GUNS
Northeast	Oct. 1-Nov. 16	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 17-Dec. 1 (dogs)
	Nov. 5-16 (antlerless primitive weapon)		Dec. 16-23 (no dogs)
	Jan. 17-31 (archery/primitive weapon)		Dec. 24-Jan. 16(dogs)
			Nov. 3-Jan. 31 (youth)
East Central	Oct. 1-Nov. 16	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 17-Dec. 1 (dogs)
	Nov. 5-16 (antlerless primitive weapon)		Dec. 16-23 (no dogs)
	Jan. 17-31 (archery-primitive weapon)		Dec. 24-Jan. 16(dogs)
			Nov. 3-Jan. 31 (youth)
Southwest	Oct. 1-Nov. 16	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 17-Dec. 1 (dogs)
	Nov. 5-16 (antlerless primitive weapon)		Dec. 16-23 (no dogs)
	Jan. 17-31 (archery-primitive weapon)		Dec. 24-Jan.16(dogs)
			Nov. 3-Jan. 31 (youth)
Southeast	Oct. 15-Nov. 16	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 17-Jan. 1 (dogs)
	Jan. 17-31 (either-sex arch-primitive)		Dec. 16-23 (no dogs)
	Feb. 1-15 (archery-primitive bucks only)		Dec. 24-Jan. 16(dogs)
			Nov. 3-Feb. 15(youth)
Delta	Oct. 1-Nov. 16	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 17-Jan. 1 (dogs)
	Nov. 5-16 (antlerless primitive weapon)		Dec. 16-23 (no dogs)
	Jan. 17-31(archery primitive weapon)		Dec. 24-Jan. 17(dogs)
			Nov. 3-Jan. 31 (youth)

SALTWATER

STATE COASTAL WATERS REGULATIONS (0 - 3 miles)		
FISH SPECIES	Minimum Lengths	Creel Limit (per person)
Greater amberjack	34" FL	1/day
Blue marlin	99" LJFL	no limit
White marlin	66" LJFL	no limit
Sailfish	63" LJFL	no limit
Sharks (large coastal/pelagic)@	37" TL*	1/day or 3/boat
Sharks@	25" TL*	4/day
Cobia	33" FL	2 per day
Redfish (red drum)	18" minimum	
	30" maximum TL	3/day (1 over 30")
Flounder (state waters)	12" TL	15/day
Groupers (black and gag)	24" TL@	4/day aggregate
Hogfish	12" FL@	5/day
Red, yellowfin grouper	20" TL@	4/day
Scamp grouper	16" TL@	4/day
Speckled hind/Warsaw grouper	no minimum@	1/day each
Gray/schoolmaster/cubera/ mahogany/yellowtail/dog snapper	12" TL@	10/day aggregate
Mutton snapper	16" TL@	10/day
Queen/blackfin/silk/winchman snapper	none@	10/day aggregate
Vermillion/lane snapper	10"/8" TL@	20/day aggregate
Gray triggerfish	14" FL@	20/day
Golden/blueline/anchor/blackline tilefish	none@	20/day
King mackerel	24" FL@	2/day
Spanish mackerel	no minimum size@	15/day
Yellowfin tuna	27" CFL@	3/day
Bigeye tuna	27" CFL@	no limit
Tripletail	18" TL	3/day
Spotted sea trout (speckled)	15"	15/day

@ For openings and closings of federally regulated fish and updated size limits, visit gulfcouncil.org.

FRESHWATER

FISH Species (Inland waters)	Minimum Size Limit	Creel Limit (per day)
Crappie/Panfish #	%	30 crappie, 100 bream
Largemouth, smallmouth, spotted bass	%	10 in combination
Channel catfish	No more than 1 over 34"	None +
Blue catfish	No more than 1 over 34"	None +
Flathead catfish	No more than 1 over 34"	None +
Striped bass or hybrid bass	15"	6 in combination
Mountain Trout (Lake Lamar Bruce)	No restrictions	3
Sauger	%	10
Walleye	%	3
Alligator gar/paddlefish	No fish over 30" in creel	2

TL=Total Length; LJFL=Lower jaw to middle of fork in tail; FL=Fork Length (tip of snout to middle of fork in tail); CFL=Curved Fork Length (measure of a line tracing contour of body from tip of upper jaw to fork of the tail).

+ In Lake Okhissa, 5 per day, in ReCon Lake and all MDWFP lakes, 10 per day

% For lake-specific regs, see MDWFP's Regulations Digest or www.mdwfp.com/

In Lake Okhissa and Percy Quin State Park, the creel limit is 50 per day.

* Possession of certain species of sharks is prohibited.



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

The "Best Days" column is based on the ever-changing positions of the sun and the moon, rating each day on a scale of 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more solar/lunar influence that day is experiencing (see "Value" column or corresponding black bars). The two Primary periods (Moon Overhead and Moon Underfoot) vary in length from one hour to three-and-one-half hours, depending on a number of important lunar cycles, such as how close the moon is to the earth that day and how high its orbit is. The solar symbols alert you to when a Primary period overlaps a major solar period (eg: Dawn, High-Noon, and Dusk). The secondary periods of Moonrise and Moonset last about one hour each... 30 minutes before and after the listed time. (See key at bottom of each month for more detail.)

