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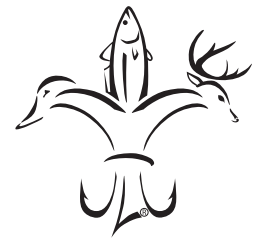
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Chad McGinty killed this trophy buck the day after Christmas last season in Yazoo County. He didn't have to worry about the October Lull. It was long past.

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UPDATE
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Bobby Cleveland



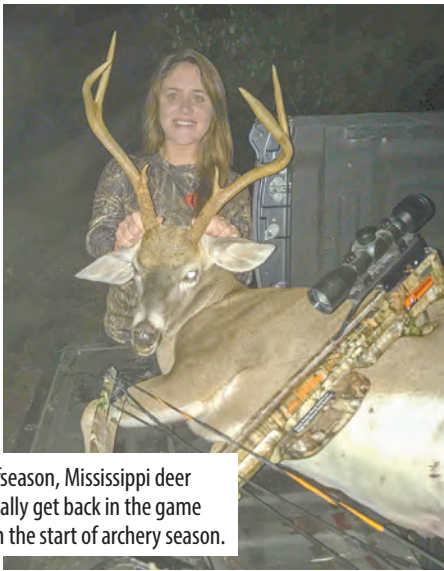
Bobby Cleveland has covered sports in Mississippi for over 38 years. A native of Hattiesburg and graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, Cleveland lives on Ross Barnett Reservoir near Jackson with his wife Pam. He can be reached at bobbyc7754@yahoo.com.

OCTOBER: FINALLY, IT'S DEER SEASON

THIS OFFSEASON HAS BEEN MORE EXCRUCIATING THAN MOST

Many Mississippi sportsmen got their first taste of hunting in September, either shooting doves, Canada geese or teal. Youth under age 15 even got a week of squirrel hunting. In October, bigger game comes into play. The archery season for deer opens for most Mississippians on Oct. 1 — on Oct. 15 in the Southeast Zone. Whew! It's about time we can put the very long and, at times, extremely excruciating offseason behind us. Since the close of the past season, Mississippi sportsmen had a big scare when the first case of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in deer was confirmed in a 4½-year-old buck found dead in late January in Issaquena County. Lab tests

confirming the CWD came in early February, and it became the biggest offseason deer story in the state in decades. Fortunately, more than 800 deer have been sampled since, mostly from the 25-mile circle around the spot where the diseased buck was found, and no other evidence of CWD have been found. Besides a few new regulations in place in a limited area around the site, the disease will have very limited impact statewide. Hunters are being urged to be alert to any deer showing signs of illness, but otherwise . . . It's time to hunt, so let's get to it. ■



After a long offseason, Mississippi deer hunters can finally get back in the game in October with the start of archery season.

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MISSISSIPPI'S ARCHERY SEASONS

Delta, Northeast, East Central and Southwest Zones: Opens Oct. 1 and continues through Jan. 31 (Archery equipment is legal during all firearm seasons).

Southeast Zone: Opens Oct. 15 and continues through Feb. 15 (Archery equipment is legal during all firearm seasons). From Feb. 1-15, the season is open only to legal bucks — no antlerless deer.

Limits:

Bucks: The bag limit on antlered buck deer is one per day, not to exceed three per annual season. Legal bucks must meet the antler criteria within the appropriate deer management zone. For youth hunters — 15 years and younger — hunting on private land and authorized state and federal lands, all three may be any antlered deer. In the Delta Zone, a legal buck is defined as having EITHER A 12-inch inside spread OR a main beam of at least 15 inches. In all other zones, legal bucks must have EITHER a 10-inch inside spread OR a main beam of at least 13 inches.

Antlerless deer: On private lands in the Northeast, Delta, East Central and Southwest Zones the limit on antlerless deer is three per annual season. The bag limit on Southeast Zone antlerless deer is one per day, two per annual season. On U.S. Forest Service National Forests, the bag limit on antlerless deer is one per day, not to exceed three per annual season, except in the Southeast Zone which is two per annual season.

WILL THE VELVET TREND CONTINUE?

The 2017 archery season saw an increase in the number of bucks killed with antlers still in either full velvet or at least partially covered in the hair-like membrane of skin that carries blood and nutrients to growing antlers until they are fully calcified.

When the antlers have completed growth and solidified, blood flow ceases and the velvet dies and begins to peel. The peeling process can take anywhere from mere hours to days, even a week or more. The timing can depend on the buck's personality, in that, if he is at peak maturity and strength, he can speed the process by raising his head into branches of trees or rubbing the antlers against smaller trees.

It can be a bloody mess.

But a delayed process, for whatever reason, can also produce beautiful trophies. A buck taken in early October in full velvet makes a splendid mount.

Most archery seasons see a few velvet trophies, but 2017 produced more than just a few. For the first two or three weeks of the archery season, the stories were commonplace, including multiple kills and repeated trail-cam photos.

Casey Tebow's 128-inch Madison County 8-point was his first in full velvet.

"I've been hunting for 24 years, and I've never killed one in velvet before," said Tebow, who killed the buck on Oct. 3. He's only had one other chance — and that was a half-hour earlier.

"It's crazy, but 30 minutes before I shot this one, I missed a bigger one that was still in full velvet," Tebow said. "It was a weird year. Our trail cams have a lot of photos of bucks, and all our young bucks are out of velvet totally. But all of our bigger bucks, the shooters we've identified, they're all still in velvet. Best we can figure is that the 15-day cool snap we had early in September must have something to do with it. That's all we can think of."

Paul Autry hunts the Big Black River bottoms in western Hinds County; he said most of the bucks captured on trail cams were



Bobby Cleveland

Killing a buck in full velvet is usually a rare occurrence, since the window of opportunity is very short to get one before it completely sheds the hairy skin. In 2017, more velvet bucks were reported than usual. Will it repeat in 2018?

still in full velvet in mid-September before the 2017 season when he quit checking cameras.

"I figured the velvet would be gone, as it usually is by bow season," he said. "Then, on the first weekend, every buck I saw was either in full velvet or was in the process of losing it. I've always seen one of two bucks still in partial velvet in bow season. Last year was different.

"I saw about 12 to 15 bucks close enough to glass, from yearling spikes to mature racks, and very few of them had clean antlers. The biggest, a tall and wide 10-point I was hunting, was in full velvet and lucky he never crossed the 40-yard threshold."

Tommy Burns of Southaven reported a similar story in north Mississippi from his Desoto County camp.

"First three bucks I saw — none of which were shooters but all at least 2- or 3-year-old 8 points — were in velvet," he said. "The 9-point shooter that I was hunting came out at 70 yards and was carrying streamers of velvet blowing in the wind. We had five hunters opening weekend, and all of them reported seeing bucks in full velvet, but the only buck killed, by a young girl with a crossbow, was a 6-point cull deer without a speck of velvet anywhere. We all thought it was weird. The smaller deer were the cleaner deer."

Be sure to read Andy Douglas' feature on how to avoid the "October Lull" that can impact hunting after a week or two of hunting. ■

more updates... >

CHECK NEW REGULATIONS FOR CWD AREA

Final approval of new deer-hunting regulations for the CWD Management Zone were given at the August meeting of the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. Those regulations were provided in the September issue of *Mississippi Sportsman*.

Included was a reduction in the size of this area: bordered to the west by the Mississippi River, to the east by the Yazoo River and Warren County lines, to the north by Highways 14 and 16, and to the south by the Warren County line.

Within those boundaries, there is a ban on supplemental feeding that includes feeders, salt licks and mineral licks. The MDWFP took this action to limit the most-effective means of CWD transmission between deer — direct contact with prions (protein cells) from an infected deer. Tests show that saliva likely has the highest concentration of prions.

The proposals also include how deer killed during the 2018-19



One of the restrictions placed on hunters in the CWD management zone in the South Delta is a ban on supplemental feeding. No feeding or baiting allowed.

Philip Gentry

season can be transported in the zone. The only portions of a harvested deer that can be legally removed from the proposed zone are:

- Cut/wrapped meat (commercially or privately);
- Deboned meat (which can be processed outside the management zone);
- Hides with no head attached;
- Finished taxidermy;
- Antlers with no tissue attached;
- Cleaned skull plates (no brain tissue);
- Cleaned skulls (no lymphoid or brain tissue). ■

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SMALL GAME: SQUIRREL FIRST, THEN RABBITS

October is a big month for small-game enthusiasts, with the opening of the statewide squirrel season on Oct. 1 and the statewide rabbit season on Oct. 13, giving both several weeks of hunting before the opening of gun season on deer on Nov. 17.

"That's the key, getting those weeks to hunt small game before the deer gun season," said James Bryant of Tupelo. "Our deer club in Pontotoc County only has one archery deer hunter, and he's not too serious about it, but everybody hunts deer when gun season opens. We make a big deal out of the opening weekend of squirrel season, and do the same on rabbit season.

"We allow dogs for both squirrel and rabbits through the end of October, and then we stop so that we can eliminate a lot of presence in the woods in November before the gun season. By then, we've gotten plenty of time with the kids on small game and killed enough squirrel and rabbit to eat each weekend at camp."

The balance of small-game and deer hunting is a problem a lot of deer camps face. Obviously, deer hunting is the priority, and the main reason that members are willing to pay a few thousand dollars a year — or more — to join a hunting club. Some are extreme, either allowing no small game hunting at all before deer season, while others are more lax.

"It's why I have memberships in two clubs," said Billy Hughes of Vicksburg. "I'm in one club in Claiborne County where all we do is deer hunt from October through January. We do not hunt rabbit or squirrel until February. I joined another club in Rankin County along the Pearl River where about all we do is hunt swamp rabbits and squirrels. We have a lot of deer, but nothing size-wise to brag about. The only deer hunting we do there is designed around the rabbit hunts, when deer hunters get on the outskirts of the area where the rabbit dogs are running and try to pick off deer that make a break for it and try to escape."

Hughes joined the small-game club for two reasons.

"One, I got two grandsons who are just getting old enough to hunt, and I wanted a place where we could go and not worry about deer hunters," he said. "The other reason is that I have always hunted public lands in the Delta for squirrels, but they have gotten so crowded. I still go because I enjoy hunting black squirrels, and the only place you can find them is along the Mississippi River."

Rabbit and squirrel seasons continue through Feb. 28, and there is a daily limit of 8 per hunter for each species. For an entertaining look at hunting squirrels with a good treeing dog, see Mike Giles' feature in this edition of *Mississippi Sportsman*. ■



Bobby Cleveland

October is a great time for small game hunters. Squirrel season opens Oct. 1 and rabbit season on Oct. 13.

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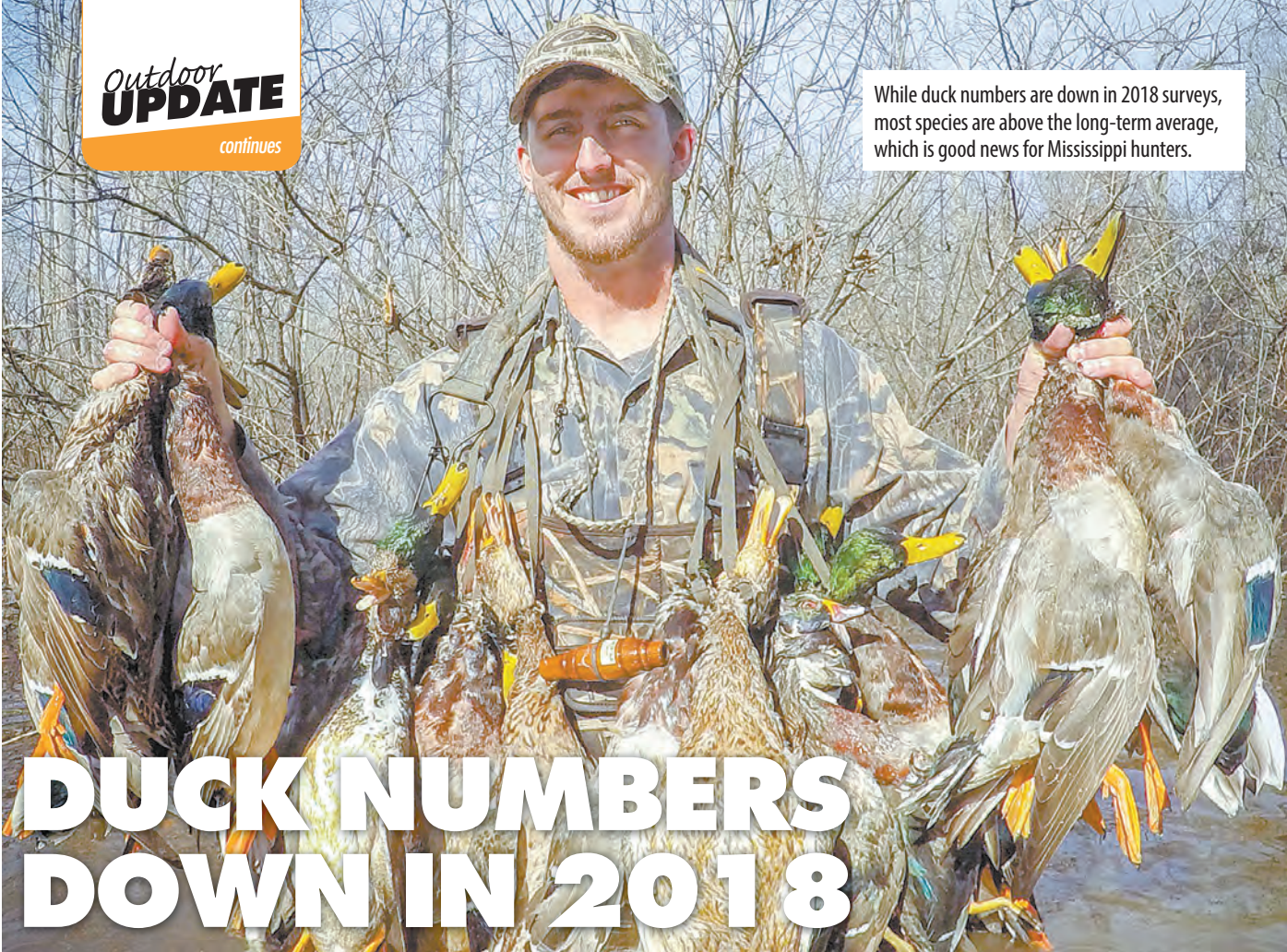
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While duck numbers are down in 2018 surveys, most species are above the long-term average, which is good news for Mississippi hunters.



