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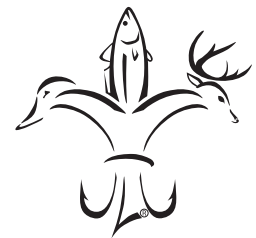
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Some of Mississippi's top public-hunting areas are underwater from record flooding, but there's still plenty of spots available for hunters to target deer, ducks and small-game species. Photo by Rick Small.



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DOVES? I'LL HAVE A LIMIT, PLEASE

Outdoor
UPDATE
with
Bobby Cleveland

LITTLE GRAY BOMBERS HIGHLIGHT SEPTEMBER'S RETURN OF HUNTING

Mississippi hunters, idled so long by the spring and summer offseason, should appreciate September's arrival almost as much as football fans.

At least, that is, the wing-shooting segment can celebrate. Bird season is upon us.

The countryside will erupt in gunfire as early as Sept. 1, when dove season opens statewide. The fleet, little

gray birds will get most of the attention, although there are other migratory species that are in peril.

The early Canada goose season, originally designed to give Mississippi hunters a crack at the increasingly abundant resident population, also opens Sept. 1, and for the second-straight year will run through the entire month.

Two less popular — but equally sporting — seasons open Sept. 1, allowing hunters a chance to take some tasty gallinules and

rails. Those birds will be available the entire month, in addition to a second season that starts in November.

Duck hunters also get some shooting time, when the 16-day early teal season opens Sept. 14.

Don't worry deer hunters, you still get several weekends to work at your hunting camps to get food plots in, stands in order and trails cleared before the archery season opens on Oct. 1.

But, that's a month away, and we've still got lots to talk about in September.

This edition of *Mississippi Sportsman* sets the table for another great month of outdoors in the Magnolia State.

The fall is a great time for fishing, especially for rivers. Writer David Hawkins specializes in chasing spotted bass in running water and shares tips from some experts on how to make the most of stream fishing, and writer Phillip Gentry does the same for one of his fall favorites, catfish. His tips for bumping on the Mississippi River should put more fish in your boat.

We also want to get you in the spirit of the hunting season. Mike Giles gives us a look at the best state-run Wildlife Management Areas for different species, and Bill Garbo has an interesting piece on preparing the human body for the long hunting season ahead. And, yes, we couldn't leave out deer, not this close to the season. Pete Rogers provides tips for the first few weeks of the archery season.

Hunt safe, fish wisely and let's get this party started. ■



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.



Mississippi hunters can hunt gallinules (and rails), the entire month of September.

DON'T MISS OUT ON GREAT DOVE OPPORTUNITIES

If a hunter visited a field every day of dove season and killed a limit every day, what would he or she end up having?

If you said anything other than a horribly sore shoulder, you didn't think it through.

Over a 90-day season, a hunter killing the 15-bird limit would have 1,350 birds, which, of course, would be a lot of good eating. But that would likely be earned by burning about 2,500 shells, or 100 boxes of No. 7½ or No. 8 shot. That's 10 cases, and that's being extremely conservative, because who among us can average better than two shots per bird over the course of a season?

Certainly not this writer — only once have I limited within a box of shells, and that was in the 1990s when the daily limit was 12, and I think the last two or three birds died of shock.

Due to more liberal limits and longer seasons, every hunter has more than a fair chance of enjoying grilled or fried dove breasts, and/or having dove popper appetizers for tailgating or holiday meals — they are the best.

"All that you need to get your fill of doves is a decent field that somebody, somewhere, put a lot of time, love and care into preparing," said Ron Thomas of Madison, an avid dove hunter who hunts all three segments of the North Zone season. "There's 10 of us that do exactly that, on five or six fields, every year in the Delta. We lease little 3-, 4- and 5-acre fields in different areas, on farms, and we plant sunflowers and soy beans in the spring and manipulate those crops with the sole intent and goal of attracting and holding doves.

"We can hunt two or three times a week in the opening season and have great hunting. We rotate the fields so we're not always worrying about burning up a field, and there's enough shooting throughout the Delta to keep the birds moving."

Thomas said that the first season is the least important one of the year for him and his buddies. It's the second and third seasons when their hard work is intended to produce the best results.

"By then, if you have a credible food source for doves, they'll come, and you will have the best shooting of the year," he said. "The second season is the toughest for most clubs, even if they did some prepping. The trouble is, the farmers have been pulling corn and pulling beans, and there's a lot of scrap on the ground

Hunting over a good, consistent food source is the best way to have a successful dove hunt in any of the three segments of Mississippi's dove season.



2019-20 DOVE SEASONS

North Zone: Sept. 1-Oct. 6; Oct. 19-Nov. 6; Dec. 21-Jan. 14 (total of 90 days).

South Zone (area south of U.S. Highway 84, and east of Mississippi Highway 35): Sept. 1-15; Oct. 5-Nov. 6; Dec. 21-Jan. 31 (total of 90 days).

Limits: 15 daily, 45 in possession.

for the birds. They don't concentrate as much. But if you have the food there, especially sunflowers, surrounded by rows that the farmers have cleared, then you are going to have birds.

"Now the third season, that's when we really love to shoot. We get those waves of migrating birds from the Midwest, fat birds who have been eating corn all year. If there's an early winter up north and they get pushed down to join the native birds that survived all the shooting, it can be great — really, really great. We make sure we have plenty of food for them. Food sources are scarce, and if they find a source, like our fields, they will continue to come to it even if we hunt it every day. They have to eat."

The smaller South Zone season is also 90 days, and the later the season, the better.

"I am so happy that our third and final season is 43 days," said Mac Graham of Hattiesburg. "But I'm happiest that our final season goes all the way to Jan. 31. That's the best thing that's happened to us. We will have a better opportunity; that's for sure. Birds that fly south hit the Gulf and turn around, so we do have some good hunting in January. Our first season is only 15 days, but really, that's more than plenty. If we have birds then, they get scarce as all get out, literally, after a day or two of shooting. They get out of the area pretty quickly." ■

A CHANCE TO LOAD UP

Hunters who need to stock up on shells for dove season — or ammunition for any season — have a brief, tax-free weekend to get good deals. Mississippi's three-day "Second Amendment Tax Free Holiday" is Aug. 30-Sept. 1.

Certain purchases will be exempt from state sales tax at hundreds of stores statewide. Exempt items include archery equipment, firearms, firearm and archery cases, firearm and archery accessories, hearing protection, holsters, belts, ammunition and slings. Items like clothing, stands, and calls are not exempt.

For a complete list of exempt and non-exempt items, visit the Mississippi Department of Revenue online at www.dor.ms.gov/Pages/Mississippi-Second-Amendment-Weekend-Guidance.aspx. ■

Mississippi hunters can take Canada geese during the early season the entire month of September.

TRY 'OTHER' WATERFOWL

Waterfowling has two seasons designed for them in September, including the mostly underutilized early Canada goose season that opens on the first day of the month. Later, on Sept. 14, there's the highly popular early teal season that allows hunters a shot at the early migrating and plentiful blue-winged teal.

"I love to teal hunt, and I do it as many times as I can during the short season, but I really enjoy a few days with the Canadas," said Matt Hughes of Jackson. "I think a lot more people would enjoy it if they just gave it a shot, and it's not like it's rocket science. The birds, they are all lazy, resident geese and dumb. Their lineage is that of nuisance geese Mississippi stupidly took or traded to get from northern states that were happy to find somebody to take them."

"Barnett Reservoir is just one place where they are plentiful, and if you can't get a limit of five of them, you just aren't trying. Just act like you're fishing, and they'll swim or fly right by your boat. I try to make it harder than that, but it's really hard to make it harder. They will come to a call, so we try to get hidden in grass and wait until we see some and call them in."

Hughes said he started hunting early season Canada geese when he was fishing with his father while in high school.

"They started having the season while I was in school, and Dad was a big bass fisherman," Hughes said. "I went with him, and there were all these geese. I always joked about how easy it would be to kill them, and then they opened a season. We'd go fishing, and I'd take a shotgun with steel shot and shoot them when they came by. We had to be careful and not have a motor operating when I'd shoot."

In those days, the season was 15 days long; now, it's the entire month.

"The second half of the month is more difficult, because once you start shooting at them, they are smart enough to go to areas where we can't shoot," said Ray Hudson of Madison, Graham's hunting partner. "They don't go far, because they just start sticking close to the roads, parks and the residential areas of the reservoir. You know, those people are sick and tired of those geese pooping in their yards, on their boats and on their piers."

SEPTEMBER WATERFOWL SEASONS

Canada goose: Sept. 1-Sept 30. Limit is five daily, 15 possession.

Teal: Sept. 14-Sept. 29. Limit is six daily, 18 possession.

Moorhens and gallinules: Sept 1-30; daily limit 15 singly or in aggregate, possession limit 45.

Rails: Sept. 1-Sept 30; limits on clapper and king rails are 15 singly or in aggregate, and 45 in possession; limits on sora and Virginia rails are 15 singly or in aggregate, and 45 in possession.



"But we don't really care about the last two weeks, because every chance we get, we go teal hunting in the Delta, or even up on Barnett Reservoir. This year ought to be great on Barnett because the water has been kept low all year while they fight vegetation (giant salvinia). That has created outstanding teal habitat: shallow, mud flats. Hope so, anyway."

Seasons on rails and gallinule are also open in September, which Hudson likes.

"We never really thought about it until the last few years, but there's a bunch of purple gallinules in the areas of Barnett and Grenada that we hunt," Hudson said. "I heard they were good to eat, so we started shooting them the last few years. They are really good to eat, especially in a gumbo. Wish we'd known years ago." ■

Kids under 16 years of age can hunt squirrels in Mississippi during the Sept 24-30 season.



2019-20 SQUIRREL SEASONS

Youth season: Sept. 24-30.

Regular season: Oct. 1-Feb. 28.

Limit: 8 daily.

Spring season: May 15-June 1.

Limit: 4 daily.

Mississippi license for the species being hunted.

"A lot of parents might use the youth season as a chance to scout for squirrels for when the regular season opens Oct. 1, but that's not

how it ought to be," said Eric Thames of Starkville. "At our hunting club, the emphasis, regardless of season, is on kids. We put as much into the youth hunt as we do regular hunts.

"And, something else we don't do is close areas of the camp to youth squirrel hunt just because archery season (deer) opens Oct. 1. The best squirrel areas are also the best archery areas, but that's a moot point. We made a conscious decision years ago that whenever a youth season is open, whether its deer or squirrel or whatever, we'd put the emphasis on that opportunity." ■

SEPTEMBER SQUIRRELS?

ONLY IF YOU'RE A YOUNG 'UN

Some Mississippians will have a chance to put fresh squirrel on their menus this month — there just has to be a youth involved in putting the animals on the ground.

The youth season is open Sept. 24-30. Only hunters under the age of 16 can legally shoot squirrels, although adults can participate in all other phases of the hunting experience. In some instances, they are required to hunt. The rules are different for youths under 12 and between the ages of 12 to 15.

- A child at least 12 years of age and under 16 years of age must have a certificate of satisfactory completion of a hunter education course approved by the department before hunting alone in the state. Otherwise, they must be in the presence and under the direct supervision of a licensed or exempt hunter at least 21 years of age when hunting.

- A child under the age of 12 must be in the presence and under the direct supervision of a licensed or exempt hunter at least 21 years of age when the child is hunting. A licensed hunter supervising a child as provided in this section must hold a valid

SOUTH DELTA FLOOD IMPACTS ARE NOT SHORT-LIVED

The catastrophic 9-month flood that has plagued Mississippi's South Delta, inundating more than 550,000 acres at its peak, has had many victims. Families have been driven out of their homes, and farmers have lost an entire year of crops.

But the hardest hit may be the area's rich wildlife, and it may take a decade to realize the full impact, according to Russ Walsh, the state's executive director of wildlife for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks.

Walsh indicated it was too early to tell the full impact. "The impacts of the 2019 flooding in the South Delta will take years to fully appreciate," he said. "The MDWFP will be working with hunters, land managers and conservation partners in the South Delta to collect data to garner a full understanding of the impacts on wildlife.

"For white-tailed deer, antler growth and body condition were negatively affected. This was particularly evident in areas where they were isolated and food resources were depleted. The concentration of deer for an extended period would have created an opportunity for CWD to spread. Testing via hunter-harvested samples will be critically important in the coming seasons to determine whether CWD did in fact spread."

While no decisions had been reached by early August, there could be some changes in regulations for the South Delta area, much of which is within the Issaquena CWD Management Zone. ■

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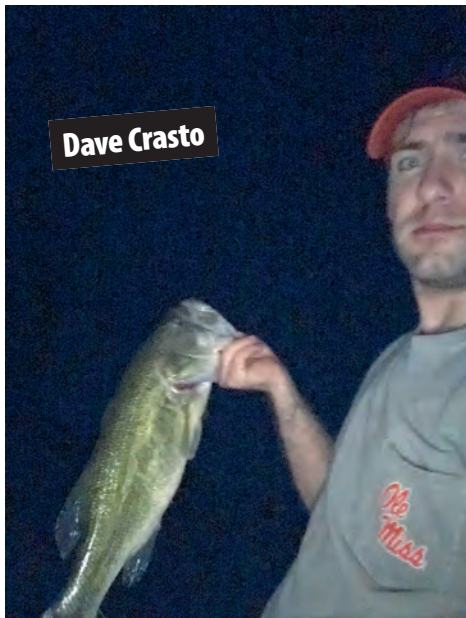
Brooklyn Wyatt

Brooklyn Wyatt started summer off with some bream! This one was caught in a private lake in Brandon.



Conner Dale

Conner Dale caught this big 'un in a private lake in Bentonia while fishing with live bream.



Dave Crasto

Dave Crasto with a bass caught on a Clauser minnow late one night at Lake Cavalier in Madison using a 9 foot, 5-weight fly rod. He says fishing after dark for big bass in Mississippi is as good (or better) than it gets!



Austin Holt

Austin Holt of New Albany holds a bass caught March 1 at Brent's Lake near Hickory Flat on a chartreuse crankbait.

GOT PICS? We want 'em

Email images to: images@ms-sportsman.com

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Crappie pro Dan Dannenmueller demonstrates the new Garmin Force trolling motor and a new Garmin scanning sonar unit at the 2019 ICAST show.



Photo courtesy of Garmin

THE 'FORCE' IS WITH GARMIN AS ICAST "BEST OF SHOW"

By Kinny Haddox

New trolling motor make waves

Nearly 1,000 manufacturers gather and showcase their new products at the annual ICAST show in Orlando, Fla. Many enter at least one new product in a competition for the coveted "Best of Show" award. Awards are given in 29 categories, but then one, big overall winner is chosen. When the last ballot is cast, only one product can net that win.

The new Garmin "Force" trolling motor won that honor at the 2019 show in July, and you don't have to be a Jedi to use the exciting new features and technology. This is Garmin's first entry into the trolling-motor market and the second year in a row for Garmin to take the top show award; Live Scope depth finder system took that top award in 2018.

The vision of pairing the two obviously

led voters to examine the product closely, and they found what a few, select anglers who have actually had the opportunity to test it before it hit the market already knew. The power of the Force is evident.

One of those anglers is pro crappie angler Dan Dannenmueller, a member of Garmin's Pro Staff, and regular participant in Louisiana crappie events.

"It's an amazing product," Dannenmueller said. "It has 30% more thrust than any other freshwater trolling motor, and more power means less power drain. I witnessed no response delays and had fewer adjustments and more control on maintaining positioning. The quiet operation is a huge plus. The motor is brushless, which is one of the keys. There is no noise when turning the motor. Look, I've seen fish react this year on LiveScope when a noise comes from the old trolling motors. This motor's stealth will improve our fishing."

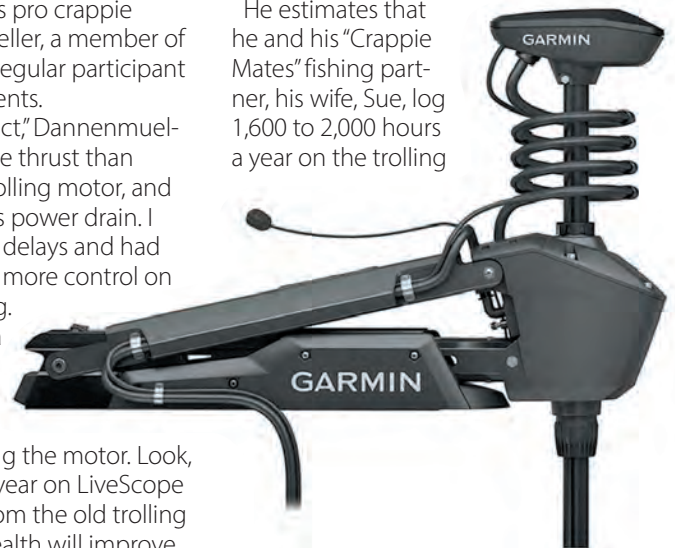
While Force operates with almost undetectable levels of sonar and steering noise, it's also the first trolling motor to include built-in, industry-leading Garmin CHIRP traditional and Ultra High-Definition ClearVü and SideVü scanning sonars.

WiFi operated hand-held and foot-pedal remote controls can be used from anywhere in the boat. Perhaps the motor's most unique feature is "motion control," which allows the motor to operate following hand movements of the controller after depressing a special button on the hand-held. It's like playing Nintendo with your trolling motor. And there are no cables to

break, bend or get in the way.

"I've honestly never seen this capability in any trolling motor except this one," Dannenmueller said. "It perfectly follows your motions with no delays."

He estimates that he and his "Crappie Mates" fishing partner, his wife, Sue, log 1,600 to 2,000 hours a year on the trolling



motor, so it's easy to see why he is excited about the product, but he says it will benefit anybody.

"Whether a fisherman goes once a year, or frequently, either in tournaments or just for pleasure, the Force provides easy and ready to use controls. Having a quiet, powerful and fully integrated set of capabilities is powerful. It allows you to easily make the most of your time on the water doing what you are there for — catching fish."

Only a few units are available now, but consumers should expect better availability later in August and into the fall. Retail pricing is expected to run somewhere between \$3,100 to \$3,500. ■

Only one can claim the "Best of Show" each year. This year it is this new Garmin Force trolling motor.



IT'S TRIPLETAIL TIME ON MISSISSIPPI COAST

By Brian Cope

TROUT AND REDFISH ARE HOT, BUT TRIPLETAIL ARE THE BIGGEST HIT

Worried about dirty water? Algal blooms? Impacts from Hurricane Barry? If any of those issues are keeping you off the water, you're making a big mistake. The fishing is great off Mississippi's coast, and Capt. Ronnie Daniels of Fisher-Man Guide Service in Pass Christian is putting his clients on multiple species.

