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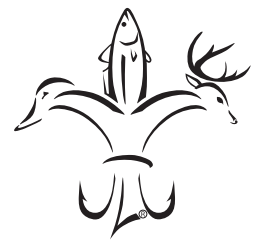
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Bass fishing breaks loose this month, with great action on the Tenn-Tom Waterway, and plenty of places where anglers can get away in a kayak. Photo by Brian Carroll.



Mississippi **SPORTSMAN**

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
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# TRAP DOOR'S OPEN

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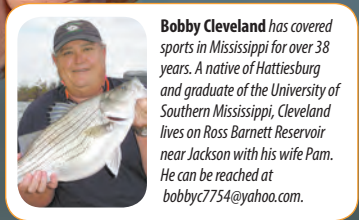


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**UPDATE**  
with  
**Bobby Cleveland**



**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](mailto:bobbyc7754@yahoo.com).

# YES, YOU MAY GO FISHING!

## BEDDING BLUEGILL MOVE TO THE FOREFRONT IN MISSISSIPPI WATERS

**M**ay in Mississippi is a time of transition.

Most fish species are either transitioning out of spawning (crappie and bass), are in the prime of a long bedding cycle (bream and speckled trout) or are just entering the process (catfish).

Turkeys are breathing easier; the season ends May 1.

Deer are moving into a time of plenty; the green-up feeds them all.

Perhaps no species transitions more than humans, especially families. Children are exiting school for the summer, leaving parents the task of planning summer

activities and vacations.

This edition of *Mississippi Sportsman* can help with those plans, starting with news in this opening roundup. Keep reading and learn about great bream fishing, off-shore fishing trips, and how the opening of a new shooting center in North Mississippi will provide many opportunities to enjoy some off-season shooting.

Then, flip through the pages of the magazine to learn more fun adventures, like Mike Giles' look at bass fishing from a kayak, or David Hawkins' look at how to find largemouth on the Tenn-Tom Waterway. Phillip Gentry gets and gives tips for postspawn crappie, and there's a look at

the great speckled trout fishing along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

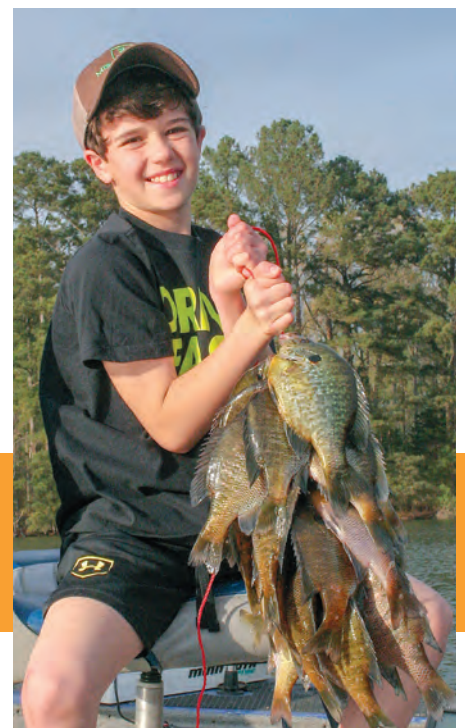
There's all that and more in *Mississippi Sportsman*, so let's get going. ■

May begins serious fishing for bluegill and other sunfish around Mississippi.

**GOT PICS?**  
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Email images to: [images@ms-sportsman.com](mailto:images@ms-sportsman.com)

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# OH BOY: BREAM! RETURN TO YOUR FISHING ROOTS

**M**odern freshwater fishing is often defined by visions of tournament and recreational anglers racing up and down a waterway in a flashy boat, rigged with enough fish-finding electronics to see a brush top under the surface at 60 miles an hour.

Forget that, for now, and imagine this scenario:

You're sitting in a bag chair at water's edge, either at a farm pond or a small public lake, a cold beverage in the chair's cup holder. Your gaze, though often distracted by the flight of a bird or the color of the dogwoods or wildflowers, is centered on a small piece of fluorescent Styrofoam, bobbing up and down on the water.

Maybe there's some AI Green playing in the background, or perhaps Willie Nelson, or maybe not. It's your call.

Then, all of a sudden, the bobber shoots under the water.

You react, grabbing the pole and giving it a yank to set the hook in whatever has eaten your cricket.

Without leaving your seat, you swing the hand-sized bluegill bream within reach, remove it from the hook and toss it into the open ice chest at your feet, where it joins about 20 others you've already caught. It flops once or twice before settling down on the bed of ice.

By then, you've already put another cricket on the hook, swung the line out into the water and returned to your gaze. Maybe Brother Green has moved on to another song, maybe not.

Either way, all is right with the world.

Now, that's the essence of fishing, and truth be told, one of the great pleasures granted us in this life. It's simple really: a pole — be it cane or modern graphite — with a box of crickets, a small tackle box with a few spare hooks, split-shot and bobbers, and bedding bream — but so rewarding in both a soul-satisfying and mouth-watering way.

"As good as it is for your soul, the best part of bream fishing comes hours later

when you sit down with a mess of fried bluegill," said fisherman Joe Watts of Canton. "The fun you have catching them, and the enjoyment of eating them, is worth having to clean them in between."

Watts is a dedicated bobber-watcher who lives on a bream-filled lake and has access to several others. He often bass fishes, loves to chase reds and specks in the Gulf, and has fought marlin and tuna.

Yet his true love is, as he said, "drowning crickets."

May is his favorite time, too. It's just too easy.

"They bed up first in April, especially the reed, but in May, all the bluegill come in on the new and full moons," Watts said. "The fish in our lake have some historical bedding areas, but on other lakes, I like to smell them out. When you get downwind of a big bed, believe me, you'll know it.

"It's an aroma that is semi-sweet, like watermelon, mixed with an acrid, earthy

smell of wet dirt and with a fishy smell. You find that on the wind and then follow it upwind to its source. You can fish it from a boat, but usually it's close enough to the bank that you can go ashore, set up chairs and wear them out, comfortably."

Watts has an array of 11-foot B'n'M crappie poles at the ready at all times in the spring, including some with ultralight spinning reels to cast to beds just out of reach without casting.

Bream bed throughout the spring and early summer, he said, usually on the new and full moons.

"It's the gift that keeps on giving," Watts said. ■

**ABOVE:** Catching bedding bream is as easy as swinging a cricket or worm into a pond.

## WORMS VS. CRICKETS — OR GO FOR A FLY

Live bait is a necessary evil of bream fishing, especially in the spring when bluegill are on their beds.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, we know, there's a legion of fly fishermen who say casting a fly is the only way to go. Go in peace brothers, this story isn't about art; it's about putting fish in the frying pan.

For most fishermen, it's either crickets or a live wiggler — red worm, night crawler, catalpa or meal worm. The cricket vs. worm argument is an old one and not one to be argued here today ... well, maybe a little.

They both have their advantages and disadvantages. Crickets are cheaper than worms, and they have less of the "yuck" factor. But, worms can't jump, and if they escape their container, they are slow to make their getaway. If one or two get away, they simply die, dry up, and that's that.

Crickets will live in the boat, in the garage, and chirp all night until they ... heck, they never shut up. And there's this:

There are two kinds of cricket fisher-

men, those who have had a cricket jump in their mouths or down their shirts, and those who will have one jump in their mouths or down their shirts. It's even worse if the wife is involved, and in a soon-to-be-turned-over boat. That said, a cricket in the mouth still beats worm guts on the



Bobby Cleveland

hands, shirts, pants, the boat, the ice chest, or, yep, sandwiches.

It's true that when the bream aren't bedding and are scattered across the bottom in deeper areas of the lake, worms are indeed the best bet. They just work better when bream are feeding by sense of smell. ■

Grabbing for big flathead and blue catfish begins May 1 in Mississippi.



Tony Garitta

# CATFISH, BY HAND, CRANKS UP IN MAY

## GRABBING IS A FAVORITE TACTIC FOR MANY MISSISSIPPIANS

**T**aking catfish by hand is growing in popularity, especially with cable TV networks highlighting this brazen method of fishing. The guys and girls who do it love it; the rest of us question their intelligence quotient.

Seriously, going underwater, in water usually so muddy you can't see your nose, sticking a foot or a hand into a hole — be it a stump, bank, ramp, or man-made box — hoping it gets bit; I mean, what could go wrong?

"Yeah, we get that kind of reaction all the time," said Jimmy Thomas of Grenada. "The questions I get are, 'Aren't you afraid of getting bit by a snake, or a turtle, or a gator?' I always tell them the same thing: 'I'm just hoping to get bit by a 70-pound catfish, or bigger.' It kills me when they get that horrid look on their face, or they just cuss and shake their heads."

Mississippi's hand-grabbing season opens May 1 and runs through July 15, which is timed to match the spawning

season of flathead and blue catfish. The big females will choose a nest to lay their eggs; they prefer an old, hollow stump, a washed-out hole in a bank, a cavity below a boat ramp or culvert, or, as Thomas prefers, one of his man-made fish boxes.

"They are legal in most Mississippi waters, as long as you abide by the rules regarding materials you use," he said. "We make ours out of wood and weigh them down with big rocks and mud. They all have about a 10-inch box, enclosed completely except for a very small hole in the back and a bigger hole, or door, in the front. That gives the fish access to the box and gives us a place to put our hand."

"When one of us goes down, first, we use a foot to block the opening so the fish can't escape. Then, we sink under and stick a hand in. A big, aggressive female will bite the intruding hand. That's the goal."

Once the fish chomps down, the nut, I mean fisherman, must be quick and grab the lower jaw and remove the fish, subdue it against his or her body and wrestle it to the surface.

All that has to happen before the idiot, I mean fisherman, runs out of oxygen.

"It's not insane, but that time between it biting you and you getting it to the surface is so crazy and such an adrenaline rush that once you've done it, you can't wait to do it again," Thomas said. "We've got a team of four of us who always grab together, and we usually make it a point to bring a new person with us each trip. If the newbie wants to participate, fine. It might just be blocking the hole at first while another person grabs, or it might be just helping subdue the fish. But, almost always, before the day is over, they will

want to do the grabbing, especially if we find a box with a 15- to 30-pound cat in it. Better one that size than a 50- or 60-pounder."

Thomas and company make it a point to grab as often during the 2½-month season as possible, and to release far more fish than they keep.

"Rarely will we keep a fish over 20 pounds," he said, "and for sure, anything over 40 or 50 goes back. It's more about the thrill for us, not taking fish home to fry. We can catch enough small, eating-size fish on hook and line." ■

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# CWD COUNT NOW 19; ZONES GROW CLOSER

The two latest confirmed cases of chronic wasting disease in Mississippi's free-ranging deer herd brings the total to 19, causing the North CWD Management Zone to expand south.

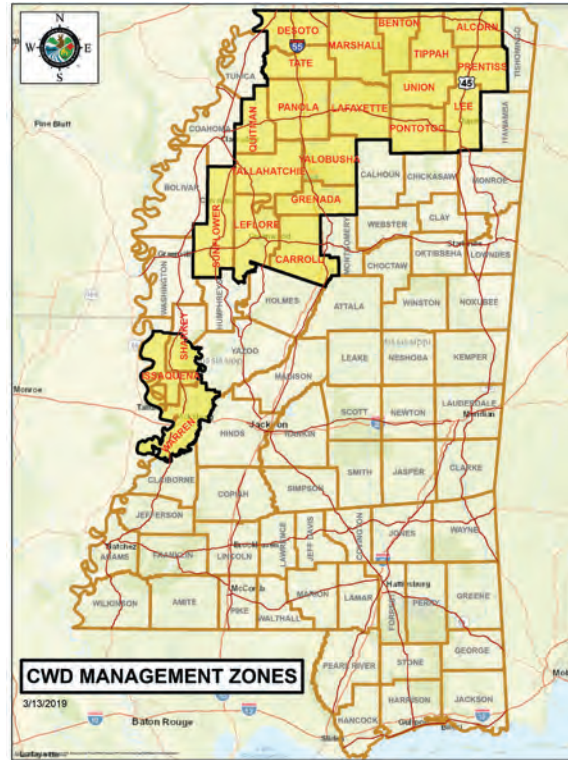
Two does, one each from Tallahatchie and Panola counties, were recently added to the list of confirmed cases. Because the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks' CWD Response Plan impacts areas within 25 miles of a confirmed case, the North Zone grew, adding Sunflower, Leflore and Carroll to a list of 19 other counties affected. Added to three counties in the original Issaquena Zone, Mississippi now has parts or fall of 22 counties in CWD Management Zones.

With the North Zone expanding

to the south, only three counties — Humphreys, Holmes and Yazoo — keep the two zones separate.

Within the CWD zones, it is illegal to:

- Supplementally feed wildlife;
- Establish new mineral sites or add supplements to existing sites;
- Trap wild hogs without a permit from MDWFP;
- Remove certain portions of cervid carcasses from the zone. Only cut/wrapped meat; deboned meat; hides with no head attached; finished taxidermy; antlers with no tissue attached; cleaned skull plates with no brain tissue; and cleaned skulls with no lymphoid or brain tissue can be transported from inside to outside a CWD Management Zone. ■



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# ALLIGATOR SEASON, REGULATIONS SET

**T**he application process for Mississippi's 2019 alligator hunting season will begin May 31 at 10 a.m., with only electronic applications accepted through 10 a.m. on June 6.

It will be the 15th year of alligator hunting in Mississippi, growing from 50 weekend-only permits on Barnett Reservoir in 2005 to a statewide 10-day season (Aug. 31-Sept. 10) with a total of 960 permits.

The number of permits offered has increased by 30 from last year, with 10 each added to the Barnett Reservoir, Southwest and West Central zones. The seven zones with available permits, are: Northwest (40), Northeast (130), West Central (190), Southwest (190), South Central (150) and the upper Pearl River area of Barnett Reservoir (100).

The application process is an electronic procedure that requires an email address and a processing fee of slightly more than \$2. It can be done anywhere Mississippi licenses are sold or by phone (1-800-5-Go Hunt). Applicants may only apply once in one zone of their choice. To be eligible to apply:

- You must be at least 16 years of age at the time of purchase.
- You must possess one of the following

valid resident licenses to be eligible: Sportsman License, All-Game Hunting/Fishing License, Small Game Hunting/Fishing License, Apprentice Sportsman License, Apprentice All Game License, Apprentice Small Game License, Senior Exempt License, Disabled Exempt License, or a Lifetime License.

- Non-residents need not apply.

Ricky Flynt, the alligator program coordinator for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, advises that applicants make the process easier with these tips.

"Make sure your hunting and fishing license is up to date prior to applying, and after applying, check your receipt to make sure you applied for the right zone you wanted

and your email address is correct," he said. "This can save a lot of heartache later."

Flynt said the drawing will be held on or about June 12. Those drawn will be immediately notified through the email provided and will have 48 hours to complete their purchase of the \$200 permit. Any permits unclaimed within the 48-hour window will be awarded during a second draw on or about June 24, open to only those applicants not selected during the first draw.

For more information on alligator hunting in Mississippi, including complete regulations and application process, visit <https://www.mdwfp.com/wildlife-hunting/alligator-program/> ■

Alligator hunters will have 960 permits for the 2019 season, up from 930 in 2018.

# SPRING SQUIRREL SEASON WILL OPEN ON MAY 15

**M**ississippi hunters will again have a chance to take squirrels this month when the statewide spring season opens May 15. It ends on June 1. The limit is four per day, per person.

"I've hunted the spring season every year, and I've learned one thing for sure," said hunter Timmy Wright of Brandon. "Snake boots and chaps are a good investment. I might see one or two snakes a year during the regular fall and winter season, but I see one or two an hour, at least, in the spring.

"I got hit twice by copperheads last year, and neither one was able to bite through my snake chaps and boots."

Wright's enthusiasm was not impacted.

"Oh, heck, no, I love it," he said. "Once you know what to look for, the spring season

can be fantastic. With a limit of four, my son and I can both get our limits in a couple of hours with our dog, Wheel. He's a cur with a never-ending desire to tree squirrels. We named him Wheel cause he's always ready to roll."

Wright hunts both private and public lands, and he always concentrates on any ripe fruit, like mulberry trees, he can find.

"Squirrels will eat anything; they are opportunistic," he said. "They will eat bark, tender chutes, even bugs, but their favorites are ripe nuts and fruit. Mulberry trees



Mississippi's spring squirrel season runs from May 15 to June 1.

fruit in the spring, and the squirrels will frequent those. If you don't have a treeing dog or if you're unable to walk a lot, you can just set up around a fruiting mulberry and wait. They'll come." ■

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# MDWFP OPENS NEW RANGE NEAR SARDIS

A state-of-the-art public shooting range is opening on the Charles Ray Nix WMA in north Mississippi.

MDWFP

**T**he Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks opened its latest shooting range; the 300-acre Mclvor Shooting Facility at the Charles Ray Nix Wildlife Management Area near Sardis brings a state-of-the-art facility to sportsmen in a highly populated region of north Mississippi.