DUCK NUMBERS DOWN IN 2018

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service officials announced a 13-percent decrease in ducks in the agency’s annual breeding population survey, which can be directly tied to a 14-percent decline in nesting habitat.

The total population was estimated at 41.2 million breeding ducks in traditional survey areas, down from 47.3 million in 2017. However, that’s still 17-percent higher than the long-term average since the mid-1950s.

Mallards, the most-important species to hunters, were down 12 percent from 12.9 million a year ago to 11.4 million this year. Of all popular species, only one, the wigeon, showed an increase in 2018.

Ducks Unlimited, the private conservation organization devoted to protecting habitat, believes the decrease in ducks is simply explained by the loss of habitat. The total pond estimate for the U.S. and Canada was 5.2 million, down from 6.1 million a year ago and identical to the long-term average of 5.2 million.

“The dip in the population for prairie-breeding puddle ducks is not unexpected and by no means unprecedented given that conditions on the prairies this spring were drier than last year,” said Tom

Moorman, DU’s chief scientist. “As a result, 2018 populations dropped accordingly. However, populations of all key species, except northern pintails and scaup, remain above long-term averages.

“This year’s breeding-population decline is a reminder of the need to sustain the capacity of breeding habitats, particularly in the prairies as we go through natural variation in wetland conditions. Waterfowl populations are adapted well to short-term swings in habitat conditions, but we must continue to guard against the long-term loss of prairie breeding habitat.”

According to USFWS protocol, the total count is still high enough to offer hunters liberal frameworks, which in Mississippi will be a 60-day season divided into three segments with a six-duck daily bag limit.

The statewide seasons are Nov. 23-25, Nov. 30-Dec. 2, and Dec. 5-Jan. 27.

The six-duck daily limit can include no more than four mallards (only two of which may be females), three wood ducks, two redheads, three scaup, two canvasbacks, one mottled duck, two black ducks and two pintails. ■

2018 Duck breeding population survey

Results of the annual duck survey conducted in May and June by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service, with comparison to 2017 and the long-term average (LTA).

Species	Estimate	2017	LTA
Mallard	9.3 million	-12 percent	+17 percent
Gadwall	2.9 million	-31 percent	+43 percent
American wigeon	2.8 million	+2 percent	+8 percent
Green-winged teal	3 million	-16 percent	+42 percent
Blue-winged teal	6.5 million	-18 percent	+27 percent
Northern shoveler	4.2 million	-3 percent	+62 percent
Northern pintail	2.4 million	-18 percent	-40 percent
Redheads	1 million	-10 percent	+38 percent
Canvasback	0.7 million	-6 percent	+16 percent
Scaup	4 million	-9 percent	+20 percent

Hunting/Fishing
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Ashley Laird with a nice bull red caught out of Pass Christian with Legends of the Lower Marsh Charters in July 2018.



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Rhett Sullivan poses with a redfish from an August trip to Clermont Harbor pier in Hancock County.



Wyatt and Jessica Sullivan with a Spanish mackerel caught at Garfield Ladner Pier in Waveland on Aug. 10.



Manning Moody of Wiggins caught this 3½-pound largemouth bass in a lake in Leakesville.



Gabby Pecou was handgrabbing in Lake Washington when she got this catfish on May 19, 2018.

DOVE HUNTING CONTINUES

Mississippi wing-shooters will have plenty of opportunities to take doves in October, but the focus shifts to the southeastern corner of the state for most of the month.

Hunters in the small South Zone — encompassed by US 84 to the north, Mississippi Highway 35 and the Louisiana border to the west, the Alabama border to the east and the Gulf of Mexico to the south — had only eight days of hunting in September, compared to the entire month in the North Zone. The South Zone season reopens Oct. 6 and will continue through Nov. 7.

The North Zone's first season continues through Oct. 7, and hunters have to take a 20-day break. The second season will open Oct. 27 and continue through Nov. 7.

Limits in both zones are 15 daily and 45 in possession.

Other migratory bird seasons change in October.

The early Canada goose season that opened Sept. 1 closed on Sept. 30.



Dove hunters, especially those in South Mississippi, get more opportunities in October. Retrievers enjoy the second season since it's cooler.

Bobby Cleveland

Goose hunting is still available in areas where light geese are located through a federal conservation order. That opportunity opens Oct. 1 and continues through Nov. 7 but only on snow, blue and Ross' geese with no limit.

The season for several shore birds — rails, moorhens and gallinules — closed Sept. 30 but will open again in Nov. 23. ■

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FISHING PRESSURE FALLS, BUT BITE INCREASES

One bonus of the October arrival of hunting seasons is decreased fishing pressure on inland and coastal waters of Mississippi. That it coincides with a time when many saltwater and freshwater species are entering major feeding periods creates an ideal situation for hard-core anglers.

On the Gulf Coast, to fishermen like Columbia native Tommy Sutton, it means calm weather and shallow action.

"Two main things that October gives us are some of the most dependable weather and kindest water conditions of the year," said Sutton, who fishes the Mississippi Sound from Cat Island to the Biloxi Marsh. "That means we can make more trips without worrying about rough seas.

"Cooling water temperatures also means hungry fish, especially redfish. They move

to the shorelines of the barrier islands and the marsh and start feeding in big schools. You can wear yourself out on bull reds, but I like to get deeper into the marsh and look for the slot fish (legal keepers), and it's like bass fishing, only more fun when you hook up."

Sutton also likes chasing speckled trout; the key is finding oyster beds.

"If you see those big white PVC poles marking a big area, that means an oyster fisherman has marked his area," he said. "Trout get on those areas and feed like crazy. You can also look for diving birds; that's a sure sign of schooling fish feeding on the surface."

Look for Brian Cope's feature in this edition of *Mississippi Sportsman* to learn about four outstanding Gulf fishing

October isn't just about hunting. As a matter of fact, more hunters means less fishermen and that reduced pressure comes at a time when many fish are entering a heavy feeding period.



opportunities. While you're at it, also look for David Hawkins' piece on float fishing for spotted bass on the Strong River.

That's just one of the many opportunities fresh water anglers can enjoy in Mississippi in October. In addition to great bass, crappie and catfish action, fishermen can step out of their comfort range and seek a little different action, including gar, white bass and hybrid stripers. We've got a story on where and when to find those oddball bites.

Enjoy the month, and be safe out there. ■

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9-FOOT GATOR LANDED — FROM A 'YAK!

By Patrick Bonin

40-MINUTE BATTLE IN BAYOU HERON CULMINATES IN ANGLER'S FIRST-EVER GATOR

In the inshore kayak community, the Hobie Pro Angler 14 is a beast in the marsh, perfect for pursuing specks, reds, bass and more — and stable as a rock if standing up and sight-fishing is your thing.

But Daniel Wilson's plans for his PA 14 last month were likely a little more aggressive than even the most confident Hobie design engineer.

Wilson, a 37-year-old D'Iberville, La., native who lives in Mobile, Ala., decided the stealthy paddlecraft would be a perfect platform to target alligators — and that's just what he did on Saturday, Sept. 1 during the opening days of Mississippi's alligator season on Bayou Heron south of Pascagoula.

After an epic 40-minute battle via rod-and-reel that morning, Wilson finally finished off a 9-footer from the PA 14 that he estimated weighed about 225 pounds.

"It was something I had never seen anybody do, and I wanted to be the first to my knowledge that's ever done it in a kayak," said Wilson, who described himself as an avid inshore kayak angler all over the coast from Grand Isle, La., to Alabama. "Over the course of the last year, I had been seeing the animals in that area and it just struck me as an idea, like you know, 'I can do this.'"

"The kayak community has these stigmas about it, like you're limited on what you can do, and boaters say we get in their way and can't do what they do — I just wanted to be the one to say, 'Yes we can.'"

And he did.

But harvest rules in Mississippi make the task even more monumental from a kayak: You're not allowed to bait, so gators have to be stalked and hooked, and then noosed with a catch pole before being shot.

But Wilson drew two tags in the state's lottery harvest system, so that morning, he and his fishing partner, Steve Roberts, kayaked down Bayou Heron to see what

they might find.

"I just happened to catch a glimpse of him when he surfaced — it was really a lucky chance that I saw the animal," Wilson said.

But as they approached, a storm moved in and the duo had to push into the marsh grass to ride it out. Incredibly, the gator was still in the area, just beyond a point, after the rain moved through.

Wilson eventually got within about 60 feet of the animal and then cast a weighted 10/0 treble hook from his 6000 Series Penn rod and reel. The alligator submerged, and he missed with the first cast, but he connected on the second.

"When I felt the hook come tight, I set it and the animal started to move. I thought I had jumped him but I didn't and set it again," he said. "Then the fight began, me and him back and forth. It lasted about 40 minutes."

"The last 20 minutes of the fight, I had a broken rod — it snapped about 3 foot above the grip."

Wilson had hooked the animal near one of its rear legs, so Roberts assisted by getting a second hook in the gator so the noose could eventually be slipped over its head.

Finally, Wilson stood up in the Hobie and dispatched the gator with one shot from his 20-gauge shotgun.

Then the real fun began.

"We had to figure out how to get him out," Wilson said with a laugh. "We had an idea, but the logistics of getting a 9-foot animal into a kayak posed a little more difficulty than most people would imagine."

Ultimately they succeeded, and Wilson brought the animal home to clean. He plans on having lots of gator jerky soon and is getting a European skull mount commissioned to remember his first-ever gator from a 'yak.

And he was quick to credit his teammate for the overall success of the trip.

"Steve was a key part in this. It wouldn't have happened without him. He was an equal part in this process, and gets just as much credit as I do. He was there for the planning, the brainstorming, the preparations and the licensing, the hunt, the processing," Wilson said. "He was an equal part in this. My key role was I drew the tags and I made the shot."

If you have a kayak and are crazy enough to consider targeting gators, Wilson had some sage advice.

"Preparation and knowledge are key," he said. "Don't go into it blind. Know what the animal is going to do and respect the animal. Prepare yourself..."

"He wasn't a really big gator, but the first one out of a kayak, he was plenty." ■



Daniel Wilson, of Mobile, Ala., shows off the 9-foot alligator he battled and eventually harvested from his Hobie PA 14 in Bayou Heron south of Pascagoula on Sept. 1.

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AVOID THE **OCTOBER LULL**

By Andy Douglas

Hunting pressure, changes in food availability often make it seem like deer have disappeared, but they're still around. A good adjustment will result in a filled tag — and maybe a trip to the taxidermist.

IT'S FALL, AND THAT MEANS DEER HUNTING HAS FINALLY RETURNED TO MISSISSIPPI, WITH ARCHERS EXCITEDLY ANTICIPATING THE OCT. 1 OPENING OF BOW SEASON IN FOUR OF THE STATE'S FIVE DEER ZONES.

Hunters have been busy for months, glassing fields in the evenings and checking their trail cameras to find and pattern the bigger bucks. Ambush stands have been strategically placed, with options for each wind direction.

Most bowhunters know they have a small window to get a trophy buck early in the season, before the most talked-about, dreaded and frustrating part of the entire deer season begins: the "October Lull."

It happens every year, usually a week or two into the season.

Deer sightings diminish, or as many hunters say, it's like they disappeared or crawled into a hole.

It is especially true of trophy bucks, many of which even vanish from nighttime trail-camera photos overlooking feeders.

So just what happens during the October Lull, and is it even a real thing?

There's a lot of skepticism about the Lull. Most hunters complain about it, but it could be that they don't comprehend what is really happening.

The lull is real enough and can be simply explained. Deer naturally change their habits in October, plus, the sudden arrival of human presence in their habitat can certainly impact deer behavior increasingly after opening day.

Yet the Lull can be avoided. Jimmy Riley, manager of the Giles Island Lodge and star of the *Deer Thugs* television show, said hunters make a big mistake by giving into the negativity or perception of the lull, instead of realizing what is actually happening and adapting.

His point: deer don't disappear; they

just enter a natural transition period, moving from summer to fall patterns.

They are still doing what deer do: bedding, feeding, watering and traveling between the three. They simply start doing it in different places after the season opens and progresses a bit.

"Whatever doesn't work today, try something different tomorrow," Riley said, adding that the hunters who recognize what's happening on their hunting property should be able to change tactics and adjust.

In southeast Mississippi, where the archery season opens Oct. 15, those seasonal changes may not begin until November.

THE PRESSURE IS ON

The natural seasonal transition can be hastened by human presence. Deer avoid contact with people, and if spooked or bumped, they will change their behavior and normal patterns. The influx of human scent into deer territory will change where and when deer travel. It will make deer go nocturnal, limiting or even eliminating all daytime movement.

Pressure doesn't just come from deer hunters. Other early fall outdoor activities such as dove and squirrel hunting — and even deer-club workdays — can impact deer.

BELOW: Well into fall transition — a.k.a. the October Lull — older bucks will start to frequent food sources at the same times and places as does. On a good day, a mature buck might make a fatal mistake.

The Mississippi State University Deer Lab (MSUDeerLab.com) conducted a study in south-central Oklahoma to evaluate the effects of hunter activity on deer movements. It was enlightening.



"The results of the study show that deer recognize pressure after three days of hunting and alter movement behaviors to minimize their risk of predation from hunters," said Steve Demarais, an MSU professor. "Deer observations decreased by two-thirds after opening weekend. We knew from the GPS collars that deer were in the hunted zones. They were able to avoid being seen.