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

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

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2019 MAR		BEST DAYS			VALUE
POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL		
Fri 1	█	█	█	█	18
Sat 2	█	█	█	█	19
Sun 3	█	█	█	█	29
Mon 4	█	█	█	█	39
Tue 5	█	█	█	█	51
Wed 6	█	█	█	█	58
Thu 7	█	█	█	█	51
Fri 8	█	█	█	█	44
Sat 9	█	█	█	█	39
Sun 10	█	█	█	█	37
Mon 11	█	█	█	█	40
Tue 12	█	█	█	█	43
Wed 13	█	█	█	█	51
Thu 14	█	█	█	█	63
Fri 15	█	█	█	█	54
Sat 16	█	█	█	█	49
Sun 17	█	█	█	█	60
Mon 18	█	█	█	█	68
Tue 19	█	█	█	█	78
Wed 20	█	█	█	█	81
Thu 21	█	█	█	█	67
Fri 22	█	█	█	█	53
Sat 23	█	█	█	█	39
Sun 24	█	█	█	█	32
Mon 25	█	█	█	█	29
Tue 26	█	█	█	█	31
Wed 27	█	█	█	█	40
Thu 28	█	█	█	█	28
Fri 29	█	█	█	█	23
Sat 30	█	█	█	█	22
Sun 31	█	█	█	█	24

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LUNAR PERIODS					TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED	
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT			
3:39 am	8:16 am - 9:14 am	1:50 pm	8:41 pm - 9:39 pm	LOW	☾	
4:26 am	9:02 am - 10:04 am	2:42 pm	9:27 pm - 10:29 pm	LOW	☾	
5:08 am	9:46 am - 10:54 am	3:36 pm	10:11 pm - 11:19 pm	Apogee	☾	
5:46 am	10:27 am - 11:45 am	4:31 pm	10:52 pm - 12:10 am	Apogee	☾	
6:20 am	11:07 am - 12:35 pm	5:26 pm	11:32 pm - Midnight	NEW	☾	
6:52 am	11:43 am - 1:25 pm	6:21 pm	Midnight - 1:00 am	NEW	☾	
7:22 am	12:17 pm - 2:15 pm	7:17 pm	12:08 am - 1:50 am	NEW	☾	
7:51 am	12:53 pm - 3:05 pm	8:13 pm	12:42 am - 2:40 am	NEW	☾	
8:21 am	1:27 pm - 3:57 pm	9:09 pm	1:18 am - 3:30 am	NEW	☾	
9:52 am	3:03 pm - 5:49 pm	11:07 pm	1:52 am - 4:22 am	DST	☾	
10:25 am	3:42 pm - 6:42 pm		3:28 am - 6:14 am	DST	☾	
11:01 am	4:27 pm - 7:37 pm	12:07 am	4:07 am - 7:07 am	DST	☾	
11:43 am	5:14 pm - 8:34 pm	1:08 am	4:52 am - 8:02 am	DST	☾	
12:32 pm	6:07 pm - 9:33 pm	2:10 am	5:39 am - 8:59 am	HALF	☾	
1:27 pm	7:06 pm - 10:32 pm	3:11 am	6:32 am - 9:58 am	HIGH	☾	
2:29 pm	8:07 pm - 11:29 pm	4:09 am	7:31 am - 10:57 am	HIGH	☾	
3:37 pm	9:12 pm - 12:24 am	5:03 am	8:32 am - 11:54 am	HIGH	☾	
4:48 pm	10:16 pm - 1:16 am	5:52 am	9:37 am - 12:49 pm	HIGH	☾	
6:00 pm	11:22 pm - Midnight	6:37 am	10:41 am - 1:41 pm	Perigee	☾	
7:12 pm	Midnight - 2:04 am	7:17 am	11:47 am - 2:29 pm	Perigee	☾	
8:22 pm	12:26 am - 2:48 am	7:55 am	12:51 pm - 3:13 pm	Perigee	☾	
9:30 pm	1:29 am - 3:31 am	8:31 am	1:54 pm - 3:56 pm	Perigee	☾	
10:37 pm	2:29 am - 4:15 am	9:07 am	2:54 pm - 4:40 pm	Perigee	☾	
11:41 pm	3:30 am - 4:58 am	9:45 am	3:55 pm - 5:23 pm	Perigee	☾	
12:43 am	4:28 am - 5:44 am	10:25 am	4:53 pm - 6:09 pm	Perigee	☾	
1:41 am	5:24 am - 6:30 am	11:08 am	5:49 pm - 6:55 pm	Perigee	☾	
2:35 am	6:17 am - 7:19 am	11:54 am	6:42 pm - 7:44 pm	Perigee	☾	
3:23 am	7:10 am - 8:08 am	12:44 pm	7:35 pm - 8:33 pm	Perigee	☾	
4:07 am	7:58 am - 9:00 am	1:35 pm	8:23 pm - 9:25 pm	Perigee	☾	
4:46 am	8:44 am - 9:50 am	2:29 pm	9:09 pm - 10:15 pm	Perigee	☾	
	9:25 am - 10:41 am	3:24 pm	9:50 pm - 11:06 pm	Perigee	☾	

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