Although it is part of the WMA, the range will be isolated from hunting areas, with access to shooting locations controlled by time cards and counters, similar to MDWFP's first two ranges: the Turcotte Shooting Facility near Jackson and the McHenry Shooting Facility near Wiggins.

Within a short drive from several population centers — Sardis, Grenada, Oxford, Senatobia, Southaven and Olive Branch — the Mclvor range is a multi-discipline shooting sports facility. MDWFP partnered with the Foundation for Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, and Olin Chemical, the parent company of Winchester Ammunition. Funding for the facility included a \$1.425 million grant from Olin, and the MDWFP worked with the U.S.

Fish & Wildlife Service to garner additional grant funding.

Olin/Winchester has an ammunition plant on the outskirts of Oxford in rural Lafayette County.

MDWFP said the Mclvor range is part of the agency's R3 Initiative: Recruiting, Retaining and Reactivating sportsmen into hunting and fishing activities. R3 also includes a youth-oriented hunter education program.

"One of the central themes of R3 is partnerships," said Dr. Sam Polles, the executive director of MDWFP. "Whether it is MDWFP collaborating with other conservation organizations throughout the state or with hunters and anglers themselves, we must work together to make sure we are creating and empowering more hunters and anglers each year. Building the hunting and fishing community in Mississippi is essential.

"Without a strong base of consistent participation in hunting, angling, target shooting and other outdoor recreation activities, the valuable funding each year for wildlife conservation and habitat

restoration will decline. This will leave our state with fewer resources and even fewer jobs."

Capt. Scottie Jones of the MDWFP Law Enforcement division, the Mclvor project manager, said the range provides a safe, comfortable environment.

"Our key goal is to provide facilities where people go out and enjoy shooting sports," Jones said. "Some of the big programs we have in shooting sports are the Mississippi Scholastic Shooting Program (MSSP), where schools can compete in the shotgun sports — sporting clays, skeet, trap, and five stand.

"We also have archery programs within the agency. We're hoping that youth will one day want to take the next step and go hunting and fishing."

The facility also will feature a 3D archery range that simulates real-world hunting situations. Visitors can engage animal targets such as deer on a trail through a forested area. Facility managers can move the targets and make adjustments to the trail on the fly, which keeps the experience fresh for visitors. ■

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# SPORTSMAN'S HUNTING & FISHING SCRAPBOOK

Kyla Huffman, 12, proudly shows off her first deer. It was taken in Rankin County while hunting with her dad, Scot Huffman. The highlight of Scot's season was hearing Kyla scream "I dropped him daddy!"



Tanner Garrison, 8, of Holly Springs caught this channel cat on stinkbait while fishing with his uncle, Aaron Barton, at Tippah County State Fishing Lake.



Owen Porche, 10, killed his first buck on Jan. 27, 2019, hunting with his dad on their family farm in Amite County.



Jacob Palazzo harvested this nice buck on Nov. 10, 2018 in Lexington.



FAR LEFT: On Dec. 10, 2018, Ty Palazzo killed his first buck, this 8-point, in Ebenezer. LEFT: Hayden Jordan, 10, poses with his six Monroe County bream.

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# ROOKIE OF THE YEAR? WOMAN SCORES BIG

CRYSTAL SPRINGS HUNTER TAKES  
BIRDS ON FIRST TWO HUNTS, ONE  
WITH TWO BEARDS By Andy Douglas

**L**ori Kennedy of Crystal Springs, an avid deer hunter, saw plenty of turkeys in a food plot last fall while sitting in her hunting blind. She's had the "itch" to kill a turkey but really didn't know how to go about it.

"I know people that turkey hunt and have girlfriends that turkey hunt, but I'd never been before," she said.

One day, after weekly services at Harmony Church in Copiah County, Kennedy struck up a conversation with Clint Gerald, of Wesson, a veteran turkey hunter. She mentioned that she'd never taken a gobbler but would like to. Gerald volunteered to lend a hand.

What a hand that was. Within 10 days, under Gerald's tutelage, Kennedy tagged two gobblers, the biggest of which sported



Lori Kennedy of Crystal Springs killed this gobbler on her first turkey hunt. It sported a thick, 9-inch beard and 1¼-inch spurs.

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two beards, 10¾ and 8½ inches long.

The two started with a mid-day scouting trip to Kennedy's hunting property, they went back a couple of mornings to listen to turkeys on the roost, and Gerald said they "heard gobbling each morning."

A few days after the season opener, they were back on Kennedy's hunting grounds.

"I thought we'd start by her pretty little food plot in a bottom down by a creek," Gerald said. "It looks like the perfect place for turkeys to gather, plus, she has a box blind right on it."

They set out decoys at 20 yards and settled into the blind. At daylight, a tom sounded off a couple hundred yards behind them. They listened for a few minutes and decided to go to the turkey, but a hen walked into the bottom, leaving them pinned down while the tom was letting it rip.

The hen finally left, and Gerald called before they made a move, getting a response from a second gobbler over their left shoulders. Peering out of a mesh-covered window, they saw him at 40 yards — where he stayed, strutting and gobbling for 30 minutes. He finally moved across the field, ignored the decoys and stayed just out of range, crossing a creek. Gerald's aggressive calls finally got him interested, as he double- and tripled-gobbed, crossing back over the creek. Kennedy killed the tom, which had a 9-inch beard and sharp, 1¼-inch spurs.

A few days later, Kennedy asked Gerald if he had time for another hunt. He told her to get into the woods early and listen, and when she heard more gobbling, they'd go again. That wound up being April 1, and they started in the same place, just listening, well before first light.



Kennedy took this gobbler with two beards: 10 3/4 inches and 8 1/2 inches.

Gerald didn't plan on them getting in the blind this time; he wanted Kennedy to be out in the woods with the birds. A gobbler sounded off early, and they headed in his direction, setting up a decoy 20 yards from their spot on a small rise in a long, straight logging trail.

The tom saw the decoy, headed their way, but he was just over the crest of a hill, out of sight, gobbling the whole time. Gerald decided to quit calling, hoping that curiosity would get the better of the gobbler. Suddenly, they heard something behind them walking.

"As soon as I turn my head to see if it's a deer or something, a different big gobbler spits and drums right in my ear — he's only 10 feet behind us," said Gerald, noting that Kennedy had her gun pointed towards the first big tom that was still just out of sight and still hammering.

After 20 minutes, the tom behind them moved to the left; they estimated his paintbrush-thick beard at 10 inches. With both gobblers nearly in sight and shooting range, Kennedy looked up the logging trail, where a third gobbler appeared strutting and walking to the decoy.

When he passed the decoy, he dropped out of his strut and gave Kennedy a clear shot; she dropped him with a 2 3/4-inch load of TSS.

This bird had two beards — 10 3/4 and 8 1/2 inches, and 3/4-inch spurs.

"Clint told me that it's not supposed to happen like this or be this easy, killing two gobblers on my first two hunts ever and then killing the huge double-bearded tom, too," Kennedy said. "But I am obsessed now. We're already making plans to go after my third one." ■



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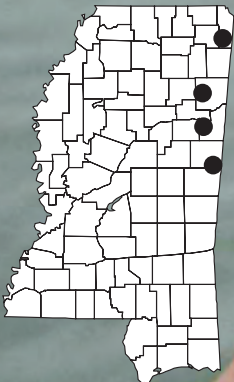
# Bassin'

## the Tenn-Tom

By David Hawkins



Working this KVD jig along a grass line resulted in a nice Tenn-Tom bass coming to the boat.




Bay Springs Lake

Aberdeen Lake

Columbus Lake

Aliceville Lake



**These four lakes** on the famed waterway are worth the attention of any Mississippi bass fisherman. Try them out soon.

**T**he string of lakes that make up the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway were constructed to boost the regional economy, and to that end, they have been successful. As a side boost, the lakes have enhanced fishing, boating and camping and brought additional income to the area as the site of big bass tournaments.

Needless to say, tournaments are not held on barren waters. Some lakes are better than others, according to some anglers, but as a whole, they have a charm and fishability on par with any lake system anywhere.

Photo by David Hawkins

**F**rom a Mississippi perspective, the lakes run between Pickwick to the north and Aliceville to the south. A good, bass-fishing bucket list wouldn't be complete without all of those lakes.

There is no charge for locking up or down the waterway, but it can be a tournament loser if you don't get back to the weigh-in on time because of barge traffic.

Given the broad scope of the waterway, the lakes are not static; state regulations, slot limits and creel limits all apply. Plenty of bass spawn the old-fashioned way, just as they have for centuries in rivers and streams. Healthy populations of bass, crappie, catfish and bream are available and are all popular with anglers. Bass may well be the most sought-after species on an ongoing, 12-month basis; crappie and catfish run a close second. That said, there are few baits mature bass have not seen in a lifetime, but with a few tricks and a working knowledge of the fishery, good bass can be caught.

## COLUMBUS, ABERDEEN, ALICEVILLE

Ken Lowery, who considers Columbus Lake his home water, said each of these lakes are just different enough to make them interesting, but alike in so many ways that the same approach can be taken to each body of water.

"I don't think any bass angler will object to grass and weeds," Lowery said. "Early morning fishing is great where the grass is dense around points and humps near deeper water that contains some structure. The bass will be in there chasing baitfish near the surface and then transition to the deeper water as the sun gets high and surface temperatures rise."

Passing barge traffic on the Tenn-Tom Waterway can create fishing opportunities due to the resulting current. **INSET:** This Aliceville bass came the boat for Jim Fikes of Pickinsville, Ala.

Weedless frogs and lizards are just a couple of Lowery's go-to morning baits. He casts to the back of the grass, where it is against a shallow ledge, and works his bait through the grass, stopping adjacent to cover such as stumps or poles, much as a live frog will do. He will continue this approach with critters until he has covered the grass patch, and then he'll break out a buzzbait to work the skinny water around the grass.

continues >

## Go with the Tow

One technique unique to the Tenn-Tom is the bite prompted by barge traffic.

When a boat pushing loaded barges up or down the waterway passes, the outflow of water and inflow after passage creates a very noticeable current. This triggers a feeding frenzy as baitfish are pushed from their holding places and are at the mercy of the current.

The same phenomenon occurs when the locks are filled and emptied or refilled after locking activity. Simply put, when a barge is approaching or passing, or you are fishing near an active lock, have a line in the water. Naturally, the closer to the lock one is fishing, the more exaggerated the water movement will become. ■





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## Bassin' the Tenn-Tom

James Golden lips a Bay Springs bass during an annual outing to the Tenn-Tom Waterway.



“In Columbus, there is plenty of old, man-made structure remaining where the gravel business operated before the construction of the waterway,” Lowery said. “Casting against or parallel to the vertical, gravel walls will often bring a strike, as will working every piece of emerging structure. During the spawn, this is the hot place to fish, as bass like a level place to make a bed. Where a ledge is wide enough to support a bed, a bass will be there. Use your depth finder to find beds holding fish and cast to them with Carolina rigs in a junebug or a red color or a sinking worm in any color that mimics an egg-eating predator.”

Out of the gravel mine, Lowery goes to creeks and works every log and stump field. Sometimes, schooling bass will be seen blowing up on shad, and this is the time when crankbaits do the trick.



David Hawkins

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Locking up to the pool known locally as Aberdeen will find much the same fishing conditions, with feeder creeks and a few very popular oxbow lakes where the fishing is reported to be above-average. One will encounter a few bowfin and gar in the slack water, but where these old river runs connect to the river, the bass fishing can be good.

The Tom Bevil Lock and Dam creates Aliceville Lake, often called Pickinsville by locals for its proximity to the Alabama city of that name. If locking down from Columbus Lake, have plenty of gas and be prepared for a long ride; the fishing in the old Tombigbee River portion of the waterway can be fruitful. For the angler who wants a different challenge, locking down from Columbus will allow for a short ride to the

Tenn-Tom's confluence with Luxapalila Creek, just south of the city of Columbus. The Luxapalila is a known home for native Mississippi walleye. You may fish all day and never catch one, but you might. They hit the same baits you throw for bass.

## WANT TO GO NORTH? DON'T BOTHER

Unless you are a dyed-in-the-wool river fisherman, don't bother with the waterway north of Amory. The skinny water is designed for barge traffic, and the dirt on the bottom so poor it wouldn't raise dust in the middle of a dry August. The habitat just won't support good bass fishing. Hold the cards and letters folks; having hunted and hiked the Divide Section part of the waterway,

Frogs are a common early morning bait among the pads and grass patches of the Tenn-Tom.

I can attest, it's not worth the trip if bass are your target.

Go far enough, however, and you'll find Bay Springs Lake, created by the Jamie Whitten Lock and Dam and connected to Pickwick Lake. James Golden of Taylorsville takes a vacation each year on Bay Springs and catches bass, crappie, catfish and bream.

"Bay Springs has everything that Pickwick does, but in a smaller footprint," Golden said. "Around the end of May, perhaps as late as June, I try to hit the lake when the mayfly hatch is taking place. Some of the willows will be hanging with them, and every kind of fish will be under the drop, either eating the flies as they hit the water or eating the smaller fish as they gather to eat the manna falling from the sky."

Golden ties a mayfly pattern of his own design and keeps at least a dozen on hand when he fishes his favorite willow, which extends over a gravel bed. The flies are not a specular insect but can produce swarms so large they show up on radar. All the Tenn-Tom lakes in Mississippi feature a mayfly hatch.

"If I could have just one bass lure on Bay Springs, it would be the old standard Rapala black-and-silver model," Golden said. "The wooden one is still my favorite, but there are few of the balsa models remaining. The last one I bought was in a tackle box in an estate sale — still in the original box".

continues >



David Hawkins

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**J**ames starts early, using the Rapala as a topwater lure by slowly retrieving the bait near structure near grass; the slight twitching is intended to replicate an injured minnow. As the sun warms the water, he increases the speed of the retrieve to push the lure down in the water. By varying the speed of the retrieve, the minnow-colored bait will mimic a feeding baitfish, triggering strikes.

“My tackle box is full of lures I know how to use,” Golden said, “Mepps spinners, plastics and critter baits — a few

I call Gully-Whoppers that from time-to-time will catch a big bass. I guess I’m a sucker for every new bait idea that comes through town. I’m impressed with the new product by Odin that has a bait reservoir what stores an attractant that is released through the faux gills. I’m anxious to see just how well it works.”

To fish the grass, Golden is a frog-man, saying if there is ever a weedless Rapala made, it will make someone a fortune. He is not picky about color but uses a fluorocarbon leader attached to braided line on a baitcasting reel. He said too many bass have wrapped his line around a limb and broken off.

“I’m not a fancy fisherman,” Golden added. “I catch fish for fun and food. Bay Springs Lake is as pretty a place as anybody could ask for. Every year, I catch largemouth bass, smallmouth bass and a number of other species of panfish. I believe in releasing the bass and keeping some of the others for breakfast and supper. Every man needs a place to go where he feels at home and can catch fish. Bay Springs is my place.” ■



**David Hawkins** is a freelance writer living in Forest, Miss. He can be reached at [hawkins2209@att.net](mailto:hawkins2209@att.net).



The remains of a former gravel mining operation in Columbus Lake provide habitat and spawning areas for fish.

David Hawkins

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# PADDLE UP A LUNKER

By Mike Giles

Fishing from a kayak gives anglers access to all kinds of great Mississippi bass waters, some that bass boats can't access. Learn the basics here.



**B**rad Case maneuvered his kayak above a submerged channel on the edge of a flat and paused just long enough to make a precise cast down the break line. He worked the Stanley Top Toad over the channel edge but never got it back to the boat.

Ka-Whoosh! A Neshoba County Lake bass blew up on it and bore

down towards the bottom.

“That lunker bass just annihilated it,” said Case, who snapped his rod back and drove the hooks deep into the jaws of the fish. Try as she might, the bass just couldn't escape. Eventually boated, the bass weighed 10 pounds, 8 ounces, and it was caught during the heat of the summer. >

**C**ase, from Florence, is a die-hard bass angler who switched to fishing from a kayak several years ago, mainly to escape the crowds and catch more fish. He became hooked on fishing from a kayak and has become a top kayak bass tournament angler, winning several big tournaments.

Case's best 5-bass tournament limit from a kayak weighed 26 pounds; all were released shortly after being measured and photographed.

While kayaks provide anglers with unlimited opportunities, they do limit how much water can be covered in a day.

"Kayak fishing makes us better anglers," Case said. "We don't have the luxury of run-and-gun fishing all over a body of water, so we have to choose where we're going to fish and what time of day we want to be there. That's what makes us better anglers, because we have to learn one area right down to the very twigs in the water."

## UNLIMITED OPPORTUNITIES

Kayaks are usually sleek, shallow-draft vessels made of fiberglass, plastics or polymers that can float in mere inches of water, making them easy to maneuver in shallow-water situations.

"There's no doubt kayaks give you an opportunity to get into places and fish where traditional bass boats can't get or dare try to go," he said. "At the same time, the stealth factor of kayaks allows anglers to get within casting range of bass without spooking them, something that's hard to do when fishing from large bass boats in the pads or grass."