"The use of cover increases once deer recognize pressure."

Recognizing that fact is how White Oak Hunting Service, which specializes in duck hunting but also offers guided deer hunts in Tunica County, puts archers on bucks in the Delta.

"When the pressure is on, we target

RIGHT: Searching for a white oak tree that is both dropping acorns and has plenty left on the limbs, and hanging a climber nearby, is an excellent strategy to beat the October Lull. Know going in that the first hunt at the new site will provide the best opportunity for success.

BELOW: Of all the hard mast, deer prefer acorns over just about anything else, especially fresh-falling white oaks.



ditches,” owner Phillip Cagle said. “The deer here in the Delta farmland will run ditch lines and try to stay hidden. We’ve had a lot of success, both mornings and evenings, changing tactics and targeting ditches.”

FOOD SOURCES CHANGE

Nature’s No. 1 contribution to the October Lull is changing food sources. Deer transition to a fall pattern of browsing, curtailing their summer ritual of hitting crop fields. A few unpressured deer will always frequent harvested row crops looking for anything left by the pickers, and even unharvested crops, especially if the land and crops are manipulated for that purpose.

“This year, we are going to have a lot more food than we normally do during archery season,” Cagle said. “While the crops of corn were harvested as normal, the beans were planted late, so we will have standing soybeans to hunt through the end of October. We will adjust our normal strategy to take advantage of this.”

If you’re not fortunate enough to hunt over cut beans or cornfields, don’t worry. Deer are selective browsers and will keep moving and feeding on whatever offers maximum nutrition in their home range. During October, deer start feeding on foods with more carbohydrates, getting ready for the higher-energy demands of the soon-to-arrive rut.

That means hard mast.

Deer prefer acorns, especially those from white oaks, over just about anything else. Other hard-mast crops to look for are hickory, pecan, beech and

walnuts, and there are times each can offer a hunter an advantage.

“The pecans will start hitting the ground about mid-October here,” Riley said. “The deer will jump right on them, so we target those stands near early pecans.”

Soft mast — persimmon, crabapple, honey locust and domestic pear or apple — is another food source deer will seek in the October transition. If you can find some ripe soft mast, hunt it; it’s like candy for deer, and they will devour it.

“We hunt those sweet sources of food: persimmons and honey locust beans,” Riley said. “It’s happened many times at Giles Island during the lull; a hunter only sees 10 deer on a three-day hunt, but one of them will be a 150-inch hooking bull that came in to eat a persimmon and gets killed.”

Hunters need to learn where all the hard- and soft-mast sources are on his or her hunting property. This is a key step in patterning bucks and does; bowhunters have to adapt quickly to the changing fall food sources.

“There’s an exceptional crop of honey locust this year,” Riley said. “I prefer honey locust over persimmon because



the coons and coyotes don’t eat them. They’ll fall the first of bow season, and we will be all over them.”

NEW BEDROOMS

Bumping deer in their bedding areas will cause them to seek new areas to rest. Deer will no longer bed in places where they have encountered humans, either by deer hunters on their way to a stand or checking trail cams, or by small-game hunters or other human activity.

Natural forces can also cause deer to relocate to new bedding areas.

As food sources change, so will bedding areas. Deer usually bed as close as possible to food sources. Bucks and does use as little energy as possible this time of the year, but they can relocate frequently

in October. When the persimmons are gone, or their favorite acorn tree runs out, they'll adjust and find new ones and bed as close as safely possible to that food source.

PRE-RUT TRANSITION

Even the rut can contribute to the October Lull, despite it being months away. As part of the normal seasonal change, bucks realize that the rut is not far away, and this causes a significant shift in deer patterns. The bachelor groups are busting up, and summer-long friendships are coming to an end.

Although you'll still see some young bucks together, more mature bucks start spending time alone. This is when hooked trees and fresh rub lines will appear and when sparring starts taking place as bucks begin establishing the pecking order.

Does and yearlings will still hang out in groups, and an occasional 1½-year-old buck will hang with them. By the very end of the Lull, which can linger into November depending on the area, older bucks will start to frequent food sources at the same times and places as does. On a good day, you may even catch a mature buck coming in to mix it up with the group.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

As deer change habits, hunters must be willing to adjust to be successful during the October Lull. Always be ready to move, and a climbing stand is a good way to be mobile. As food sources and bedding areas change, scout for fresh falling



During the October lull and normal seasonal changes is when hooked trees and fresh rub-lines will appear; sparring starts taking place and pecking orders begin to establish.

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acorns, then hang your climber and hunt. The best chance to bag a deer is the first hunt at a new location.

Another good tactic Riley said is to hunt close to water, especially when the weather is hot and dry, as it has been in October in recent years.

"We set up stands on the edge of the lakes and sloughs over here," he said. "Deer will come in during the afternoons when they get hot and thirsty."

Most important, Riley said, don't give up when hunting starts to get tough and deer sightings diminish.

"Stick it out," he said. "We do. We may not be seeing very many deer, and then all of the sudden that 150-incher steps out. It only takes once, so stay in the woods and be there when the stars line up and you'll kill him."

Many factors change deer behavior every October, each as equally important as the others. The sudden intrusion of man into deer habitat, combined with changes in food sources and bedding areas, plus the on-set of the pre-rut, changes deer behavior dramatically. A hunter unwilling to abandon a favorite early bow season stand is more likely to create and suffer an



When the big boys go nocturnal and start disappearing from trail cam photos, you'll know that the October lull is happening and it's time to start adapting to changes in deer behavior.

October Lull of his or her own making.

When deer transition, adapt to those changes. It's a hunter's best bet at turning the October Lull from reality into a myth. ■



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

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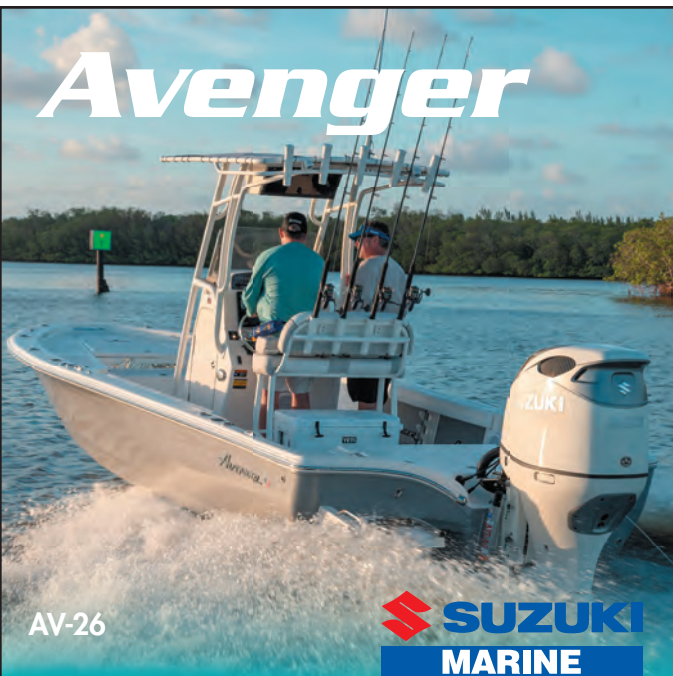
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FALL'S SALTWATER FISHING HOTSPOTS

By Brian Cope



Mississippi's Gulf Coast offers plenty of adventures for the saltwater fisherman who's up for a nice, October boat ride and a full cooler.

Finally, anglers and the fish they pursue are getting a reprieve from the heat. Football season is in full swing, cookouts are more comfortable than they've been in months, and the fishing action is as good as it gets along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

After talking with several experts, *Mississippi Sportsman* has a good variety of species and locales to catch them this time of year, and no matter where you are along the coast, you'll be hard pressed to wet a line without bringing something to the boat — or the dinner table — this month.

BILOXI MARSH

As it is for most of the year, the Biloxi Marsh is a hotspot for speckled trout, and it's one of the easiest bites to get on in October. Specks love the cooling weather, and the abundance of cultivated oyster fields throughout the Marsh never fails to attract plenty of these fish. The vast area begins at the far western end of the Mississippi Sound and is actually

in Louisiana waters, but it is just a few miles from ports in Long Beach, Pass Christian, Bay St. Louis and Waveland.

"This time of year, it doesn't get much better than trout fishing in Biloxi Marsh: hungry fish, calm seas, great temperatures," said Capt. Ronnie Daniels of Fisher-Man Guide Service in Gulfport. "It's easy to find the trout bite by looking for the cane or PVC markers that the oystermen use to mark oyster leases. You'll find them in a variety of depths, and these are good places to throw soft plastics like paddletail grubs."

In October, Daniels often ties on a second grub with a dropper loop to take advantage of the voracious bite. One of his favorite color combinations is Cajun pepper with a chartreuse tail.

"You can catch them two at a time some days this time of year," he said. "The trick is to set the hook when you feel the initial bite, then just hold it there for a second before you reel it in. That's often when the second fish will bite."

Biloxi Marsh is also hot for October redfish, but it takes a little different approach to catch your share. Instead of focusing on the shell-lined floors of oyster farms, Paul Leoni of Southern

Comfort Charters of Waveland fishes in all the nooks and crannies of calm water protected by the small islands scattered throughout the Marsh.

“Check close to the island banks and use live shrimp under Boat Monkey corks,” Leoni said. “Flooded grass will hold a lot of bait, so those are good fishing spots. Anywhere you see a cut in the bank is also a good place, and anywhere you see small drainage ditches running into the water are good bets, too. We also throw gold spoons and have good luck with them.

“We don’t pop the corks very much this time of year. With the clear water, it can spook the redfish, so we just let the shrimp do most of the work. You cast it close enough, and these fish won’t hesitate to take it.”

THE BARRIER ISLANDS

While many anglers believe October is too late for cobia, anglers like Manny Mandrich of Ocean Springs catches the big, brown fish close to Cat Island, Ship Island, Horn Island and Petit Bois Island.

Finding feeding speckled trout in the Biloxi Marsh in October is as easy as finding the well-marked oyster beds in the area. Check them out until you find the one holding the most fish. **BELOW:** For a lot of fishermen, wading is the way to catch limits of specks and reds around the Chandeleur Island chain at the west end of the Mississippi Sound.



“The cobia move into the area in the spring, and a lot of them stick around all summer and into the fall,” he said. “This is usually the last month I catch them, but I never have any trouble catching them.”

“I troll two lures at a time ... both Savage Lures Real Eels. On one side of the boat, I use an 8-inch lure. On the other side, I use the 16-inch eel. Both have a treble hook on the bottom and a single hook coming out the top. I use a contrasting-colored Crappie Psychic Mega Trailer on the top hooks, and I start off trolling around .5 miles per hour and adjust from there.”

Patience, Mandrich said, is a necessity.

“Many times, you’ll see them surface after you pass over them, and you have to be patient,” he said. “Just keep trolling back and forth when you see that. When they’re ready to eat, they’ll attack those eels no matter how many times they’ve ignored them before.”

Think October is too late for cobia? Wrong. Guys like Manny Mandrich of Ocean Springs find them trolling outside Mississippi’s barrier islands (east to west) Cat, Ship, Petit Bois and Horn.



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MISSISSIPPI SOUND

Autumn is a great time to catch tripletail, at least until the first major cold front drives these tasty and sporting fish offshore.

Until then, triples are a favorite target of fishermen like Capt. Mark Wright of Legends of the Lower Marsh of Pass Christian.

Wright said the best days are warm, bright, clear days that allow you to easily see fish hanging out close to floating crab trap markers or any surface debris. The bait of choice is live shrimp under a popping cork, which he called “deadly on tripletail.”

“This whole month will be good for tripletail in Mississippi Sound.”

Anglers can entice them into biting by casting the bait near the floating debris, then making a couple of cranks of the reel handle. This will lure the fish away from the cover, and they’ll suck in the shrimp aggressively, sensing that cooler temperatures are on the way.

“This whole month will be good for tripletail in Mississippi Sound, and they may stick around deep into next month until it gets brutally cold,” Wright said.

BUGS! FISH AREN'T THE ONLY THINGS BITING

Fishing along Mississippi’s Gulf Coast is great in October. The air is cooling, water temperatures are still comfortable, and many different species of fish are feeding heavily. But something else that is prevalent this time of year — biting flies.

“Everything would be perfect this time of year if not for the bugs,” said Delvin Dubroc of Long Beach. “The weather and the fishing are great, but the bugs can make it tough on some days, especially when there is very little wind.”

To combat the pesky critters, Dubroc uses Ben’s Insect Repellent with 100-percent DEET.

“I used to use the 30-percent formula, but the 100 lasts much longer and just does a better job,” he said. “For some reason, these bugs seem to love my ankles more than

anything else, so I spray them down real good. And I lightly spray everything else, including my face and head.”

Other fishermen in Mississippi and Louisiana have different formulas, many made and concocted at home with either a vanilla base, or with scents from stores like Victoria’s Secrets.

Perhaps the best protection is clothing, long sleeves and long pants.

Dubroc wears lightweight performance fishing shirts with hoods, often wearing the hood throughout the day.

“Its main purpose is to keep the sun off my neck and bald head, but it helps keep the bugs away, too,” he said. ■

— Brian Cope



CHANDELEUR SOUND

Another sound — the Chandeleur Sound — is a great fishing spot this month. Located far south of the west end of the Mississippi Sound, the area behind the Chandeleur Island chain is an historical hotspot for specks and reds.

Both species feed aggressively this time of year, and anglers catch them in a variety of sizes. This is the last month of the year anglers can comfortably wade-fish here, and that's just how Carson Paire of Diamondhead prefers fishing this area.

"It's a long but beautiful ride there," Paire said. "I leave early enough to arrive at first light, then it's out of the boat and casting Super Spooks on the surface. I catch mostly big trout, but redfish will bite that often enough to keep things interesting.