The speckled trout bite has been insane, and the tripletail bite has been just as hot. Plus, the redfish have been plenty accommodating as well.

Daniels said some anglers are seeing dirty water in localized spots, but those areas are small compared to the vast amount of fishable water.

WAIT ON THE HOOKSET

While the redfish and trout provide plenty of fun for anglers, Daniels (228-323-1115) said the tripletail have been an especially big hit lately. He's put numerous anglers on their first-ever



tripletail, and every angler has been delighted.

Fishing for tripletail is pretty exciting. They are fairly easy to see, hanging around close to the surface near buoys and other floating objects. Daniels suggests using live shrimp under a popping cork. Once an angler spots a tripletail, they make a cast to it. Then, they can watch the tripletail as it observes the shrimp and even see the fish eat the bait. And that's when the real fun starts.

It can be tempting to set the hook too quickly when watching the fish get the bait in its mouth. But Daniels said it's best to wait until you see the cork go under. ■



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GOING PUBLIC

MISSISSIPPI HUNTERS WILL HAVE PLENTY OF PUBLIC-LAND OPPORTUNITIES THIS FALL, ESPECIALLY FOR DEER, BUT IT MIGHT TAKE A LITTLE STUDYING AND A LOT OF SCOUTING.

By Mike Giles

Shane McCullough slowly waded through frigid flood waters on Twin Oaks Wildlife Management Area with one destination in mind: a red-hot spot he'd found while scouting for buck sign.

The temperature was 28 degrees, but McCullough was burning up after 45 minutes walking with a climbing stand on his back. He climbed high in a tree and settled in for the morning, having found a dry spot in the middle of the flood waters and surveying the area around him, looking for any sign of a deer.

"I spotted movement and quickly focused on the spot," McCullough said. "Five or six does were feeding toward me; they fed up to the edge of

the water, and I spotted something white glistening behind them. A shooter buck was trailing them."

The buck followed the does as if he was on a string, walking directly into the range of McCullough's 50-caliber Knight Muzzleloader.

The blackpowder rifle roared, "Tic-BOOM!"

"He crossed a slough and fell dead just across it," McCullough said. "The buck was a 200 pound 8-point sporting a big, tall rack spanning almost 18 inches wide."

"If you like hunting trophy bucks, then the Delta WMAs are the ticket, but you have to put in your time scouting if you want to harvest a big buck," McCullough said. "You can't show

up the morning of the hunt and go in blind; it just doesn't work that way."

McCullough has enjoyed many successful hunts on WMAs over the course of his hunting career, and it points to the opportunities that Mississippi hunters have if they put in the time scouting and hunting. This year should be no different for thousands of successful public-land hunters.

Although a few WMAs have been affected by long-term flooding this year, the state of the public-land deer herd in Mississippi is good, and hunters should be excited about the opportunities to harvest deer, ducks, squirrel, rabbits and even a few quail.

NORTHWEST REGION >

NORTHWEST REGION

DEER

MALMAISON WMA

“Malmaison is definitely the place to hunt if you’re looking for quality deer,” said Brad Holder, a biologist with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. “We usually harvest two or three nice bucks, and it’s not uncommon to have a 140 to 160 (inch deer) killed every year or every other year there.”

“Malmaison is just going to produce bigger deer on average, and we have better antler regulations to help the bucks live longer.”

CHARLES RAY NIX WMA

“We have a lot of deer at **Charles Ray Nix**, and we try to manage for a better-quality buck there with the 15- to 18-inch antler regulations,” Holder said. “The deer habitat is great, and this soil region is second only to the Delta — and maybe even neck and neck with it. It’s juxtaposed to agricultural landscape that also provides high protein foods.”

UPPER SARDIS WMA

“When you’re just hunting for a deer, then the **Upper Sardis** is the place to go, as we follow the statewide regulations there and use the 10/13 antler regulations,” Holder said. “We’ve also increased the antlerless harvest this year, partly because of the CWD problems. The antlerless harvest opportunity is just a return to what we’d always had in the past, and you can kill a number of does there.”

A new regulation for Upper Sardis. “We are now allowing one of your 3-buck limit to be any antlered deer for adults,” he said.

WATERFOWL

MALMAISON/ CHARLES RAY NIX WMAS

“Malmaison is our flagship waterfowl area in this region,” Holder said. “The McIntyre Scatters and the Malmaison Greentree reservoirs are popular areas that hold a lot of ducks. The Scatters consistently produces a lot of ducks, too.”

UPPER SARDIS WMA

“The north end of the **Upper Sardis** area is a good area as well,” Holder said. “Hunters can expect to harvest a variety of ducks on these areas, including greenheads, gadwalls, teal, shovelers, widgeon and on a few pintails on occasion.”

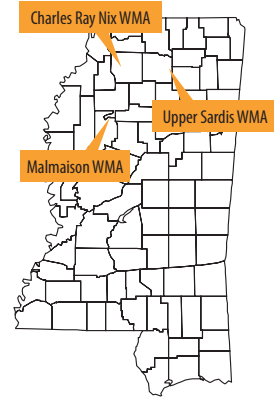
SMALL GAME

MALMAISON/UPPER SARDIS WMAS

“A lot of people squirrel hunt **Malmaison** and **Upper Sardis**,” Holder said. “Malmaison has about 9,000 acres of hardwood forests, and there’s quite a few squirrels and squirrel hunting there.”

The **Upper Sardis WMA** has 54,000 acres, and all is forested with a mixture of pines and hardwood, which makes it prime for squirrel hunting.

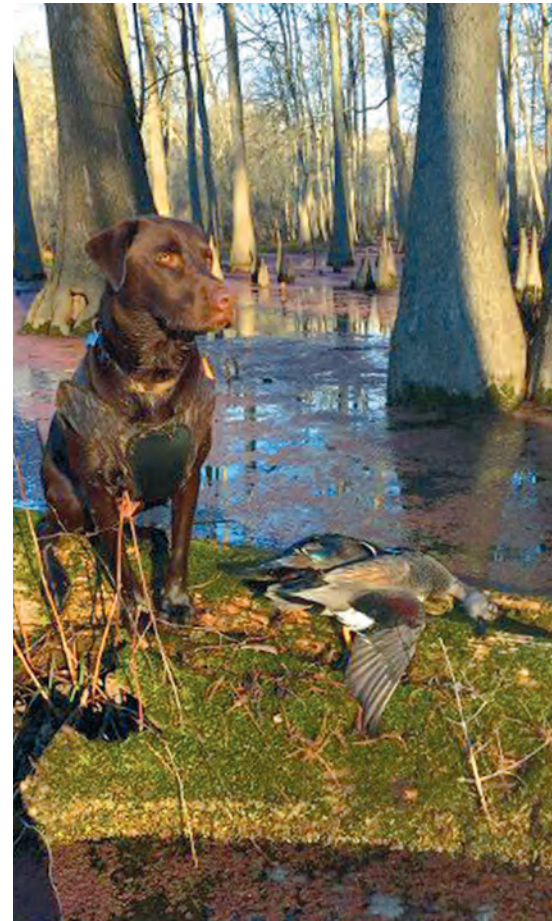
Several WMAs in Mississippi’s Northwest Region provide the public with excellent duck hunting.



CHARLES RAY NIX WMA

“Charles Ray Nix has a lot of good rabbit habitat, and most people hunting rabbits in this region hunt this WMA,” said Holder. “We welcome all rabbit hunters, and it’s open hunting with no draw for small game.” ■

EAST CENTRAL REGION ➤



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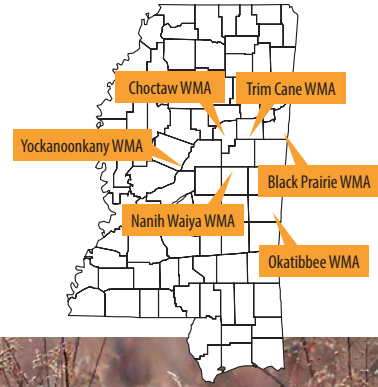
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EAST CENTRAL REGION

Antler restrictions on Black Prairie WMA allow bucks to live long enough to grow nice racks.



DEER

BLACK PRAIRIE WMA

"Black Prairie is still the best WMA in the East Central Region to harvest a quality buck," said Chad Masley, an MDWFP biologist. "We've run camera surveys and practiced intensive management for quality deer, and the cameras are showing good results."

Black Prairie has 6,000 acres of prime hunting land, with 1,600 acres in agriculture such as soybeans and plenty of early successional growth, which gives the deer plenty of quality food, too.

Black Prairie has a 15-inch inside spread or 18-inch main beam requirements, which give the bucks time to grow and reach their potential. Mature bucks 3½ years and older typically weigh between 180 and 200 pounds.

NANIH WAIYA/CHOCTAW WMAS

"Nanih Waiya is a good place to harvest a deer, and there will be an either-sex opportunity on this WMA. There was a pretty good hunter success rate there last year," Masley said.

Nanih Waiya has 8,243 acres along the Pearl River in Neshoba and Winston counties near Philadelphia. Choctaw WMA has 21,705 acres in Choctaw and Winston counties near Ackerman.

TRIM CANE WMA

Trim Cane excels in youth and handicapped hunts.

"Trim Cane has 875 acres, but very good, quality deer, and (it) provides excellent opportunities to harvest a good buck for youth and handicap hunts," said Masley. "Deer hunting is limited to handicapped and youth hunters, which limits the pressure. We have one hunt a week, and each Saturday, we draw for two youth hunters and two handicapped hunters."

Mike Giles



WATERFOWL

TRIM CANE/NANIH WAIYA/OKATIBBEE WMAS

"Trim Cane is your best bet for waterfowl if it gets enough water early," Masley said. "Generally, if we have the water here early, we'll usually have a lot of ducks, too."

Trim Cane is primarily managed for waterfowl and rabbit hunting, and it is the best opportunity to harvest ducks in this region. Brown-top millet, milo and other duck foods are usually planted to attract the ducks.

Nanih Waiya WMA provides duck-hunting opportunities in an area of the state that doesn't have a lot of water. Kayaks and duck boats are good bets when hunting this WMA.

Okatibbee WMA, near Collinsville and adjacent to Okatibbee Lake north of Meridian, offers excellent waterfowl opportunities along creeks, beaver sloughs and in the upper end of Okatibbee Lake. Many hunters have had excellent teal hunts during the early season, but hunters must put in the time to scout early and plan their hunts accordingly. During the early season avid hunters will be set up in the prime areas well before daybreak.

SMALL GAME

YOCKANOOKANY/CHOCTAW/BLACK PRAIRIE WMAS

Yockanookany WMA has 2,375 acres along the Yockanookany River in Attala County near McCool. Hunters are encouraged to bring ATVs to access the area more easily, as you have to travel a good way from the access areas before getting to good hunting areas.

"Yockanookany has the best squirrel hunting in this region," Masley said. "There's plenty of hardwood, mast-producing trees and habitat for the squirrels, and we have a lot of hunters taking advantage of that too."

Choctaw is also a top pick for harvesting squirrels.

"Last year, our rabbit numbers quadrupled as the habitat got thicker," said Masley. "We have special dates for the rabbit hunts, but the opportunities are good when you can get drawn."

Black Prairie is also open to rabbit hunting, and if you have some good dogs, you'll kill some rabbits there," Masley said. "Rabbit season is open in November and February and we have a draw for Wednesdays and Saturday hunts." ■

DELTA REGION

According to biologist Roger Tankesly of MDWFP, the south Delta region started flooding last November, and some areas are still underwater. That could spell trouble for hunters who like to hunt **Mahannah, Twin Oaks** and other South Delta WMAs.

"Last August, we had record rainfall in the Ohio Valley, and 60 to 70 percent of the water in the river comes from up there," he said. "We started seeing the effects during November last year at Mahannah and Twin Oaks. We lost the entire season in January, and it's been flooded ever since."

Hunters need to understand that this is a 125-year flood, something that's never been seen before in our lifetime.

"(In late July), the river is at 98 feet in the backwater, with about 8½ feet of water in the shop at Mahannah," Tankesly said. "The levee system was inundated and is still several feet underwater, and we just don't know when it will come down."

"**Lake George WMA** is protected to 96 feet, and it's 9 to 10 feet deep in the head-quarters there."

The extent of the flood devastation is unknown at this time, but the habitat and infrastructure in the area will be affected, with buildings and roads taking the biggest hits. The habitat has also been affected severely, and the deer and other animals that could leave did.

While the deer usually return as soon as

the floods recede, what will happen this time is unknown, as a lack of browse and food will play a big factor.

South Delta WMAs may not be open to deer hunting this year, but time will tell as that determination hasn't been made yet. ■

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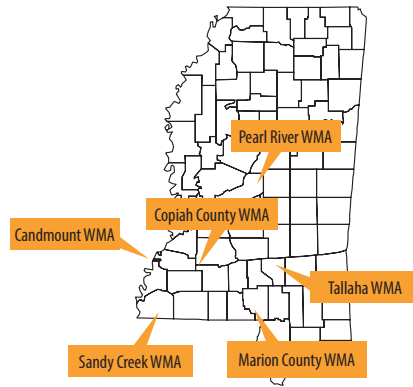
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SOUTHWEST REGION



DEER

CANEMOUNT WMA

"**Canemount** is No. 1 for good, quality bucks," said biologist Josh Moree of MDWFP. "Hunters killed several nice bucks here last year, but nothing exceptional."

Deer hunting on this WMA is by limited draw only; it covers about 3,500 acres in the Loess Bluffs of Claiborne County near the Mississippi River. The hills are very fertile, with a lot of mast producing hardwoods. **Canemount** also has a long history of trophy deer management and a private and public property.

"That's paying off for public-land hunters now, and I have seen the results firsthand and experienced success there as well,"

Moree said.

An added bonus to hunting at **Canemount** is that a lot of hogs live among the steep ravines, hills and hollows for hunters who prefer pork chops and hog sausage.

COPIAH COUNTY

"**Copiah County WMA** is always good, and it's just a short drive south of Jackson, so it gets a lot of deer-hunting pressure," Moree said. "But hunters have a good chance to harvest a decent deer there if you scout and spend some time there."

"**Sandy Creek** down in the Homochitto National Forest has been known to produce good quality bucks as well," Moree

said. "The soil in this WMA is good for this region for growing bucks, and you get a pretty good deer as a result."

Increased doe-harvest opportunities are available now on several area WMAs.

"During the last two years, the WMAs on our

forest service lands only had doe-harvest opportunities in youth gun and during the early archery season," Moree said. "This year, we will have either-sex hunting during the December primitive weapon season too at **Sandy Creek, Caston Creek, Bienville, Tallahala** and **Caney Creek**."

Three WMAs offer deer hunting with dogs, as well as still-hunting, according to Moree: **Bienville, Tallahala, and Caney Creek**. Combined these three WMAs encompass over 82,000 acres of prime south-Central public hunting lands.

SMALL GAME

SANDY CREEK/TALLAHA WMAS

"I'd say **Sandy Creek** is our top squirrel hunting area, with **Tallahala** close behind," Moree said. "**Sandy Creek** has mostly upland hardwoods and some bottomland hardwoods with lots of good habitat for squirrels."

Sandy Creek covers 19,125 acres in Adams and Franklin Counties near Natchez, including larger areas of hardwood bottoms and plenty of squirrel habitat.

"**Tallahala** is comprised of 27,442 acres and has some big hardwood bottoms with good squirrel habitat as well," Moree

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The Covich County and Marion County WMAs have huntable populations of bobwhite quail.



said. "There's plenty of squirrel dog hunters in this area and they have a lot of room to move around and hunt."

QUAIL

MARION COUNTY/COPIAH COUNTY WMAS

Marion County WMA and Covich County WMA are very popular quail hunting areas, and they have a decent population of wild quail, also," Moree said. "Woodcocks also provide another opportunity at wing shooting as an added bonus to the quail hunting."

WATERFOWL

PEARL RIVER WMA

"Pearl River is about the only area we have in the region that has good waterfowl opportunities on it," Moree said. "This is a youth-only waterfowl hunt, by permit only. We have several managed waterfowl impoundments in the area that offer excellent harvest opportunities. There are about 1,000 acres of flooded hardwoods, sloughs and moist-soil impoundments for youth only."

There are limited wood duck opportunities along creeks, sloughs and beaver ponds on most of the other WMAs where you find water and feed. ■

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NORTHEAST REGION

"We've had a lot of rainfall at the right time in this region, so we have a lot of forage and great vegetation growth as a result," said biologist Nathan Blount of WDWFP. "So we're expecting a good deer hunting season this year."

DEER

DIVIDE SECTION WMA

"I'd focus on **Divide Section** for quality in this region," Blount said. "This WMA seems to produce better-quality bucks, but not a lot of them, due to the size of the area. Last year, the area produced 10 bucks, but it routinely produces an above-average deer every year, with an

exceptional buck ever year, also."

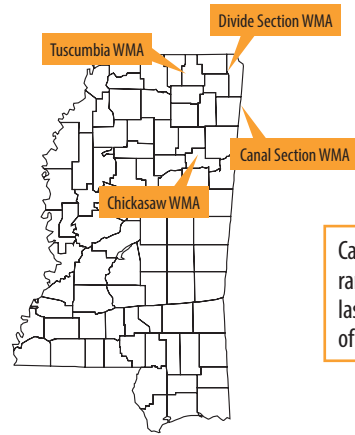
CANAL SECTION WMA

"With 30,000 acres, **Canal Section** has tons of room for the deer to roam and get away from the roads and away from open land," Blount said. "The rut runs in January up here, and some of the better hunting is actually in January."

"A trophy buck up here is anything above 120 B&C, and that's an exceptional deer in this region, but a few are taken every year. They're nothing like the Delta, but there are opportunities to harvest a good buck."

CHICKASAW WMA

"If you're just looking to kill a buck, then



Canal Section WMA ranked No. 2 in Mississippi last season in the number of squirrels harvested.

Chickasaw WMA is a good place to do that," Blount said. "This is the first year we're going back to allowing antlerless deer harvest with a gun in the last two years. The population is doing really well, and the numbers are the best for buck harvest per man-day in over 10 years."

"During the first primitive-weapons season, we're going to allow doe harvest, and hunters will have a great chance at a buck as well."

With 27,000 acres of prime habitat, hunters will have plenty of room to hunt and search for that buck.

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SMALL GAME CANAL SECTION WMA

Canal Section is one of the better WMAs in the state," Blount said. "There is a lot of bottomland hardwoods for mast production, and last year there were 2,200 squirrels harvested here; that was the No. 2 WMA in the state for numbers harvested."

Chickasaw and **Divide Section** also have excellent squirrel hunting.

"Hell Creek and Canal Section are the top rabbit areas in this region," Blount said. "Hell Creek is managed for rabbits as well."