Mississippi is chock full of small streams, creeks and shallow rivers

that are home to spotted and largemouth bass but are too shallow to launch a big bass boat. Some anglers may enjoy fishing from a canoe, but serious bass anglers usually prefer kayaks made for fishing because they are very stable and hard to turn over.

"When I'm not fishing tournaments, I like to fish streams and small creeks like Black Creek, Homochitto and a few others," Case said. "I like to carry kids fishing in streams because they can get out and wade or explore so they won't get bored while they're fishing. There's plenty of time to do both when the action slows."

While some kayakers prefer the solitude of smaller creeks and streams, Case pointed out that you can fish from a kayak in most any lake.

"When you have a kayak, you're not limited to launching at a ramp," Case said. "You can launch a kayak anywhere you have access to the lake. That gives us an opportunity to pick out backwater areas off the beaten paths that are hard to get to in big bass boats."

Case regularly fishes backwater areas on Ross Barnett, as well as behind the No. 7 sign below Highway 43, in Pelahatchie Bay and upriver in the sloughs and lakes near Ratliff's Ferry. The possibilities are limitless, and the fish are there.

## SHALLOW-WATER TECHNIQUES

"I'm a shallow-water fisherman," Case said. "If the water gets to 6 or 8 foot deep, that's deep water for me."

"During May, most bass will be in postspawn mode and starting to feed and fatten up. Bream will be bedding, shad will be spawning, and the bass will roam the shallows looking for an easy meal. That's when I get my frog out."

Case likes to fish frog baits around pads, grass and shallow cover. >





## TOP CREEKS AND RIVERS FOR KAYAK BASS FISHING

**Chunky River:** Located just west of Meridian, the Chunky starts near the town of Chunky and flows south until it intersects with Okatibbee Creek south of Meridian, forming the Chickasawhaway just north of Enterprise. The Chunky is a shallow river and perfect for catching spotted bass while escaping the crowds.

**Chickasawhaway River:** This jewel is a sure bet when you're looking for beautiful scenery and feisty spotted bass. The Chickawawhaway runs south until it meets the Leaf River in George County. It's the principal tributary of the Pascagoula River. The best fishing is found from Quitman to Shubuta by many accounts of anglers who regularly fish this river.

**Black Creek:** Black Creek is south of Hattiesburg and is one of Brad Case's favorite kayak spots to fish. It's 21 miles long and features deep, black water, steep colorful bluffs and white sand bars. It's a favorite destination of many anglers and kayak enthusiasts alike.

**Okatoma Creek:** Located near Seminary, this creek is an ideal spot for canoeing and kayaking and also is excellent for fishing for bass. However, during the summer, the river is full canoes and kayaks and may be tough to fish. Fall offers the perfect time to catch feisty spotted bass, however, and the author has caught many spotted bass here.

**Leaf River:** The leaf River starts in southwestern Scott County and flows south toward Hattiesburg. The area near Hattiesburg also has old gravel pits and offers excellent kayak fishing opportunities when the water levels is stable. ■

Kayaks allow anglers the chance to fish bass-rich waters that bigger boats can't access. **INSET:** A soft-plastic frog is a great bait to tempt postspawn bass that are getting back on their feed.

“I like to find an active bream bed and work the area about 5 yards off the bed,” Case said. “The bedding bream will hit smaller bream coming into the bed and injure them sometimes, and the injured bream become targets for hungry bass. Lunker bass prowl around the beds and strike an injured bream as soon as they detect a weakness.”

Case prefers fishing SPRO frogs and likes to stick to the basics.

“I like to have three basic colors, including black, white that mimics shad and yellow belly colored frogs,” said Case. “Most of the time, I’ll do a steady retrieve, and that will trigger reaction strikes. If you start finessing them, they will check them out closely, so I normally want a steady, or fast retrieve.”

Case also carries a Stanley Top Toad, which features paddling feet. He uses it as a search bait, too, as it will also trigger strikes. If he misses a couple bass on it, he’ll slow down and work the area thoroughly before moving.

### PREFERRED FROG TACKLE

“I prefer an 8-foot rod with an ABU Revo Rocket reel with a 9:1 gear ratio, which lets me retrieve that frog fast,” Case said. “When you drop the rod down, it allows you to get the slack out really quick, so you can

Angler Brad Case likes to fish outside active bream beds for bass looking for an easy meal.




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### BRAD CASE'S FAVORITE BASS LAKES:

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3. Ross Barnett Reservoir
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5. Jeff Davis



set the hook and control that fish.

I want to get him out of the cover as fast as I can. I also like to use 65-pound braid so I can get him out fast without fear of breaking off.”

When the bite is tough, Case switches gears and changes tactics.

“If they’re not hitting frogs or topwater baits, I’ll pitch a craw, a do-nothing worm, wacky worm or a crankbait,” Case said. “I like to use a small crankbait with a No. 1 hook on it. Most of the time, I’ll try to get a limit of bass first with smaller crankbaits and then try to cull. Once I get five keepers, I’ll move up to a 2½-inch crankbait and work a little deeper for larger fish.”

## KAYAKS

Besides being able to get off the beaten path and away from crowded waters and bass boats, kayaks are relatively inexpensive and lightweight compared to a modern bass boat, which may cost \$200 to fill with fuel for a weekend of fishing. A kayak’s only operating cost is pulling it to the nearest creek, slough or lake.

“I use a Wilderness Systems ATAK 140,” Case said. “It’s a 14-foot kayak; I can lay my rods across the front so I can get to them easy, and they’re not apt to get broken on limbs as some are prone to when sticking straight up like some kayak rod holders have them. Plus, I like to stand up and fish so I can see fish move in the shallow water and cast to them when I spot them moving.”

Many shallow-water bites come from active fish that are spotted when they’re feeding or moving among the grass, pads or vegetation. ■

The cost of fishing from a kayak is relatively low compared to most bass-fishing vessels.

A yellow advertisement for Plano Rustriector. At the top is the Plano logo and the Rustriector logo, which features the word 'RUSTRICTOR' in a stylized font with arrows indicating a 360-degree rotation. Below the logos is the text 'BLOCKS RUST 5X LONGER'. Two crankbaits are shown side-by-side. The one on the left is labeled 'EATEN UP' and is clean. The one on the right is labeled 'BEATEN UP' and is heavily rusted. Below each crankbait is a hook. In the center, an open white Plano StowAway tackle box is shown. At the bottom, the text reads 'INTRODUCING THE #1 ANTI-RUST TECHNOLOGY IN FISHING. Rustriector technology delivers 360° of protection by infusing the entire StowAway with the #1 rust preventative. PLANOMOLDING.COM'.



Mike Giles of Meridian has been hunting and fishing Mississippi since 1965. He is an award-winning wildlife photographer, writer, seminar speaker and guide.

## LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

Ott DeFoe, the 2019 Bassmaster Classic Champion and Major League Fishing pro angler, holds up a big bass caught on a Terminator Shuddering Bait.

# TERMINATOR'S SHUDDERING BAIT

**A** new artificial lure on the shelves and in tackle boxes is doing more, much more, than giving lip service to the process of catching bass.

Terminator's Shuddering Bait has a cupped swimming lip that gives it a unique, side-to-side shimmy, especially when used with a soft-plastic trailer, according to Ott DeFoe, the reigning Bassmaster Classic champion. He started praising the bladed jig long before it arrived on the market earlier this year.

A week-and-a-half after winning the Bassmaster Classic on his home waters in Knoxville, Tenn., DeFoe took a few minutes on an off-day to talk about the artificial lure he helped design for Terminator Lures.

The Terminator Shuddering Bait is a game-changer in the world of bladed jigs, DeFoe said.

"It's a different bait, for sure, than anything on the market. It's a bladed jig that everyone should have in their tackle box," he said, adding that he believes no other vibrating swim jig moves as much water on the retrieve as the Shuddering Bait.

"Yeah, I think it could be a player. Yeah, I think it could be," he said.



The new, bladed jig was instrumental in his success in a tournament two years ago at Lake Sam Rayburn, he said, noting that bass bit consistently on a ½-ounce green pumpkin/orange model that was perfect for the off-colored water he was fishing.

Over the past few years, he said, "I've had some 4-pounders on it. I haven't had any giants, but I've had real nice fish."

The artificial lure is innovative from front to back, a combination that includes the blade, jighead, skirt and soft-plastic trailer that make it shimmy like none before it. It is available in ½- and ¾-ounce models in nine baitfish colors and six blade colors.

"The ability to match the blade to the bait is something that, with most bladed jigs, you just don't have. And you can have a matte-finish blade that doesn't have the flash when you don't want it," DeFoe said.

It's also armed with "super sharp" 5/0 VMC hooks to handle big bass, he said, and there are quality components from the snap to the split ring that attaches the body to the blade.

When DeFoe and others got their hands on the early prototypes, they looked closely at the unique, cupped lip and saw room for improvement.

"We thinned it down in a lot of places. There was extra material, and it kind of messed up the action a little bit. Once we thinned it down, that livened it up some, made it more lively," he said.

The idea for the cupped lip was borrowed from a crankbait design the company had tinkered with earlier, DeFoe said. It was a success, particularly after the tweaks were made.

"Most bladed jigs have a really thin, flat metal blade. The Shuddering Bait's blade is very different. It's actually a cupped



plastic swimming lip that catches and displaces water ahead of it. It catches water, releases water. Catches water, releases water. Tying that to a jig kind of gives it a unique action," he said.

DeFoe, 33, believes the Terminator Shuddering Bait will be effective, very effective in Louisiana and elsewhere in the south, heck, across the U.S.A. A soft-plastic crawfish imitation ought to work lights out as a trailer in and around the Sportsman's Paradise, he said, particularly on the black/blue/purple, aka bruise, model.

About adding soft-plastic trailers: a stainless-steel keeper ensures your favorite soft-plastic trailer stays in place cast after cast.

"Having a trailer keeper extends the life of that bait and makes more of your casts productive," DeFoe said, "because your trailer's going to stay in place, where it needs to be."

He said the new bladed jig's castability makes it both an open-water bait and a chunk-and-wind bait.

"For me, I find myself going to it in really dirty water when the fish want a moving bait," he said, adding that he uses 50-pound braid and 17-pound fluorocarbon whenever he fishes the bait.

DeFoe likened the slow, methodical, thumping action to a spinnerbait with two Colorado blades. The thumping vibration

is slower than other bladed jigs, an action that is effective in water with limited visibility.

Dave Lefebre, another pro bass fisherman, also favors it in stained water conditions and worse, anywhere.

"There are a lot of different bladed jig-makers, a lot of different styles, but no one ever had one that I felt worked really well in the muddiest of water until I got my hands on this," Lefebre said. "It's just got a really, really good thump to it."

"When you think you can't get a bite — this is one of those baits that will get you a bite," Lefebre said.

For more information about the Terminator Shuddering Bait and other Terminator Lures products, call 888-231-4449 or go to [www.rapala.com/terminator-spinnerbaits-jigs/](http://www.rapala.com/terminator-spinnerbaits-jigs/) ■



**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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## LUNKER LINES

Paul Elias

At Ross Barnett Reservoir in May, fish a buzzbait around rocks, pier posts and pilings, trying to draw a reaction strike from a postspawn bass.

# ROSS BARNETT'S TOPWATER BASS

## POSTSPAWN BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN SURFACE BAITS

**R**oss Barnett is one of the best topwater lakes in Mississippi, especially in May. Bass will be in the postspawn mode on the 33,000-acre reservoir on the Pearl River in Madison and Rankin counties. Dividing this month in half, I fish shallow water the first two weeks and deep water the last two weeks.

### FIRST TWO WEEKS

Early in the month, I'll be fishing down by the dam around the rock banks, piers and docks in that area with these topwater lures: a Pop-R, a Zara Spook, a buzzbait and a black Superfrog.

• **Pop-R.** I'll be fishing a shad-colored Pop-R on 20-pound White Peacock fluorocarbon, with a 6-foot-6, medium-action baitcasting rod and a 7:1 gear ratio reel. I'll concentrate in the corners where the docks meet the rocks by casting against the bank and working the Pop-R out away from the bank. When the Pop-R hits the water, I'll let it sit still for a few seconds, then give it two hard pops and let it to sit still again.

• **Zara Spook.** I'll fish a shad-colored Zara Spook in the same areas, without stopping the bait. I'll keep it walking

from the bank back to the boat, using the same rod, reel and line to fish that I used to fish the Pop-R.

• **Buzzbaits.** I'll fish buzzbaits by bumping them into rocks, posts and pilings around marinas. I'll usually have different buzzbaits tied on two rods; one tuned to run to the right and the other to the left, ensuring a buzzbait will run into the pilings on the left or the right side of the marina or dock. Sometimes, on a cloudy day, the bass will like a black buzzbait, but on a bluebird day, they'll usually prefer a white buzzbait. I fish the docks and rocks for the first two hours of daylight.



• **Superfrog.** After I've caught bass on topwater lures near the dam, I'll go across the lake to the east side and fish the lily pads with a black Mann's Superfrog on a 7-foot, medium-heavy rod, 50-pound bass braid and a 7:1 reel. I'll stop the frog in the

openings in the pads. If a bass doesn't blow up on the bait, I'll continue to retrieve it through the pads, stopping on the pads' edges, as bass will track the frog and take it once you stop it.

### LAST TWO WEEKS

The bass will leave shallow water and move out to the shallow ledges, 4 to 10 feet deep. I'll fish these ledges with a Little George, a Carolina-rigged Jelly Bug and a 15+ crankbait.

• **The Little George.** Using 2-pound fluorocarbon on a 7-foot, medium-action rod, I'll fish the Little George on the river ledge and main-river bars where a ditch cuts through a sandbar. I'll cast it a long way, let it go to the bottom, jerk it up and allow it to flutter down through the schools of bass.

• **Jelly Bug.** I'll fish a Carolina rig on 50-pound bass braid, using a 7-foot-6, medium-heavy rod with a 7:1 reel and 2 feet of 20-pound fluorocarbon leader. On the end of the leader, I'll have a junebug-colored Jelly Bug.

When I'm fishing the Little George on ledges, often the bass will hit the blade as it's falling and won't get the hooks further up the body. If I get a couple of



The ledge pattern for bass that starts the last two weeks of May should be productive all the way through August.

short strikes and don't hook the bass, I'll lay down the Little George, pick up the Carolina rig, cast to the same place and pull that Jelly Bug slowly across the bottom. Hopefully, the bass will pick it up.

• **Mann's 15+ crankbait in grey ghost.** At the end

of the sandbars, where they start to taper off toward the river chan-

nel, I'll fish this lure on 20-pound fluorocarbon with a 7-foot-6, medium-action rod. I'll crank that bait on the ends of those sandbars where they drop off into deep water and on the underwater roadbeds about 10 to 12 feet deep.

I'll concentrate my fishing where the bridges that were built to cross the underwater creeks and rivers were blown up before the lake was inundated. One of those is in the mouth of Pelahatchie Creek. On the west side of the lake, near the Natchez Trace, you'll see another roadbed by using a lake map and your electronics.

**JUNE THROUGH AUGUST**

From about May 15 to the end of August, ledge-fishing on Ross Barnett should be very productive. By fishing ledges, you might find a school of bass and catch 20 in one place.

Although most of the bass you catch in May will weigh 1½ to 3 pounds, I have caught 6- or 7-pounders with these techniques. ■



Jelly Bug



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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**YAMAHA**



**O**ur May morning, which had started so beautifully with a vivid sunrise to the east, had yielded only a few bites on shallow bars around Cat Island. The three speckled trout we'd caught were nice, averaging about 3½ pounds, obviously females with their bellies fat with eggs four days before the full moon.

But an hour of casting on such a promising day should have produced more, or at least Capt. Tom Sutton thought so. He kept staring to the southwest as boats kept passing by, about one every 10 or 15 minutes.

"I've heard the bite has been good at Flat Boat Key," he said. "I reckon they heard it, too. Guess it's time we join them. Let's get ready for a nice run to Flat Boat. It'll be a little bumpy, so let's hope there's room left for us."

With that, Sutton battened down the boat's compartments, punched some numbers into his GPS, and throttled up the 250-horsepower engine. The 22-foot boat responded instantly, rose up on top of the chop and raced to the southwest. The sun was full and a few degrees above the horizon, and as we kept it over our left shoulders, we noticed its effect on the wind was working in our favor.

"Calming down, seas flattening," Sutton shouted over the noise as he pushed the throttle down a little more.

## THE ARMADA

It was easy to spot Flat Boat Key from more than a mile away, with so many boats seemingly tethered together the length of the popular and well-known fishing spot. As we approached, we could see each was anchored, with about 50 feet between them. Had to be over 50 of them, forming a nearly mile-long curved reef over what was once a rim of a barrier island at the east end of the Biloxi Marsh near Isle Aux Pitre. The bottom is hard on the key, mostly oysters and other shells, perfect for holding trout.

"Dang," Sutton said, as he slowed and tried to find a promising parking spot. "Pretty slim pickings; pattern's full."