"Once the topwater bite dies down, I go to using a 2½-inch Johnson Silver Minnow in gold color, and I fish it parallel to the beaches. I wear a wading belt and carry a second rod with me. One that rod, I have a 2-inch version of that spoon in black. Anytime I get a hit and miss on the gold spoon, I'll immediately cast the black spoon along the same path. I catch a lot of redfish this way." ■

For information on Ronnie Daniels' Fisher-Man Guide Service, call (228)-323-1115.

For information on Paul Leoni's Southern Comfort Guide Service, call (228)-234-5562.

For information on Mark Wright's Legends of the Lower Marsh Guide Service, call (228)-324-7612.

Wading and casting the shoreline of Chandeleur Island can put a fisherman in a battle with a bull redfish at any moment, especially at sunrise.



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

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FIND A STRONG SPOT



Spotted bass are the highlight of a float trip down Mississippi's Strong River.

By David Hawkins

After his kayak passed over a log, left the current and slowed in a long, still run of the Strong River, Mark Golden realized the opportunity he was presented and went into action.

He grabbed his fishing rod, snipped the line and removed the floating Rapala he had tied on, opting instead for a wacky worm rig on a weighted, weedless hook.

He paused in the still waters to let the river and its inhabitants settle after his arrival.

Golden cast above the log and allowed the worm to wiggle its way through the fast water and into the calmer pool, using his rod tip to make the lure dance as it fell into the deeper water. Then, he saw what he was hoping for: a hesitation in the worm's fall.

David Hawkins

GOLDEN TIGHTENED UP AND SET THE HOOK.

The fish ran back under the log. Golden started playing it in the gentle current, which carried him 30 yards downstream before he could boat, unhook, admire and release the fish.

It is a spotted bass, a fish that lures fishermen to the Strong River — that, and the peacefulness of a float trip down the river.

LOWER PART IS BEST

The Strong River has its origin near the Kalem community in Scott County, but the genuine character of the river becomes most notable when it flows across the shallows at D'Lo, just north of the Simpson County town of Mendenhall. Those shallows are a popular swimming area for locals, featured in the Cohen brothers' movie, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*

It is at there that the river becomes a

navigable waterway for canoeists and lately, even more kayakers. Unless you have been shackled to a prison work gang for the past decade, you know kayaks are the hottest item on the fishing scene.

The number of put-in and take-out points along the river between D'Lo and Georgetown is limited due to most of the adjoining land being privately owned. But with a little planning, a float can be enjoyed, and some nice bass and bream can be brought to the boat, along with spotted bass, as feisty as any fish found in small rivers in the state.

"The float from D'Lo to Merit is very scenic and filled with small river character," said Judson Wallace of Mendenhall. "It's a good afternoon float, four to five hours. A day float from D'Lo would be to the Mississippi Highway 28 Bridge, but the take-out there is almost a vertical bank."

Wallace said that the section of river from Merit to Pinola is different, much slower and deeper. The next take-out is at Georgetown where the Strong enters the Pearl River just south of Highway 28.

"There are some good spotted bass in the upper portion of the river and no doubt in the lower area as well," Wallace said. "I have more experience in the upper portion of the river where the current is a little faster."



An assortment of plugs and baits that will handle spots just about anywhere. **INSET:** Kentucky spotted bass, this one caught on a Road Runner with a curlytail grub, are fun to catch, great to eat and beautiful to behold.

Deanna Simkins of Madison plies the waters below a log jam looking for a spotted bass.



David Hawkins

Wallace uses small spinnerbaits for the 1- to 2-pound spotted bass he catches on the upper Strong. His go-to lure is an 1/8-ounce black/green Beetle Spin on ultralight tackle or a 3/8-ounce version of the same bait with a heavier rod.

“Anglers should target any place where the flow of the river is diverted: around a stump, a log, a fallen tree or a submerged object,” Wallace said. “The bass will be holding in the slack water behind such objects and will dart out to grab a passing meal. Don’t be shy about casting right to the obstruction. The fish may be just inches from it and will strike sometimes as soon as the bait hits the water.”

Wallace, who lives on the river in Simpson County, also wants readers to understand that the Strong River may seem sleepy and calm in its normal state, but it can quickly become perilous and very powerful. His father perished while the river was experiencing a sudden rise.

SPOTTED BASS NOT RARE

While the spotted bass is a river- and stream-dwelling fish, it is also found in many other lakes statewide.

“Spotted bass are common all across Mississippi, both in streams and large reservoirs,” said biologist Tom Holman of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. “They are, by all accounts, more aggressive than largemouth in their feeding characteristics. Some biologists have found the spotted bass to be more ‘trout-like’ in their approach to eating. In big water, they favor open water and windswept stump fields, and in streams and creeks, they want moving water.”

Young spots feed on aquatic insects but move up to crustaceans such as crawfish and smaller fishes as they grow. Adults have diets much like

largemouths and will feed on shad and small sunfish. Fishermen on big lakes with good shad populations targeting largemouth bass often catch spotted bass. Lake spots are often larger in size because of the abundant food supply.

Holman said recent studies have discovered several sub-species of spotted bass with varying characteristics. The spots in the Strong River are like those in the Pearl River, which is no surprise since the rivers join.

Golden, from Taylorsville, is a kayak-bound fly fisherman with a penchant

for chasing spots in Mississippi streams. Where water is swift, he will beach his kayak and wade to within casting distance of a promising section of water.

continues >

A family consisting of a man, a woman, and a child are on a blue and white pontoon boat. The boat has a Tohatsu outboard motor and is on a body of water with rocky cliffs in the background. The boat has the name 'Quest' written on its side.

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"The fish are facing upstream or toward the current that will bring the food past their lair," Golden said. "My go-to fly is a Muddler Minnow with a few red threads in the tail. The bigger fly and bigger hook are more apt to hold a bass than smaller popping bugs, which are constantly getting hammered by bream. In the fall, bass bugs will catch spots, but the slow sinker just seems to catch more.

"Portions of the Strong and Leaf rivers have gravel bars that form points underwater. These bars generally indicate faster water shallow and slower water deeper. The bass will tend to hang just below the fastest water in any form of eddy, be it a log or a rock pile. A spot, just as any bass, wants the most meal

for the least effort, so they may not strike until the second or third cast. For that reason, it is important to make multiple presentations, progressing from shallow rapids to deeper, flowing water, getting as close to the eddy producing structure as possible."

Golden carries three rods on each float trip.

"One is a spinning reel spooled with 10-pound fluorocarbon on a 6-foot, medium-action rod. This is a bit of overkill for smaller bass but just the ticket for a heavier largemouth should you encounter one. Bowfin or grinnell are common where the river gets wide and slow.

"My other two rods are fly rods, one rigged for bass and the other for bream. I have a dream of catching a record-breaking green sunfish. Don't ask me why, it's just something I want to

STRONG RIVER FLOATS REQUIRE PREPARATION

It is a blessing and a curse, but parts of the Strong River have little or no cell-phone service. Tall trees and high banks block the signal. For that reason, if no other, be sure to file a travel itinerary with someone who will take responsibility if you fail to show up at an appointed time.

Don't expect help to come quickly in case of emergency. Keep a first-aid kit in your craft, along with a dry-box for valuables. Other necessities are hand sanitizers, insect repellent and sunscreen. On a long float, you'll also find a need for toilet paper and a method of lighting a fire.

A flashlight is another essential overnight item.

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do. The current state record is 1.26 pounds."

Golden doesn't take expensive lures to the streams.

"The rivers are full of limbs and logs looking to keep your bait," he said. "For that reason, I go as cheap as possible. There is a bait shop that sells H&H spinnerbaits for \$2 each, and I keep a dozen in my box all the time. Beetle Spins are as low as 85 cents at Walmart and will catch fish like crazy. Mepps spinners are deadly on spots but easily hang-up. Putting a curlytail grub on a Road Runner makes it a fine spot bait."

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Golden said that the spots he chases are most always in clear water, and that the fish are easily spooked by careless anglers and approaching floaters in kayaks and inner tubes.

"I'm not complaining about recreational users, but weekends during the summer are poor times to fish, unless that is the only time you have," he said. "Midweek on a steady level or a very slow rise has always been the best times for me."

There are alligators on the river, but Golden said they have always shied away from his watercraft. That's not to say they may not be curious and get close to investigate. Enough people camp on the sandbars that the gators are bound to associate the smell of food with humans. ■



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

Canoes are the top choice for float-fishing pairs. Two paddles allow better control, and a canoe can carry more cargo than a kayak. **INSET:** These hand-tied flies by Scott Waters are just a few Mark Golden uses to catch bass and bream on float trips.



Photos by David Hawkins



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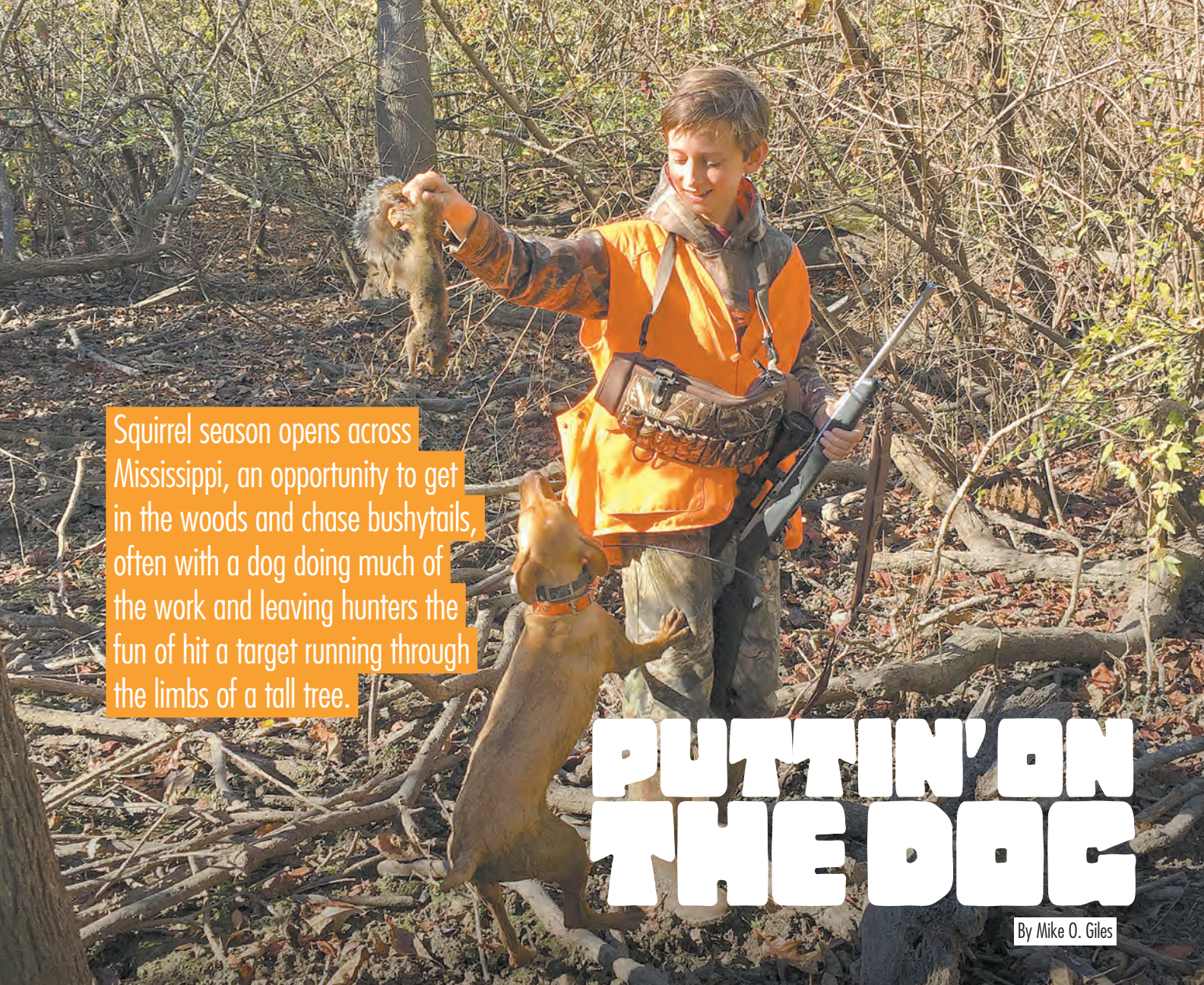
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Squirrel season opens across Mississippi, an opportunity to get in the woods and chase bushytails, often with a dog doing much of the work and leaving hunters the fun of hit a target running through the limbs of a tall tree.

PUTTIN' ON THE DOG

By Mike O. Giles

Patrick Allen dropped his tailgate, and Honey Girl hit the ground running wide open into the hardwood bottom — a squirrel dog on a mission.

Honey Girl, Allen's Mullins Feist, wasted no time getting to work. She ran about 100 yards and treed a squirrel pronto. Before the hunters could get to the squirrel, Honey Girl left the tree and ran about 30 yards and treed again, which was not like her at all.

Arriving at the tree, we spotted a squirrel high among the upper branches, and the young guns took a shot or two, then all heck broke loose. As the young hunters were blazing away at that squirrel, more squirrels started coming out of the woodwork, running, jumping and swinging from limb to limb in their attempts to escape.

The trees were shaking with squirrels dashing this way and that.

Jared Barnett picked out the first squirrel and dropped it as he sailed through the oak tree limbs.

"There's another one," Jack Allen said. "And there's another one over there, too. Honey treed three squirrels in two different trees at the same time."

The dog hadn't left a false tree; there were just too many squirrels to count, and she watched the first one move to another tree and followed him. We thought she'd messed up, but Honey Girl was on the ball.

The grey squirrels flew through the treetops like trapeze artists. Honey Girl was following them with keen eyes and trailing along. She was just coming into her prime three years old.

Jack Allen and Nathan Hodgins took a sharp aim at one of the escaping squirrels, and ended its run.

Boom! Ka-Boom!

Their shotguns roared, and the squirrel fell from the heights.