QUAIL DIVIDE SECTION WMA

Divide Section has a good quail population and is one of only a few WMAs in the state that has good quail hunting,"

WATERFOWL TUSCUMBIA/CANAL SECTION WMA

"**Tuscumbia** is still the best waterfowl hunting opportunity in this region," Blount said. "If we get enough rainfall in the WMA, we'll have ducks."

Tuscumbia is located in Alcorn County near Corinth.

"Unit 1 is open to waterfowl hunting, but you'll need a boat to access most of it, and there is a boat ramp there," Blount said. "Hunters usually harvest a mixture of wood ducks and mallards."

"Unit 2 is draw-hunt only, with nine impoundments and nine hunters drawn for each impoundment; they can bring up to three guests per hunter drawn. About half the ducks harvested will be mallards, with some teal, gadwall and pintails mixed in, too."

"**Canal Section** is located in Prentiss, Itawamba and Monroe counties near Fulton and has open-water mallards," Blount said. "If we have cold weather and the ducks come down, hunters will have an excellent chance to harvest ducks here." ■

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Public dove fields are all across Mississippi, but this year, some of the Delta dove hunts will be curtailed because of flooding.

While **Mahannah's** youth hunt has likely been eliminated this year, the youth hunt opportunity at **Black Prairie** is still scheduled for Sept. 2. Planned events before the hunt include skeet

Plenty of public dove fields in the Delta will be closed by flooding, but the MDWFP should still have a number of dove fields available around Mississippi.



shooting and a safety discussion with MDWFP conservation officers. Lunch will be provided. The hunt will begin at 2 p.m. and will conclude at sunset.

This hunt is open to youths 15 years of age and younger; they must be accompanied by a parent or guardian more than 21 years of age during the entire hunt.

Divide Section, Hell Creek, William C. Deviney, Leroy Percy, Muscadine Farms, Tuscumbia, Yockanookany, Charles Ray Nix and Okatibbee WMAs will offer dove hunts again. Hunters should check the WMA season dates and regulations for the specific dates on the MDWFP.com website. ■

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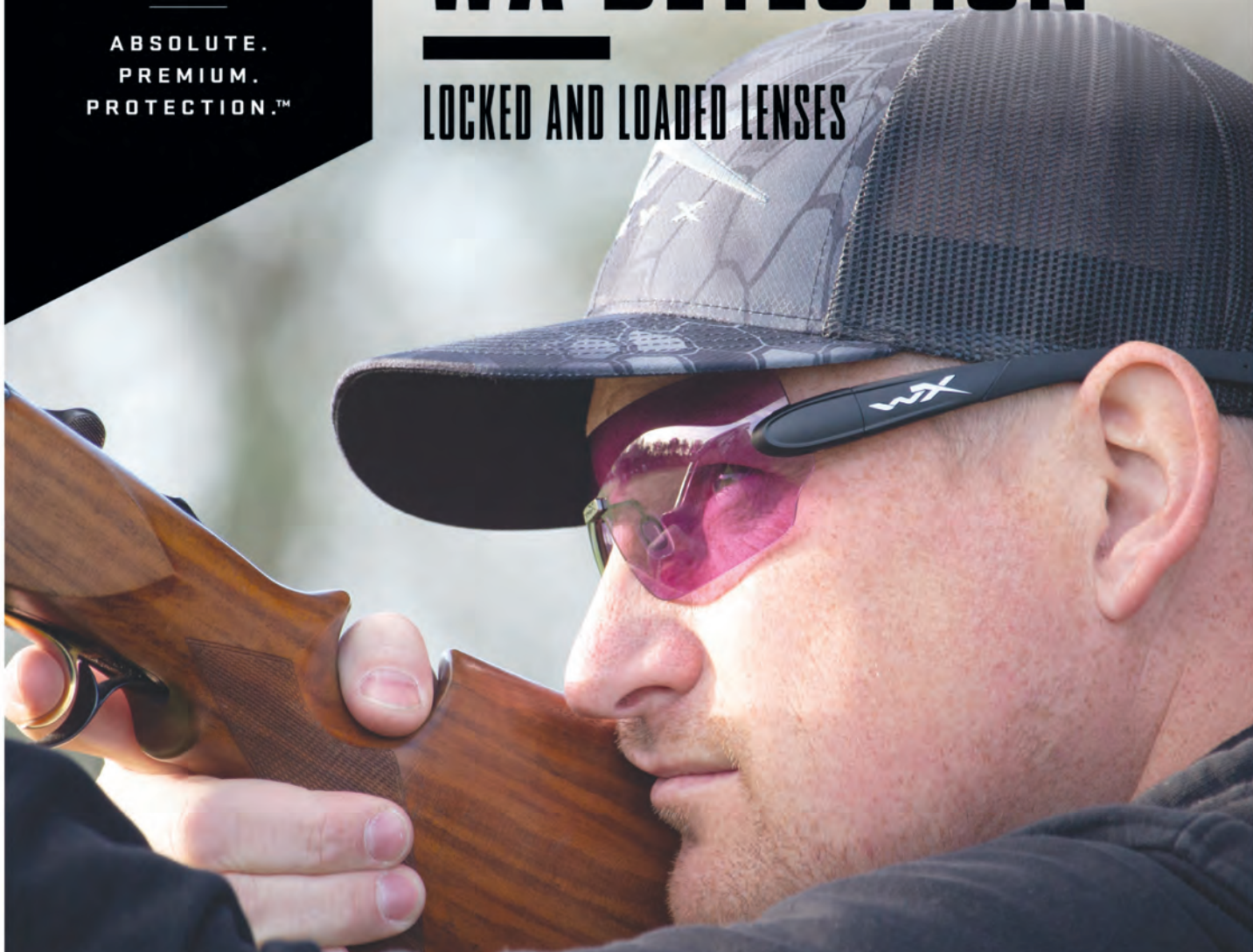
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SOUTHEAST REGION

According to biologist Cody Haynes of WDWFP, the major change for this region will be an increased opportunity for hunters to harvest antlerless deer this year.

"We're going back to what was normal for us, and that is to help control the deer population by harvesting more antlerless deer," he said.

Although this region typically has smaller antlered deer than most of the regions, there are ample opportunities to harvest deer, including trophy bucks, for hunters willing to spend the time and effort both scouting and hunting.

DEER

OLD RIVER WMA

"Old River has quality hunting, with some good deer harvested each year," Haynes said. "This WMA has a pretty big tract of land, but it's not easily accessible with all of the creeks, rivers and sloughs in it. The best access is by boat if you know where to go."

Old River also has more deer hunters, but the area is so large it really doesn't get an undue amount of pressure.

LEAF RIVER WMA

"Leaf River has a higher deer population, and it's the largest deer herd in the region," Haynes said. "Leaf River and Pascagoula WMA are the two biggest in the region also."

"Mature bucks ages 4½ to 5½ years old typically will weigh from 160 to 180 pounds, with the 180-pounders being the exception — but a really good deer here," Haynes said. "Deer that live to be at least six years of age are capable of growing racks from 130 to 140 inches, which is about as good as it gets down here."

SMALL GAME

PASCAGOULA, WARD BAYOU, OLD RIVER, WOLF RIVER, THEODORE MARS WMAS

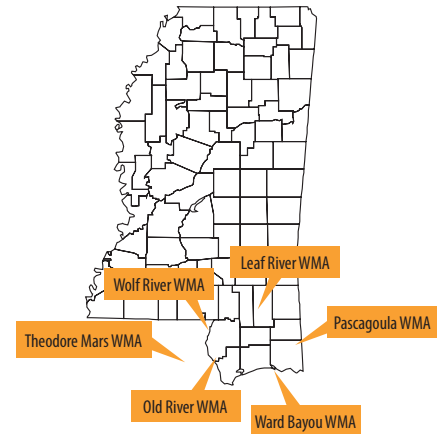
Most the areas in the southeast region have good populations of squirrels but Pascagoula, Ward Bayou and Old River are the most-popular areas. They have a lot of bottomland, hardwood areas, and those are the best areas to concentrate on and hunt.

"Wolf River also has the Bachman squirrels, which is a subspecies of the fox squirrel," Haynes said.

The Bachman squirrels are large squirrels, typically having a reddish color with black coloration on the upper body and head with white on the nose, ears.

"Theodore Mars, near Poplarville is a great place for small game and rabbits in

Theodore Mars WMA is one of Mississippi's better rabbit-hunting WMAs



particular," Haynes said. "And Ward Bayou, near Vancleave, also has some pretty good squirrel hunting."

WATERFOWL

According to Haynes, this is not a great area for waterfowl hunting, but you can harvest wood ducks along the creeks, sloughs, and rivers.

Ward Bayou, Pascagoula River and Old River offer excellent wood duck opportunities, and occasionally, you'll have some dabbling ducks come in also. ■



NORTH DELTA

DEER

O'KEEFE WMA

"This year should be a great year for **O'Keefe**," said biologist Roger Tankesly. "It's been the most-active timber harvest, and that should help the browse and deer hunting. We've planted soybeans and other crops, and habitat-wise, it's great. We normally harvest a couple hundred acres of timber, so bowhunters should have a lot of deer and a chance to harvest a mature buck, 130 inches and up.

"If you kill a buck in the Delta region, it will be a lifetime memory," Tankesly said. "Those bucks have the genetics and habitat to grow big antlers and big bodies. If they get the chance to live to maturity, they are usually outstanding."

O'Keefe offers a little of everything with excellent duck hunting as well as squirrel and rabbit hunting.

SKY LAKE WMA

"There's very good hunting here, with plenty of good habitat," Tankesly said. "We have archery and primitive weapons draw hunting here, and some weeks, hunting pressure is weak. If hunters will get out and hunt the trails and put in the time, there's a good possibility they may have a chance at a trophy buck.

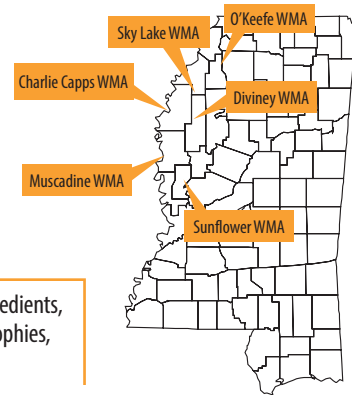
"It seems like every year or so, somebody kills a buck in the 150 to 170 class. Part of the reason the deer live to maturity here is because the area is planted with trees, and they are thick. It's just like O'Keefe but hard to hunt."

WATERFOWL

MUSCADINE/ CHARLIE CAPPS/ DIVINEY WMAS

"**Muscadine, Charlie Capps and Diviney** should provide excellent duck-hunting opportunities if we get the cold weather and ducks," Tankesly said. "We've done a lot of work at Muscadine this year and worked about a third of the area, sprayed a third and the other we left in

Bucks from Mississippi's Delta have all the ingredients, when mixed with a little age, to wind up as trophies, even on Wildlife Management Areas.



Mike Giles

natural, moist-soil habitat. We couldn't complete everything we wanted to do because of the rain, but we were able to plant a lot of the area for ducks, (and) sprayed a lot of the undesirable weeds like copper weed, so that should help as well."

SMALL GAME

SKY LAKE/O'KEEFE/ MUSCADINE/ SUNFLOWER WMAS

"The best areas for rabbit hunting are **Sky Lake, O'Keefe** and **Muscadine**," Tankesly said. "We have the habitat on those areas, and hunters are successful at those places. The forecast for rabbits is good again this year.

Squirrel hunting is always good at **O'Keefe**, and hunters are usually pretty successful.

"**Sunflower** is one of the most-popular squirrel-hunting destinations, when it's open to hunt," Tankesly said. "We will get it open as soon as possible after the flood waters recede, but we're going on eight months under water now, so we don't know when that will happen or how it's affected the squirrel population." ■



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



The latest and hottest tactic for catching trophy catfish from flowing waters like the Mississippi River is called "bumping".

Phillip Gentry

BUMP UP A BIG 'UN

By
Phillip Gentry

Fishing a place with strong current for catfish? There's no better tactic than bumping to put fish in the boat.

Tactics for catching catfish have taken a long and varied path from the days of just casting out lines and waiting for Ol' Whiskerface to come strolling along. From trolling to casting, even getting in the water and noodling, catfish are becoming a more-popular target.

One of the fastest-growing tactics for targeting catfish in moving water is called "bumping." The tactic has also been referred to as slipping, dragging and back-trolling. Two of the kings

of bumping are Nick Dimino and Adam Long of Starkville. In 2013, the duo won the Big Cat Quest National Championship on the Mississippi River with a two-day total of 10 catfish that weighed 239.60 pounds. What tactic did they use? Bumping.

Bumping is most effective in rivers or other areas with heavy current, i.e., prime catfish waters. Large rivers and waterways are the top spots, but tailraces or canals coming out of reservoirs, especially when releasing current, are another option.



Phillip Gentry

The key to bumping for catfish is getting the rig far enough behind the boat so that the bait scoots naturally across the bottom of the river.

Dimino, who fishes both local and national catfish tournaments, describes what makes the tactic so effective.

“Bumping is a really natural presentation. It mimics food washing downcurrent where catfish will lay facing upstream, waiting for something to come by,” he said. “To imitate this, what you do is nose your boat into the current and let the current drift you back, then using the trolling motor; you troll into the current, enough to cut your drift speed in half. The boat is going slower than the current, so the bait is also going slower downriver.”

At first blush, bumping might seem to be a vertical presentation, but this is not the case. Bumping is very similar to trolling the bottom, only in reverse. To get the right presentation angle, the angler lets out more and more line until the bait is nearly sliding across the bottom with the current at a much slower speed than trolling with the current.

continues >>>

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Courtesy Nick Dimino

Nick Dimino catches plenty of big blues and flatheads bumping baits across the bottom.

“You want to disengage the reel to be in free spool, and you just keep letting line out until you get the rig back behind the boat,” Dimino said. “You can tell by the feel of the rod that you are in a comfortable spot, because it will feel like the weight is only bouncing a foot or so at a time.

“Bumping is not a multiple-rod tactic,” he said. “With my partner Adam and I in the boat, we fish one rod each, but it will definitely put some big catfish in the boat.”

Obviously, it takes developing a “feel” for the tactic to be effective.

“When you hit that sweet spot, that’s where you want to be,” he said. “You drop the rig to the bottom and you pick

The bumping rig, perfected

Unlike the perfect country-and-western song, the perfect catfish-bumping rig has nothing to do with trains, mama or prison. But, according to catfish pro David Magness of Hernando, it has a lot to do with better feel of the bottom, tensile strength and hook-setting power.

Here’s a look at the perfect catfish bumping rig, piece by piece:

- **Hawaiian swivel.** This unusual component is used to tie the 65-pound main-line braid to the rig. It has 125-pound breaking strength and serves as a quick release when changing rigs.

- **Interlocked barrel swivel.** Magness orders interlocked swivels from Moorlink. The combo is a 3/0 swivel interlocked with a 2/0 barrel swivel and is preferred over a 3-way swivel; it provides direct in-line contact between the swivel and the weight. Magness said the most-important aspect in bumping is feeling the bottom. The tag end of the smaller swivel goes to the hook.

- **Snaplock swivel.** Also known as a coast lock, Magness uses the snap swivel to attach to the weight line, which varies from 18 to 24 inches in length. A shorter weight line is used for falling water levels, and a longer weight line is used for rising water.

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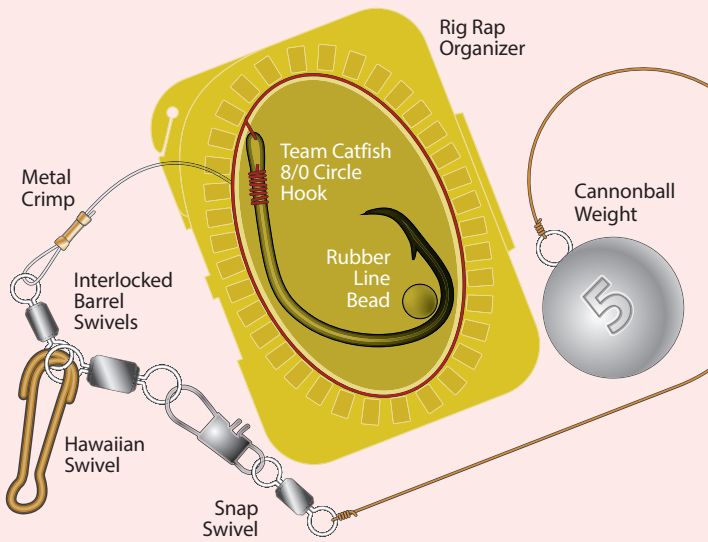
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• **Cannonball weight.** Magness prefers a round cannonball over other weights because it has more surface area. When it makes contact with the bottom, there is only one bump. He said a pyramid or bank sinker sees a lot of use in catfishing circles, but

because the weight falls over when it hits the bottom, there can be a false “double tap” when using an oblong weight. The rule of thumb is more weight for faster current and/or slower boat speed and less weight for slower current or faster speed.

• **Hook.** The only hook Magness uses is an 8/0 Team Catfish Double Action circle hook, which is the exact match for a 7/0 Daiichi circle hook that he snells with 50-pound Hi-Seas Quatro line, crimping the tag end to the barrel swivel with a metal crimp. He starts with a 36-inch section of Hi-Seas leader, and after snelling and crimping, hook leader ends up about 33 inches long. After the snell, he does not glue the line to the hook but does melt the very end with a lighter to make a bead that won’t pull through the hook eye.

• **Organizer.** Magness stores the leader, attached to the remainder of the rig, in a Rig-Rap organizer container. The only detachable component is the weight line, which he ties to the coast lock snap swivel. This allows him to quick change weights and lengths of the weight line based on current fishing conditions.

• **Final note.** One last piece is a rubber bead, which Magness stores in the Rig-Rap, inserting his main line above the Hawaiian swivel. Along with knot protection, the rubber bead catches trash that catches on the line and keeps it from sliding down the rig to the hook and swivel, keeping the rig clean.

it up, as soon as you set it down, you hit the bottom. You only want to lift the weight up about 3 or 4 inches — just enough to get off the bottom and let the current sweep it along and then set it back down. That sort of scoots the bait along the bottom in a very natural manner.”

Getting the hang of bumping is a challenge, but it’s only half of the equation. At some point, a catfish — hopefully a big one — will fall for the bait and eat it. When that happens, the angler needs to be able to distinguish the bite from the bottom and take quick action.

“What most anglers don’t realize is that when the fish bites, the boat is still moving downriver, and the fish that just grabbed your bait is sitting still,” Dimino said. “You need to start taking up slack, quickly. If you’re not taking up slack, you’re making a big loop in the line between you and the fish, and you’re going to miss your fish if you don’t start getting that line tight.”