As we passed the boats, we saw a lot of casting but not a lot of catching.





Relatively small factors can make a huge difference in targeting speckled trout that begin spawning in Gulf waters this month.

■ By Bobby Cleveland

# Speck-tacular

## MAY FISHING



***“Let’s go to the South end, try to find anything that looks different and stop,” Sutton said.***

“The guy who first took me here said he might come today ... and there he is. See that last boat down there alone? That’s him.”

Sutton throttled back up, swung wide outside the line of boats and pulled in near his buddy, who was reeling in a 14-inch speck as we arrived. He tried to hide his catch as best he could until he recognized the boat.

“Took you long enough, Tom,” one man said. “We’re catching a good many fish, but they’re kind of small; only half are keepers. Anchor somewhere outside our casting range and throw back toward the marsh. They’re all out there, but you best have live shrimp; they’re not eating plastics at all.”

Within 10 minutes, we were catching 12-, 13- and an occasional 14-inch trout on every cast, with a lot of short fish mixed in. Sutton said they were all males, with slim bodies that, when squeezed, exuded milt.

“There’s got to be bigger fish somewhere close, females,” he said, “but for now, let’s be satisfied just filling the box a little.”

But our position was a problem. The incoming current was increasing and pushing us back toward his friend’s casting range. I pulled up our Power Poles, Sutton put the trolling motor on high, and we moved north. After moving about 30 yards, we felt a sudden “thunk” against the motor’s lower unit when we hit something solid. It was part of the bottom, composed mostly of oyster shells and almost boulder-like.

“Tom, we’re right on top of the key, I think,” I said.

## AT HOME ON THE ROCK

“Looks like it; there’s another big lump over there,” he said, pointing with his rod tip. I looked and liked what I saw ... a lot. There was a line of high spots running in a line for about 15 yards.

“You can see the current going around this ridge and meeting on the backside. See the foam coming together? That looks interesting,” I said, lowering the Power Poles.

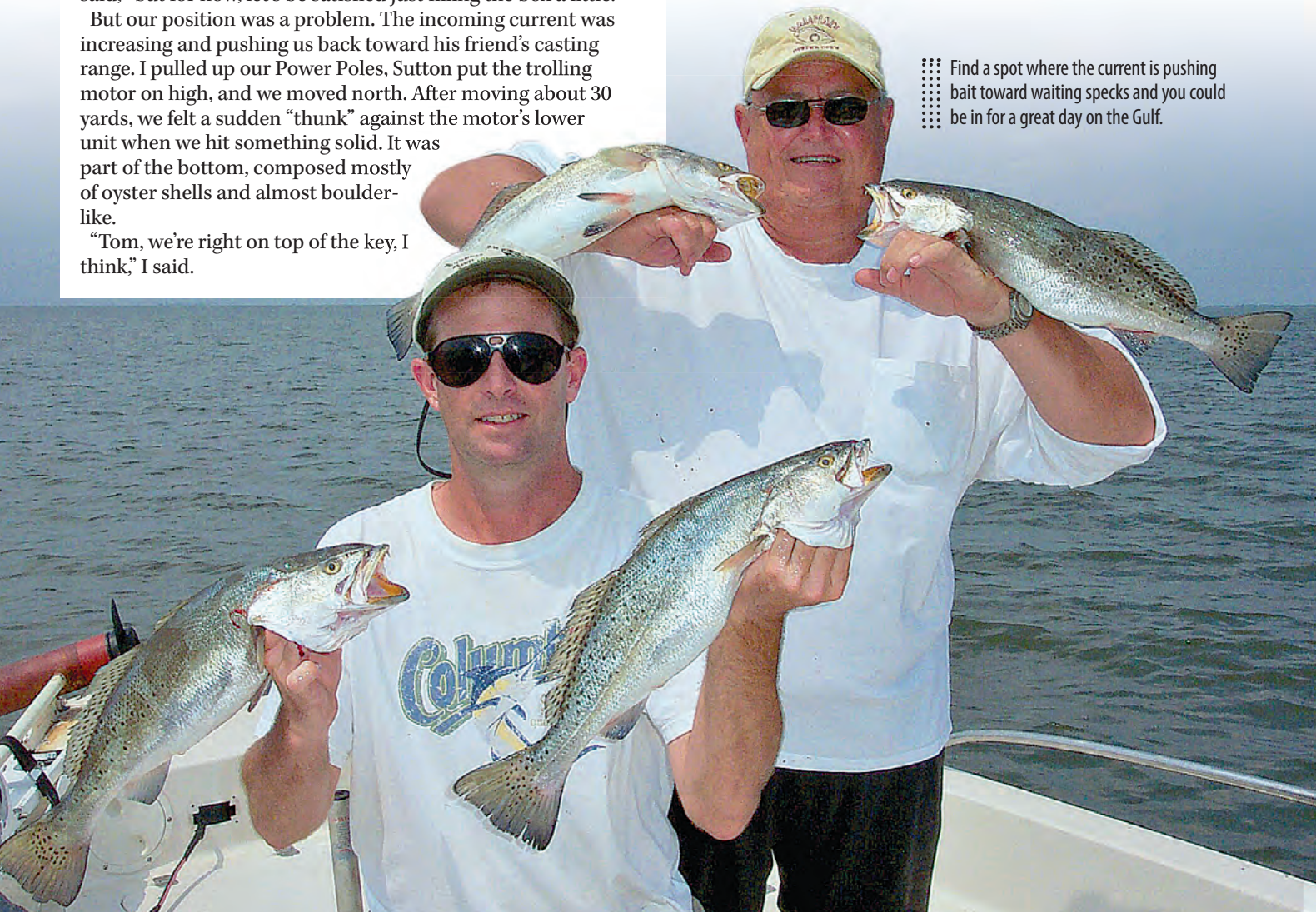
My first cast sent a shrimp flying toward the spot where the two tides merged, the popping cork hit with a plop and never stopped. It shot beneath the surface instantly.

“Fish on!” I hollered.

“Me too,” said Sutton, who was already reeling in a fish.

The drag gears inside my Shimano spinning reel were busy. The fish was taking line; it didn’t feel like a speck.

Find a spot where the current is pushing bait toward waiting specks and you could be in for a great day on the Gulf.





:::: Female speckled trout begin their annual spawning  
 :::: ritual in the Gulf in May, but that doesn't stop them  
 :::: from feeding.

“Think I either got a drum or a red,” I said. “Got too much to be a speck.”

It took me about a minute to turn the fish, and as it came to the boat, Sutton was standing next to me with the net waiting to see what was coming.

“Whoa!” he shouted in my ear. “That’s a speck, a giant trout.”

The fish suddenly came to the surface and started thrashing, as trout are apt to do, but this one was big enough to splash us with water from 10 feet away. I guided it to the net, and Sutton swooped it up in the boat.

“Six pounds, maybe seven,” he said, dropping the net and racing to re-bait his line and make another cast. While I was releasing my big fish back to the Gulf — I don’t like the big sows when it comes to eating — Sutton was reeling in another fish. It was his second 2-pounder, which he put in the icebox. My big fish went back in the Gulf.

Reality struck.

“Late to the show, but looks like we still got the best seats in the house,” I told Sutton. “I think we found the sweet spot.”

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Soft-plastic artificial shrimp, fished on a jighead or under a popping cork are deadly when specks are feeding.

## CURRENT-LY BITING

As is often the case in fishing, luck plays a big role. Out of the over 50 boats at Flat Boat Key, we'd landed on the key spot, a perfect spot formed by the merging of currents split by a ridge. Where the currents came back together, the fish were stacked, waiting for the natural movement of the sea to bring them meals.

Because of the way it worked, casting need not be precise. All either of us had to do was put our baits in the water in line on either side of the split and let the current do the magic. The corks would take 30 seconds or so to ride the water around the ridge and float right into the fish. Once there, the cork would suddenly shoot out of sight.

My first 10 casts all produced fish, all more than 4 pounds. Sutton caught fish on every cast, too, but his were in the 2- to 2½-pound range. The difference was one of two things, we decided.

"It's either because I'm coming around the right side of the ridge and you the left side, or it's because you're fishing about a foot deeper than I am," he said. "Let's figure it out; switch places."

I moved to the front of the boat, and he went to the back. I cast the way he'd been casting, and he threw the way I had been. Our corks immediately began racing with current on opposite sides of the ridge and eventually merged together. His

disappeared first, and he hooked up with a trout. A few seconds later, mine shot underneath with an audible plop easily heard from 60 feet away.

"I got another giant," I said.

"I got another keeper," he said.

## DEPTH-SPECIFIC

We'd found the answer. The 10-inch difference in depth between our lines had to be it. Sutton found another rod in his arsenal rigged just like mine, baited it up and made a cast.

Soon, he was hooked up with a line-puller.

From that point on, we had two choices: fish 3 feet deep and catch 5- and 6-pounders, or fish 2 feet deep and catch "eating-sized" fish.

"What a wonderful dilemma," I told Sutton. "This will be one of those all-time trips we'll never forget."

In our joy, we hadn't noticed that soon, we were one of only two boats still on Flat Boat Key. Sutton's friends had stopped fishing and were only watching as we kept catching big fish after big fish.

Our box was getting full and yet, it only held 25 fish. We'd spent so much time catching the bigger fish — of which we only kept two that had been mortally wounded by hooks — that we were well short of the limit. With Flat Boat Key just over the edge of the state line in Louisiana, the limit was 25 each, about twice what we had.

I made the decision and told Sutton that we had reached the limit of what I desired to clean.

"Me too," he said, turning to wave in his friends. "Y'all come over here and anchor right where we are, and y'all can have them."

After switching places and explaining how to work the current to reach the magic spot, they were immediately catching big trout.

We left with the fish still biting and with grown men hollering like little kids behind us.

What a great day.

A year later, with May approaching, we're already making plans to find that sweet spot again, and we will, thanks to the pin dropped on Sutton's GPS unit. We hope the tide will be working at just the same rate.



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..... The best speckled trout action in the Gulf along the Louisiana-Mississippi border is normally on full moons from April to June.

### SUCCESS: A FINE LINE

So often with fishing, there is a fine line between success and failure. Even when the action is good, there is always one spot, one magic hole, where the action is the hottest.

For us, it was finding a break in Flat Boat Key where the current was allowed to split and then merge, creating a vortex, so to speak, where fish could sit and wait for meals to naturally come their way.

Sure, we found ours by luck, but we also learned that a slight difference in the natural sea bottom, along with a slight adjustment in depth of bait presentation, made all the difference in the catch.

Those other 50 boats that had pulled up and left over the 2½ hours we were there had scattered in different directions, obviously dissatisfied with their results and off to find their own hot spots.

In May, Mississippi Sound holds many such places.

“Especially on the full moons, really from April all the way through June,” said Capt. Sonny Schindler of Shore Thing Charters in Bay St. Louis. “Our trout spawn on the full moon, and if you can get on the right sand bar at Cat Island or one of



the other islands, or even down at Flat Boat Key, in the few days before or after the moon goes full, then you can hit the jackpot and really hit the big sows.

“Between the full moons, you just have to look for the right pockets of water that have good salinity and plenty of bait. In recent years, there’s been a lot of freshwater coming into the marsh from the Mississippi River, especially when they’ve had to open (the Bonnet Carre Spillway) at Lake Ponchartrain.

All of that freshwater coming through the spillway pushes the trout out, and as it moves toward the Gulf through Lake Borgne and the marsh, the trout move further east. Louisiana’s loss is Mississippi’s gain. Redfish can tolerate the freshwater, but the trout don’t like it at all.”

### GO EAST, YOUNG (AND OLD) TROUT

The encroachment of the freshwater can actually improve a fisherman’s odds of finding a huge cache of trout holding in one area.

“Again, and not to sound like a broken record, you have to search and find the pockets that have higher salinity levels,” Schindler said. “Those areas will also hold more bait. One yields the other, because the smaller creatures like shrimp and glass minnows are naturally going to be

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Trout will gang up in areas where the degree of salinity in the water is high, especially important in the spring.

drawn to the salty water. With a multi-boat guide service, it's easy for us to keep track of those areas, because we're out there every day the weather allows.

"But the weekend fishermen have to find it, too, and believe me, it's worth the search. This year, it appears we're going to have the advantage of the spillway pushing fish east again. It was open in March and still partially open into April, and that's before the northern thaw, so there's more water to come down the Mississippi."

That will help increase the number of trout in Mississippi Sound and pack spawners around Cat Island and the other barrier islands further east — and don't forget the front beaches along the coast line.

"Shoot, we've had more fish off the main beach the last few years," said angler Jimmy Ladner of Long Beach. "I get up nearly every day of the full-moon cycles in April and May and wade off the beach and catch enough trout in an hour or two before work that we eat good at home for days. Last year, I caught an 8-pounder standing in just over knee-deep water on a D.O.A.



Shrimp under a cork. I had it mounted.

"I caught a lot of other big females that I let go and still kept enough males and smaller females for my wife, two kids and I to eat, and even give some to friends." ■



**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.

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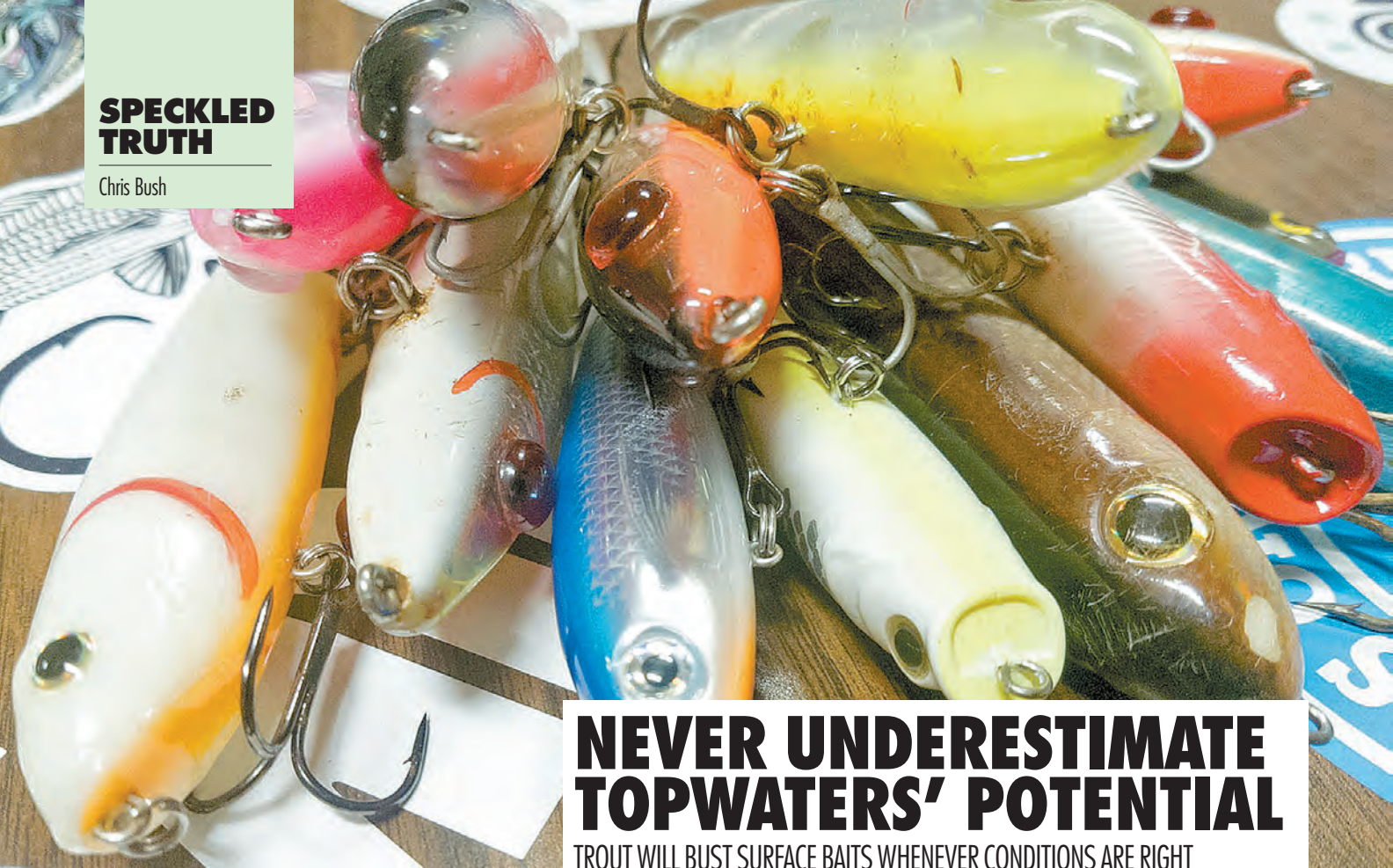
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## SPECKLED TRUTH

Chris Bush



# NEVER UNDERESTIMATE TOPWATERS' POTENTIAL

TROUT WILL BUST SURFACE BAITS WHENEVER CONDITIONS ARE RIGHT

**B**efore we dive into this month's discussion about topwater plugs, take a step back in time with me.

In May 2014, I reached the pinnacle of my trout-fishing endeavors. With noble intent to learn more about my "new" homewaters of Corpus Christi, Texas, I was covering an area with a MirrOlure She Dog when an 11-pound giant, 30½ inches long and 17¼ inches in girth, rudely interrupted my quest.