It was a mild fall day in East Mississippi, but also a wild fall day in the woods. Honey Girl was treeing constantly. Patrick Allen and his 14-year-old son, Jack, are avid squirrel hunters, and 12-year-old Nathan Hodgins had come along for on his first squirrel dog hunt. The party included Jared Barnett, who was sharing one of his squirrel hunting hot spots.

FUN TIME

The hunting was wide open and action-packed, although we kept at a leisurely pace in between Honey's trees.

Squirrel hunting with dogs is like that, with action fast and furious when the dogs have treed, but laid back and fun when the dogs are working the woods and hunting for another squirrel.

"We have great fun," Patrick Allen said. "It's actually a social hunt with friends and family, and we spend a lot of time talking and cutting up and getting some good exercise, too. It's fun telling stories and tall tales while we watch the dogs work."

Patrick Allen used to be a diehard deer hunter, but that's a thing of the past now.

"About five years ago, a man carried me and my son, Jack, squirrel hunting with a dog, and we saw what we'd been missing," Patrick Allen said. "We had so much fun that we switched from hard-core deer hunters to hard-core squirrel hunters.

"Deer hunting had become so serious that it's taken a lot of fun out of it. We love squirrel hunting for lots of reasons, but we get to spend time with each other, and there's lots of action.

That's what makes it fun for me and the kids. These days, a lot of kids grow up deer hunting from stands and never get to squirrel hunt or learn the basics of hunting. They're really missing out on some fantastic hunting and good times. We still like to hunt deer during the rut when the action is hot. And we like to shoot a good buck, too, but we spend most of our time hunting squirrels and only hunt deer when they're chasing does."

The Allens prefer limiting their hunting parties to four to six people, enough to surround the treed squirrels and find them — they can be hard to spot when they lay flat against the tree trunk or tree limbs — and still be safe. Adults usually go for the fun of working the dogs, watching the kids have fun — and to make sure that everybody hunts safely.

HOT DELTA SQUIRREL HUNTING

While many people like to hunt the Mississippi Delta for huge bucks and plentiful ducks, a select few squirrel hunters have their own "squirrel camps" — places they stay so that they can hunt a few days at a time.

Allen lives near Meridian, so it's too long of a drive to hunt one day and then drive home.

"We have a camp between Rolling Fork and Holly Bluff," he said. "We do most of our hunting on public land. During most of the deer season, deer hunters don't want you hunting their private land, but they welcome you after deer season closes. However, that doesn't give you much time to hunt if you wait until February.

"There's lots of public land in the Delta, and we do see a bunch of nice deer while squirrel hunting. Sunflower WMA is in the Delta National Forest, and it has plenty of squirrels and



Honey Girl trees another squirrel. In addition to being an effective way to fill a game sack with squirrels, a good treeing dog allows hunting parties to talk and walk at a leisurely pace to make for a fun family day.

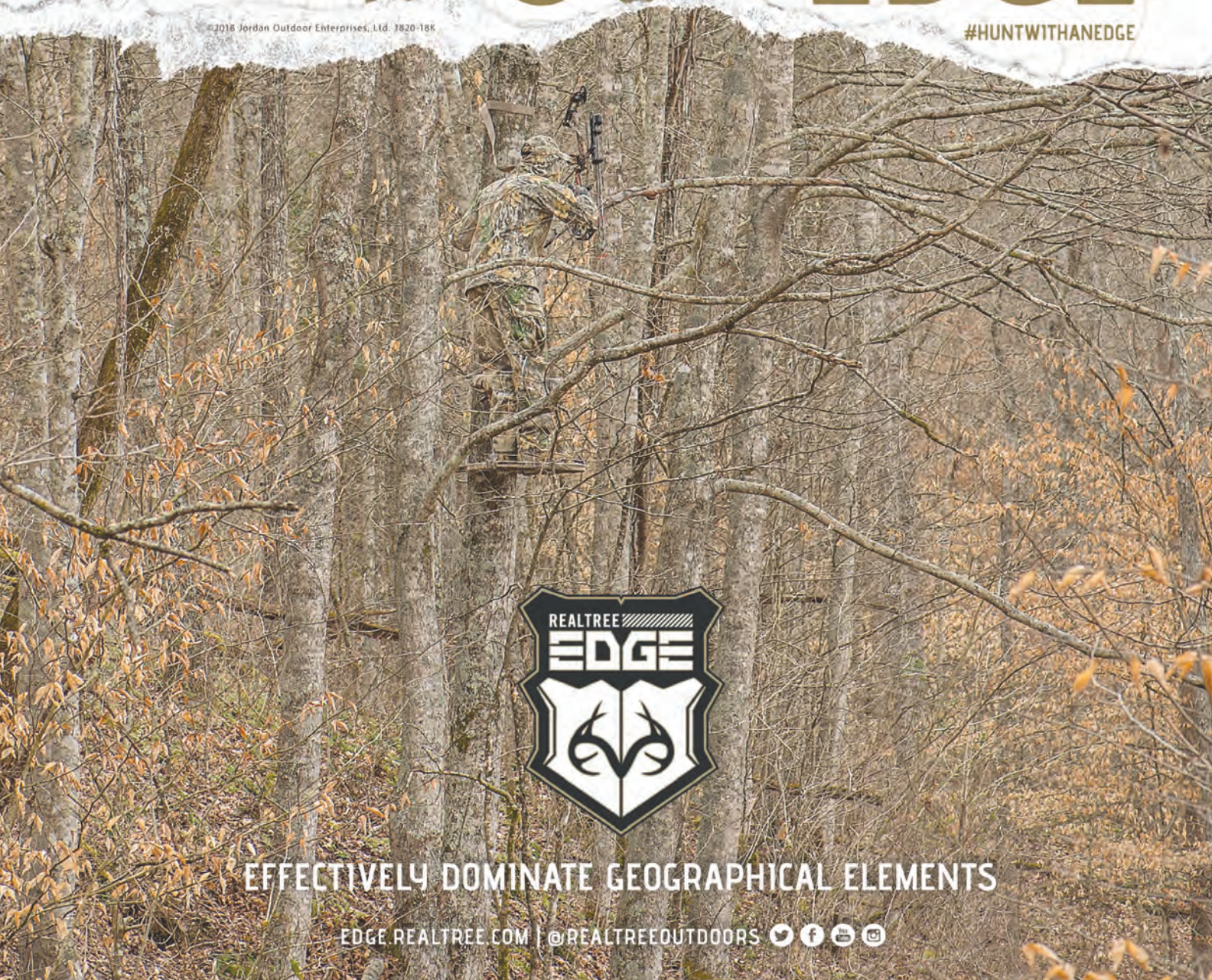
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RIGHT: Brian Belk harvested this unique-colored squirrel that appears to have been a cross between a red and black fox squirrel.



Mike Giles

room enough to stay clear of the deer hunters. We like to hunt places that are not so easy to get to because a lot of people hunt those easily accessible places.”

Mahannah WMA, Twin Oaks WMA, and Panther Swamp National Wildlife Refuge have thousands of acres of bottomland hardwoods to hunt; they offer some of the state’s best opportunities to harvest a sack full of squirrels. Be sure to check WMA regulations to be sure when and where squirrel hunting is legal on different tracts.

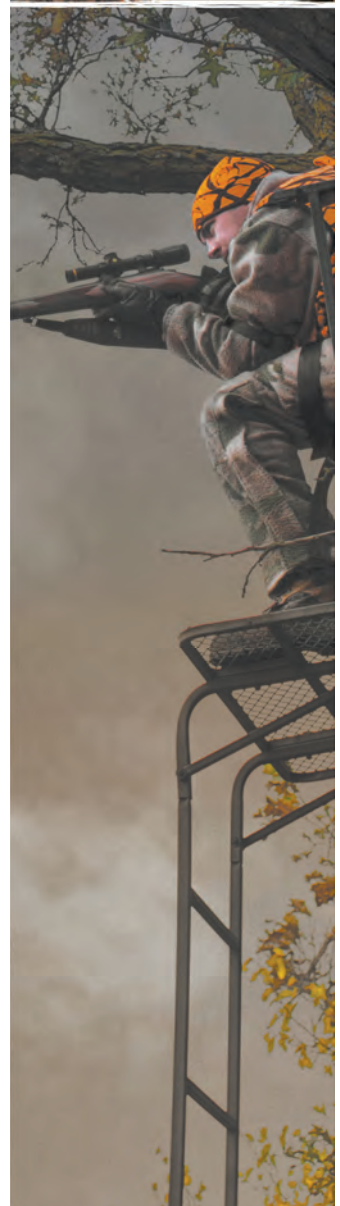
If you haven’t hunted in the Delta, you’re really missing something special. It is the only area of Mississippi where a hunter can score a “squirrel trifecta” by bagging gray, red and black squirrels on the same day. The Delta is home to fox squirrels that come in two main colors: red and black.

“In the Delta, it’s about a 50-50 split between the red fox squirrels and grey squirrels,” Patrick Allen said. “Hunters will find more black squirrels on Mahannah than most of the other places in the Delta.”

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OTHER REGIONS

In East Central Mississippi, the Tallahala, Bienville and Caney Creek WMAs are all popular. Squirrels are plentiful, and the Allens often hunt there when time is limited and prevents a run to the Delta.

“Upper Sardis and Malmaison WMAs are the top destinations for squirrel hunting in the Northwest WMA Region,” said biologist Brad Holder of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. “There are squirrels to be had at Charles Ray Nix WMA, but it’s not on the same level as Upper Sardis and Malmaison.”

In Northeast Mississippi, biologist Nathan Blount of MDWFP had a couple of recommendations.

“The Canal Section and John Bell Williams WMAs are your best places to harvest squirrels in the northeast section of the state,” Blount said. “There are lots of bottomland hardwoods and lots of squirrels. Last year, John Bell Williams was really impressive, and lots of squirrels were harvested there.”

DOGS FUN, NOT REQUIRED

During the early part of the season when the leaves are still on the trees, stalking — or still-hunting — is an alternative to dog hunting and a good tactic for hunters who don’t have dogs.

“Still-hunting for squirrels can be just as fun, and it’s hard to beat during the early season,” Patrick Allen said. “My son, Jack, likes to still-hunt near the house after school, and he loves to use a squirrel call, too.”

“Jack has really harvested a lot of squirrels while using the squirrel call. He’ll hit that squirrel call, and they will answer him, and he slips up on them under the cover of the leaf canopy, and he’ll bring home a sack full!”

Squirrel calls are really productive when stalking squirrels with a .22 rifle. Hunters can slip up on the squirrels and pick them off without disturbing other squirrels in the area. If squirrels are responding and barking back at your call, if you’re good at slipping up stealthily on the squirrels, they’re easy pickings for a sharpshooter with a scoped .22 rifle.

SCRUMPTIOUS EATING

When it comes to fine table fare, look no further than a plate of tender, fried squirrels, brown gravy and homemade biscuits. Country cooks tenderize the squirrels in pressure

A hunting party of between four and six youths and adults puts plenty of eyes in the tree tops to spot the squirrel treed by the dog.



Mike Giles

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A notched stump in the woods was a perfect place to display the fruits of a hunt by (from left) Patrick Allen, Nathan Hodgins, Jared Barnett and Jack Allen, along with Honey Girl.



Mike Giles

TIME TO GET SQUIRRELY

Mississippi's fall squirrel season opens statewide on Sept. 30 and lasts through Feb. 28. The daily bag limit is eight squirrels per hunter.

Patrick Allen sits on a log with his prized Mullins Feist, Honey Girl, with the fruits of a hunt. He outfits her with a GPS tracker on her collar to keep up with her in the woods.



Mike Giles

cookers, crock pots or by boiling them until tender. A few like to fry the squirrel lightly, just browning them a bit, and then put them a pan of brown gravy and let them simmer until the meat falls off the bone.

"I like to cook them down until the meat falls off the bone and then pull the meat off and mix them with rice," Allen said. "We love that squirrel and rice, and my wife even makes some fine squirrel gumbo!"