Dimino stressed that the more horizontal you can get with the presentation, the more effective you will become and the more natural the presentation will look. He discourages anglers from trying to stay vertical, which may seem easier but is not as effective.

“The further I can get the rig back away from the boat, the more bites I get, and the further I can get away from the boat, the better the bites are,” he said. “If the bait is not far enough back, when I’m picking the bait up, it suddenly flies several feet down the river, right on top of a fish or something.”

His final thought on perfecting the tactic is to realize that the riverbed is not uniformly flat beneath the boat. Valleys and hills, holes and debris are all attractive to catfish, but they

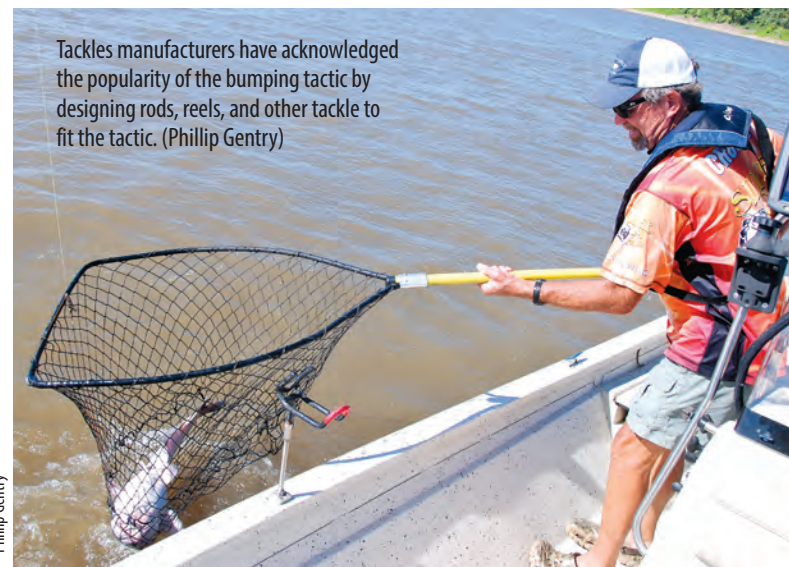
make it tougher on the angler.

“It takes a lot of practice to distinguish the difference between different bites when you’re bumping and bottom structure and cover, because you’ve got contours on the bottom,” he said.

“You’re going up hills; you’re falling down into holes. You’re also bumping over logs and who knows what sitting on the bottom.

“With practice, you learn when to take it out of free spool and pick up some line and when to let more line out in order to keep the bait bumping along naturally.”

continues >>>



Tackles manufacturers have acknowledged the popularity of the bumping tactic by designing rods, reels, and other tackle to fit the tactic. (Phillip Gentry)

Phillip Gentry



Top bumping baits are cut skipjack herring or any other bait that can be found in the river you're fishing.

BUMP UP A BIG 'UN

Dimino's rod of choice is a model made by B'n'M, a specific bumping rod with a split-cork handle and a combination of high-density carbon and fiberglass that is light enough to work all day but strong to horse a good fish out of deep water. Dimino's reels and line are also important. Together, they form the strong and sensitive tool needed to pull big catfish from the depths.

"I use 50-pound main-line braid," he said. "The reason I use 50-pound braid is it's more sensitive. I'm also using a low-profile Quantum PT reel. It's a 300 class reel, so it will hold a pretty good bit of line. You've got to have that paired with a rod you can feel with and still have the backbone it needs."

Finally, it's what's on the front of Dimino's catfish boat that is so critical to success when executing a bumping run on the mighty Mississippi. A 36-volt, high-output trolling motor is mandatory for keeping pace with the river and adjusting boat speed.

"You need a good trolling motor; that's for sure," Dimino said. "I run a 36-volt Minn Kota trolling motor. The 36 volts are what most all of the tournament guys are running now — one with a remote control or remote steering system. Bumping is also hard on a set of batteries, too, because you're fighting the current all day long. I'll run a bank of batteries down by 1 or 2 o'clock every day before the tournament is over." ■



Phillip Gentry is a veteran outdoor writer who catches everything that swims but specializes in crappie, catfish and striped bass.

Phillip Gentry

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Getting off to a good start

By Pete Rogers

Cross your t's and dot your i's as the archery season arrives; the first few days will be your best chance at a buck before he becomes wary.

Finally, after a long layoff, hunters are getting back into the woods, but many who venture into the sweltering deer stands of early archery season are doing so unprepared.

Too many spent the offseason fishing, lounging around and waiting on deer season to open, when the first weeks of the season may offer the best opportunity to get that buck you have been targeting. They are very predictable and easily patterned, so it's time to use your knowledge and skill to put an arrow where it needs to be.

continues >>>

AFTERNOONS OR MORNINGS?

Many bowhunters skip hunting mornings, thinking that afternoons are best early in the season. But the opposite may be true. In places where bow season opens as October arrives, bucks are already putting on their winter coats, and the heat of the afternoon can be oppressive. Cooler, morning temperatures make it not only more comfortable for deer, but also for hunters. Cooler, morning temperatures tend to allow bucks to lazily wander back to their beds. After months of not being under any hunting pressure, a cool morning will often bring bucks past your stand more consistently than afternoon hunts.

continues >>>



The five P's of shooting practice

Ralph Cianciarulo developed a saying when teaching people proper shooting techniques: "Proper Practice Promotes Perfect Placement."

The five P's of practice make shot placement perfect, and when hunting live animals, there is no excuse for bad shot placement.

"When I practice, I want everything to be exactly like I am hunting," he said. "I try and replicate the situation as best I can."

"Too many people go out and sling arrows and have no idea what they may be doing wrong or right. They just go out and shoot."

Cianciarulo stresses that before the season, hunters should

consider the responsibility they have in releasing an arrow and do everything to ensure that the arrow will hit exactly where they want.

Cianciarulo is a strong proponent for life-sized targets.

"Shooting bags is good, but it really does not help with judging animal anatomy and where the arrow will go once it hits the animal," he said, encouraging hunters to get life-sized, 3D targets for practice and to concentrate on proper shot placement. "I tell people to aim through the animal. Shoot for the opposite shoulder. If you do that, you will hit the vitals every time." ■



Shooting practice should have more of an aim than just getting your bow sighted in. Practice in hunting situations.

Hen decoy can add to archery setup

Two of the keys to taking deer with bow and arrow are to get them in range and to make them relaxed once they're there, so they aren't on full alert to jump or duck a shot.

Food is one of the means, and food plots, feeders and food piles are all used with varying degrees of success. But getting them to drop their guard and relax is another problem, the solution of which can result in easy shots at close range without the problem of a nice buck jumping the string. The deer must be confident the spot is safe before dropping its guard.

One way is to add something super wary to the area that a deer will perceive as relaxed. Waterfowl hunters use blue

heron, seagull and crow decoys to convince wary ducks and geese their setup is safe. This idea works well with deer, too. A blue heron decoy may work with water nearby, but almost all deer respond well to a hen turkey decoy.

Many gobbler decoys are strutters, an unnatural posture in the fall. There are jake decoys with folded fans that might work, but a hen or two feeding in the general area, off to the side, will make deer confident the area is safe.

Place the hen decoy about 10 yards from the spot you expect the deer to appear. Getting ready to enter the area, deer may stop to scan the surroundings, and the hen decoy will give most of them the feeling of security they need to make that final, fatal move into range. ■

— Jerry Dilsaver



STOPPING YOUR SCENT

Vicki Cianciarulo, co-host of *Archer's Choice* and *The Choice*, is perhaps the most-accomplished female hunter on television. She has spent an inordinate amount of time in the field during the early season for more than 30 years and said scent control is one of the most-important elements as the season kicks off.

"Being able to keep the deer from smelling you is essential," she said, explaining that she and her husband and co-host, Ralph, have a regimen of laundry, bathing, spraying everything down and wearing the right clothes to keep perspiration at a minimum. She said hunting the wind is more critical in the early season than at any other time.

"Our bodies emit a lot of odors, and while scents and masking agents certainly help, nothing helps better than hunting the wind. You have to pay close attention to the wind, especially during the early season," she said.

NO BUZZ-BUZZ

Other concerns of early season hunting in the South are controlling the throngs of mosquitoes that will feast on you while you are in your stand. Hordes that descend on you in Biblical proportions can make hunting impossible. Nothing has changed hunting more than ThermaCell products. Many hunters will go home before hunting without their ThermaCell mosquito appliance. Being able to sit on stand comfortably and for extended periods is essential for killing bucks. Comfortable hunters are successful hunters. Hunters who are constantly sweating and swatting are not going to be successful.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Last, prepare and practice before the season with your equipment. Too often, bowhunters shelve their bows and arrows until a few weeks before the season opens, then sling a few arrows and consider themselves ready.

Nothing could be further from the truth. You should go through your equipment with a fine-toothed comb every season. Check your cams, cables and string. Servings tend to wear, so replace your "D-loop." Clean your sights and check your rest. Check every bolt and screw on your bow, going through it carefully and tightening everything.

Arrows are next. If they're bent, cracked or splintered, they need replacing, and good ones may need re-fletching. After that, check your peripheral equipment: release aid, broadheads, quivers, etc. It's not a bad idea to carry a spare release aid in your pack.

Employing these tactics and tips can help you be better prepared for early season when the buck of your dreams shows up during the cool of the morning. ■



Pete Rogers is employed with the USDA Wildlife Services and has been a sporting writer and photographer for over a decade. He has a real passion for trapping and enjoys sharing his outdoors experiences with his wife and five children.

The value of a rangefinder

For the past nine months, deer hunters have painfully waited for the opening day of bow season, and they need to be prepared on several different levels to make their opportunities count and get that big buck on the ground and off to the taxidermist.

Hunters have invested countless hours planting food plots, scouting, capturing detailed surveillance photos of deer and developing a foolproof strategy to open the season successfully. And who could forget the hundreds of arrows slung into foam targets at various distances.

Even though many archers can group arrows into golf ball-sized targets from 10 to 40 yards out, knowing the exact distance is a key component to precise and accurate shots. A rangefinder is must-have gear for the archer.

Rangefinders come in various shapes and sizes. Most are capable of producing accurate readings to very long distances, and most come with optical zooms and the works. Extended-range units have been embraced by western varmint or big-game hunters, making 1,000-yard shots across a valley on a neighboring mountaintop a possibility. Sig Sauer makes a Kilo unit that comes equipped with an optical zoom and Lightwave DSP technology to accurately range targets out to two miles.

Bowhunters need accurate readings on a much-smaller scale, typically out to 50 yards. With readings accurate to one yard, an optical zoom isn't as important.

High-end and economical options are available that can fill a bowhunter's needs. The two most-important features archers need to consider is whether units will provide corrected distances based on vertical adjustments, and overall size.

Bowhunters have tons of gear to drag into the tree stand, and a rangefinder doesn't need to be much bigger than palm-sized to get the job done. A unit that can fit inside a shirt pocket is ideal.

Nine out of 10 bowhunters will be hunting from elevated positions, and a standard, horizontal rangefinder will not take into account the vertical distance. Most late-model rangefinders developed for hunting have built-in inclinometers to make sure the range results are true distances that compensate for the elevation from a tree stand or terrain.

Rangefinders may seem like extra gear for some hunters, but not for the avid bowhunter trying to close the deal on a trophy buck. They will eliminate the distance variable to make an accurate sight-pin choice. ■

— Jeff Burluson



Rangefinders are especially important for bowhunters, who need to know the range of their possible shots.



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HISTORIC SOUTH DELTA FLOODING IS HAVING ENORMOUS, NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON WILDLIFE POPULATIONS, AS WELL AS RESIDENTS AGRICULTURE. HOW AND WHEN WILL IT END?

By Bobby Cleveland

Jeff Terry has many sad stories to tell about this year's catastrophic backwater flooding in Mississippi's South Delta and its impact on local residents, farmers and other businesses.

But when he starts talking about how it has hurt wildlife, that's when his descriptions become horrific and he becomes animated.

And there are so many of those stories, like:

"Having to watch two does come into my yard to drop fawns, and then watching them decide which one to abandon so they could at least try to save one of them," Terry said. "After they left, I had to go and remove the carcasses of the two young ones left behind and put them in fields for buzzards."

Or ...

"Watching does birthing fawns in water because there was no other safe place," he said. "Didn't matter anyway, I guess, because the fawns weren't likely to survive anyway. There was nothing for the doe to eat, so sustaining fawns wasn't going to be possible."

Or ...

"You can't travel any road around here — the ones still out of water — and not see dead deer, rabbits, snakes, gators and basically every kind of animal you can think of," he said. "The shoulders of the roads are like mass grave sites for wildlife."

It's a sickening description of an event lasting nine months, which will likely impact wildlife, most notably deer, for years, if not decades.

A TRAGEDY FOR ALL >

A TRAGEDY FOR ALL

Terry has a strong relation to wildlife. A former top guide at Tara Wildlife near Eagle Lake, he operates a farming operation across the road from Eagle Lake on about 900 acres. He had no crops on his land this summer, just a lot of water and a lot of suffering wildlife.

“I’m not the only one who has seen this kind of sadness happening here,” he said. “This has gone on and on, over 550,000 acres, all covered in several feet of water, for over six months. When I tell you it’s terrible or sad or horrible, none of those words, or the combination of them, covers the scope of this tragedy. And that’s what it is, a tragedy, for us and for wildlife.”

Photos and film of starving wildlife can be found on many social-media websites, but they are too depressing to watch for many people, like Lynette Brown of Jackson, who went to the Aug. 2-4 Wildlife Extravaganza to ask Terry and others there just how bad it was.

What she heard, Brown said, was as disgusting as what she’d seen online.

“I dropped several people and groups

from my Facebook because I was getting too emotional from the pictures of the poor wildlife over there,” Brown said.

“I can only take so much of looking at deer with their rib cages pushed hard against their frail bodies, or pictures of the remains of animals that starved to death. I wanted to know just how bad it really was because you never really saw or heard much about it on the news. It’s kind of like a flood that was kept under wraps.”

According to Terry and state agencies, 550,000 acres were flooded at the peak of the high water this summer. As of Aug. 5, about 300,000 acres were still under water. Just because the water was leaving and will eventually be gone, that doesn’t mean wildlife can return to normal.

“No, not by a long shot,” Terry said. “In the first place, I don’t think a lot of the misplaced wildlife will remember where home is. Seriously, think about it. In most years when we flood, it might be a month or two at the most, and deer will go right back from where they came. But this year, it’s been about eight months. This started back during last hunting season

in December; that’s when the mass migration started. Remember, they cut the deer season short because of it.

“These deer have never had to deal with floods that long, and a lot of them have been pushed further off their home range than ever before. I doubt seriously that many of them will know where to go. Another problem is that just because the water will be gone doesn’t mean the lack of food will no longer be an issue. Remember, this water has been here for eight months in most places and six months everywhere.

“There are no grain crops. The lower limbs of trees that can normally provide some food aren’t going to offer any relief. Natural grasses, like Johnson grass, will come back first but they are not what deer are needing. I had a vet come out and tell me he looked at a mature buck that had a 6-pound wad of Johnson grass in its stomach, and that’s what killed it. It’s just another sad story, one of so many.”



OPPOSES SEASON CLOSURE

In late July and August, the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks began to poll hunters asking their thoughts on the coming season, with options from completely eliminating the season this year (or longer) to reducing the season length by between one and three months. Results of the survey are not yet available.

Terry opposes a ban on deer hunting in the South Delta, in any shape or form.

“When I saw that, I immediately began reaching out to the wildlife agency and talking to anybody that would listen, to tell them that eliminating the season would be the biggest mistake they could make, and just make the situation over here worse,” Terry said. “I told them that they waited too long to begin feeding the starving deer in the first place. We asked them and told them we wanted to feed deer over here, but they denied it because the CWD ban on supplemental feeding wouldn’t allow it. When the

social-media pressure from all the news about wildlife dying of starvation got so bad, they allowed it, but it was too late for a lot of deer.

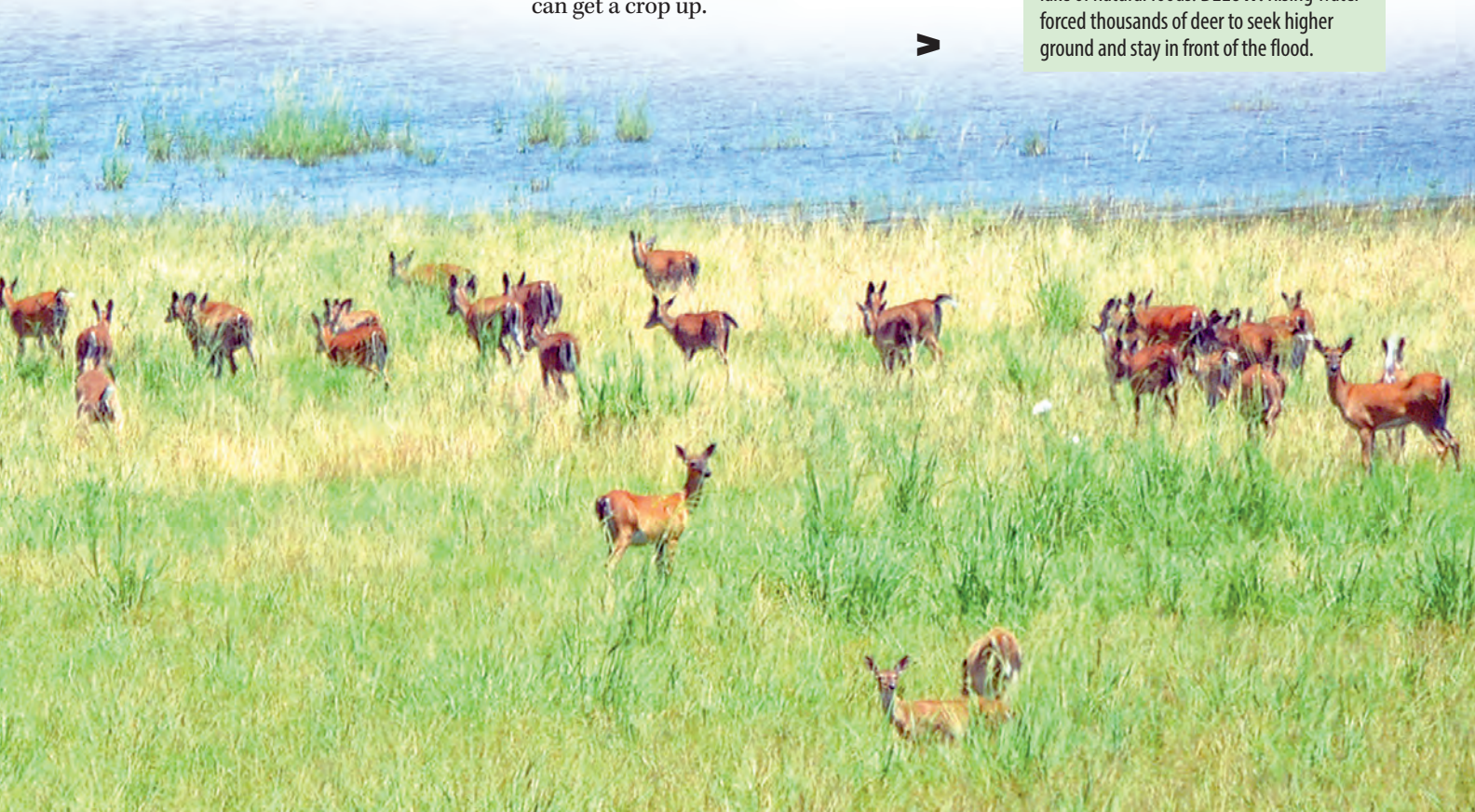
“I believe that not having a deer season over here would just compound the problem. They will starve to death. There will be little to no natural food sources to sustain wildlife, and without a season, a lot of the deer clubs that remain over here will have no reason to plant food plots. They won’t plant, and they won’t be able to put feeders out due to the CWD ban (which will be back in effect in September).”