The take was subtle. Over the crest of a wave caused by a strong east wind, I saw a noticeable swirl, and my line went tight. What followed was a remarkable head shake I compare to an underwater coffee can and a fight I'll never forget.

Earmarked by shot nerves and a quivering voice, I called and messaged those close to me on my accomplishment. Capstoning the event was even more impressive. Truth be told, I botched the attempt to release the fish, and since her fate was decided, I chose to clean her after I made the 2½-hour trek back to San Antonio. What I found was mind blowing. As I ran the filet knife down her stomach cavity, a 15-inch trout emerged. A world-class fish had what I considered a "nice trout" in her mid-section, yet was still search-

ing for the dessert to an already healthy meal — fortunately for me, it was my topwater!

## LIMITLESS POTENTIAL

Now let's fast-forward and discuss how that relates to the topic at hand. I reflect on that story to show the true capability topwater baits possess. We all know you give up bites when fishing surface plugs. Heck, if I had a dollar for every time I heard an angler say, "I'd rather catch 'X' quality trout on topwater versus a limit on a jig or live bait," a Powerball ticket would seem secondary.

Instead, I'd suggest fishing topwaters and truly understanding how their limitless upside allows you to fish them confidently.

So how do I know when to fish topwater? The answer is, year-round.

Seasonal trends as well as micro-weather events can determine a good surface bite even if the months don't coincide with fishing literature.

In other words, a warmer-than-normal winter can keep the topwater bite steady, even if it's January or February. Going a step further, more acute weather anomalies can lead to periods — or days — when topwaters can be effective. In short,

steady or spikes in water temperature as a result of rising air temperature can excite big fish in a surface environment.

The other equally important question is, "What plugs should I throw?" Despite limitless options, my encouragement is to keep it simple within the parameters of size, sound, color and profile.

## PROFILE AND SIZE

Size and profile go hand-in-hand. A general rule of thumb is to match the lure to the conditions and baitfish in the area.

In clear skies and clear water, I'll choose smaller-profile lures like Heddon Spook Jr, MirrOlure MirrOmullet or MirrOlure Top Pups. In the event, larger finfish are present or conditions become less than perfect, I'll upsize to a Heddon One Knocker, MirrOlure Top Dog Jr. or YoZuri 3DR Series Pencil.

Remember, topwater baits mimic baitfish, primarily mullet, so choose the best combination of size and profile to achieve that result.

## SOUND

Of the four characteristics, I believe sound is the most important. I call it audible presence. Lures like MirrOlure She Dogs or He Dogs have a tremendous audi-

ble presence. In clear, calm conditions, the high-pitch presence can be overpowering.

The same can be said when conditions are less than ideal too. Having a bait that “hunts” because of wave action on a pronounced pause can draw just as many ferocious strikes as a consistent walk-the-dog cadence.

Again match the audible presence to the conditions; it can be the difference in success or failure.

## COLOR

In my opinion, I find color the least important of the four. The color spectrum varies widely, but keeping in line with our simple approach, basic colors often get the job done.

In colder months, I find nontraditional or brighter patterns more productive. I attribute this to clarity and density.

Clarity fluctuates, but trout-green water in the winter looks totally different than trout-green water in the summer. The only thing I can attribute that to is water density as a result of water temperature.

With less substrate in the water column and generally more overcast skies brought about by weather events, the contrast seemingly works well. Outside of that, I stick to natural colors, as well as chartreuse, pearl, bone, gold, silver and pink.

Additionally, custom color patterns are something to consider if you're looking to be different from other anglers on the water.

Topwaters have limitless upside year-round when looking for that once-in-a-lifetime trout. As a result, remain encouraged and draw confidence from the past that if there is a trophy in your midst, chances are they'll eat your bait.

Until next month, tight lines, God bless, and take what you need and release the rest. ■



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



### PICKING A PLUG:

In general, go with smaller topwater baits under clear skies and in clear water; upsize on overcast days or when water conditions are less than perfect. Similarly, go with brighter colors on overcast days and natural colors on bright-sky days.

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Don't make the mistake of thinking that crappie fishing is over, just because the spawn is past. Keep catching slabs using these tactics.

# POSTSPAWN CRAPPIE TRICKS

By Philip Gentry

**If** you're a deer hunter in Mississippi, you spend much of the year yearning for the time when the whitetail mating rituals significantly increase the chances of bringing the hunter and the hunted together.

The annual crappie spawn, what many anglers have even labelled "crappie season" isn't that much different from the deer rut, that when it's over, many hunters leave the woods until the next year, thinking their chances are finished. Don't be that guy when it comes to crappie fishing. It's true, a crappie may not be hiding behind every bush and stump at water's edge, but that doesn't mean you still can't catch them.

Understanding how crappie relate to the time after the spawn and using the right tactics to target them will put you right back on the fish and make you forget that "crappie season" is supposed to be over.

>

## JIG STANDING TIMBER

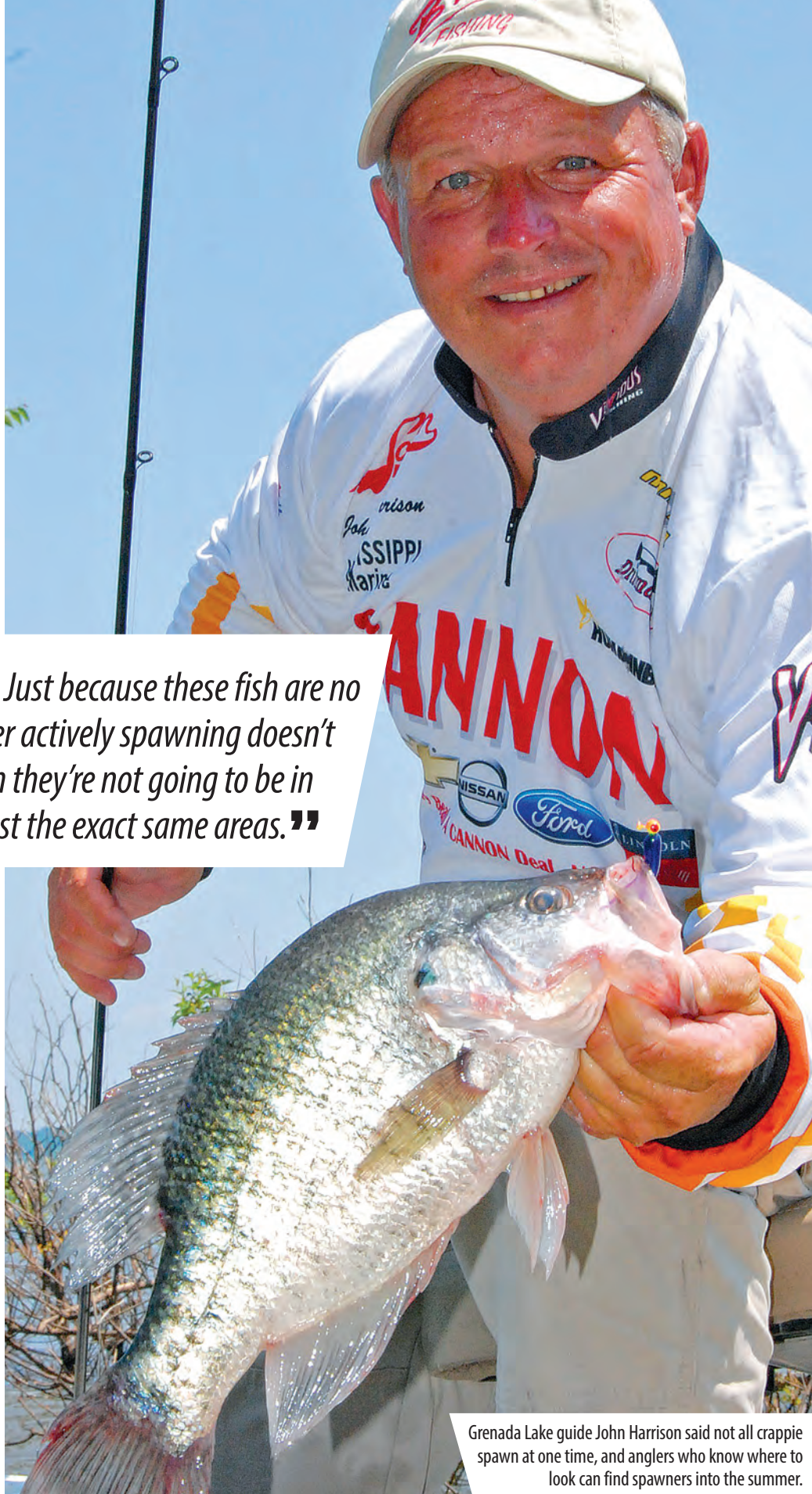
Crappie pro Ronnie Capps from Dyersburg, Tenn., said many anglers make the mistake of giving up when they are no longer catching male crappie sporting spawning colors or egg-laden females. Just because the crappie in your lake may not be actively spawning, Capps said that doesn't mean they have left the area, and fish may be in water only a couple of feet deeper than they were the previous few weeks.

Capps said post-spawn crappie are instinctively drawn to live, standing timber as water temperatures increase through the spring.

"Just because these fish are no longer actively spawning doesn't mean they're not going to be in almost the exact same areas," Capps said. "We're catching some good fish now on lakes across Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee and Alabama in 3 or 4 feet of water — the same areas we'd be wading in, but just out a little bit deeper."

Capps suggests using a single pole to jig timber from now until the fish move out to more open water. In many shallow lakes like Arkabutla, Capps said this takes a while, and he may still be catching fish around trees until late summer. One key is to target trees or brush on the edge of a creek channel, ditch or some other depression that gives crappie access to deeper water. That same access also tends to draw baitfish moving in and out.

“Just because these fish are no longer actively spawning doesn't mean they're not going to be in almost the exact same areas.”



Grenada Lake guide John Harrison said not all crappie spawn at one time, and anglers who know where to look can find spawners into the summer.



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Crappie pro Ronnie Capps said to look for water that's just a little deeper than what anglers have been wading through the spawn.

**C**apps suggests using an 8- to 9-foot jig pole that can reach into an area around standing timber but still has enough backbone to pull a fish out of the brush. For this application, he also wants a “do-nothing jig” that all he has to do is present correctly. “I like a 1/16-ounce ProBuilt jig with a rubber tube skirt, something that you can just stick down there and hold still as it shimmies in front of the fish,” Capps said. Another factor that plays hand-in-hand

with shallow-water fishing any time of year is the water level. Capps reminds anglers that fish will often move up to find new water on rising levels and will retreat back to deeper cuts and channels as the water recedes.

### **FIND LATE SPAWNERS**

John Harrison of Calhoun City, who guides on Grenada Lake, said anglers who pattern fish in one area may make the mistake of thinking the spawn is over when those fish move on.

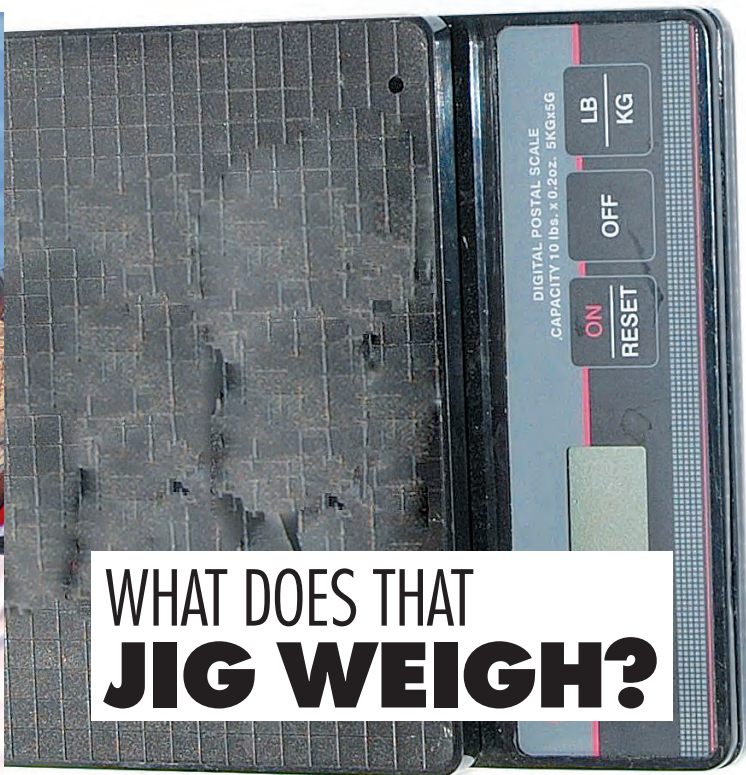
“Everybody has heard, ‘They don’t all

spawn at once,’ but nobody seems to believe that,” Harrison said. “Just because the fish move out of your favorite area or those one or two places you’ve found them, doesn’t mean they’ve all completed spawning.”

Harrison said he can find fish still in the throes of spawning as late as mid-June, most years, on most of his north Mississippi lakes. One of the keys is to look for spawning locations that are not obvious.

“Everybody wants to run up the creeks and get in the shallow flats to catch fish, but I don’t think all those fish move to

continues page 52 >



Using a gram scale can help you determine if that 1/16-ounce jig you're using is in the right weight class.

## WHAT DOES THAT JIG WEIGH?

Phillip Gentry

**C**rappie anglers are familiar with using jigs that weigh considerably less than typical ones fished for

bass and other species. Popular jig weights for crappie include 1/32-, 1/16- and 1/8-ounce, but those listed weights can vary considerably from one manufacturer to another, sometimes even one jig to another.

"I've seen jigs marked 1/16-ounce that weighed anywhere from 1.5 grams to 2.1 grams," said crappie pro Kent Driscoll. "That's why I also ways carry a gram scale with me and measure each jig individually before I put (it) in the rotation."

Driscoll said what may seem to be a negligible difference in weight can make a lot of difference in how that jig swims, whether it's pulled behind the boat, shot up under a dock, or presented vertically on a jig pole. Add to that the weight and buoyancy of the jig body, and most anglers have no real clue what their jig is doing under the water.

"The best water for crappie fishing in general is going to

be stained, which means reduced visibility," Driscoll said. "A crappie may only be able to see the bait at a distance of about 2 feet. Another factor is

that a crappie always feeds in an upward position and will ignore a bait that passes just 6 inches under its nose."

Using a gram scale, which can be found at most hardware stores that sell precision tools and equipment for around \$15, instead of having only three or four jig-weight choices, he can broaden that range to around a dozen. The subtle weight difference allows Driscoll to hone his swimming depths to get around a foot of depth tolerance, which can and has made a huge difference in the number of bites he gets. ■

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the back of the lake to spawn,” he said. “I’ve found males guarding nests down the lake sitting on humps in 8 to 10 feet of water. I think those fish were just waiting on the right conditions for the area of the lake they live in.”

## FISH BOAT DOCKS

Guide Brad Whitehead from Muscle Shoals, Ala., said he’s found that, all over the South, a lot of crappie will spawn around boat docks, and even after the spawn has ended, many of those fish, and others, will gravitate to boat docks.

“You can fish the pilings with a jig pole and catch some fish, but the best way to catch a lot of fish is by shooting jigs back up under the dock,” he said.

Whitehead said not just any rod will do the job when it comes to shooting tiny jigs well back under a boat dock. His

choice is a B’n’M Sharpshooter 6.

“Light line and a slow-falling jig are the two key ingredients, but what good are they if you can’t get the jig back there where most of the crappie are?” Whitehead said. “That’s what this rod does; it slings even the tiniest jigs up under the cover, and then it’s just a matter of getting that good, slow fall and watching that line for even the slightest twitch.”

Before heading out to shoot docks, Whitehead said anglers need to understand that not all docks are created equal.

Docks come in two basic styles: floaters or piers. The big difference is a floating dock has little or no support structure attached to the bottom. A pier dock has vertical, and more often than not, supplemental diagonal and horizontal

supports for stability. The two styles of docks fish differently.

“I really like a floating dock because there’s nothing under it to get hung up on,” Whitehead said. “If the fish are under there, and you feel any kind of catch or tension on your line after you shoot the jig, you’ll know pretty well it’s a fish. Pier docks are a little more aggravating, because cross bars and vertical supports will snag your jig. The floating docks are a little easier to shoot just because they can be a little bit higher off the water sometimes.”

Whitehead also recommended targeting boat docks sitting in or over at least 10 feet of water.

“A good dock with access to deep water will hold crappie all summer long,” he said. ■



Crappie will retreat to the shade under boat docks when the spawn ends; getting a bait back under the dock to them becomes the key to success.

# THE FLIP SIDE

While fishing a crappie tournament several years ago, veteran angler Whitey Outlaw was asked about the way he hooked a minnow onto a jig.