Other hunters prefer taking that tenderized meat and using it in dumplings. Squirrel dumplings are a tasty treat indeed and something everybody should sample at least once. ■



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

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Desoto
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Sabine
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 • 113 Acres \$3,250/AC
 • 160 Acres \$3,300/AC
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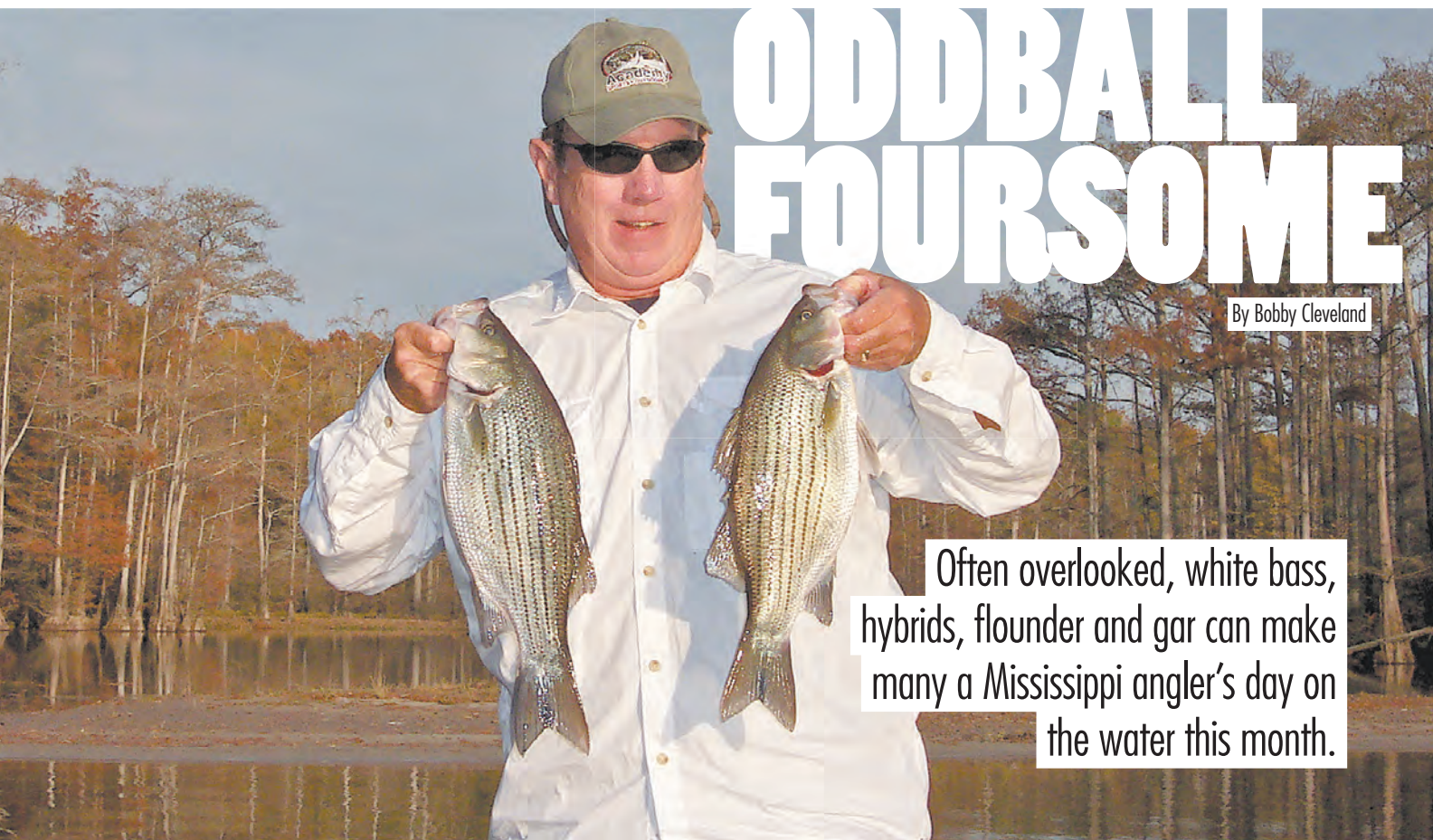


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ODDBALL FOURSOME

By Bobby Cleveland

Often overlooked, white bass, hybrids, flounder and gar can make many a Mississippi angler's day on the water this month.

As soon as the grub floated through the gap in the rocks and fell on the deep side of the jetty, Sid Montgomery felt the slightest bump and saw the faintest twitch in the line.

A millisecond later, his light-action rod was bowed in a big arc, and the fight was on.

“Ooh wee, if that’s a white bass, it’s a big one,” he said, looking at the rod tip and enjoying its bend. “He’s using the current ... to his advantage. Probably makes him feel bigger than he actually is.”

A minute later, the backbone of the rod had done its job, the 6-pound monofilament had withstood the abrasion of the rocks, and the fish, about 15 inches long, was in the net — about a 2-pounder.

“Pretty good, not bad, can’t complain,” Montgomery said, singing the lyrics from a John Prine song. “And we can do this all-day long. It’s fall on the Mississippi River and it’s a fine time to be fishing.”

October is a great time to be a sportsman in Mississippi, and not just because hunting seasons have started to arrive. The transition between seasons is also a great time to be on the water. Fish know winter is coming and sense that it’s important to eat heavily before food sources become less available and expending energy to chase it less desirable.

“It cold water, they aren’t aggressive,” Montgomery said. “That’s what makes fishing in October so good.”

Autumn also opens a door to some fishing opportunities. With a little imagination and basic information, some exciting adventures are available on the water, some that put delicious fish on the table and some that just provide fun. Here are four of those October oddities that are worth the effort.

RIVER WHITES

Montgomery’s love of the Mississippi River runs as deep as some of its waters, and white bass are a big part of it.

“I wish I knew why so few people find white bass so unappealing,” he said. “From a sporting standpoint, they’re as much fun to catch as anything swimming, and there is no limit. From an eating standpoint, if they are cleaned and prepared right, I’d put them up against crappie or any other freshwater fish.

“In eating the fish, the fact that there is no limit is important. Yes, they do have that red meat along the lateral line, but the white meat around it is perfect. You just cut out the red meat and trim the edges of the white flesh, and you’ve got a fillet that will fry as nicely as fish can be fried. When you got about 100 fish in a box, you end up with a lot of it.”



▶

Catching that many is not as difficult as one would think. “It’s actually fairly easy,” Montgomery said. “They school up pretty good, and they really do it in October. If you find one, you’re likely looking at a bunch of fish in one spot.”

Montgomery has two basic patterns he uses to find whites; both involve current and current breaks.

“No. 1 is finding the breaks in the rock jetties or dikes that the (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) built to control the flow of the river,” he said. “There’s hundreds of them up and down the river from Vicksburg north to Greenville and Vicksburg down to Natchez. The key is finding the ones that are closest to the level of the river that day. With so many jetties, there are going to be several that are perfect any given day.”

The perfect scenario, Montgomery explained, is a jetty a foot or two above the water level at some point along the rocks. Parts of the jetty may be 10 feet out of the water, but another part or parts will be lower, with water spilling through breaks in the rocks or running over the tops of the rocks.

“That’s what you are looking for, anywhere there is water coming through or over the rocks,” he said. “Sport fish will stack up in areas where that water is racing through because it comes with a force and brings all kinds of forage through the rocks with it. The fish, especially white bass, will sit there waiting to nab a quick meal.”

Montgomery uses several lures to take white bass, but his favorite is simple enough: a 1/8-ounce jighead with a 2- or 3-inch pearl white grub. It’s a bait he can use to most closely mimic the natural feeding process that occurs in the jetty breaks. He positions the boat close enough to the break to cast the jig above the jetty, and then holds his rod tip very high to carefully dance it through the rocks until it gets through a gap.

“Once it gets to the down side of the break, I lower the tip and let the bait fall,” he said. “That’s when they’ll hit it. You have to watch your line and have a finger on the line, because the hits are hard to detect.”

“The jetties are used to guide currents and create deep water. The water will be deep on the downriver side of the jetty, so you can let the bait fall. All the time, you are trying to keep contact with the lure and keep it out of the rocks, but it’s going to happen. You break off a lot of jigs, but that’s why they make tackle boxes, so you can have enough with you.”

Montgomery uses the same technique with a small spinner-bait like a Road Runner or an in-line Mepps spinner.

“Another good lure is a Bandit 200 or 300 crankbait in a shad pattern — it needs a white belly,” he said. “In between feeding, the fish will move over and hold in the eddy water along the current formed by the break in the rocks. I work those edges with a crankbait and pick up fish. You can also crank the edges of the rocks along the jetty, too.”

CLOSE COUSINS: HYBRIDS UP NEXT ▶

||||| Breaks near the waterline in the many jetties of the Mississippi River provide anglers a perfect ambush point for white bass.



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CLOSE COUSINS: HYBRIDS

Another hard-to-skip October opportunity — and one that fishermen have been forced to skip over the past decade — is chasing hybrid stripers on Barnett Reservoir, especially on the upper reservoir area on the Pearl River. Hybrids are kin to the white bass since they are a cross between white bass and striped bass bred in a fish-hatchery lab.

Hybrids are a mobile lot, fish that will swim miles in a day to pursue shad. In October, shad on Barnett are well into their migration from the main lake up the river. Hybrids, when they are stocked in The Rez, spend the summer on the open water and then follow the migrating shad. It creates a wild and crazy fish bite that hasn't been seen in years.

That will change this month, since hybrids were heavily stocked in 2017.

"I'm looking forward to the fall this year," said Jerry Thomas of Brandon. "We haven't had the hybrids like this in years. I heard they stocked them good last year, and this summer I've encountered big schools of them in the 12- to 14-inch range. That's too small to keep, but they are growing fast. They were like 10 to 12 inches in May when I first found them and were pushing 14 inches by mid-August.

"I bet they are over the 15-inch minimum by the time they reach the upper river area. I just hope these new hybrids act like ones they used to stock and go up there. The pure striped bass that they've been stocking didn't make the big fall river run; maybe these hybrids will!"

John Alford of Fannin is a fisherman who used to chase the hybrids up the river in the fall, and he was delighted to hear the fish may be available to catch this month.

"Man, we used to kill them in October," Alford said. "You didn't catch them where you thought you would, or where you would catch them in the spring, but when you did find them, there'd literally be thousands of them in a stretch of the river. You could catch them until you got tired of it."

One spot that Alford used to hammer them regularly is about as odd as you'd find: a long, deep (10 to 12 feet) flat that is completely devoid of cover between two bends in the river. It is located just as you leave the no-wake area at Flag Island.

"I never really figured out why they would get there, but they always did," he said. "One day I was out looking for a good spotted bass hole, and I saw a school of fish blasting shad on the surface. I hadn't throttled back up after the no-wake, and I was able to jump up and get a rod and make a cast. Bam! An 18-inch hybrid hit it immediately. I caught three in three casts on a Bandit 200, and then they went down. I switched to a 3-inch pearl grub on a jighead, smashed the barb on the hook, and I caught about 50 or 60 in the next hour to an hour-and-a-half. It was insane."

Fortunately, Alford called me that night and invited me along the next day. We ran straight to the spot, and the insanity resumed immediately and was non-stop between 8 a.m. and noon. They were still biting on nearly every cast when we'd had enough.

In addition to the crankbaits and grubs, Alford also likes a tail-spinner, like the original Bob Ponds-made Whing-Ding.

"When they are down on the bottom, the Whing-Ding is the ticket," Alford said. "They can't stand that little flash and vibra-



Hybrid striped bass can be caught on a number of lures in the upper Pearl River area of Barnett Reservoir, where they follow migrating shad.

tion that spinner throws off."

Alford found two or three similar flats that all held fish.

"Go to the upriver end, kill the motor and drift back with the current," he said. "Stop when you run out of fish and go back up the other end and start another drift. You will wear them out and you will get worn out."

FLAT-OUT INSHORE FUN

Flounder may not be the most-curious fish in the Gulf of Mexico, but they are sure odd with their flat bodies and both eyes on one side of their heads. Their bottoms are white, their tops a mottled dark-grayish brown.

They do top a certain list for many fishermen: ones they like to eat.

"Best eating fish in the Gulf," said Columbia native Tommy Sutton, who has retired and moved to a fish camp near the mouth of the Pearl River. "In October, that's when you are most

The flat-sided flounder is sporting on the hook and delicious on a plate. In October, these odd fish start returning to the shallows along the Gulf Coast.

likely to catch them, and a lot of them, in the shallows.”

Flounder move back inshore in the fall and feed heavily on the edges of bayous and coves, ditches and shell beds.

“They’ll get anywhere,” Sutton said. “They are flat so they can get extremely shallow, like a few inches of water. They like to be around structure, so if you have a bayou that has some pilings or old stumps, that’s a good place to look.”

Flounder rely on scent to eat and prefer live or cut bait. They will hit an artificial lure but are 10 times more likely to hit it if it is adorned with a piece of cut bait or a dead shrimp.

“A friend of mine I met after moving down here taught be a trick for catching flounder,” Sutton said. “That’s why I always buy a bunch of those small, Styrofoam crappie or bream floats with the peg that holds the line down the center of the float. I use 10-pound braided line from the reel tied to a swivel with a ¼-ounce or lighter slip sinker just above the swivel. Behind the swivel, I tie about 18 inches to 2 feet of fluorocarbon line with an Octopus or a circle hook. About halfway between the hook and the swivel, I put the crappie float and peg it. Then I put a shrimp on the hook.”

The rig allows the bait to float just off the bottom as it is retrieved slowly across the bottom.

“Right in a flounder’s strike zone,” Sutton said. “The beauty of it is redfish and speckled trout will also hit it.”



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GAR-RILLA BY ROPE

Gar fishing is not for everybody, but for fishermen who like to live on the edge, it's a blast.

"It's strictly a hot- or warm-weather deal," said Mark Beason of Jackson, a gar fanatic. "We do it more in August and September, but it's so hot it can be miserable while fishing. That's why in years that the weather stays hot or at least warm into October, we keep right on fishing. It's more comfortable."

Beason uses frayed rope for a lure. There's no hook involved.

"We call it Velcro fishing," he said. "The gar we're targeting — long-nose, short-nose and spotted gar — all have hundreds of hypodermic needle-like teeth. When they hit that frayed rope they get hung up like Velcro. The more they shake, the more they roll, and the more they fight, the more they get caught in the rope."

"What's great about it is that the more fish you catch on a piece of rope, the more effective that piece of rope becomes. The more it shreds or frays, the better it looks and the more effective it becomes in getting snagged in all those teeth."

As long as the water is warm, gar will stay near the surface and continually rise to gulp air for their swim bladders. That is what Beason looks for.

"They will let you know where they are, just like schooling bass," he said. "If you see or hear a gar rise and gulp, cast at the spot immediately and hang on. It could be a small 2- or 3-pounder but it could also be a 15- or 20-pounder, or even bigger. You get a big one on 12-pound line, and you've got a long fight on your hands."

The later in the summer or early fall that you get, the more likely you are to find big gar hanging out in big schools of the same size. Beason and I found a wad of them balled up inside a roped-off swimming area below Sardis Dam and caught about a dozen 15-pounders in a row.

"The spillway areas below dams, old oxbow lakes off the Mississippi River and old river beds now removed from the channel are all great gar holes."

Warning: Take thick gloves and some long needle-nose



All that's needed for catching gar is a 12-inch piece of nylon rope passed through a big swivel and then unwound and frayed. The finished lures in the middle show the stages of use — new on the left, after catching a few in the middle and battle-worn on the right.



pliers along on the trip. Removing the rope from teeth can be hazardous to fingertips.

"It's not easy but it's worth it," Beason said. "If you like to fight big fish, and a lot of them, you've got to try it."

Do you eat gar?