Terry said that some clubs, especially the bigger “rich-man clubs” and big farmers might plant, but it won’t be enough to feed all the deer. He said he would plant whatever he could, if he can get enough seed.

“They’ve said they are going to stop the supplemental feeding in September,” Terry said. “When they do that, there will be nothing for the deer to eat, because we won’t have had the time to get any plants in. We can’t grow wheat here until the armyworms have gone, and that’s after the first cold front. That will be a month-and-a-half between when the supplemental feeding is stopped until we can get a crop up.



ABOVE: Plenty of whitetail fawns didn’t survive the flooding in the South Delta because does couldn’t care for them due to lake of natural foods. **BELOW:** Rising water forced thousands of deer to seek higher ground and stay in front of the flood.



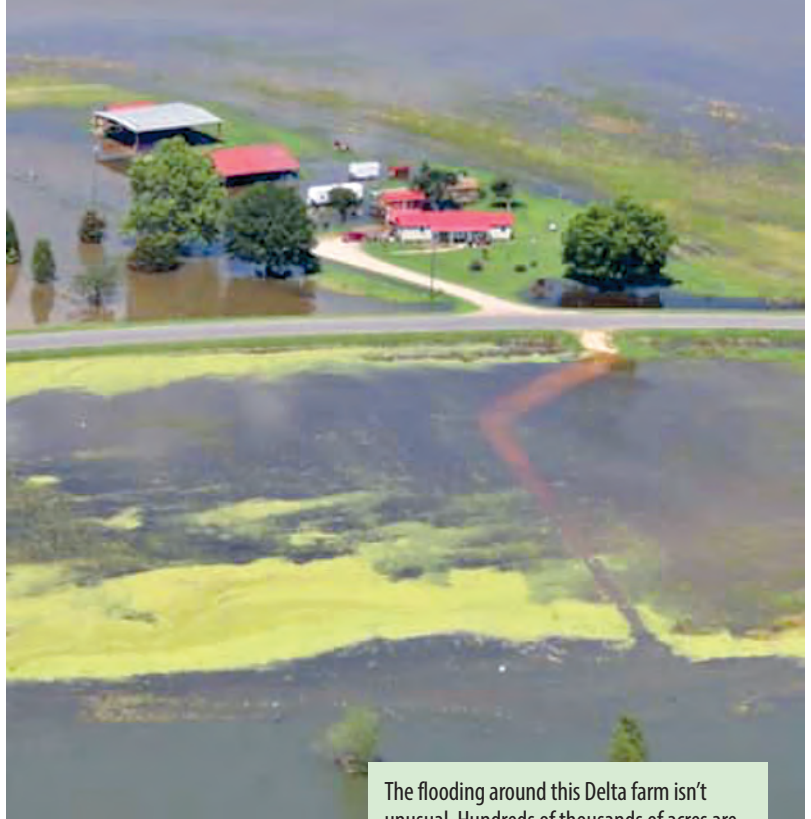
ANYBODY GOT AN ARK?

“I’d much rather be able to plant a field or two in food plots than have a hundred deer all sticking their heads up in the same feeder day after day, so I’m going to plant what I can. I think if farmers like me can get our hands on the seed, we’d all get as many fields planted as we could.”

At the peak of the migration last winter and early spring, when deer were being pushed to high ground where they spent the spring and summer, Terry said it wasn’t unusual for him to see more than 1,000 deer a day pass across his fields toward the levee.

“I quit shooting does on my property before they closed the season, because I was no longer doing it to manage the deer herd on my land,” he said. “I was killing deer that lived somewhere else that were pushed miles from their home by rising water. Other farmers did the same thing, and it continued into this year for the few farmers in protected areas like behind the main levee. They quit shooting deer on depredation permits because there were so many deer it wasn’t going to save the crops.

“No, believe me, it’s a lot better to have a season and give a lot of clubs the reason to plant food plots. That would help the



The flooding around this Delta farm isn’t unusual. Hundreds of thousands of acres are still underwater, with crops yet to be planted.

deer recover.”

Terry believes that about half of the South Delta’s deer herd will survive the flood.



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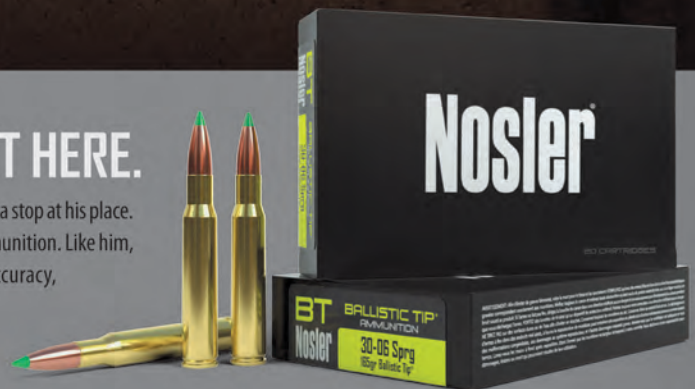
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ANYBODY GOT AN ARK?



Deer aren't the only wildlife displaced by the flooding. This bobcat wound up finding a dry spot to rest on someone's back porch.

That's based on what I've seen," he said. "I think the consensus

is that we had about 25,000 deer in this immediate area based on surveys and counts per acre. That's an estimate. I'd be surprised if we came out of this flood with half that number. Between starvation, low recruitment (abandoned fawns), predation and vehicular impact, I think 50% is a real but very sad estimate."

Terry said that on the main road leaving Eagle Lake, every Sunday afternoon this year, "I bet 25 or more were getting run over (by) people who were leaving their homes and camps here after a weekend of tending to flood problems. People would leave and hit the road, and anybody driving over 25 miles per hour was going to hit one or two. That's how thick the deer were along the roads."

CONTROVERSY MAKES NEWS

In early August, as the water was receding yet still covering hundreds of thousands of acres, the backwater flood was just becoming a daily topic on local news — albeit for the wrong reason.

Victims of the flooding brought their case to the 33rd annual Wildlife Extravaganza at the Trade Mart in Jackson Aug. 2-4.

The event is sponsored annually by the Mississippi Wildlife Federation, a private conservation group long on record as an opponent of the installation of a pumping system that many victims, like Terry, feel would alleviate or at least mitigate backwater flooding.

A week before the Extravaganza, when the

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Federation denied the “Finish the Pumps” group a booth at the show — the Federation said it was not for political reasons — there was an immediate uproar.

Longtime supporters/exhibitors of the Extravaganza, like the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, Pennington Seed, Primos Outdoors, Mississippi Chevrolet Dealers and about 40 to 50 others, withdrew not only from the show but also from being financial supporters or contributors to the Federation.

Andy Gipson, Mississippi’s Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce, which operates the Trade Mart on the state fairgrounds, stepped in, stated his dismay over the situation, and offered Finish the Pumps space in his agency’s booth. Another sponsor, Mississippi Ag, a statewide farm equipment retailer, gave up most of its massive space to the group.

By then, the show had already lost about a quarter of its exhibitors, who forfeited their booth fees to honor the protest, which included a push in the public to boycott the show. Spread by social media, the boycott worked, with estimates of about an 80% reduction in attendance, which has averaged between 25,000 to 30,000 in recent years.

“We didn’t go there to blast the Wildlife Federation for their opposition to the pump; we wanted a booth so that we could explain our position on why the pumps are necessary,” Terry said. “We simply wanted to state our case and make sure people understood exactly what all is involved. There is so much misinformation out there; we simply wanted to state our side.

“A lot of people do not understand the whole situation and why the pumps are necessary. Most did not know that this flood was not caused by the Mississippi River, nor did they understand that the pumps were to be an integral part of a flood project aimed at keeping the river from flowing up into the South Delta. Levees and control structures were built to keep the river out of the South Delta, and they have done a great job at doing that.

“But those same levees and structures keep flooding caused by rain from leaving the South Delta. That’s what the pumps were for; to remove water. Without the pumps, we have a situation that is man-made that has caused flooding over here seven of the last 10 years. This year is just the worse, but until we get the pumps built, we’re going to continue to have this problem.”

And, Terry said, “people and wildlife will continue to suffer.” ■



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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A person wearing camouflage clothing and a cap is climbing a tree using a climbing device. The person is seen from the back, looking towards the right. The tree is thick and has many branches. The background shows a forest with green leaves and a blue sky.

PRESEASON WORK

FOR A GOOD SEASON IN THE FIELD, SCOUTING ISN'T THE ONLY THING YOU NEED TO DO BEFORE HUNTING SEASON ARRIVES. GET YOURSELF IN SHAPE FOR THE EFFORT YOU'LL BE PUTTING FORTH.

By Bill Garbo

Those of us who hunt and recreate in the great outdoors will soon be climbing trees, pulling bow strings, carrying knapsacks and rifles and hiking up and down hill and dale.

If you are not already in "hunting shape", it is not too late to start exercising and training. Just remember, the most-important way to get in shape is to identify your goals and tailor your training to achieve them. For best results, the goals you set need to be relevant to your particular outdoor interests.

Not only will getting yourself in proper shape make you a better, happier and probably more successful hunter, regular physical activity can produce long-term health benefits. Regular exercise and resulting physical fitness helps provide stronger bones and muscles and increases a person's overall energy level. It's important to start slowly and set small achievable goals. It is safer this way and will set you up for success.

IT IS A SERIOUS MATTER >



The author does an exercise called “planks” to enhance overall core strength.

to speed up and intensify their efforts to maintain physical capabilities, but most people tend to slow down and become more sedentary. This is a recipe for disaster when it comes to general health and to the physical abilities necessary to safely and successfully hunt and recreate in the outdoors.

THE BREAKDOWN

Twilbeck breaks down getting properly fit to hunt into four areas of emphasis: endurance, core strength, flexibility and diet — the four pillars of fitness. For an exercise program to promote “functional fitness”, it needs to replicate real-world activity. There is a definite difference between working out

STRENGTH VS. ENDURANCE

Experts recommend:

- For cardiovascular (endurance) training, you should exercise at least 30 minutes per session, five or more days a week.
- Strength training should be performed two to three days a week with an emphasis on core and functional exercises.

to get in “beach shape” and working out to get in “hunting shape.” Getting in beach shape is more about appearance, while getting in hunting shape is all about function and overall condition to achieve better performance in the field. I am far from a bodybuilder, but even at my age, I can still safely climb tree-stand ladders and scale trees. It is all because of my year-round adherence to Twilbeck’s four pillars of fitness.

ENDURANCE >

IT IS A SERIOUS MATTER

We all hear stories or have personal experience with hunters hurting themselves or even dying while in the pursuit of game. Many of these injuries and deaths could have easily been prevented with some preseason preparation. Preparing physically is every bit as essential as planning where to put tree stands and sighting in your bow. Some accidents are inevitable, but often, hunters are just not physically prepared for what is — and let’s not kid ourselves — an activity that can be brutally physical at times. Most of us grew up hunting and enjoying the outdoors, but the vitality of youth all too soon transitions to middle age and then to old age. There is absolutely no reason to slow down or curtail your hunting passion as you age.

Yes indeed, what we are talking about here can be challenging and take some time out of your week, but it will pay off long-term. So, if you are not already exercising regularly, be sure and talk to your family physician before beginning an exercise program.

PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

To get the best advice on just what to do and not do, I consulted a friend, Travis Twilbeck, who has degrees, training, and experience in Exercise Science and Sports Medicine. He helped set up my personal training regimen, which I do for about two hours at least three times per week. It has worked wonders for me physically and overall health-wise. At 71, I can still do most everything outdoors that I ever did as a younger person, because I have been regularly exercising and lifting weights for many years. Regrettably, as people age, they actually need

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ENDURANCE

To create or increase stamina and endurance, start moving. It can be as simple as walking or jogging around your neighborhood. You can go for a hike or climb up flights of stairs carrying a weighted rucksack or belt-pack. You can ride a bicycle or go to a gym and walk or jog on a treadmill.

CORE STRENGTH

When you are hiking from your vehicle or ATV to your hunting spot, you will be carrying all sorts of gear and often wearing heavy clothing and boots. The weight you are carrying over and above your body weight adds up fast when you factor in a rifle or shotgun with ammunition that will alone easily weigh 10 to 15 pounds. For bowhunters, drawing a bow with a proper draw weight for hunting requires upper body strength.

Then, if your hunt is successful, you will be pulling or carrying the weight of a dead animal back to your vehicle or ATV. Core strength training is a vital part of getting fit for hunting.

CARDIO IS IMPORTANT

Cardio training is important. Cardio exercises to improve your stamina and endurance can include:

- Hiking with a weighted pack to simulate field conditions.
- Biking on a stationary or regular bicycle.
- Walking: use sidewalks and paths, especially ones with hills.
- Jogging: if your knees are up to it, this is the old standby.



Bill Garbo

AN EXERCISED LIFE

Travis Twilbeck grew up in Paris, TN, where he began his love of sports and fitness while playing multiple sports in high school.

He went on to receive a bachelor's degree in Kinesiology and Exercise Science from Mississippi College, where he also worked on the athletic training staff. He has since continued to

gain knowledge in the field and obtained a master's degree in Exercise Science, conducting research and specializing in cancer exercise therapy. He is a certified exercise physiologist through the American College of Sports Medicine and holds credentials in Exercise is Medicine.



Travis Twilbeck

Hauling a nice buck to your ATV, truck or camp requires some serious cardiovascular work, especially if you don't have a nice game hauler like this one.



Bill Garbo

Incline bench abdominal crunches help improve core strength.

CORE WORK EXPANDS THE BASE

As we age, most of us tend to neglect core strength training. Consider doing the following:

- Carry heavy objects or wear a weighted rucksack up and down hills and inclines.
- Use an elastic band to increase muscular strength.
- Attach a rope to an old truck tire and drag, pull or flip it to simulate field conditions.
- Use free weights and resistance-machine training at a gym. To build muscle endurance, use lower weights and more repetitions.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

A good healthy diet should be based on:

- Eating lean protein and avoiding processed meats.
- Eating lots of vegetables and fruit.
- Cutting back on foods containing refined sugar.
- Drinking plenty of water. A minimum of 64 ounces (½ gallon) of water per day is recommended for proper body function.

FLEXIBILITY

Stretching to become more flexible goes hand-in-hand with strength training. While hunting, you will be stepping on and off of logs, stumps and rocks, all while humping up and down hills and hollows. You cannot do this safely without core strength, flexibility and balance.

DIET

Diet and exercise are key components of getting in shape. According to some experts, a general rule-of-thumb is that if weight loss is one goal of a getting-fit plan, 75% of your effort should be diet and 25% should be exercise. Also, alcohol consumption, especially the night before a hunt, can be a safety problem as well as cause dehydration, which can seriously reduce a hunter's physical performance. ■



Bill Garbo is a petroleum engineer and avid whitetail hunter from Madison, Miss. He has lived and hunted out west and taken numerous big game species, but hunting big old mature southern whitetail bucks is his favorite pursuit by a country mile.

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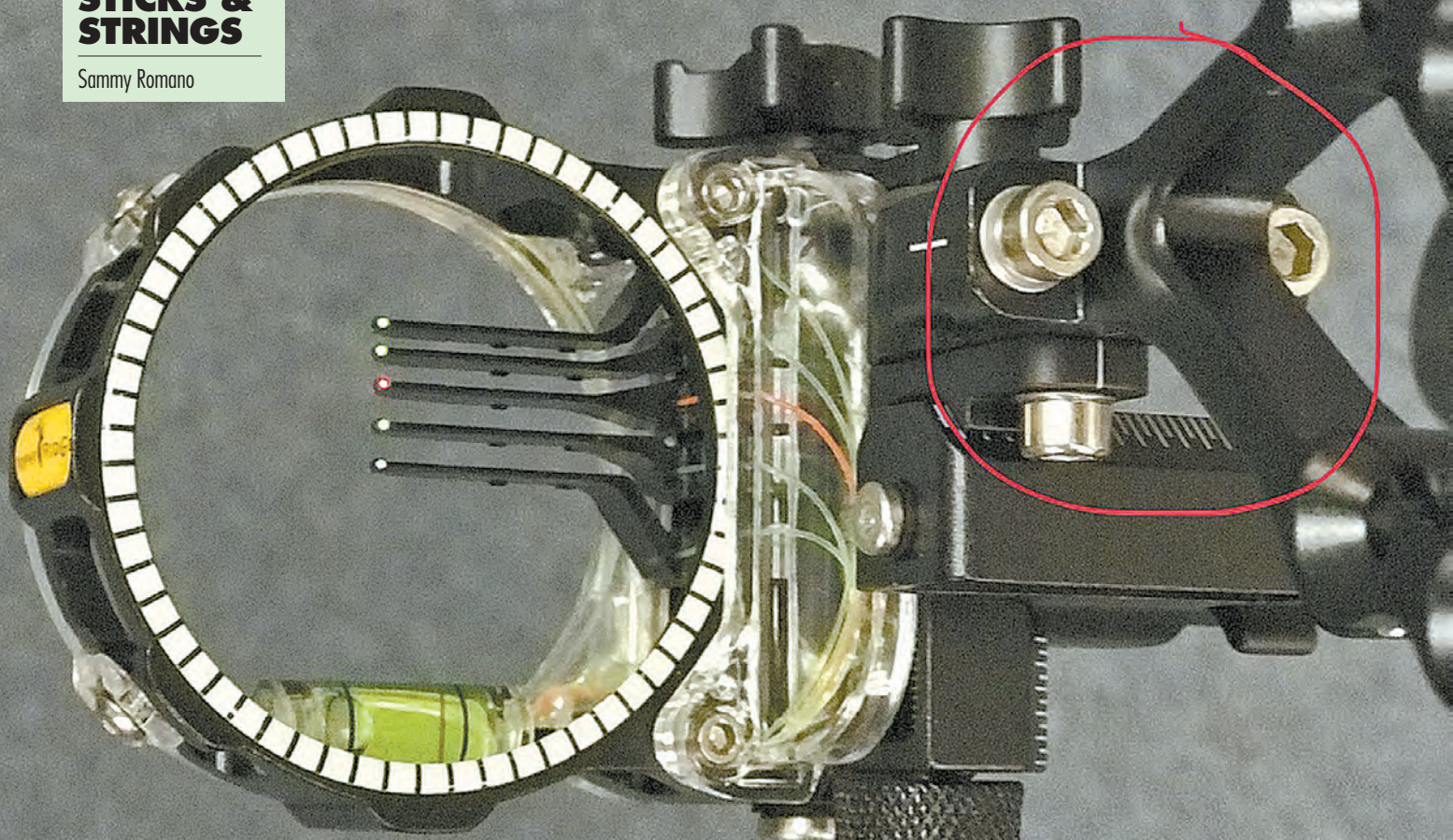
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THE AXIS OF ACCURACY

LEVEL THREE AXES ON YOUR BOW'S SIGHT OR RISK MISSES ON LONGER, ANGLED SHOTS AT DEER

Properly setting up a modern compound bow is a detail-oriented and often-tedious process. In order to obtain maximum accuracy, many hours of setup and tweaking are required.