Outlaw, who has a proven track record, shared a secret for attracting attention to his bait when fishing a jib around cover that is already loaded with natural bait. Outlaw uses a 1/6-ounce jig and piggybacks a live minnow on the end of the jig — a common practice among many crappie anglers. The difference is that Outlaw impales his bait upside down, inserting the hook through the minnow's nostril and coming out behind the lower jaw. The result is a very disoriented bait that wriggles to right itself as soon as it's back in the water.

Outlaw said that a minnow hooked in this fashion never "settles down" as many will do when hooked and left for a time in the water.

"Well, I don't really know when I started fishing minnows this way. I probably did it by accident the first time" Outlaw said. "All I know is that it worked, and I've been doin' it ever since."

Outlaw said his trick works in deep, clear lakes across Mississippi like Pickwick and Bay Springs, as well as more stained, shallower waters like Grenada and Arkabutla.

"I don't troll 'em upside down" Outlaw said. "That'll kill them in a hurry, but for enticing a big slab that's hanging down in structure, that upside-down minnow looks like it's injured, and he's usually the first that big crappie will pick off." ■

Hooking a minnow upside down creates more erratic movements. Just what you need to tempt postspawn crappie into biting.



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.

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IS MAY TIME FOR

# mayflies?

BY DAVID HAWKINS

My first memorable encounter with mayflies happened one year around the first week of June at J.P. Coleman State Park on Pickwick Lake.

We were fishing with spinners and crankbaits when we came upon a willow tree hanging over the water, covered with yellow mayflies, some falling to the surface of the lake.

Fish were rising to inhale the dying insects, so I broke out a fly rod and tied on an imitation mayfly as my wife changed to a Mepps spinner with a yellow hair accent. For the next 30 minutes we boated and kept enough redears and fat bluegills for several meals. We even caught some small bass and shad. It seems every fish likes a mayfly for lunch.

The day was a great success, thanks to the little yellow critters in the willow. So, just what were these delicate little creatures that fish find so tasty, and

what influence have they had on fishing?

It is an insect that lives around water, with a cyclic life that includes nymph and adult stages — two stages when fish find them attractive and tasty.

## THE NYMPH

In the mayflies' existence, the nymph stage is the longest.

According to the Audubon Field Guide to Insects, there are some 2,100 types of mayflies. Some have up to a four-year larval, or nymph, stage, but scientists say mayflies local to Mississippi have an egg-to-adult lifespan of about a year.

And the fish just love them, especially bluegills and redears, aka shellcrackers, but bass, catfish and crappie have been known to feed on mayflies.

A mayfly's nymph stage lives along the

bottom, so fisherman will fish wet flies or nymphs, casting, letting them sink and stripping the back with short strips.

## THE ADULT

According to Blake Layton, an entomologist with Mississippi State University, the adult life of a mayfly is very short.

Adults have only one purpose — to mate and reproduce — usually in a single day. Adults have no mouth parts and no digestive system. They mate in flight over water and then return to the water where the female lays eggs, and then both die. Since this part of the life cycle takes place on or above the surface, that is where the fish will go to grab them.

"The mass emergence is one of those natural phenomena that occur for species preservation," Layton said. "The sheer numbers are so overwhelming to the insect's predators that many will survive."

But when one fish notices the falling bugs, the feed is on.

"Fish are much attuned to the sounds

An adult mayfly spends very little time out of the water, perhaps as little as a single day, but that's the day they're most desirable to fish of all species.



A fly or popping bug designed to look like a mayfly can be deadly on sunfish off all kinds. **BELOW:** Imitation mayflies tied as dry flies are to be used when insects have left the nymph stage and are swarming above the surface mating or falling back into the water.

within their environment,” said Tom Holman, a fisheries biologist with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. “They have the ability to interpret sound waves with much of their bodies. So when they hear another fish feeding on the surface, they tune in to the fact that food is available on or near the surface.”

Holman said as long as surface feeding is continuing, surrounding fish will be attracted to the meal.

## THE IMITATORS

Flipping through the pages of a fly catalog reveals a plenitude of mayfly wannabes, that is, patterns intended to imitate the nymph, or adult, stage of the mayfly, stone fly or caddis fly.

Save the mail fee, however, because aside from a few Harvard-educated New England brook trout, few Mississippi fish will distinguish the difference in the whole lot.

A few of the names associated with such flies include “dun,” which is the sub-imago stage of the mayfly just before it becomes an adult. The imago is the full adult stage of the insect.

Nymphs, of course, indicate the stage of the fly prior to emerging.

## MISSISSIPPI FLY FISHERMEN

Now that we have had a lesson in what it means to be a mayfly and where the life cycle of the little critters enters the picture, here are the fillets the Mississippi angler can take to the kitchen.

The nymph stage calls for the use of a wet fly. Patterns are numerous and available at all major fishing tackle outlets.

Since the nymph is alive and active long before the adult emerges, fly anglers should fish the nymph wannabes where hatches normally occur.

Since the water is usually shallow in these areas, wade fisherman or kayak paddlers will have the advantage.

One of the largest emergences at the 'Rez happens near the spillway and along the dam.

According to Layton, mayflies are not attracted to the lights: the lights just allow them to be seen by more people in a high-traffic area.

>



**A**ccording to Scott Peyton of the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, natural currents and winds are the most likely cause for the high number of nymphs along the dam.

The sand, mud and sediment in the riprap, along with the crevices along the rocks, are excellent environments for the mayfly to complete its life cycle. The riprap connection is shared by Layton, who witnessed a similar emergence on Grenada Lake.

Also at the 'Rez, the piers around the Jackson Yacht Club — again, close to riprap — are the scene of an annual hatch.

The Highway 43 area connecting Rankin and Madison counties is another area where mayflies are prevalent during the spring and summer.

## MAYFLIES IN ACTION

For nymphs, a 9-foot fly rod and a 4x tapered leader will work on nymph patterns. With dry flies, drop to a 6x tapered leader. If you don't have a tapered leader, go with a leader of 5x tippet material.

One mayfly imitation tied locally is the Slim Shady, which can be fished on a slow drift, but also with a quick drag if conditions dictate that. Cast it to the edge of the bank in creeks and rivers and let the current pull it out and start a drift. On ponds and lakes, cast past the target area and use soft, short strips, pausing every 2 or 3 inches. Use a gentle, dragging pickup to pull the fly off the water for another cast. The smooth, rapid movement may trigger a strike from fish that are afraid

Another fly fisherman is David Frazier. Also a member of Magnolia Fly Fishers, Frazier ties a fly named Slim Shady based on a mayfly pattern.

A Slim Shady should be fished on a slow drift, but a quick drag gets results if conditions are right. Cast to the edge of bank in creeks and rivers and let current pull it out, and start a drift. On ponds and lakes, cast beyond the target area and use soft, short strips with pauses every 2 to 3 inches.

Use a gentle, dragging pickup. This movement may triggers a strike; fish might fear that a meal is about to take off. ■



**David Hawkins** is a freelance writer living in Forest, Miss. He can be reached at [hawkins2209@att.net](mailto:hawkins2209@att.net).

There are few limitations when it comes to the mayfly patterns that can be tied in a fly-tying vise. Colors and sizes will vary greatly.



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## GETTIN' FRESH

Hal Schramm

Christopher Anderson . . . An Escambia River alligator gar. The broad, blunt, and relatively short snout distinguishes alligator gar from other gar species.

# STUDY ALLIGATOR GAR HABITAT USE, MOVEMENT

RESEARCH SHOWS UNIQUE FISH WILL MOVE A LONG WAY IN LATE SPRING

**S**omewhere in a flood-plain pond or stream near you, alligator gar may be — or should be — spawning. I say “should be” because populations of this fearsome-looking, ancient fish are greatly reduced from their historical levels.

Their decline, and in some areas their demise, has resulted from harvest and habitat alteration. Information about habitat use and movement is critical to the species' conservation. Recent studies in Arkansas and Florida provide useful information.

## BIOLOGY OF A BEAST

Alligator gar are long-lived, primitive fish that grow to sizes exceeding 7 feet and 200 pounds. They live in larger rivers and oxbow lakes and can tolerate brackish water. Spawning occurs in May and June in Mississippi waters.

Although insufficiently studied to define specific spawning habitat requirements, spawning has been observed in a variety of flood-plain ponds, oxbow lakes, and tributary streams. The eggs are deposited on brush or aquatic vegetation.

Adults are primarily fish eaters, but fish in coastal marshes also eat blue crabs. They are stalking predators, usually seen lurking in or near brush or marginal vegetation.

While several species of gar are called “gator gar,” the broad and blunt snout of alligator gar is an easy way to distinguish

them from others members of the gar clan.

## ESCAMBIA RIVER

The Escambia River flows through the Florida Panhandle into Pensacola Bay. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission biologists tracked adult alligator gar, 37 to 76 inches long, in the Escambia River for two years. Alligator gar concentrated in off-channel habitats in the winter, sometimes with individuals only several feet apart. As water temperature warmed above 60 degrees in April, the fish dispersed into the main channel. Throughout the year, the tracked fish largely remained in the middle and lower reaches of the Escambia, where they had access to off-channel habitat.

The fish moved little during the cold season, but they moved more frequently and greater distances from April to November, when movement averaged 27 miles among individual fish. The longest distance moved was 63 miles. Movement did not differ between day and night in either the warm or cold seasons.

## FOURCHE LAFAVE RIVER

The Fourche LaFave River flows through west-central Arkansas, ending at the Arkansas River. The University of Central Arkansas and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fisheries biologists tracked alligator gar 59 to 88 inches long

from February to October for two years in the lower reaches of Fourche LaFave.

During the February-to-April prespawning period, alligator gar were located primarily in slow-current depressions in the main channel of river. Rising river stages and inundation of the flood plain in May was accompanied by alligator gar moving downstream toward known spawning areas, then moving onto the flood plain and into flood-plain tributaries to spawn. The flood-plain tributaries were used more frequently than the inundated flood plains.

Distances and speed of movement were lowest during the cold-water, prespawning season and increased during the spawn; spawning-season movement was confined to movement within and among the spawning areas. The Arkansas research team suggested the frequent movement near the spawning areas may be a consequence of the gar monitoring the water and habitat conditions, waiting for the best conditions for spawning. The fish distributed extensively upstream and downstream of the spawning areas after the spawn.



Hal Schramm is an avid angler and veteran fisheries biologist.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Except for the brief period of the spawn, alligator gar were most-frequently located in the main channel of the Fourche LaFave River. The fish usually were within 15 feet of the channel bank in relatively shallow water with slow or no current. Fish were more often located in areas with overhanging vegetation and in-water structure, like logs and fallen trees, than in open water or areas with only overhanging vegetation or in-water structure.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR CONSERVATION

Whether in Arkansas, Florida or other states where alligator gar live and have been studied, the fish need access to slow- or no-current areas in the winter and inundated flood plain or off-channel areas during the spring spawn. From the information available, rising water in the spring seems to be an important trigger for spawning. And the rising water must occur at a time that coincides with the normal spawning cycle.

Slack-water areas appear to be critical wintering habitat. While alligator gar remaining in the channel of the Fourche LaFave River may seem to contradict this, Fourche LaFave River has little flow, and the flood plain has little inundated habitat in the winter.


Changes to the landscape that alter the amount and timing of river flows and channelization or levees that eliminate access to flood-plain or off-channel habitat can be expected to threaten the persistence of this ancient fish. The relatively limited movement of these fish suggests that local habitat management and system-specific harvest restriction may benefit recovery of alligator gar. ■




Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

### TOOTHY CRITTER:

Alligator gars have gills like other fish, but they also have a swim bladder that is connected to their stomach by a unique duct that allows them to gulp air from the surface. This also allows them to live in water that a low level of dissolved oxygen. Oh, and the teeth are pretty interesting.


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## COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver

Steamed in parchment paper with vegetables is a great way of cooking the mild fillets of bottomfish. **INSET:** It takes about 12 minutes for a packet of fish and vegetables to cook thoroughly.



# PARCHMENT PAPER GRILLED FISH

BOTTOMFISH IS A FAVORITE ON THE TABLE, AND THIS RECIPE IT'S A GREAT ONE

**S**ometimes it seems like it takes spring a while to get going, but it usually manages to make its arrival felt by May. This is time to enjoy being outdoors, especially if that includes enjoying a meal of fresh fish hot off the grill.

There is a little bit of turkey season left, but this is the time to enjoy some fresh fish. Fishing is good and improving. This month's recipe is based on a deep-water bottomfish. Not everyone runs offshore to where golden tilefish live, but it's available from your favorite fish market, and it's good.

Fishermen are already plying the offshore waters, and a lot of folks are eager to do some bottom-bouncing.

Almost all bottomfish are welcome on most tables. They are white meat and mild in flavor. They taste good to begin with and are just the thing to use in simple recipes like this.

This recipe uses golden tilefish, but it works almost as well with grouper, beeliners, large grunts and more. The only requirement is for the fish to have a 6- to 8-ounce fillet that

isn't so thin it overcooks easily. Wrapping it in parchment paper helps, as the fish is steaming in its own juice. The proper term is "fish en papillote," and it is a nearly foolproof way to prepare fish, especially those with milder flavor and tender meat.

The trip for golden tilefish is a bit longer than for many other bottomfish, but fishermen are often in the same general areas when trolling for wahoo and tuna. Paying attention to the fish finder while trolling down a rip, color change or temperature break can provide spots to return and look for bottomfish. Some days, when trolling is either frenetic or slow, dropping a few baits into the deep can provide a change — and some different dinner guests.

This recipe works well with a variety of fish, but is just that little bit better with a mild, white-meat fillet cut fresh from a healthy bottomfish. It also cooks quickly and cleans up quickly as it can be eaten from the parchment paper, which is then put in the trash. Give it a try. ■

# PARCHMENT PAPER GRILLED FISH

This is a nice way to combine a couple of things into a tasty meal. It works well with just about any mild fish. I like it with offshore bottomfish, as the meat is usually firm, but mild. This particular version was made with golden tilefish, and it was really good. If you haven't eaten golden tilefish, it is very tender, mild and a little sweet to the taste. Golden tilefish are deep-water bottom-dwellers, and most fishermen catch them only rarely, if at all. Commercial fishermen have been catching them, and your favorite fishmonger should have some.

This type of cooking actually steams the fish and vegetables in their juices, the little bit of oil, lemon juice and the spices. For years, I cooked like this, using aluminum foil to wrap the fish. It still works, but I have been convinced that parchment paper is better for recipes that include vegetables and citrus fruits high in vitamin C.

Recent research suggests that when aluminum foil is used during cooking, some aluminum leaches into food. The same research said the aluminum leaching increases with higher heat, like roasting and broiling, and foods that are high in acidity, such as tomatoes, vinegar, and vitamin C-rich produce.

My first reaction was that parchment paper might burn at higher temperatures, especially on the grill. This was easy to check, and most parchment paper is rated for use up to at least 400 degrees. The Reynolds Kitchens parchment paper I used is rated to 420 degrees. If you would prefer to cook this in an oven, preheat to 400 degrees and check the fish at 10 minutes. It should cook in 10 to 12 minutes unless it is a thick fillet.

My grill has double burners but no thermostat. I preheat it with both burners on high, then reduce one to medium and cook on

that side. I keep the packets on a vegetable tray; they're easier to handle.

It takes about 12 minutes for two packets with fillets that are  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch thick. Thicker fillets will take a few extra minutes, but since you're cooking with steam, the margin of error is wide. But don't cook until the fish appears dry or you won't like it.

The listed ingredients are for four portions. For this, I prepared and cooked two and saved the ingredients for two for the next day. This fillet was very thick, so I cut  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch slices off it and used two of them as the base for each meal.

I'm not afraid to change things and encourage experimenting. My wife doesn't care for spicy foods, so I prepared hers with pepper and Cavender's. I like to kick things up a step or two, so I used extra pepper and some ground Chipotle pepper, with just a pinch of sea salt. It also works well with a few slivers of fresh jalapeno peppers added to the squash, a touch of garlic, or your favorite spice blend instead of salt.

Give this a try. It works in the oven or on the grill. I like being outside and like it grilled better, but that's a personal choice. ■

## INGREDIENTS:

4 fish fillets, 6 to 8 ounces each

$\frac{1}{2}$  pound medium shrimp

1 zucchini squash

1 summer squash

1 lemon

Coarse ground pepper and pink sea salt

Cavender's All Purpose Greek Seasoning

Olive oil or non-stick cooking spray.

Options: jalapeno pepper, garlic, powdered jalapeno, chipotle peppers, Tony Chachere's Original Creole seasoning, aluminum foil.

## PREPARATION: Serves 4

Wash the fillets and pat them dry. Peel and devein the shrimp. Slice the squash very thin. Slice the onions thin and cut the slices into pieces a couple inches long.

Cut four pieces of parchment paper roughly square at the box width. Center a fillet on each piece of parchment paper. Brush the fillets lightly with olive oil or spray them lightly with non-stick cooking spray. Salt (or seasoning of choice) and pepper fillets to taste.