"I do," he said. "You'd be surprised at how good and white the flesh of the shoulder loins of an 8- to 10-pound gar are. Cajuns love it in gumbos and in stews, but they usually use melon scoops and make balls out of them." ■



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.



The hundreds of needle-like teeth of a long-nose gar make it vulnerable to a piece of frayed rope used as a hookless bait.

5 DEER CALIBERS

that can't be beat

By Pete Rogers



For whitetails in Mississippi, it's difficult to come up with any better examples of ammo that will do the job.

The debate over the best rifle calibers for deer has been going on as long as hunters have been sitting around campfires. In Mississippi, the array of calibers is as wide as the beaches along the Gulf Coast. Narrowing the list to five is, well, challenging.

How does one select the best caliber for Magnolia State whitetails? Began with a list of things to consider. First, leave out any caliber less than .27 and

more than .35. Second, ask yourself, which of these are popular, and which would I use or already currently use? Another consideration is affordability. How much do the guns chambered for them cost? Availability of ammunition is another factor. If you run out or go out the door and forget your bullets, can you stop at almost any store that carries ammo and pick some up? Last is the accuracy and killing effectiveness of these calibers for the size of deer in Mississippi. >>>

THERE ARE LITERALLY HUNDREDS OF CALIBERS TO CHOOSE FROM.

BUT STAYING WITHIN THE PARAMETERS, HERE ARE FIVE. LET THE DEBATES BEGIN.

.30-06 SPRINGFIELD

Arguably the most-popular deer caliber in America, it is also a favorite almost everywhere. If not at the top, it is certainly in the top three. Available in a variety of bullet weights, ranging from 90 to 220 grains, it is ideal for deer. For example, the factory loaded, 150-grain bullet carries a muzzle velocity of 2,910 feet per second, with a downrange velocity at 200 yards of 2,492. Equally impressive is the energy retention, at well over 2,298 foot pounds at 200 yards. That makes it one of the best, most-accurate rounds available.



.270 WINCHESTER

Legendary gun writer Jack O'Connor referred to the .270 Winchester as the finest all-around caliber available. Certainly, he forgot more about guns than most of us will ever know. The .270 has a love-hate relationship with deer hunters; there are those who swear by it, and others who scoff at it. Still, for the size deer you're likely to run into, it is hard to beat, given its flat trajectory, low recoil and effective killing power. When asked, — "How many deer have you killed with that .270?" — one prolific deer slayer answered plainly, "All of them."

Factory loaded 130-grain bullets leave a .270's muzzle at an effective 3,060 feet per second and are still travelling 2,627 feet per second at 200 yards. Equally effective is the energy retention, producing 2,702 foot pounds at the muzzle and a 1,991 foot pounds at 200 yards downrange — more than enough energy for even the biggest Mississippi whitetails.



.7MM-08 REMINGTON

If there was ever a great marriage between the .270 Winchester and .30-caliber rounds, it is the .7mm-08 Remington. This combination of a .30-caliber case necked down to support a 7mm bullet could just be the best all-around cartridge for deer and other, similar-sized game.

The 140-grain Nosler bullet leaves the barrel at 2,860 feet per second and is still travelling 2,488 feet per second 200 yards downrange. Its energy is 2,543 foot pounds at the muzzle and 1,925 at 200 yards.

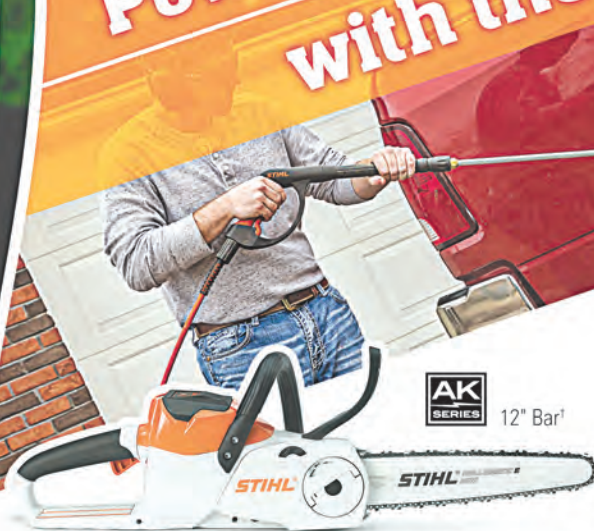
This is a caliber many parents use to introduce their children to hunting. The effective killing range and very low recoil make it comfortable for small-framed hunters to have confidence shooting it at controlled ranges.



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7MM REMINGTON MAGNUM

Admittedly, this is a behemoth of a round for whitetails. The size of the bullet and the extreme damage it does to deer seems like overkill. But in the words of legendary author Robert Ruark, "Use enough gun," and in choosing the 7mm Remington Magnum, you certainly have done that.

The 150-grain bullet leaves the muzzle at a blistering 3,110 feet per second, with 3,221 foot pounds of energy. At 200 yards down-range, it carries 2,751 feet per second velocity and 2,520 foot

pounds of energy — more than enough to drop a deer in its tracks, even with marginal shot placement. Personal preference adheres to the old adage about the 7mm Remington Magnum: "It kills on one end and maims on the other."



6.5 CREEDMOOR

New to the list is a cartridge that is quickly gaining traction. Originally designed for long-range, bench-rest shooters, the 6.5 Creedmoor is an excellent cartridge for deer. It is perhaps the best cartridge ever developed for deer- and antelope-sized game. Like a lot of new cartridges, it has its "nay-sayers," but looking at the numbers, it is hard to beat a cartridge that dominates 1,000-yard rifle competitions for accuracy and still retains downrange killing energy. Couple this with the extremely light recoil, and what is not to like about this round?

More and more manufacturers are carrying the 6.5 Creedmoor, and it's showing up in more stores, which is why it made the list. Ammunition is around \$25 per box, less expensive than the magnum rounds but a shade more than the old standards. To verify, let's look at the numbers.

Most deer hunters use the 129-grain bullets, but it also comes in 120- and 140-grain rounds. The 129-grain Hornady load pushes 2,950 feet per second at the muzzle with 2,492 foot pounds of energy. Out at the terminal range of 200 yards, this little bullet retains 2,570 feet per second of velocity and a deliberate 1,892 foot pounds of energy. Not bad for a small bullet screaming through the air.



CONCLUSION

There are a host of popular calibers not included here — the .30-30, .308, .243, .35 Remington, .300 Winchester Magnum, and so on — not because they are not excellent rounds, but simply due to space limitations. Narrowing the list to five is difficult, to say the least. Still, any of these listed are excellent rounds for your fall hunt for Mississippi deer. ■



Pete Rogers is employed with USDA Wildlife Services; he has been a sporting writer and photographer for more than a decade.



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IN THE 'CROSS'HAIRS

By Chris Ginn

Crossbows are still looked down upon by some traditional bowhunters, but they definitely provide an appealing option during archery season. Here's what you need to know if you're heading into the woods with one this fall.

The constant chatter about how crossbows are for cheaters still fills Stephen Chapman's ears, several years after the grumbling first started.

That's because Chapman, a veteran bow technician, deals with bowhunters on a daily basis.

"A lot of people still don't accept crossbows," he said. "But the way I see it, if shooting a crossbow allows you to enjoy the outdoors and keeps you legal, then go for it ... up to a point."

Chapman frequently sets his customers up with either Mission or CamX crossbows. He even bought one for himself a couple years ago but has never used it in the woods.

Although he believes they're great for some people, he feels like they do take away the primitive part of hunting with a bow.

"I had a pacemaker put in a while back, so I bought one," Chapman said. "Pulled it out the box and put it together, and without making any adjustments to it, I was putting all four arrows in a 2-inch circle at 70 yards. But the doctor removed my pacemaker before hunting season started, so I never even took it to the woods. As long as I can pull back a compound bow, that's what I'm going to use."

Chapman's personal experience perfectly portrays his feelings about crossbows.

He thinks they're great tools for people who aren't physically able to pull back compound bows — disabled vets, people with bum shoulders and youngsters — because they allow those folks to still be able to enjoy a hunt.

"For me, archery is archery," Chapman said. "You've got to do your homework and get up close and personal to make your best shot... typically 40 yards or under. Even when I wind up having to use a crossbow, I'm still going to try to get close. Just because you can shoot a deer at 100 yards with a crossbow doesn't mean you should. That's about the only issue I have with them — the temptation to make too long of a shot just because you can."

PRIMITIVE BRUSH RIFLES

There's no doubt some people buy crossbows with the idea of being able to make a long-range shot in October. Some units are shooting arrow speeds in the mid 400-feet-per-second range, with 2-inch groups out to 100 yards.

"It's almost like hunting with a .30-30," Chapman said. "With an old brush rifle, you don't need a tack-driver. Three rounds in a 3-inch circle at 100 yards is good enough. The only real differences are you're shooting arrows with a crossbow instead of bullets, and you can use

one during archery season."

Although Chapman believes most of the hunters he sells crossbows to wind up taking shots at the same distances they would with compound bows, he said knowing in the back of their minds that they could make an 80-yard shot resonates with them.

"What you've got to remember, though, is that a crossbow bolt is going to have a much higher arc to the point of impact 100 yards downrange than a rifle," he explained.

"And while it might feel like you've got a primitive rifle in your hands, the reality is that the tunnel vision you get when a deer walks out could keep you from seeing things above your line of sight that might impact your bolt at the top of the arc. Anything — a limb or even a twig — touches your bolt, and a lot of stuff can go wrong."

The only situation in the field that would make Chapman comfortable making a 70- or 80-yard shot with a crossbow would be an open lane in perfect conditions. At that point, he agreed that it would be very much like using a rifle that shoots an arrow.

A NEED FOR SPEED

With crossbows running a full 100 feet-per-second faster (440 fps) than even the fastest compound bow (340 fps), there's no doubt they fulfill the need for speed — assuming you need all that speed to begin with.

In Chapman's line of work, the first thing customers ask him about when looking at a crossbow or a compound bow is speed, because everybody thinks speed kills. Hunters feel like they need the fastest crossbow they can get because of their collective fear that a deer will jump the string.

"No doubt crossbows give you the advantage there," he said, "but the way I see it the faster you can shoot,

While hunting with her crossbow, 11-year-old Raelyn Crain put some meat in the family freezer.



Nine-year-old Natalee Ponder took this doe with her crossbow during an early-season hunt, evidence that crossbows are great for introducing kids to bowhunting.

the faster you can miss. Sure, that arrow is going to get downrange quicker, but what's it going to do when it gets there?"

Chapman agreed with the assertion that the faster the arrow, the flatter its flight, which could help in a longer shot. But he believes kinetic energy is more important than speed.

"I wish people would get off the speed kick" he said. "I've tried shooting flatter and faster, but it's like throwing a ping pong ball at 500 miles an hour; it's going to sting really badly. But take a golf ball and throw it at 100 miles an hour, and it's going to break bones."

This is why Chapman is an advocate for a slightly slower crossbow shooting a slightly heavier bolt.

"Although a crossbow has a speed advantage, it comes at a price," Chapman said. "A compound bow is a lot quieter than a crossbow. We do have dampeners



Bowhunter Hunter Shaffett still had to get close with his crossbow to take this nice buck.



you can put on them, and some of the more high-end crossbows like the CamX A4, Mission Sub 1, and the Ravin ... they're the quietest and fastest, top of the line. I work on a bunch of fast bows, though, and the faster a bow is the more likely you are to have problems with it."

CROSSBOW ADVANTAGES

With a little imagination and some extra money, a compound bow-hunter could conceivably hunt from just about any kind of stand; however, hunting with a crossbow makes it easier to hunt from whatever stand you choose.

"You really have no stand limitations with a crossbow," Chapman said. "None of this is set in stone, but compound-bow hunters typically hunt your lock-ons, climbers and ladders. You can hunt in box and ground blinds, but they have to be big enough for you to draw, and you have to have those tall, narrow windows on the corners. With a crossbow, as long as you can get your scope on it, you can shoot it."

Crossbows also have the advantage of being able to take a shot with little movement, which minimizes your chances of a deer spotting you in the stand. Compound bow-hunters would argue that it's all part of the challenge of bowhunting, but there's no arguing less movement means less attention.

"You're sitting in the stand like you would be if you were holding a rifle," Chapman said. "You're already cocked and ready to go, so all you've got to do is pull the trigger. No worrying about having to stand up or getting busted on the draw."

PACKAGE DEALS

Like just about everything else in the world, the main trend in crossbows has been to make them smaller and lighter. You don't have to think too far back to remember crossbows that had limbs that looked 3 feet wide.

"Man, when you shot those things out of a box stand those limbs would go forward, and you might wind up breaking your limbs or smoking your stand," Chapman said. "Now the reverse limbs are popular

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CROSSBOWS

because they move sideways and not forward. Heck, the CamX A4 is only 10½ inches wide.

“Compact and faster, that’s where we’re headed.”

Another trend in crossbows is for them to come in a package that includes everything you need to jump right into the woods. And a fully decked out crossbow ready to hunt can be had for \$850 to \$1,000.

“You’re going to spend \$1,000 just for a naked compound bow nowadays,” Chapman said. “Then you’re looking at buying another \$700 worth of stuff to put on it to get it ready to shoot. Of course, you could go higher or lower on crossbows and compounds depending on what you want to spend, but those are good averages.”

CROSSBOW SETUP

Since most crossbows already come with the bolts, there isn’t much to consider except for which broadhead you’re going to shoot.



The way bow tech Stephen Chapman sees it, if crossbows get more people in the woods enjoying the outdoors, he’s all for them.

While acknowledging that there are some good fixed blades on the market, Chapman said he personally would go with a mechanical blade because they consistently fly a lot better than fixed blades.

“I want the head that’s going to fly most like my field points,”

he said. “And most mechanicals are going to fly like that right of the box. Other than that, I’d shoot a 100-grain head on a 100-grain shaft with a 50-grain insert. That’s going to give me 150 grains forward weight, which is going to give me more accuracy, more momentum and more penetration when it hits the animal.”