While today's archers are much more knowledgeable when it comes to tuning their bow for perfect arrow flight, many still don't realize how critical it is to properly level all three axes of their bow's sight. Failure to do so can result in severe misses, especially when shooting at longer distances or at steep angles uphill or downhill.

An axis is an imaginary line around which an object rotates. A compound bow's sight has three axes. It is critical that all three are leveled to obtain the most accuracy possible.

THE FIRST AXIS

The first axis is best described as a line parallel to the ground running from left

to right in front of the bow. This is the least-important axis. This axis is set from the factory on many sights; however, sights that use a scope aperture mounted on a sliding or threaded rod will require this axis to be leveled. Rotate the scope aperture towards or away from you until its face is parallel to the bow's string.

THE SECOND AXIS

The second axis refers to the level of the sight head and the pins. The simplest explanation of this axis is that it runs through the archer's line of sight and rotates like the hands of a clock. This is the axis archers spend the most time leveling, and is definitely the most important. Failure to properly set the second axis will cause the archer to cant the bow when leveling the sight level. This will cause the pins to run diagonally, which will cause arrows to hit left or right of the target at longer distances. This problem will worsen progressively as the distance

of the shot increases. Most of today's better sights offer some type of second axis adjustability. Even if your bow's sight doesn't have an adjustment for the second axis, this can be adjusted by shimming the sight mounting bracket itself.

THE THIRD AXIS

The most-misunderstood and overlooked axis is the third axis. This axis runs top to bottom through the head of the sight, perpendicular to the ground. Picturing the sight head as a door hinge, opening and closing away from and towards the archer, provides the best analogy for the rotation along the third



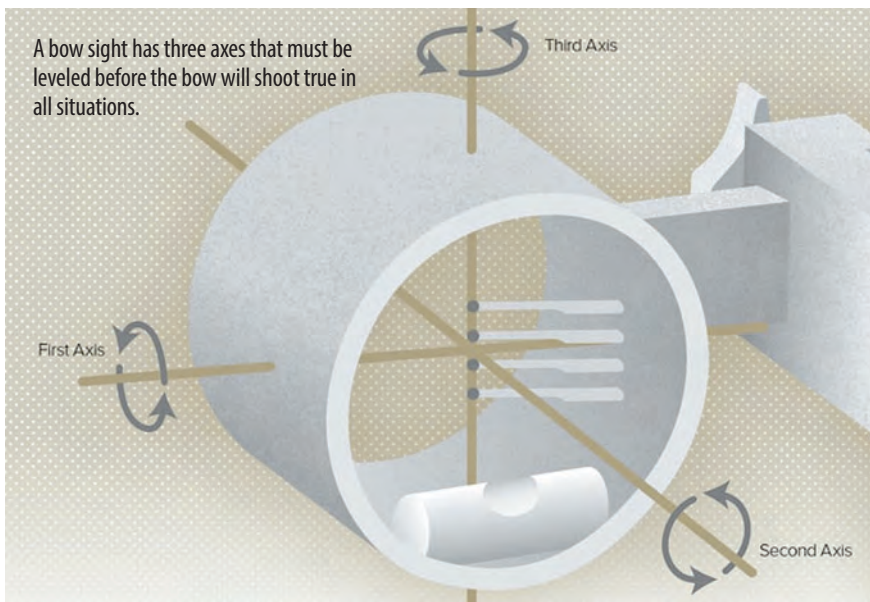
Sammy Romano is a lifelong hunter who has worked in the archery industry for more than 24 years. His expertise includes compounds and crossbows. He can be reached at samboka31@aol.com.

OPPOSITE PAGE: The red circle indicates the adjustment screws used to adjust the second and third axes on your bow's sight.

axis. When taking uphill or downhill shots at angles of 45 degrees or greater and distances longer than 20 yards, this adjustment is absolutely critical to avoid left or right misses. This can make a difference of nearly a foot in windage at 50 yards or a steep angle. Most high-end sights offer third axis adjustability, and I wouldn't purchase one that doesn't.

To properly level the sight's third axis, make sure to level the second axis beforehand. The bow should then be placed in a bow vise. Next, install a temporary level on the bow's riser and level it to match the sight's level. The bow should then be rotated forward while keeping the temporary riser level's bubble centered. If the third axis is not properly adjusted, the sight's level bubble will run off to one side as the angle increases. Adjust the third axis until both the sight level and riser level are centered all the way until the bow's riser is parallel to the ground. Achieving this usually requires trial and error and several adjustments.

Once your bow is properly tuned and all three axes of your sight are properly leveled, the bow is ready to be sighted in. Many times, properly tuned bows that inexplicably shoot to the left or right have sights that weren't properly leveled to begin with.



I hope this explanation of why and how to level sight axes helps some archers who are struggling to dial in their bows. This can be a complicated and somewhat intimidating process, and if you aren't comfortable doing it yourself, as always I recommend bringing your bow to a pro shop that offers this service. Most pro shops offer sight-leveling for a reasonable fee, and they can save valuable time by doing it quickly and properly. Whether you're not sure if your sight is leveled, or if you know it isn't, have this done today to get the most from your bow setup. ■

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A young man with a beard and blue eyes, wearing a blue Lowrance baseball cap and a blue hoodie with 'LOWRANCE' printed on it, is smiling and holding a large spotted bass. He is on a boat, with a fishing rod visible. The background shows a body of water and trees. The text 'Summer spots for spots?' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Summer spots for spots?

If there's current, there's a place in any Mississippi waters for the pugnacious spotted bass.

By David Hawkins

Don Kibler

Spotted bass demand respect. They live in a world dominated by larger fish and have no trouble holding their own. A good one will weigh a couple of pounds, while a really nice one will tip the scales at 4 pounds. The current Mississippi record, which has stood since 1975, is 8 pounds, 2 ounces, showing what a rarity that was.

After a long, hot summer, most outdoorsmen are looking forward to sitting in the cool shade of a tree as fall approaches and enjoying a change of pace. Don't make that mistake; it's a perfect time to chase spots.

continues >>>

Spotted bass are a cousin of largemouths and are present in many Mississippi waters.

Summer spots for spots?

According to Tom Holman, a fisheries biologist with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, spotted bass, also known as Kentucky bass, are river fish, favoring current over slack water. They are found in all of the river systems from Tennessee to the Gulf Coast, and creeks and rivers are a popular destination for anglers targeting spots. Chasing them in small boats with fly tackle is a bigger challenge than it might seem.

“All of the spots I catch are hooked while I am fishing for largemouths,” said Chuck Wade, a bass fisherman from Forest. “They do seem more prevalent up the Pearl River above (Ross Barnett), not so much in the main lake. While I don’t fish just for spots, I certainly welcome the bite. I caught one once that maybe weighed 1½ pounds but fought like a 4-pound bigmouth. They really put up a fight, and where one is caught, others seem to be nearby.”

Tennessee has separate creel and length limits for spotted bass; however, in Mississippi, a bass is a bass. According to Holman, spotted bass and largemouths are counted and measured the same. While largemouths are regularly stocked in many lakes and impoundments, spots are left to their own devices. A poor spawn could result in a gap in an age class.

According to the *Inland Fisheries of Mississippi*, the feeding habits of spotted bass may somewhat mimic that of wild trout, with the fish in shallow environs hiding or resting below stumps or stream obstructions in wait for prey. In deeper rivers, they can be found on the deeper inside edge of a curve.

continues >>>



Spotted bass are at home in Mississippi streams, often taking up residence in areas around and below shoals.

How long is the jaw? Tell a spot for sure

Spotted bass are a unique animal. They resemble largemouth bass only in a general sense. Largemouths, smallmouths and spots are all bass, but that's where the similarity ends.

Among other defining characteristics, the jaw of the spotted bass does not project rearward past the eye. On a largemouth, the jaw passes the eye. There are some unique scale patterns and subtle differences in the shape, size and number of spines in the spot's fins, but trust a man who can't remember a one-item grocery list; if the jaw doesn't extend past the eye, it's a spot.

According to biologists, all spotted bass have a toothy tongue patch to help hold prey before swallowing. This is not a definite proof of species, as approximately 30% of largemouths have these patches. Smallmouths do not have tongue patches.

The scale pattern of a spotted bass below the lateral line will consist of definite rows of spots, but this can also be found in some largemouth bass.

Identifying a spotted bass can be tricky, but the jaw-to-eye relationship, combined with coloration and tongue patch, may be all you need to know. ■



David Hawkins

Can you easily tell a largemouth (top) from a spotted bass (below)? If the lower jaw extends past the fish's eye, it's a largemouth.

Summer spots for spots?

When it comes to bait, nothing special is needed for targeting spots. Lighter tackle will result in good action when using ¼- and ½-ounce offerings. On a recent float trip down the Leaf River, a ¾-ounce Booyah spinnerbait proved to be the right medicine. A black/silver Rapala was a productive lure on a trip down the Chunky River. A Bill Dance Shad got hammered on the Pearl River at the Low Head Dam, as did a Booyah square-bill crankbait in a bluegill pattern.

When a modified craw trailer was added to a Strike King KVD weedless rattle jig, we thought the spots would go crazy. But that was until a pair of bass double-teamed a River2sea Whopper Plopper where the tailrace of the Ross Barnett spillway becomes the Pearl River again.

A junebug-colored french fry worm wiggled wacky style and weedless suspended 18 to 24 inches under a popping cork was the ticket around trees that had fallen off the banks and into the water; don't be timid about trying this rig with a bit more weight and a stout line and rod. Between the Low Head and MS 43, we caught catfish, gar, bowfin and bass with the wacky rig under a float.

The bottom line is, if it catches bass, it's the right bait. So far this summer, we have found them just where the experts say to look: in current and around rocks, including a personal-best 5-pound fish on a green Scum frog dragged through grass near Ratliff Ferry.

Mike Giles of Meridian has chased bass across the waters of east Mississippi, and one of his favorite haunts is the spot where Okatibbee Creek joins the Chunky River to form the Chickasawhay River near Emprise in Clarke County. Fishing from a kayak, Giles is so familiar with the spotted bass there that they send each other Christmas cards.

"One of the keys to fishing success on the Chunky, or any other river for that matter, is knowing when the river is right," Giles said. "On the Chunky, that means around 2.5 on the reporting gage. Lower than 2 feet will require dragging your boat across a lot of shallows, and over 3 feet may be too swift, requiring more time controlling the boat than fishing. A very slow rise or fall is okay. Rainstorms will cause the river to rise rapidly, but then it will fall rapidly."

Giles keeps a couple of rods handy when floating the Chunky: an ultralight rigged with a Beetle Spin and a heavier rod for bigger offerings. A crawfish-colored Beetle Spin is ideal for spots but also catches the river's popular redbreast sunfish.

"Just about every bass bait I'd throw in a lake, I'll throw in the river," Giles said. "Bass Pro (Shops) has a bait called a Sassy Sally that has the action spotted bass like. It comes in several sizes, but the 4½-inch is

The Chunky River gave up this spot on an early morning float trip.

Top streams for spotted bass

Just about every stream in Mississippi hosts a fishable population of native spotted bass.

Before lakes and reservoirs dotted the landscape, anglers used live bait and cane poles to catch them from the flowing waters. They were here when the settlers came and have never needed restocking.

Some of the more-popular venues for spotted bass are listed below. Most maps show boat ramps for fishermen planning a float trip by kayak or canoe, wading and casting fly tackle as well as fishing from the watercraft. There are plenty of options.

In mid-Mississippi, the Pearl, Strong and Chunky rivers are top picks. A bit farther south, the Chickasawhay, Leaf and Bowie rivers offer endless opportunities. Round out the southward trek with the Jourdan River and Black Creek, Little Biloxi and Pascagoula, and your fall will be filled with fantastic fishing.

To the north, Bear Creek, the Coldwater River, the entire Tenn-Tom Lake system and the lazy Luxaphila will keep you casting for the spunky little spotted bass there. And these are just starters. If it is a river system in the Magnolia State, it holds spotted bass. ■



David Hawkins

my favorite. Crawfish color is my favorite.”

When not constrained by time, Giles will park his kayak in a place that allows him to fish across water below a shoal. During the cool of the day, the whole stream should be targeted; during the heat of the day, those areas cooled by shade will likely hold the fish.

David Frazier of Cleveland has waded the cool, clear waters of many Mississippi creeks and streams casting his hand-tied creations for spotted bass. He likes to fish when the weather gets warm enough to shed the waders.

“Allow the water to tell you how to fish the current and what bait to use,” Frazier said. “Cast a dry fly above the current and allow it to float through the swift water just as a live bug would. If the spots are holding where the fast water slows, they will have to hit the bait. If streamer is your choice, either strip it through the fast water in the upstream direction or rip it across the current below a shoal”

Frazier uses a 4- to 5-weight rod and line for the 2- to 3-pound spotted bass in Mississippi waters. Woolly Boogers are a good pattern; so are streamers and frog patterns. Anglers will also be wise to have an assortment of popping bugs. ■



Spotted bass won't hit just a variety of lures, but also a variety of flies: popping bugs, streamers and terrestrials.

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David Hawkins is a freelance writer living in Forest, Miss. He can be reached at hawkins2209@att.net.



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YAMAHA

LUNKER LINES

Paul Elias

Paul Elias likes to fish a bladed jig in several different areas of the lake this time of year. INSET: Elias likes a bladed jig with a crawfish trailer.

FISH BOGUE HOMA IN SEPTEMBER

WITH GRASS DISAPPEARING, YOU CAN CAST TO PLACES YOU ONLY DREAMED ABOUT MONTHS AGO

September is a changing month for bass. They will start moving from their summer homes in creek channels to more open, shallow water and into the grass at the middle and end of September. Bass always follow the buffet of baitfish; the baitfish will move first.

September is also the month that grass begins to die and break up at Lake Bogue Homa, allowing fishermen to put their lures where they may not have been able to all summer.

EARLY SEPTEMBER

During early September, I'll fish the northeastern side of the lake, which is a big flat about 3 to 6 feet deep, with small,

narrow channels running through it and large cypress stumps along the edges. I'll key on cypress stumps right on the edges of the channels, because their root systems will be exposed, and the bass can hide in them. The water should be fairly clear. I'll pitch a 1/8-ounce shaky head jig with a junebug-colored Mann's Jelly Bug, on a FX 7-foot-4, medium-action custom spinning rod spooled with 15-pound bass braid and a 10-pound leader of White Peacock fluorocarbon, casting along the edges of those little channels.

BLADED JIGS

I'll fish two, 7-foot-1 FX medium-heavy custom rods with Bruin 7.5:1 reels spooled with 20-pound fluorocarbon.



Each rod will have different colors of bladed jigs — a chartreuse/white with a white trailer and a black/blue jig with a black/blue craw trailer. I'll fish the north-



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.

western side of the lake down the edge of the vegetation that also has cypress trees out in the water. I'll throw the bladed jig into the small lanes and pockets in the vegetation and use a medium retrieve.

Once I get a bite, I'll Power Pole down to fish there. In September, the bass will be ganging up in certain parts of the vegetation. When you catch a bass, you'll probably catch a couple more in that same are.

JELLY BUG FOLLOWS

If the bass misses or short-strikes the bladed jig, I'll follow up with a junebug-colored Mann's Jelly Bug on a 1/8-ounce shaky head jig. I'll have a FX 7-foot-4 medium-action custom spinning rod spooled with 15-pound braid and a 10-pound fluorocarbon leader close by. I quickly can grab that rod and cast to the exact spot where the bass has missed the bladed jig. I'll use a shaky head jighead instead of a Senko-type worm or a FreeFall worm because I want the Jelly Bug to break through vegetation and quickly fall to the bottom.

FROG 'EM

Then, I'll fish a white Mann's Super Frog on a medium-heavy, 7-foot-6 FX custom rod with a Bruin ELS 8:1 reel with 50-pound braid. I'll cast the Super Frog into the thicker grass and other vegetation — anywhere I see a bass moving through the grass — a mixture of lily pads, coontail moss, hyacinths and other aquatic vegetation, or where I hear baitfish smacking. I like a white frog due to the shad's migration back into the shallow water, and the bass keying in on shad more than bluegills.

FISH THE TREES

Although I'm mentioning various techniques in an order, that's not exactly how I'll always be fishing. When I'm fishing a frog, if I'm close to cypress trees standing in the water. I'll put down the frog and pick up the bladed jig and fish it all around the cypress trees and their knees. Next, I'll skip and/



Elias considers the FreeFall worm a great follow-up bait, if the bass misses your bladed jig.

or pitch a black/blue-flake Mann's FreeFall worm up close to the cypress trunks and the knees and let it fall. I'll fish a heavy action 7-foot-1 FX custom rod and reel spooled with 26-pound fluorocarbon, because of the vegetation growing around the trees. Once I hook a bass around the trees, that fish may be hard to pull away from the tree, roots and the knees without the stronger line.