Lay slices of squash and onions on fillets. Place several shrimp on top of vegetables on each fillet. Lightly season vegetables and shrimp. Squeeze lemon juice over shrimp, vegetables and fillet (to taste). Fold parchment paper in from the sides and roll the edges together to seal.

Preheat grill to 400 degrees (medium high to high, depending on the grill). Cook approximately 12 minutes. The fillets will not brown, they are done when the squash wilts, the shrimp turn pink and the fish is beginning to flake. Allow to set for 2 to 3 minutes before serving. Be careful opening the paper, as there will be hot steam escaping.

This goes well with a baked potato or baked sweet potato. It is also good to begin with a green salad. Since this is for May and things are warmer, a bowl of homemade ice cream makes for an excellent dessert. ■



Parchment paper is a great alternative to aluminum foil, especially when grilling and especially when vegetables are involved.



Jerry Dilsaver is a freelance writer, as well as a former national king mackerel champion fisherman.

## SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope

# SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: SWORDFISH

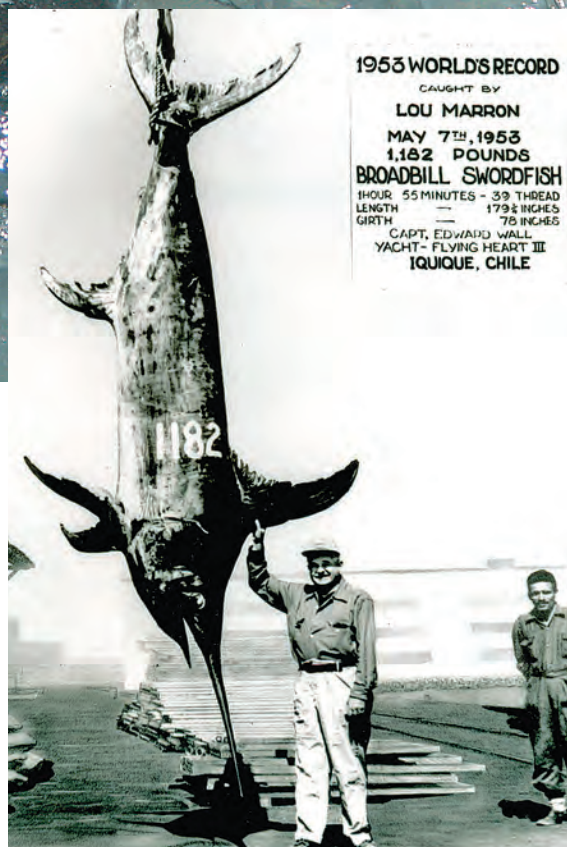
**S**wordfish (*Xiphias gladius*), often referred to as broadbills or broadbill swordfish, are highly sought-after by offshore anglers around the world. They are one of the more mysterious and elusive species of fish and are often pursued by anglers at night. These fish spend most daylight hours very deep, perhaps due to their sensitivity to light. At night, they move up in the water column, much closer to the surface.

Swordfish are listed as members of the billfish family, but this classification is somewhat deceiving.

Although they share many similarities with sailfish and marlin, swordfish are actually the sole member of the Xiphiidae family.

Although they aren't often seen near the surface during daylight hours, on rare occasions they can be seen basking in the sun on the surface or making huge leaps out of the water. Biologists believe they are trying to rid themselves of pests like remoras or lampreys that attach to swordfish and other species.

Swordfish are isolated creatures. They do not travel in schools but choose to swim alone or in distant



1953 WORLD'S RECORD  
CAUGHT BY  
LOU MARRON  
MAY 7<sup>TH</sup>, 1953  
1,182 POUNDS  
BROADBILL SWORDFISH  
1 HOUR 55 MINUTES - 39 THREAD  
LENGTH — 179½ INCHES  
GIRTH — 78 INCHES  
CAPT. EDWARD WALL  
YACHT - FLYING HEART III  
IQUIQUE, CHILE

Iquique, Chile | May 7, 1953 | 1,182 pounds | Louis Marron

Courtesy of IGFA

# SPORTSMAN COOL BREEZE

proximity of other swordfish.

Until recently, anglers and scientists believed swordfish fed only at night; however, research has shown that they do feed during the day as well. They stay much deeper (down to 2,000 feet) during the day-time, but anglers have learned how to catch them in deep water with the aid of very heavy weights and glow sticks or L.E.D. lights located near the bait. It's not uncommon for anglers to use 10 pounds of weight on a single line.

Many anglers still fish for swordfish at night, when the fish commonly move up to within 300 feet of the surface.

Common baits for swordfish are squid and whole fish, either live or dead. Some artificial lures are also used; they usually have built-in lights.

Spawning for swordfish usually takes place in water that is warmer than 75 degrees, most often during spring and summer.

Swordfish get their name from their wide, sword-like bill. It is shaped unlike than those of other billfish, which have relatively thin and pointed bills. While their bills are sometimes used to slash at prey, swordfish mostly rely on their speed to chase down meals. Their bills are very sharp, however, and have been known to slice through wooden-hulled boats after being harpooned by fishermen.

These fish are hearty fighters, and hooking one often results in a battle that lasts for

several hours. Outdoor writer Zane Grey, who fished for and wrote about swordfish in great detail, once reported fighting a swordfish for 5 hours, then observing the fish chasing down and eating flying fish, apparently unaware and unfazed that it was even hooked.

The Louisiana state record, a 310-pound swordfish, was

caught in 1980 by Thomas Dantin. He caught the fish in Mississippi Canyon.

Mississippi's state record is 242.54 pounds; it was caught by Scott Cothran in 2017. Cothran caught the fish aboard the boat *Pay Dirt* during the Mississippi Gulf Coast Billfish Classic and won \$376,075 and a Nissan truck.

The world-record swordfish

was caught off the coast of Chile in 1953. It weighed 1,182 pounds and was caught by Louis Marron. ■



**Brian Cope** is a retired Air Force combat communications technician. He has been writing about the outdoors since 2006. He's spent half his life hunting and fishing. The rest, he said, has been wasted.

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## Get spring ready

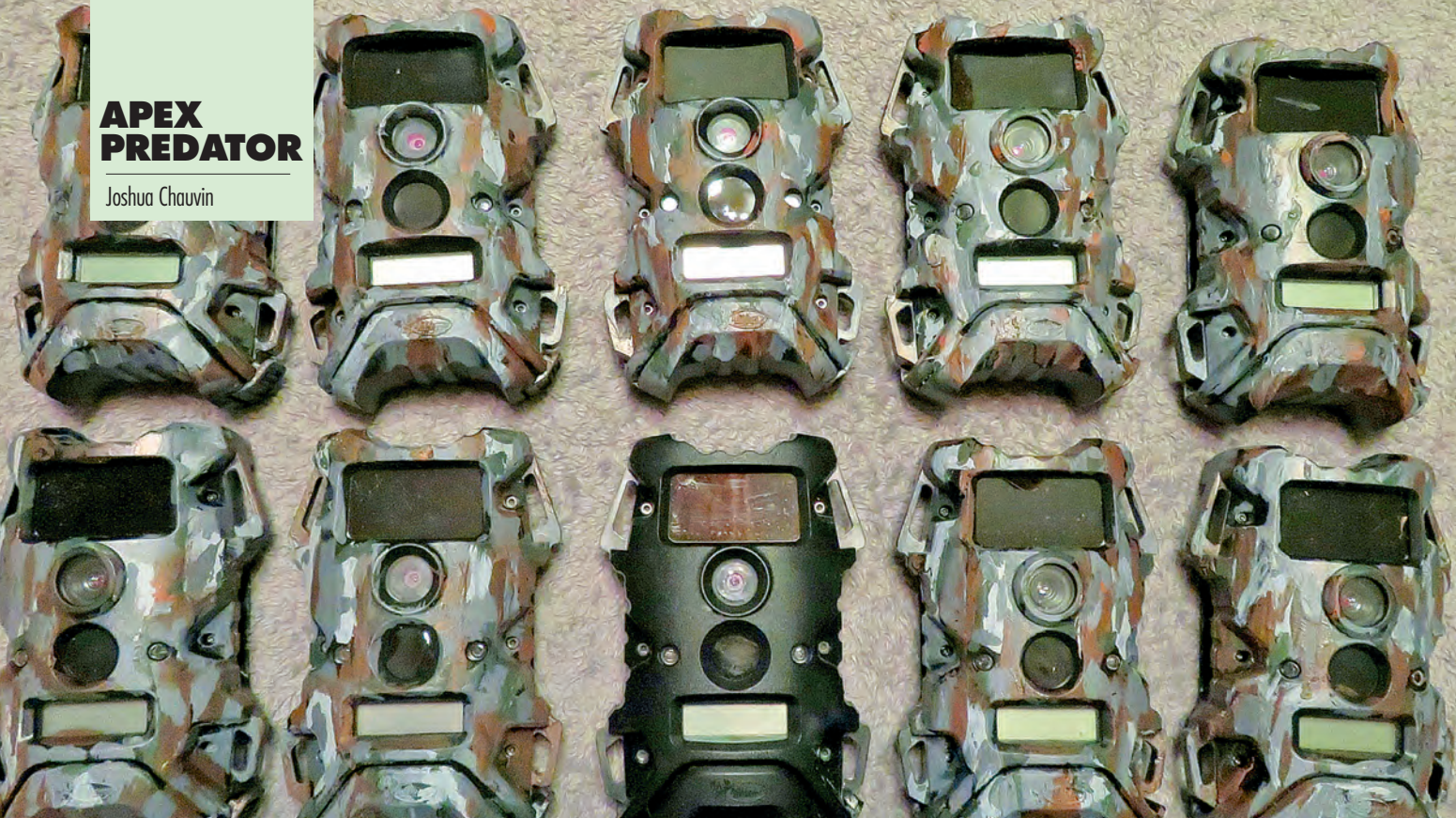
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## APEX PREDATOR

Joshua Chauvin



# USE PAINT BRUSHES TO STEALTH UP TRAIL CAMERAS

**S**pring is when I finally take my trail cameras out of the woods and paint new ones bought on clearance for the upcoming season. Since I only hunt public land, I've always use cheap cameras. I look for three very important features in a trail camera: quietness, no-lights and coloration.

I've been running dozens of cameras annually, upgrading with newer ones as some get destroyed or stolen. Every season, I get hundreds of different bucks on film. This allows me to only hunt the places visited most by mature bucks in the two dozen or more units I scout.

A common theme is, when mature bucks notice a camera, they seldom return. Often, when a daytime buck notices a camera, he becomes nocturnal at that location. Sometimes, he'll come back, but he closely watches the camera, looking for the non-natural feature that alerted him. Spooked a second time, a buck is gone for good.

I usually have several cameras in an area, so I often know when a buck leaves or stays.

## WHAT SCARES PUBLIC LAND DEER?

• **Light.** Nowadays, blackout cameras are very common, so I won't buy a camera that doesn't have this feature. Sure, you'll sacrifice some nighttime range, but to avoid spooking the buck is worth it. Some bucks may not mind the flash of a red LED light. In my experience, however, more often than not, it'll send smart bucks running for the hills. The lights also can give away a hidden camera position to thieves.

• **Camera sound.** Loud cameras that make a click to record will instantly spook an animal. Sometimes, they'll sprint off. Sometimes, they'll stay for multiple sets to investigate. Then they leave the area for good.

I was frustrated for years with noisy cameras constantly breaking and others having horrible, over-sensitive triggers. I put cameras in thick locations to hide them from people. Also, these dense tangles are where public-land animals move best, so a sensitive trigger is not helpful around all the brush when the wind blows. The wide-spreading sensors of some more-

expensive cameras have performed poorly in these brushy areas.

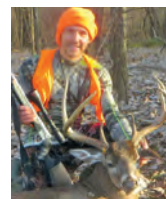
I'm looking to scout many areas in the cheapest way possible.

## CHEAP CAMERAS THAT DO THE JOB

The good news is some of the cheapest cameras have proven to have all the qualities I like.

I first snatched up some Wildgame Innovations Cloak cameras a few years back. I was surprised at how durable they were after using more than a dozen in Colorado and in the humid southeastern heat for two years. I even left a bunch in the Rocky Mountains over the winter. The next year, they all fired up without a flaw. I was impressed.

The cameras have great battery life and are simple but effective. They have a less-than-one-second trigger for both



Joshua Chauvin is a health-focused ultramarathon runner who goes on solo, manual-powered public-land adventures focusing on hunting big game and large fish by using challenging methods and weapons. He enjoys self-filming and sharing the tactics and details from his expeditions to help others learn from his unique techniques.

This photo shows 10 trail cameras — nine the author painted himself and one unpainted.

video and picture mode with hardly any false captures of moving brush. Many other cameras had the same fast picture-taking ability, but they took nearly 3 seconds to start in video mode; this often missed anything that passed by. I love video mode for capturing fighting bucks and chase scenes during the rut.

I found that the Wildgame Innovations Nano model had a trigger that was too under-sensitive. However, all the same great features in the Cloak versions came on with their Terra models as well.

I've been able to find the Cloak and Terra 6, 7, 8 and 10 GB models all for less than \$33 each with free shipping and no sales tax by searching eBay and Google Shopping for deals that sporadically pop up.

## SHOP POSTSEASON

The deals are frequent after the season when places clear out the previous year's inventory for upgraded models. These Cloak and Terra do have the slightest noise, but rarely is it loud enough to spook an animal unless it's practically standing next to the camera. For the low price, it's worth the trade-off.

I find the cheapest SD cards by buying them in large lots on eBay. Inexpensive, Class 4 cards work well with my cameras. Also, I find bulk AA alkaline batteries online. They last just as long as the name brand ones for a quarter of the name-brand price.

## DIY CAMOU

I notice that animals aren't spooked by my painted trail cameras once they look in their direction. However, I've had plain black, green or grey ones, and have had animals spook after spotting them.

Unfortunately, many cameras on sale are often non-camouflaged. There's no need to spend more money on expensive models. You can paint the cameras yourself for only pennies in cost.

I use small paint brushes to paint them mostly grey, like the majority



This buck looking at the author's self-painted camera wasn't spooked and returned many times.

of trees I set them on. I take white paint and stir in black to create various shades of gray. I paint on some browns and mix a touch a black to darken the browns. Then, I finish with a small amount of green, adding in some black to get the desired tone.

Deer seem to not notice and not be bothered by my camouflaged cameras when they look at them. Most important, camouflage matters to keep cameras hidden from thieves, and also from bears and elk, which both like to destroy cameras.

I've set numerous cameras on carcasses in Colorado and popular bear locations in Louisiana. Bears have looked right at my camouflaged cameras and walked on by, but when the same bears saw my non-camouflaged cameras nearby, they were instantly demolished.

## RED ANGER BEARS

Keep in mind, if the camera has a flashing red light or makes a loud noise, the elk or bear angrily attacks it, no matter the color pattern.

The main reason I paint my cameras in the spring is for the smell factor. I'm very picky about my scent-control measures when hunting. I've had big bucks bust me downwind when not taking precautions. Vice versa, I've taken several nice bucks that came from downwind when I did

take extreme scent-control measures, so I take the same approach with my cameras.

## BEWARE OF ODOR

I paint my cameras and leave them in a covered outdoor area for months to allow the scent to fade away. I make sure to wash my camera-setting backpack and camera straps in scent-free clothes wash and leave my bag outside for months as well. Bears also have remarkable scenting ability, which is another reason to take the scent-control methods.

Sure, gluing real tree bark, moss or leaves to the camera makes it even more stealthy. However, I found this to be impractical, as most of it fell off during my long hikes. I'm resetting dozens of cameras over many different locations all-year long. Also, most glues have an unnatural smell, so I wouldn't want to glue on the extra cover when I set them.

All of these measures may seem extreme to some, but my deer-hunting success has skyrocketed in the past few years with an ability to not only find bucks, but to keep from alerting them of the surveillance without spending top dollar. ■



After seeing the red lights from the author's older camera, this buck was never filmed again.



A blackout camera never alerted any of these bucks, and they returned often to feed.

Lone gobblers whose hens are nesting are likely to be doing a lot of traveling, especially late in the morning and early in the afternoon, when they can be fooled and killed. INSET: Be patient with late-season turkeys; they have heard plenty of calls and are extremely wary, so different tactics may be required.



# BE PATIENT, STAY LATE FOR LATE-SEASON TOMS

By Craig Holt

## TIME TO DIAL BACK YOUR CALLING

**T**urkey hunters find a big problem from mid-April through the end of the spring turkey season is that most “easy” turkeys have been killed, and the remaining ones are more wary and won’t come to calls.

But don’t fret; there are things a hunter can do.

Mike Seamster, a respected biologist now retired after managing wild-turkey populations for 30 years, said patience is the first response hunters should have to shut-mouth, scared-of-their-shadow gobblers.