WHAT YOU CATCH

In a typical day of fishing, I expect to catch 15 to 20 bass. Bogue Homa has a 15-inch size limit, and about half my catch will be shorter than the limit. But the other half of my September catch will be some very nice bass, with the possibility of even a 5- or 8-pound fish. Bogue Homa holds some big bass, so you'll catch bass weighing from 1 to 8 or 9 pounds there in September. ■



BOGUE HOMA POTENTIAL:

There's some nice sized bass to be caught in Bogue Homa this month, while most people are getting ready for bow season.

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GETTIN' FRESH

Hal Schramm

Ability to detect sounds provides bass real-time directional information about their environment that is little affected by water clarity or water movement.

BASS HEARING

HOW THEY HEAR, WHAT THEY HEAR AND WHAT THEY DON'T HEAR — AND WHY IT MATTERS

Water is an effective medium for sound transmission, and fish have a dual-receptor hearing system that equips them to detect and use sounds in water to their benefit. Research on production and effects of sounds in fish are ramping up, but information useful to anglers remains elusive.

HOW FISH HEAR

Fish translate sound waves into information the same way humans do — by activating nerve cells lining the inner ear. In humans, the bones of the middle ear (the ossicles) mechanically transfer movement of the ear drum to the inner ear that stimulate nerves. Fish lack an outer

and middle ear, but they don't need them because living in an acoustic medium (water) and being largely made of water allows the sound waves to pass readily to the inner ear. Here, the sound waves cause the ear bones (otoliths) to vibrate and stimulate the inner ear nerves.

Some fish, like minnows and catfish, have bones that convey the vibrations of the swim bladder to the inner ear. The swim bladder functions as an ear drum, and the bones — called the Weberian apparatus — function like the human middle ear.

Fish also hear via the lateral line system, which detects low-frequency sounds, actually water movement. The lateral line is often conspicuous as a line of pored scales from head to tail on the

fish's flank. Although rarely visible, the lateral line is well developed on the head of the fish.

WHAT FISH HEAR

Sound detection is an effective sense for bass detecting their environment. Sound is directional, and sound waves travel almost five times faster and much further in water than in air. Although traveling slower in water than light,



Hal Schramm is an avid angler and veteran fisheries biologist.

sound moves through clear and muddy water and transmits much further and faster than chemicals that can trigger feeding responses via smell and taste. Hearing provides real-time environmental information.

While fish with a Weberian apparatus hear sound with frequencies up to 13,000 cycles per second (also called Hertz, abbreviated Hz), peak hearing of largemouth bass, according to unpublished data cited in Dr. Keith Jones' book *Knowing Bass*, is around 100 Hz, with little sound detection above 600 Hz. For comparison, humans hear sounds ranging from 20 to 20,000 Hz.

So that leads to the key question for using sound to catch a bass: can bass hear it? With a hearing range restricted to the lower 5% of the angler's range, what you hear may not be what the bass hears.

SOUND PRODUCTION

With the exception of a dead worm or minnow on a hook under a bobber, all lures produce sounds that bass can hear with the inner ear or the lateral line. Topwaters splash, spit and gurgle; spinner blades move water, and any retrieved plug, even a solid, wooden one, moves water and generates clicks and rattles from attached hooks. These low frequency sounds can be detected by the lateral line and the inner ear.

The 1960s and 1970s ushered in "rattling baits" — molded plastic lures with internal sound chambers containing one or more metal rattles. Manufacturers claimed some version of "baitfish mimicking sound", and bass anglers reported catch rates far surpassing catches on most "silent" baits. The market broadened, and virtually all lure companies now make noisy lures.

More recently, fishing technology hit a new plateau with lures with sound-emitting chips and Hydrowave™ underwater sound systems that replicate baitfish sounds.

THE RIGHT SOUND

While sound production is a big deal for anglers and the sportfishing industry, the available — and very limited — science says bass can't hear the high-frequency rattles and the synthesized baitfish sounds. The dominant frequency — the frequency of the sound spectrum that carries the higher energy level — of these lures and sound-production systems is beyond the bass' detection frequency.

But according to information shared by Steve Quinn, a fisheries biologist, avid bass angler and writer, the dominant frequency of the sound made by a school of shad is also well beyond the supposed detection range of largemouth bass.

While much of the information I share in this column is an attempt to share known fish biology information so anglers can better understand the fish they try to catch, I think the biological knowledge of sound detection has a long way to go to provide information useful to anglers and lure and sound-production system manufacturers. For starters, the sound-frequency spectrum that largemouth bass and other sportfish can detect needs to be assessed or reassessed. A second question is whether the dominant frequency is predictive of behaviors such as feeding or striking a lure. Bass eat a lot of shad, even though the dominant frequency of sound produced by a school of shad is not detectable by bass. ■



THE EARS HAVE IT:

The inner ear of this 8-pound largemouth bass is located just behind the eye, near the center of the head. The lateral line, which also detects very low frequency sounds, is visible arching above the black lateral blotches.





When they're cooling it deep in the shade in the peak of the summer heat, sometimes it takes a big bait to get a big bass to bite.

BIG WORM BIG BASS

By Bobby Cleveland

Dan Smith called his shot, spotting the log he'd been searching for over an hour, on the deep part of a flat in the 30-acre lake.

"Ten-inch worm, at the base of that log, biggest bass of the day," Smith said. "Want to put five dollars on it?"

Cost me a Lincoln, but boy, was it worth it.

Smith put down his crankbait rod and grabbed the one he'd spent at least 15 minutes rigging about an hour earlier. He found the rod, found the ¼-ounce tungsten weights and 5/0 hook fast enough, but it took him a while to find the bag holding the only big worm in the boat.

"I've been saving this worm for this shot, this log," he said. "Now, watch this magic."

Smith's cast was appropriate, sailing several yards past where it appeared the root wad of the old tree would be. The weight carried the big worm to the bottom, and the line made an obvious twitch when it stopped.

With a quick lift of the rod tip, Smith hopped the worm toward the tree and watched as the line settled toward the bottom....

"There it is; she's on it," he yelled, reeling up the slack before rocking his 18-foot aluminum boat with the violent hookset.

His rod doubled over as the big fish swam right, unexpectedly leaving the security of the roots to race through open water. It was the fish's big mistake. Smith had little trouble coaxing it to the boat; he had an even easier time boasting, bragging and then taking my money.

"One of my dad's all-time favorites was throwing a giant worm around a tree



A big worm means a big meal to a big bass, and sometimes, that's what it takes late in summer.

in the heat of the summer," Smith said. "He taught me that trick, I guess, about 40 years ago, and I've been relying on it ever since, especially in small, shallow lakes where the bass have little escape from the heat.

"His opinion — and I agree wholeheartedly — is that this time of the year, in 90-plus-degree water, bass are finicky and are not going to spend a lot of energy to eat something unless it's big enough that it's worth its while. I bet I could have sat here and thrown a crankbait, spinnerbait or anything fast like that for an hour and never coaxed a bite. She took that worm on the first offer."

It's an old trick for Smith, but hardly a secret. It's the same kind of pattern fishermen all over the south use in the summer to get a much-needed bite during the heat of the summer.

Smith carefully unhooked the fish, not wanting to do further damage to the soft-plastic worm in a black with green glitter pattern.

"I'm going after another big fish, and I'm sorry, but that's the only big one I got," he said. "There's another big tree right on the edge of the drop up here about 50 yards."

continues >>>

A photograph of a pontoon boat on a lake. The boat is white with blue and black accents and has a Tohatsu outboard motor. A man, a woman, and a child are on board. The boat has "Sweet" written on its side. The Tohatsu logo is overlaid in the upper right, and the Emmett's Marine logo is overlaid in the lower right.

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As Smith used the trolling motor to approach the target, I was busy in the back in my bag of soft plastics. When he spotted the tree and pointed it out, my 11-inch red shad worm zoomed past his head and landed perfectly in the water. A few minutes later, I had his fish's twin sister in my hands in the back of the boat. "Go ahead Dan, throw it out there," I said. "And, if you lose it, don't worry. I got a whole bag of them back here, as a matter of fact, two including that same color. They're \$5, though." ■

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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LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman



An angler shows a speckled trout hooked and landed on a Pencil Popper.

'PUNY' PENCIL POPPERS

A Jacksonville, Fla., fisherman has been smiling ear to ear ever since Cotton Cordell Lures downsized one of his favorite artificial lures for speckled trout: the Pencil Popper.

"They always had a real big one. It was fine for tarpon or big (jack crevalle), but a little too big for trout and redfish," Chris Holleman said.

Holleman was talking about the 7-inch Pencil Popper, a 2-ounce topwater known, at least in and around Florida, for putting fish in the boat. Ditto for the 6-inch, 1-ounce model.

Holleman, a Cotton Cordell pro staffer, had clamored for years for an even smaller model and got it when the artificial lure manufacturer recently introduced the C64, a 4½-inch, ¾-ounce Pencil Popper. It's been game-on ever since and bad news for speckled trout, redfish, stripers, bass, musky and especially snook.

"Snook require a more durable lure like this one. It's likely to become a favorite among snook enthusiasts," Holleman said.

MAKE LONG CASTS

There are multiple reasons for its success, he said.

"Basically, in my opinion, it's the longest-casting, topwater walk-the-dog style lure that there is. It's very well-balanced. It seems to pick out the big trout in the bunch," Holleman said.

How does he know? Holleman, 48, is a 13-year veteran game warden for the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission who also guides part-time and loves to throw the smaller, silver/black back Pencil Popper into mullet milling on the surface along the St. John's River, the Intracoastal Waterway and all of its tributaries.

"Typically, where I throw it is in the middle of schools of mullets already getting crashed by trout," he said. "Fish seem to pick that out among all those mullet. Oh, yeah."

Pencil Poppers are notoriously effective as walk-the-dog-type topwaters. They have something else going for them, too, he points out, noting that the concave mouth catches and throws water to cre-

ate a disturbance on the surface.

WALKER/POPPER

"We can walk it, but it also has a concave head and pops, too," Holleman said.

Pencil Poppers sport solid hardware, including black nickel No. 2 treble hooks and strong split-rings. Tarpon are known to straighten hooks and split-rings on some walk-the-dog topwaters, but not the Pencil Popper, he said.

For sure, it's a go-to artificial lure for Holleman, who specializes in light-tackle inshore fishing trips for his Blue Cyclone Inland Charters.

"I particularly like to throw it over the top of oyster mounds as the tide is falling, right before they uncover, and then right when they first cover up (on a rising tide). Then, we have a lot of marsh grass islands to fish. It also works well around spoil outlets," he said.



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.

His favorite time to coax speckled trout into biting is early in the morning or as the sun goes down and, he said, at night, when he catches bigger trout around spoil islands and other structure.

"I do a lot of night fishing. They're going to find that lure," he said.

Pencil Poppers have given Holleman and others plenty of thrills. He used to throw a bone Zara Spook religiously until he got his hands on the Pencil Poppers.

The 4½-inch Pencil Poppers apparently are gaining more and more popularity along the Florida coast.

MORE THAN A TROUT LURE

"They've always been well known for striped bass fishing. Now that we've got one, I'm sure the word will get out," he said.

"It's a great lure if you get into big jack crevalle. It's sturdy, and it holds up,"

For more information on the C64 Pencil Popper and other Cotton Cordell Lures, visit www.CottonCordellLures.com. ■



Fishermen now have three sizes of Pencil Poppers to choose from (top to bottom): 4½, 6 and 7 inches.



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SPECKLED TRUTH

Chris Bush

One advantage of rigging a soft-plastic jerkbait with a nose hook? Most fish are hooked solidly in the corner of the jaw.

NOSE-HOOKED SOFT JERKBAITS

TRY THIS DIFFERENT WAY TO RIG POPULAR BAITS
WHEN FISHING GETS TOUGH

Christopher Bush

Chances are, wherever you are, you are fishing in the month synonymous with transition: September. Aside from fish being unpredictable, weather conditions provide a sneak preview of an imminent fall season.

In all honesty, trophy trout are hard to come by this month, but 30 days stand between you and, in my opinion, 60 days of the most-productive fishing of the year. To prepare for that time, I want to discuss a technique that may provide tremendous value when water temperatures begin their descent: nose-rigged soft-plastic jerkbaits.

About three years ago, I was introduced to this technique by a good friend and angler, Kyle Perry. Like me, Kyle is an officer in the U.S. Air Force and, as a result, fishes different parts of the United States. Right now, he's in northern California, where he regularly fishes the California Delta and Lake Berryessa for remarkably large bass. When he heard about this technique, he was quick to pass it

on so I could discover its potential on the inshore side of things. Simply put, it didn't disappoint.

SO WHAT IS IT?

For all intent and purposes, it's a modernized Banjo Minnow — for those of you who remember the lure sold on TV several years ago. The rig consists of a small Owner CPS, a 1/0 Octopus or drop-shot hook, a soft-plastic jerkbait of your choice and either a 1/32- or 1/16-ounce VMC or Eagle Claw nail weight as necessary.

Getting started, take the Owner CPS coil spring and screw it into the nose of the bait to the point where it is fully embedded in the plastic. Then, take the hook and thread it through the top loop on the CPS, catching some of the plastic with the hook point on entry and exit. What this gives you is an anchor point on the nose of the bait and secures your lure so it doesn't come off when casting or on the retrieve. The nail weights can be applied to provide the appropriate sink rate or help you out casting on

windy days or fishing in heavy current.

WHAT DOES IT DO?

Again, drawing comparisons to the infamous Banjo Minnow, it presents an extremely erratic, side-to-side motion with a very subtle fall. This can be great in a number of situations, but I've found it to be more successful on highly pressured fish in clearer water. Also, it compliments a topwater bite extremely well when fish aren't fully committed. The rate of fall can be adjusted using the nail weights, but I've found that the lighter, the better. In other words, do not add weight if it can be avoided.

continues >



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*.

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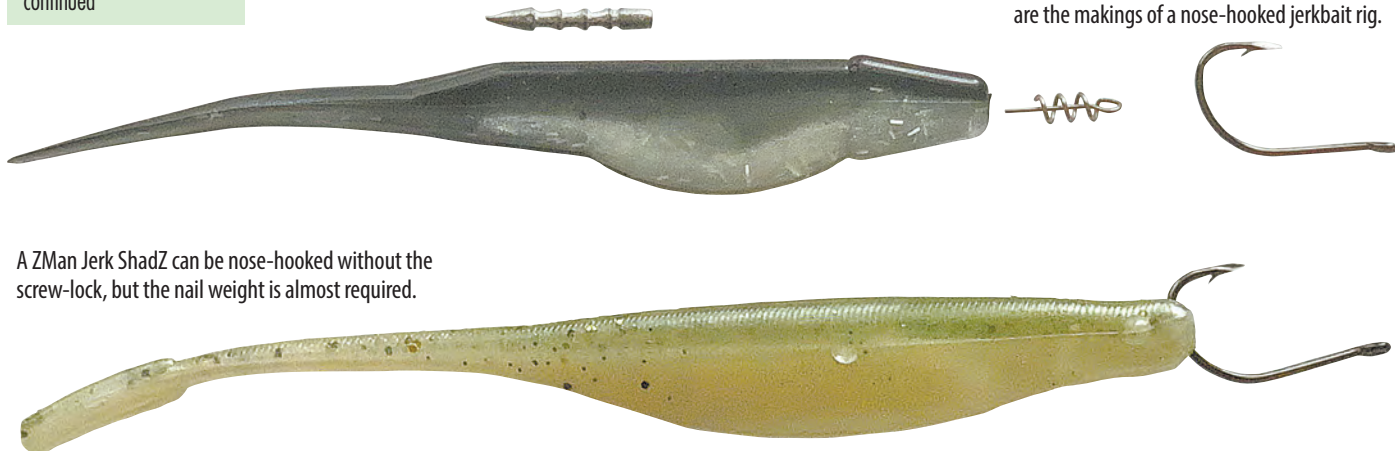
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SPECKLED TRUTH

continued



A nail weight, Owner CPS and 1/0 Octopus hook are the makings of a nose-hooked jerkbait rig.

A ZMan Jerk ShadZ can be nose-hooked without the screw-lock, but the nail weight is almost required.

PROS AND CONS

Start with the ultimate pro: big fish like it. Fishing for years in Florida, I caught more of my big trout on this rig than any other. The soft entry doesn't spook shallow fish, and the action is extremely natural. And, using an exposed hook in the nose of the bait allows you to get away with minimal terminal tackle. Said a different way, you can downsize your leader because you don't have to set the hook as forcefully. Also, going light with your terminal gear allows you to make extremely long casts, again increasing your stealth and minimizing your presence.

The main con to the rig is longevity. Expect a maximum of three to four fish on one soft-plastic bait, simply because when the fish commits, it's often a head shot. On the hookset, the lure often rides up the line, which mangles the nose of the bait, and for most soft-plastic brands, there generally isn't very much plastic there to begin with. This makes it difficult to reestablish an anchor point without compromising the action, so the best thing to do is swap out the soft-plastic bait, which can be time consuming because you have to remove the CPS and thread into a new tail.

WHICH SOFT PLASTICS?

Most companies have in their lineups a jerkbait of some kind, so really it's a matter of which brand you like to use. That said, I've established confidence in a few

brands, mainly because of density, action and profile.

Slayer and Zoom make a myriad of different colors in traditional jerkbait styles. Slayer's Sinister Twitch Bait, or STB, and the Zoom Super Fluke are both 5 inches long and offer great action and color profiles, but giving weight to longevity, I prefer the STB.

The Mirrolure Provoker and Cajun Zydeco Shad have some similar, yet different qualities. Both are 5 inches long, but instead of the forked tail, they both have a single darter-style tail, with more action. The differences between the baits is the Zydeco Shad has more of a potbelly which causes more of a horizontal fall. The Provoker's fall is led by its nose, so it's more vertical. That said, the Provoker has more surface area around its nose, which makes it easier to insert the CPS.

Lastly, the 5- or 7-inch ZMan Jerk ShadZ or the 6-inch Mann's Hardnose provide great, larger profiles. I also like both because they offer unique qualities. The JerkshadZ is made of Elaztech, which allows you to skip using the CPS — making it quicker to change lures — and it offers a slower fall. That said, you have to use a nail weight with the ZMan because, without it, the lure will not sink.

The Hardnose is traditional plastic, but as the name suggests, the nose is hard. As a result, once the CPS is secured, it can last upwards of 10 fish because it doesn't tear up as easily as other soft plastics. Keeping that in mind, there is some rigidity to the bait, so the action

isn't as good, but it still produces. Last, they are hard to find, and the colors are pretty limited, so if you can find and buy them, I suggest you do it in bulk.