“The main thing is patience ... patience kills a lot of turkeys,” he said. “If you don’t hear any gobblers at daylight to 9 a.m. or so, stay in the woods. You’re liable to hear a gobbler at mid-morning or even in the afternoon. If it’s the lull period, they’ll leave hens or the hens will have left them at some point. Then, you got a chance.”



Dan Kibler



# CAMO THAT STANDS OUT



One of Seamster's favorite tactics is to locate a gobbler that's calling hens to his tree, sneak in close, set up and yelp or purr a couple times, then stop calling.

"Sometimes he might gobble, then up in the morning, say 10:30, he might come to where he heard you call at daylight, looking for that hen he heard," Seamster said. "You can even eat lunch, then go back and call a time or two, and he might answer. This happens a lot, even after hunting season ends."

Seamster said once, in late June, he was working on a tract of land on a public hunting area when he heard a gobbler across the road.

"I had a (call) in my truck and called, and he came out on the edge of the highway, looking for the hen — during June," said Seamster, who has killed a lot of birds late in the season and late in the morning. "He's liable to gobble late in the season at any time."

Late in the season, Seamster is careful not to overcall.

"More often, soft, infrequent calls do the trick. I think it's a good idea to be subtle in calling — call less," he said. "It's especially important on (public) lands because turkeys usually have been pressured."

"If you're calling a lot, he knows a hen's out there, and she's supposed to come to him," he said. "But if he doesn't hear her for a while, he's wondering 'Has another gobbler come in and got that hen?' Then he goes looking for her, and that's when you can kill him." ■



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By Chris Ginn

# WADING FOR SLABS

WHEN YOU CAN'T REACH THE BANK FROM YOUR BOAT

In the same vein as asking why someone would want to jump out of a perfectly good airplane, I asked John Harrison why he would want to jump out of a perfectly good boat.

"To catch crappie," he answered.

Harrison, a crappie guide and tournament angler who lives near Grenada Lake, remembered the time when he realized just how productive wade fishing for crappie could be.

"The last really high-water year we had at Grenada, the water was ... going over the emergency spillway during the spring" he said. "The water was backed up way into the woods, so far the fish were virtually impossible to get to."

About the closest he could get to where crappie were holding was about 10 feet. Rather than tucking his tail and running, Harrison put on waders, grabbed a 10-foot jig pole and jumped out of his boat.

"It was so thick in there I had to break down that pole just so I could get to the bank," he said. "Now, I'm short, but I wound up having to crawl through brush until I found a little stump, vines — anything that was in 2 feet of water.

"I just sat at each spot and caught six, seven, eight fish. Then I broke my pole down again and walked — make that crawled — around until I found something else unusual. Cypress trees were magnets back there. Rotten stumps were good, too."

When the water gets so high that it pushes already shallow, springtime crappie even farther out of reach, Harrison knows the only way to get to them is to park the boat and jump in.

"When they get in those thickets, even the smallest boat in the world can't get to them," Harrison said. "But you can



John Harrison doesn't hesitate to pull on his waders and leave his boat if the water level is so high that he can't reach the bank in his boat to target shallow crappie.

Chris Ginn

bet crappie are going to go shallow this time of year. Thickets, ironwoods, willows, grass, brush — it doesn't matter. The males are going to move in, and the females are soon to follow."

There is another reason to jump out of your boat and start wade fishing for crappie. Stealth is important when targeting shallow-water crappie, and being stealthy is easier when you're on your feet rather than on your seat. ■

By David Brown

# DROP-SHOT THE LEDGES

With today's advanced sonar units boasting the ability to see detailed images of not only what's under the boat but also the bottom, it's pretty easy to locate the sweet spots for bass on a ledge.

Find a nice little nook or a hefty brush pile, and you have your target for casting and winding those crankbaits, spinnerbaits and jigs.

But what do you do when your hot bite suddenly cools? Unless you just enjoy looking for new spots, you should pull directly over the ledge and take a good look at your targeted spot. Often, the fish are still there; they just got tired of seeing the same types of presentations.

This is where your drop-shot can really shine. Fish move up on the ledge to feed, so it's not surprising to smoke a bunch of them on reaction baits. However, they will wise up eventually, so the savvy anglers must shift gears to pick off a few more.

As long as the fish remain on the ledge, it's a safe bet that they're still in the food mood — so it's just a matter of keeping an easy meal available to them.

Few rigs can achieve this level of consistent vulnerability like a drop-shot. The fish might scatter when too many crankbaits buzz past them, and they might get tired of watching a buddy yanked to topside after tipping down on that football head. But a slender worm or small shad figure that just sits there wiggling in the current — now that's just too much to resist.

A couple of considerations:

- Take a good look at the spot you'll drop on, and if there's brush, timber or anything else that can snag an exposed drop-shot hook, Texas-rig your bait.
- If fish are suspending off the ledge, try a longer leader that keeps the bait at the fish's eye level.
- Use a weight sufficient for the depth and current of the spot you're fishing. ■



A drop-shot rig will produce bass that have been hammered with other baits.

Brian Cope

By John J. Woods

# IT'S PLANTING TIME!

## WHAT SHOULD GO IN THE DIRT?

**M**ay is a good time for planting spring food plots for white-tailed deer. There are also spin-off residual benefits for other game like wild turkey, quail, dove and even small game like rabbits.

For most areas, depending on the exact habitat types or, more importantly, the soil type and water availability, the majority of wildlife has sufficient natural food resources to sustain themselves.

However, as deer hunters, whitetail managers and land managers, are terms like “sustain” and “maintain” enough to produce the kinds of deer we really desire? We’re not talking just antlers either, but overall deer herd health and vigor.

Producing such deer, means going beyond what Mother Nature is supplying via resident habitats. This is where planting spring wildlife food plots come into play.

“Poor nutrition can derail an otherwise well-planned QDM program, so deer managers strive to provide high-quality food,” said David Hewitt of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at

Texas A&M-Kingsville. “Forbs, succulent browse and mast generally have high amounts of digestible energy because they have low fiber concentration, so management for these will increase energy intake.”

Supplemental crops like corn can help provide the additional carbs, while fats most often come from mast like acorns. Hunters and deer-managing landowners can supply both by planting spring food plots and enhancing existing mast by fertilization of oak stands, as well as planting new trees for long-term resources.

One final thought about essential food energy elements for deer from Hewitt: “Protein requirements increase during the late spring and summer, when deer are most productive. Ensuring deer have access to forages with 16- to 20-percent protein during summer will enable deer to meet their (nutritional) requirements.”

In practical terms, spring is an ideal time to replant existing winter plots.

For one thing, the fall food plots have mostly died off, but hopefully the plots have not yet been overtaken with volunteer weed growth. This ought to

make soil preparation work for a new spring plot much easier. At least one or two times over the ground with a deep cutting disk, a week or two of natural burn-down, and the plot can be readied to plant again.

A number of options are available if proteins are the targeted food source to help carry deer through the tough summer months and into the fall.

Perhaps the easiest is to simply broadcast soybeans across the tilled plots. Planters can add to that iron clay cowpeas, buckwheat, sunflowers and sorghums. Grasses such as rye — not rye grass — and oats make good choices, too. Some hunters like to add annual greens, perennial clovers and sometimes chicory.

Beans, peas, buckwheat, sunflower and sorghums can be planted at the rate of 50 pounds per acre at a soil depth of ½-inch to an inch and lightly covered.

Fertilizing always gives a boost to any new plantings, and wildlife food plots should be limed on a regular basis. Periodic soil tests will tell you what your food plots need. ■

Soybeans are an easy answer to a hunter/land manager's question about what to plant in a summer food plot.

## ASTRO TABLES

**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.

### AVAILABLE PRODUCTS:

**The 2019 PrimeTimes Wall Calendar.** \$13.95 (plus \$4 s&h). Know the best days, best times, and their relative strengths for all of 2019 with this information-packed, full-color, 11-inch by 17-inch, graphic peaks

and-valleys forecaster. Includes rise and set times for the sun and moon, space to log your catches, "Timely Tips," plus fish and game symbols showing you each month's don't-miss periods. Also includes exclusive summary charts revealing the best and worst days of 2019, the year's best periods, and look ahead at 2020, and more. Comes with FREE 2019 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for \$8.95, plus \$3 s&h.

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| 2019<br>MAY | BEST DAYS |      |      | VALUE |
|-------------|-----------|------|------|-------|
|             | POOR      | FAIR | GOOD |       |
| Wed 1       | ██        | ██   | ██   | 45    |
| Thu 2       | ██        | ██   | ██   | 58    |
| Fri 3       | ██        | ██   | ██   | 72    |
| Sat 4       | ██        | ██   | ██   | 80    |
| Sun 5       | ██        | ██   | ██   | 73    |
| Mon 6       | ██        | ██   | ██   | 66    |
| Tue 7       | ██        | ██   | ██   | 58    |
| Wed 8       | ██        | ██   | ██   | 55    |
| Thu 9       | ██        | ██   | ██   | 57    |
| Fri 10      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 62    |
| Sat 11      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 72    |
| Sun 12      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 60    |
| Mon 13      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 53    |
| Tue 14      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 50    |
| Wed 15      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 56    |
| Thu 16      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 62    |
| Fri 17      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 71    |
| Sat 18      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 74    |
| Sun 19      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 61    |
| Mon 20      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 48    |
| Tue 21      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 36    |
| Wed 22      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 30    |
| Thu 23      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 29    |
| Fri 24      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 29    |
| Sat 25      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 36    |
| Sun 26      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 47    |
| Mon 27      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 40    |
| Tue 28      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 39    |
| Wed 29      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 42    |
| Thu 30      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 45    |
| Fri 31      | ██        | ██   | ██   | 59    |

25 50 75  
AVERAGE


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| MOON RISE | LUNAR PERIODS         |                        | MOON SET | TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED |                 |
|-----------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
|           | PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD | PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT |          | MOON RISE                           | MOON SET        |
| 4:55 am   | 9:52 am - 11:54 am    |                        | 4:57 pm  | 10:17 pm - 12:19 am                 | ☉               |
| 5:25 am   | 10:27 am - 12:45 pm   |                        | 5:54 pm  | 10:52 pm - 1:10 am                  | ☉               |
| 5:54 am   | 11:02 am - 1:38 pm    | ☀                      | 6:52 pm  | 11:27 pm - Midnight                 | ☉               |
| 6:26 am   | 11:40 am - 2:30 pm    | ☀                      | 7:52 pm  | Midnight - 2:03 am                  | ☉ NEW           |
| 7:01 am   | 12:23 pm - 3:25 pm    | ☀                      | 8:54 pm  | 12:05 am - 2:55 am                  | ☉               |
| 7:40 am   | 1:08 pm - 4:24 pm     |                        | 9:57 pm  | 12:48 am - 3:50 am                  | ☉               |
| 8:24 am   | 1:59 pm - 5:21 pm     |                        | 11:00 pm | 1:33 am - 4:49 am                   | ☉               |
| 9:15 am   | 2:52 pm - 6:22 pm     |                        |          | 2:24 am - 5:46 am                   | ☉ HIGH          |
| 10:13 am  | 3:52 pm - 7:18 pm     |                        |          | 3:17 am - 6:47 am                   | ☉               |
| 11:15 am  | 4:52 pm - 8:14 pm     |                        | 12:56 am | 4:17 am - 7:43 am                   | ☀               |
| 12:21 pm  | 5:54 pm - 9:06 pm     | ☀                      | 1:46 am  | 5:17 am - 8:39 am                   | ☀ HALF          |
| 1:29 pm   | 6:56 pm - 9:52 pm     | ☀                      | 2:31 am  | 6:19 am - 9:31 am                   | ☀               |
| 2:37 pm   | 7:57 pm - 10:37 pm    |                        | 3:11 am  | 7:21 am - 10:17 am                  | ☉ Perigee       |
| 3:44 pm   | 8:57 pm - 11:19 pm    |                        | 3:48 am  | 8:22 am - 11:02 am                  | ☉               |
| 4:51 pm   | 9:57 pm - 11:59 pm    |                        | 4:23 am  | 9:22 am - 11:44 am                  | ☉               |
| 5:57 pm   | 10:56 pm - 12:42 am   |                        | 4:57 am  | 10:22 am - 12:24 pm                 | ☉               |
| 7:03 pm   | 11:56 pm - Midnight   |                        | 5:33 am  | 11:21 am - 1:07 pm                  | ☀               |
| 8:09 pm   | Midnight - 1:24 am    | ☀                      | 6:10 am  | 12:21 pm - 1:49 pm                  | ☀ FULL          |
| 9:12 pm   | 12:54 am - 2:10 am    |                        | 6:50 am  | 1:19 pm - 2:35 pm                   | ☀               |
| 10:12 pm  | 1:52 am - 2:58 am     |                        | 7:34 am  | 2:17 pm - 3:23 pm                   | ☉               |
| 11:07 pm  | 2:49 am - 3:47 am     |                        | 8:22 am  | 3:14 pm - 4:12 pm                   | ☉               |
| 11:57 pm  | 3:42 am - 4:40 am     |                        | 9:14 am  | 4:07 pm - 5:05 pm                   | ☉ LOW           |
|           | 4:33 am - 5:31 am     |                        | 10:08 am | 5:58 pm - 5:56 pm                   | ☉               |
| 12:41 am  | 5:18 am - 6:24 am     | ☀                      | 11:03 am | 5:43 pm - 6:49 pm                   | ☉               |
| 1:20 am   | 6:00 am - 7:16 am     | ☀                      | 11:59 am | 6:25 pm - 7:41 pm                   | ☉               |
| 1:55 am   | 6:39 am - 8:05 am     | ☀                      | 12:55 pm | 7:04 pm - 8:30 pm                   | ☉ HALF & APOGEE |
| 2:27 am   | 7:16 am - 8:54 am     | ☀                      | 1:50 pm  | 7:41 pm - 9:19 pm                   | ☉               |
| 2:56 am   | 7:50 am - 9:46 am     |                        | 2:45 pm  | 8:15 pm - 10:11 pm                  | ☉               |
| 3:25 am   | 8:26 am - 10:34 am    |                        | 3:42 pm  | 8:51 pm - 10:59 pm                  | ☉               |
| 3:54 am   | 9:00 am - 11:26 am    |                        | 4:39 pm  | 9:25 pm - 11:51 pm                  | ☉               |
| 4:25 am   | 9:37 am - 12:19 pm    |                        | 5:39 pm  | 10:02 pm - 12:44 am                 | ☉               |





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

WHILE THE LESSER MOONRISE AND -SET OVERLAPS (ABOUT 30 MIN. BEFORE AND AFTER THE LISTED TIME) ARE DESIGNATED BY BOLD BLACK TYPE.

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| <b>FISH SPECIES</b>  | <b>Minimum Lengths</b>        | <b>Creel Limit</b> (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<br>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/<br>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](http://gulfcouncil.org).

**FRESHWATER**

| <b>FISH Species</b> (Inland waters)     | <b>Minimum Size Limit</b> | <b>Creel Limit</b> (per day) |
|---|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Crappie/Panfish #                       | %                         | 30 crappie, 100 bream        |
| Largemouth, smallmouth,<br>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](http://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.

**HUNTING SEASONS**

| <b>SPECIES</b>         | <b>SEASON DATES</b>  | <b>BAG LIMIT</b>                    | <b>POSSESSION LIMIT</b> |
|------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Doves</b>           | Sept. 1-Oct. 7 (n), Sept. 1-Sept. 9 (s)<br>Oct. 27-Nov. 7 (n), Oct. 6-Nov. 7 (s)<br>Dec. 22-Jan. 31 (n), Dec. 15-Jan. 31 (s) | 15                                  | 45                      |
| <b>Quail</b>           | Nov. 22-March 2  | 8                                   |                         |
| <b>Rabbit</b>          | Oct. 1-Feb. 28   | 8                                   |                         |
| <b>Squirrel (fall)</b> | Sept. 30-Feb. 28   | 8                                   |                         |
| <b>Squirrel (spr)</b>  | May 15-June 1  | 4                                   |                         |
| <b>Raccoon</b>         | July 1-Sept. 30  | 1 raccoons per party                |                         |
| <b>Rac/Opp/Bobct</b>   | Oct. 1-Oct. 31 (food/sport)<br>Nov. 1-Feb. 28 (food/sport/pelt)  | 5/day, 8/party<br>No limit          |                         |
| <b>Rails</b>           |  |                                     |                         |
| King & Clapper         | Sept. 2-Nov. 10  | 25                                  | 75                      |
| Sora & Virginia,       | Sept. 2-Nov. 10  | 15                                  | 45                      |
| <b>Gallinules</b>      | Sept. 2-Nov. 10  | 15                                  | 45                      |
| <b>Snipe</b>           | Nov. 14 - Feb. 28  | 8                                   | 24                      |
| <b>Crow</b>            | Nov. 4 - Feb. 28   | No limit                            | No limit                |
| <b>Woodcock</b>        | Dec. 18 - Jan. 31  | 3                                   | 9                       |
| <b>Wild Turkey</b>     |  |                                     |                         |
| 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**

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

**DEER SEASON**

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

|                                   |    |  |    |                                 |    |
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