PARTING SHOTS

This technique is great for wary fish, especially in clear water. That said, I've noticed a few other things I'd like to leave with you. First, always use a loop knot and always insert the tag end through the eyelet on the side of the hook opening. This will increase the rate at which you land fish exponentially, mainly because it deals with the hook rotation in the fish's mouth on the hookset. And always set the hook to the side instead of vertically. Again, this deals with the hook rotation in the fish's mouth; you'll find the hook in the corner of the mouth almost every time. And I always throw it on spinning tackle. I use a Shimano NASCI 3000 spooled with 20-pound/6-pound Suffix 832 on a 7-foot, medium-action Laguna Liquid rod. This allows me to make extremely long casts, provide the walk-the-dog action and set the hook once the fish commits.

Like anything in the fishing world, simplicity lends success. So I encourage you to try this simple technique when fishing gets tough or fish aren't responding to traditional offerings. It can be the difference between success and failure. ■

SALTWATER

STATE COASTAL WATERS REGULATIONS (0 - 3 miles)

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

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

FRESHWATER

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

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

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

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

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

* Possession of certain species of sharks is prohibited.

HUNTING SEASONS

SPECIES	SEASON DATES	BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT
Doves	Sept. 1-Oct. 6 (n), Sept. 1-15 (s) Oct. 19-Nov. 16 (n), Oct. 5-Nov. 6 (s) Dec. 21-Jan. 14 (n), Dec. 21-Jan. 31 (s)	15	45
Quail	Nov. 28-March 7	8	
Rabbit	Oct. 12-Feb. 28	8	
Squirrel (fall)	Oct. 1-Feb. 28	8	
Squirrel (spr)	May 15-June 1	4	
Raccoon	July 1-Sept. 30	1 raccoons per party	
Rac/Opp/Bobct	Oct. 1-Oct. 31 (food/sport) Nov. 1-Feb. 28 (food/sport/pelt)	5/day, 8/party No limit	
Rails			
King & Clapper	Sept. 1-30, Nov. 22-Dec. 31	15	45
Sora & Virginia	Sept. 1-30, Nov. 22-Dec. 31	25	75
Gallinules	Sept. 1-30, Nov. 22-Dec. 31	15	45
Snipe	Nov. 14 - Feb. 28	8	24
Crow	Nov. 2 - Feb. 28	No limit	No limit
Woodcock	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31	3	9
Wild Turkey			
Fall season	Oct. 15-Nov. 15 (selected counties)	2 per season (may be either sex)	
Spring season	March 14-May 1	1/day, 3/season, longbeards only	
Youth season	March 7-13	1/day, 3/season, bearded birds only	

WATERFOWL SEASONS

SPECIES	DATES	BAG LIMIT
Duck	Teal only: Sept. 14-30 Nov. 29-Dec. 1, Dec. 6-Jan. 31	6 6 6
Geese (Canada, blue, Ross, white-fronted, brant)	Sept. 1-30 Nov. 11-24, Nov. 29-Jan. 1, Dec. 6-Jan. 31	5 Canada 3, Brant 1 Snow/blue/Ross 20 White-fronted 3
Light Geese conservation	Oct. 1-Nov. 10, Feb. 1-7, Feb. 9-March 31	No limit

DEER SEASON

ZONE	ARCHERY	PRIM WEAPON	GUNS
Northeast	Oct. 1-Nov. 22 Nov. 11-22 (antlerless primitive weapon) Jan. 17-31 (archery/primitive weapon)	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 23-Dec. 1 (dogs) Dec. 16-23 (no dogs) Dec. 24-Jan. 22(dogs) Nov. 9-22 (youth)
East Central	Oct. 1-Nov. 22 Nov. 11-22 (antlerless primitive weapon) Jan. 17-31 (archery-primitive weapon)	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 23-Dec. 1 (dogs) Dec. 16-23 (no dogs) Dec. 24-Jan. 22(dogs) Nov. 9-22 (youth)
Southwest	Oct. 1-Nov. 22 Nov. 11-22 (antlerless primitive weapon) Jan. 17-31 (archery-primitive weapon)	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 23-Dec. 1 (dogs) Dec. 16-23 (no dogs) Dec. 24-Jan.16(dogs) Nov. 9-Jan. 22 (youth)
Southeast	Oct. 15-Nov. 22 Jan. 23-31 (either-sex arch-primitive) Feb. 1-15 (archery-primitive bucks only)	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 23-Dec. 1 (dogs) Dec. 16-23 (no dogs) Dec. 24-Jan. 16(dogs) Nov. 3-Feb. 15(youth)
Delta	Oct. 1-Nov. 22 Nov. 11-22 (antlerless primitive weapon) Jan. 22-31 (archery primitive weapon)	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 23-Jan. 1 (dogs) Dec. 16-23 (no dogs) Dec. 24-Jan. 22 (dogs) Nov. 9-22 (youth)

COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver



VENISON SAUSAGE ON A STICK

THIS MEAL WILL KICK DEER SEASON OFF WITH A BANG

While it's still very hot and humid, fall and hunting seasons are upon us. The calendar still shows several weeks of summer left, and Labor Day isn't far off, with fall officially beginning a few weeks after that.

But the Old Farmer's Almanac says that fall begins meteorologically on Sept 1. This corresponds much more closely to when fall begins in the minds of sportsmen.

Many years, the September recipe in this column has featured doves, but there weren't any in the freezer this year. However, there was venison in the freezer, and with so many sportsmen looking forward to deer season and ready to punch their tags, it seemed like a worthy substitute.

This is a special recipe that features venison sausage prepared in a unique and fun way. It is done outside on the grill and makes a reasonably good substitute for the feast usually served on the opening day of dove season. It's also good for filling up young hunters after their first day on a deer stand and works equally well under large trees or on the porch of a hunting lodge or on your patio or deck at home. ■

Jerry Dilsaver



if you don't have a jerky shooter, two plastic water bottles of slightly different sizes (top left) can be used to squeeze sausage into links (top right) and put on skewers (above).

VENISON SAUSAGE ON A STICK

This is a fun recipe any time, but I like it as a break from fish just as deer season is about to begin. Besides, it's a great time to polish off the remaining venison that's left in your freezer from last year. Hopefully, you've been eating a lot of fresh fish all summer, and this is a nice change. It's a win-win meal, as it tastes good and helps make space for this year's venison.

I don't have plain venison burger in my freezer. Call it all sausage if you like, but I have some with a few mild spices blended in for burgers, chili, meatloaf and such, and then I have some that really is sausage and is blended with hotter sausage spices for getting a day going right or for special times. I keep my burger and sausage loose ground rather than in links, as it is easier to mix or use small amounts. If you have link venison sausage, you can break the casing and reform it or simply put a skewer in it.

This recipe is one of those special times to use venison sausage. If you only have venison burger, you can spice it up with some cayenne pepper, chopped jalapenos, sage and more in one of many mixtures. This should have a little flavor explosion in your mouth and not merely be burger. Make it mild or wild to suit your personal tastes, but kick it up at least one notch.

I don't have a jerky shooter, which you can pack with the sausage mix and squeeze the handle to form links. This uses a plastic drinking water bottle to hold and form the sausage, with

a slightly smaller-diameter, half-size water bottle as a pusher. Many enterprising folks use similar arrangements to form burger or sausage links, but they typically use plastic soft-drink bottles with a smaller opening, which makes a smaller link. I prefer a larger link and looked for a while until I found a Vitamin Water bottle with a larger neck and opening and an 8-ounce water bottle that would barely slide through it once the flat end was removed.

Once you make the first link, you'll be surprised how easy it is. Just load the larger bottle with the sausage mixture — the egg and bread crumbs help it bond together — insert a skewer and push. Be careful handling the skewers; they get hot and can burn. You'll have to handle metal skewers with a pot holder or glove.

For this particular version, I sliced a bell pepper and sweet onion to sauté on the grill and add to the mixture on a brat bun. Sometimes bell peppers can be strong, and the Cavender's seasoning helps tone this down.

I believe if you try this once, you'll have it again. It's a fun meal that is easy to prepare and tastes great. That makes it just right for serving on the patio or deck on a cool September evening. Enjoy! ■

PREPARATION:

Soak wooden skewers in water for at least 30 minutes. Slice the bell pepper and onion. Put the onion and pepper slices in a large pan, spray with non-stick cooking spray and sprinkle with Cavender's.

Mix the venison sausage, egg and bread crumbs. Load the sausage mixture into a jerky shooter or bottle. Insert a skewer into the bottle through the neck opening and push it through the sausage until about ¼-inch is protruding. Push the smaller bottle through larger bottle to form sausage dog on skewer. Repeat until all the sausage is formed into sausage links.

Spray a grill vegetable tray liberally with non-stick cooking spray. Preheat the grill to medium. Place the sausage links around the perimeter of the vegetable tray. Place the onion and pepper slices in the middle of the vegetable tray. Keep a close watch for hot spots and cook the sausage dogs until done.

Stir the onion and pepper slices occasionally while the sausage is cooking. Cook the sausage and vegetables for about 10 to 12 minutes, turning as needed. This will vary with the heat of the grill. The sausage and vegetables should be done at approximately the same time. Remove the sausage and

vegetables from the grill and serve while warm.

The brat buns can be warmed on the grill or not — to personal preference. Serve the sausage links on the brat buns, with peppers, onions and sweet and spicy brown mustard. This can be served with a variety of vegetables. Corn on the cob and a fresh green salad or salad wedge are two good ways. Chocolate custard or a slice of Key Lime pie are excellent options for dessert. ■

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound ground venison sausage
- 1 extra large egg
- ½ cup plain bread crumbs
- 1 large bell pepper
- 1 large sweet onion
- Cavender's All Purpose Greek Seasoning
- Black pepper
- 1 pack bratwurst buns
- Sweet and spicy brown mustard
- 8 skewers
- Buttery flavor, non-stick cooking spray
- Jerky shooter or plastic bottle for forming sausage links.



Jerry Dilsaver



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

FISH LAB BIO MINNOW

Soft-plastic swimbaits are a big hit with freshwater and saltwater anglers. They work well, and almost every brand is the spitting image of all the rest.

But that's not true with the Fish Lab Bio Minnow. This weedless swimbait bucks the minimalist trend of a slender body with a big tail. This one has the action-producing tail, but it also has a dorsal fin, as well as all the other fins a real baitfish has. And they aren't just for looks. These fins shimmy and shiver at even the slowest retrieve speeds. The lure has big eyes, too, which are magnets for predatory gamefish.

This lure is at home in open water, but is just as effective when reeled through heavy cover, whether that's grass lines, cypress knees, or downed trees. When rigged with a



screw-lock, weighted swimbait hook, it's great for skipping under docks or low-hanging tree limbs along banks. This lure comes in three sizes and four colors, so you can match the hatch at your favorite fishing hole.

The Fish Lab Bio Minnow ranges in price from \$7.99 to \$8.99 a pack.

For more info, visit: www.fishlabtackle.com

PLANO EDGE TACKLE STORAGE

Building on its popular 3600 and 3700 Stowaway tackle boxes, Plano Molding Systems has recently debuted a set of 10 different storage boxes that provide everything a fisherman could want in tackle storage.

The EDGE series boxes start with a crystal-clear lid so their contents can be identified quickly, without opening. They feature a Dri-Loc, waterproof seal, a moisture barrier that can't be beat. A third new feature is a single latch that allows the box to be opened with one hand, so the box can be opened quickly and easily.

Plano's new Rustrictor anti-corrosion compound is infused into the base of all EDGE boxes, preventing terminal tackle and bites from corroding. Water Wick provides further corrosion defense from a water-absorbing, desiccant divider. Vented dividers allow for air circulation within the box. Different models range in MSRP from \$19.99 to \$49.99.

For more info, visit: www.planomolding.com/edge



STACKED LADDER CLIMBING STICKS

Some landowners frown on hunters putting anything metal in a tree trunk, like pegs or screw-in steps that are most-often used to help climb to a lock on-style stand well off the ground. The alternative used to be long, clunky metal ladder sections that were a real pain to tote into the woods, on your back or on the back of an ATV.

No longer. Earlier this summer, Louisiana's Stacked Outdoors debuted its Stacked Ladder Climbing Sticks, a set of four lightweight ladder sticks that can be strapped to a tree trunk in sections, allowing hunters to climb up to 20 feet up on a solid set of steps.

The sticks are molded in single pieces, four of which come per set. They fit together like plastic

stacking cups and come with a carry strap that allows hunters to easily haul them into the woods — especially since a set weighs less than 10 pounds. The step sections are 21 inches long, with 17 inches between steps, and each comes with a strap that fastens it to the tree trunk.

MSRP for a set is \$149.

For more info, visit: www.stackedoutdoors.com





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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, a look ahead at 2020, and more. Comes with FREE 2019 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for \$8.95, plus \$3 s&h. **Book: "How to Know When to Go" by Rick Taylor.** \$14.95 (plus \$4 s&h). 100 pages, 43 illustrations. A comprehensive look at the main factors influencing fish and game activity periods, plus how to devise an effective when-to-go game plan using any year's PrimeTimes calendars. Individual assessments of bass, panfish, deer, turkey, and more.

2019 Ultimate PrimeTimes software for PCs. \$29.95 (plus \$3 s&h, or no s&h if downloaded from web). The world's best forecaster allows you to fine-tune the peak times to your exact location, quarry, and even weather. Too many features to list here, including making your own App. For more details, please call us or visit our web site (see below).

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Send to: PrimeTimes 2019 - Dept. LS - 2487 NW 75th Ave., Ste. 100 - Ankeny, IA 50023

For credit/debit card orders, call 515-964-5516, or go online to primetimes2.com and click **Catalog**.

2019 SEP	BEST DAYS				VALUE
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	
Sun 1	█	█	█	█	58
Mon 2	█	█	█	█	44
Tue 3	█	█	█	█	35
Wed 4	█	█	█	█	36
Thu 5	█	█	█	█	44
Fri 6	█	█	█	█	31
Sat 7	█	█	█	█	25
Sun 8	█	█	█	█	24
Mon 9	█	█	█	█	24
Tue 10	█	█	█	█	34
Wed 11	█	█	█	█	44
Thu 12	█	█	█	█	54
Fri 13	█	█	█	█	59
Sat 14	█	█	█	█	52
Sun 15	█	█	█	█	45
Mon 16	█	█	█	█	38
Tue 17	█	█	█	█	37
Wed 18	█	█	█	█	39
Thu 19	█	█	█	█	42
Fri 20	█	█	█	█	50
Sat 21	█	█	█	█	63
Sun 22	█	█	█	█	54
Mon 23	█	█	█	█	50
Tue 24	█	█	█	█	51
Wed 25	█	█	█	█	59
Thu 26	█	█	█	█	67
Fri 27	█	█	█	█	76
Sat 28	█	█	█	█	77
Sun 29	█	█	█	█	63
Mon 30	█	█	█	█	49
	█	█	█	█	25 50 75
	█	█	█	█	AVERAGE

For more, visit primetimes2.com

LUNAR PERIODS					
TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED					
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT		
9:11 am	2:20 pm - 4:32 pm	9:33 pm	1:42 am - 4:14 am	☉	☾
10:21 am	3:23 pm - 5:15 pm	10:09 pm	2:45 am - 4:57 am	☉	☾
11:29 am	4:24 pm - 5:56 pm	10:45 pm	3:48 am - 5:40 am	☉	☾
12:35 pm	5:23 pm - 6:41 pm	11:24 pm	4:49 am - 6:21 am	☉	☾
1:39 pm	6:20 pm - 7:28 pm ☀		5:48 am - 7:06 am ☀	☉	☾ HALF
2:39 pm	7:18 pm - 8:16 pm ☀	12:06 am	6:45 am - 7:53 am ☀	☉	☾
3:36 pm	8:10 pm - 9:06 pm	12:52 am	7:43 am - 8:41 am ☀	☉	☾ LOW
4:27 pm	9:00 pm - 9:58 pm	1:41 am	8:35 am - 9:31 am	☉	☾
5:13 pm	9:48 pm - 10:50 pm	2:33 am	9:25 am - 10:23 am	☉	☾
5:54 pm	10:33 pm - 11:41 pm	3:28 am	10:13 am - 11:15 am	☉	☾
6:30 pm	11:11 pm - 12:33 am	4:23 am	10:58 am - 12:06 pm	☉	☾
7:03 pm	11:50 pm - Midnight	5:19 am	11:36 am - 12:58 pm ☀	☉	☾
7:33 pm	Midnight - 1:22 am	6:14 am	12:15 pm - 1:47 pm ☀	☉	☾ FULL & APOGEE
8:01 pm	12:24 am - 2:12 am	7:10 am	12:49 pm - 2:37 pm ☀	☉	☾
8:29 pm	12:58 am - 3:00 am	8:04 am	1:23 pm - 3:25 pm	☉	☾
8:57 pm	1:32 am - 3:50 am	8:59 am	1:57 pm - 4:15 pm	☉	☾
9:27 pm	2:05 am - 4:41 am	9:55 am	2:30 pm - 5:06 pm	☉	☾
9:59 pm	2:41 am - 5:31 am	10:52 am	3:06 pm - 5:56 pm	☉	☾
10:35 pm	3:20 am - 6:22 am	11:51 am	3:45 pm - 6:47 pm	☉	☾
11:16 pm	4:02 am - 7:18 am	12:50 pm	4:27 pm - 7:43 pm	☉	☾
	4:48 am - 8:14 am ☀	1:51 pm	5:13 pm - 8:39 pm ☀	☉	☾ HALF
12:04 am	5:41 am - 9:11 am ☀	2:50 pm	6:06 pm - 9:36 pm ☀	☉	☾ HIGH
12:59 am	6:38 am - 10:08 am ☀	3:46 pm	7:03 pm - 10:33 pm	☉	☾ Fall
2:01 am	7:39 am - 11:05 am	4:39 pm	8:04 pm - 11:30 pm	☉	☾
3:09 am	8:45 am - 11:57 am	5:26 pm	9:10 pm - 12:22 am	☉	☾
4:20 am	9:49 am - 12:49 pm	6:09 pm	10:14 pm - 1:14 am	☉	☾
5:33 am	10:54 am - 1:36 pm ☀	6:48 pm	11:19 pm - Midnight	☉	☾ Perigee
6:45 am	11:59 am - 2:21 pm ☀	7:25 pm	Midnight - 2:01 am	☉	☾ NEW
7:57 am	1:03 pm - 3:05 pm	8:02 pm	12:24 am - 2:46 am	☉	☾
9:08 am	2:06 pm - 3:48 pm	8:39 pm	1:28 am - 3:30 am	☉	☾

ANY LUNAR PERIOD IS ENHANCED WHEN IT OVERLAPS A KEY SOLAR PERIOD. THE BEST OF THESE OVERLAPS ARE DESIGNATED BY THE SUN SYMBOLS:

☀ = DAWN ☀ = HIGH NOON ☀ = DUSK

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