Regardless of all the negative crossbow talk he’s heard the last few years, Chapman said he likes the crossbow effect because they allow a lot more people to hunt during archery season.

“Outside of taking unethical long-range shots, I can agree with them 100 percent,” he concluded. “It’s all about enjoying the outdoors and the wildlife. If a crossbow makes it possible for you to get in the woods, then so be it.

“Just get the best setup you can afford. As long as you have fun and are legal, don’t worry about what other people think.” ■



Chris Ginn has been covering hunting and fishing since 1998. He lives with his wife Jennifer and children Matthew and Rebecca along the Bogue Chitto River in rural Washington Parish, La. His blog can be found at chrisinginn.com.

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GETTIN' FRESH

Hal Schramm

This smallmouth bass was caught from shallow water with a sand bottom and scattered, sparse vegetation. The light and mottled coloration makes this fish invisible when it is resting on the bottom.



VANISHING ACT

FISH CHANGE COLOR TO MATCH ENVIRONMENT

A few years ago, I was fishing for smallmouth bass with Steve Quinn, a fisheries biologist and editor of *In-Fisherman*. We had caught plenty of fish throughout the sunny day. In the middle of the afternoon, we began fishing a bank that was partly shaded. I could easily see large rocks and boulders 5 feet deep in the clear water.

After a few minutes, they appeared — big, black smallmouth. Many were 3- to 4-pounders, but a few were noticeably larger.

“Where did those come from?” I asked Steve.

“Probably from between the rocks,” he replied.

I’ve returned to that lake and many others like it over the years. It’s common to see smallmouth bass swimming in the clear water, but they are usually light in color. I call them “cruisers,” and they often are not biters. Many, but not all, that I catch from these boulder-strewn waters are dark. I surmise that they are the bad boys hiding in the dark shadows between or under the rocks, waiting to attack an unsuspecting crayfish or minnow.

You may not have fished for small-

mouth bass in clear, rocky lakes, but you have seen similar examples of the ability of fish to change color. Largemouth bass caught from clear water and vegetation have striking black and green coloration, but those from turbid water are pale with only a muted lateral color pattern.

And the brightly colored bass become pale after a couple hours in a white livewell. Same for crappie and bream, but the males of these species also become more vividly colored during the spawning season.

In the muddy Mississippi River, blue catfish are gray and flatheads tan to light brown. In clear water, blues have a dark, blue-grey back and white belly, and flatheads often have a mottled-brown- on-yellow topside and yellowish belly. Yes, fish have remarkable abilities to change color.

INVISIBLE PREDATOR

Like any predators — including waterfowl and turkey hunters — it pays to be invisible. For fish, the rules of camouflage prevail: break up the outline and look like your background. Fish in vegetation tend to have vertical barring on their flanks, breaking their outline

and resembling the general background of aquatic plant stems. Fish that live in rocky areas tend to have a pattern of small, dark blotches, and those that live in barren, sand- or mud-bottom areas tend to have large blotches or simply have a uniformly dark back.

Fish like striped bass and white bass that live in open water have a dark back and white belly. The fish are indistinguishable from the dark below when seen from above and from the white water surface above when looking up.

Fish can change color and color patterns, but there are limits. The habitat a fish selects also has much to do with the effectiveness of the color pattern.

Prey fish, whose life depends on being invisible, rely on the same principles of camouflage.

DRESS TO IMPRESS

Some fish announce their readiness to mate by assuming bright colors. This is true of many ornamental fish, but they are not outdone by the ubiquitous bluegill. While males are generally more colorful than females, males become more brightly colored during the spawning season. Male bluegills have a dominance hierarchy

during spawning season, with the larger, dominant males often nesting in prime nesting area near the center of the colony. Whether coloration plays a role in male-to-male interactions is not known.

Does brilliant coloration useful during the spawning season render bluegill more vulnerable to predation? Maybe so in a featureless farm pond, but bluegill didn't evolve in farm ponds. If you have ever dived in a stand of native, aquatic plants, you realize that it is a kaleidoscope of moving color underwater.

COLOR CHANGE

The color of fish is determined by relatively large, flat and dendritic cells in the skin called chromatophores. They contain black, white, yellow, blue or red pigments. When the pigment is dispersed throughout the cell, the color of the skin increases; it decreases when the pigment is retracted to the center of the chromatophore.

Chromatophores are affected by nerves and hormones. Neural control results in short-term color changes, like that of the black smallmouth bass I was able to lure out from under the rock. Longer-term



This dark smallmouth was enticed from the shadow of a boulder.

color changes, like the dark male crappie or the brightly multicolored male bluegill during the spawning season, are the result of hormonal signals.

Fish color not only changes from light to dark or from vertical bars to no vertical bars, but some fish are able to make refined color changes to better blend with different backgrounds. What will amaze always me is how a fish that can't

see itself can so effectively modify its coloration to mimic its environment. ■



Hal Schramm is an avid angler and veteran fisheries biologist.

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LUNKER LINES

Paul Elias

Depending on the numbers and sizes of bass you catch this month at Bogue Homa, more than likely you'll bring trophy grass to the boat as well as trophy bass.

OCTOBER BASS AT BOGUE HOMA

LARGEMOUTHS ARE PULLING OUT OF DEPTHS, MOVING TO ABUNDANT SHALLOW COVER

My October pick is one of the best fall bassing lakes in Mississippi is shallow, 882-acre Lake Bogue Homa with its several feeder creeks near Laurel. October is when the baitfish start moving out of deeper water and into shallow grass, vegetation and lily pads, with the bass following. Bass realize they need to put on weight for the cold weather that's coming.

Very stumpy, Bogue Homa has a center channel running through it that you must move your boat away from to fish some of the shallow grass and stumps. I'll start fishing in the back one-third of the lake, its northern end, and fish all the way around the back of the lake before turning and coming down its southern side.

In September, the grass and lily pads begin dying off and breaking up. Most of the places you'll fish you won't have fished all summer because they were grassed-in. I'll fish with four basic lures for October bass in the same places,

including a Mann's white Super Frog, a black Pygmy Frog, a shad-colored Baby 1-Minus and a black/blue Chatterbait.

SUPER FROG

I'll cast a white Super Frog on 50-pound bass braid with a 7.5:1 Shimano Curado K reel on a 7-foot, medium-heavy Shimano rod around lily pads and grass. I'll target open areas behind matted grass and holes in the grass, listening for baitfish smacking under the grass and watching for them swimming on the surface. I'll walk the Super Frog like a Zara Spook as a search bait to cover lots of water until I get a bite.

Once a bass blows up on a Super Frog, I'll slow down for 50 yards below and above the place of the blowup. Any time I see any activity in the grass or the pads, I'll cast all four lures.

PYGMY FROG

If bass don't want the Super Frog, I'll throw the black Pygmy Frog with the

same rod, reel and line I've used with the Super Frog. However, I'll work the Pygmy Frog more slowly, pop it and let it sit and repeat several times. I'll be fishing in those open pockets and holes in the grass and lily pads. With this two frog technique, I'll present a relatively fast-moving frog and follow that with the smaller, slowly moving Pygmy Frog.

BABY 1-MINUS

I'll fish this gray/blue-backed, pearl-sided and orange-bellied lure on 20-pound White Peacock fluorocarbon on a 6-foot-10 Shimano rod with 7.5:1 Curado K reel. I'll cast into any open water in the grass or the pads, fishing it out in front. When fishing regions with broken grass, I'll make short or long casts where I think I can retrieve the Baby 1-Minus about 10 yards before it hits and becomes hung up. This lure will run just under the surface in the same areas where you've fished the two kinds of frogs.

IT ALL ADDS UP TO MORE FISH IN THE BOAT.



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Paul Elias

CHATTERBAITS

This lure produces many big bass, and I like a ¼-ounce black/blue chatterbait with a black/blue craw worm trailer. I'll fish this lure on a 7-foot-2, medium-heavy Shimano rod with the Curado K reel on 30-pound bass braid line. I'll tie on about 10 inches of fluorocarbon as a leader then tie on a Chatterbait. I'll cast it into any open water in the grass and the pads and their outside edges.

Toward the end of October, you'll see bass blowing up on the surface, feeding on shad. The bass usually will start schooling on top, in front of the grass beds and lily pads. This lake also has cypress trees where I'll steadily retrieve the Chatterbait in the open water between the trees, their trunks and the grass. Your bait will get caught up in the grass, especially if you're fishing over coontail moss. When you're in a place that's holding a good number of bass,



According to Paul Elias, Bogue Homa is home to lots of cypress trees, so be sure to fish around the cypress stumps that may have grass around them for bass like this one.

you can catch some of the biggest bass on the lake with the Chatterbait around the grass.

WHAT YOU MAY CATCH

Many local tournaments are held at Bogue Homa from 5 to 9 p.m. To finish in the top 10, you'll probably have to bring in five bass weighing a total of 20 pounds or more. Also bow season has started, and gun hunters are putting out their trail cameras, scouting for deer and cleaning up their hunting camps, taking pressure off the Bogue Homa bass.

October through December are my favorite times to fish Bogue Homa. I'll expect to catch from 10 to 20 bass each October day weighing between 2 and 9 pounds, and the lake holds numbers of 4- to 6-pound bass. ■



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

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HAPPY TRAILS

Bill Garbo

The author putting out seed and fertilizer on one of his food plot fields. INSET: The author's hand calculations, field by field, showing acreage, and seed and fertilizer proration.



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MAIN FLD NW COR	0.14 AC	0.10127	100#	0.5064	50.0 lb.	25.0 lb.
MAIN FLD NE COR	0.25 AC	0.06329	60#	0.3165	32.0 lb.	16.0 lb.
MAIN FLD E SD	0.10 AC	0.02532	25#	0.1266	13.0 lb.	6.0 lb.
MAIN FLD SE COR	0.30 AC	0.07595	80#	0.3798	38.0 lb.	19.0 lb.
MAIN FLD S of Beach	0.50 AC	0.12658	130#	0.6329	63.0 lb.	32.0 lb.
Tower Spout FLD	0.25 AC	0.06329	60#	0.3165	32.0 lb.	16.0 lb.
West Ridge FLD	0.15 AC	0.03838	30#	0.1519	15.0 lb.	8.0 lb.
Lake Ridge FLD	0.20 AC	0.05063	50#	0.2532	25.0 lb.	13.0 lb.
Thicket FLD at OTHP	0.18 AC	0.04557	50#	0.2279	23.0 lb.	11.0 lb.
FLD Persimmon Tree FLD	0.25 AC	0.06329	60#	0.3165	32.0 lb.	16.0 lb.
3 Small misc. FLDs Hollywood & Vine FLD	0.20 AC	0.05063	50#	0.2532	25.0 lb.	13.0 lb.
				0.01866 each x 3	6.0 lb.	3.0 lb.
				13# ea	6.0 lb.	3.0 lb.
				0.05 AC each x 4	6.0 lb.	3.0 lb.
				60#	32.0 lb.	17.0 lb.
	3.95 AC	1.00000	470#	0.31645	498 lb.	251 lb.

round up to 5 Acres

October is finally here, and beyond sitting in a stand and bowhunting, you know what that means. It is once again, time to plant food plots.

As many opinions on how best to plan, prepare, and plant food plots exist as there are hunters you could ask. Over the years, I have used many different techniques and methods. Some have worked well for me, and some have not.

Seed and fertilizer are too expensive and critical to success to make an estimate and hope for the best. The trick is to put down enough on each plot, but to not waste time and money on more than enough. Most hunter/plot planters pretty much wing it and put down too much or not enough seed and fertilizer. To modify an old adage, an ounce of planning is worth a pound of results.

HOW TO MEASURE

The first thing you need to have is a

fairly accurate measurement of each food plot in acres or fractions of an acre, and the overall total acreage that will be prepared, planted and fertilized.

I have friends who swear by digital, online GPS area measurements that are obtained by walking the perimeter of a food plot, tagging GPS waystations repeatedly, then letting the map app that they are using calculate the enclosed area in acres or square feet. I've tried it; it's nifty and cutting edge, but most of the time, I found that I was spending more time and taking more steps to derive plot sizes than if I just used some very simple, non-technical methods. I may have an engineering degree, but I love simple, efficient methods to accomplish tasks.

Let me explain. Most food plots are created in some version of a circle, square or rectangle. If a given plot's geometry

is circular or oval, the basic calculation for the area of a circle, that we were all introduced to in school, is: Area = Π (the constant Pi which is 3.142) x R^2 (the plot's radius multiplied by itself). Who wouldn't be able to figure that quickly, using only a little boot leather and the calculator on their phone?

CIRCLES, RECTANGLES

Let's walk through the process quickly. You drive up to your circle-shaped plot with only a pencil, a pocket notebook, and your iPhone. Dismount, walk over to one side of the plot and start stepping off roughly 36-inch strides aimed across the plot's center to the other side. Let's say you step off 50 steps across the

FOOD PLOT MATH:

- What's the general plot shape?
- Step off the measurements.
- Calculate the area in square feet.
- An acre covers 43,560 square feet.
- Convert plot square-footage to acres.
- Decide on seeding and fertilizer rates.
- Multiply acreage times rates.
- Add it up and make your purchase.
- Apply to each plot as calculated.
- Cover it and wait for rain.



The author drag harrowing (covering) the seed and fertilizer that he has just put down.

plot. Multiply 50 times 3 feet per step, the result is a diameter of 150 feet. That means that the radius, which is half the diameter, is 75 feet. The area in square feet would be: 3.142×75^2 , resulting in a calculation of 17,674 square feet. To convert that to acres, it is as simple as the old saying, "falling off a log backwards." In your notebook, you would have already written down 43,560, the number of square feet in an acre — or you would have had the number committed to memory. In this case, divide the area of the plot you stepped off in square feet, 17,674, by the square footage per acre, 43,560, and you get an acreage for the

subject plot of 0.40, or in other words, four-tenths of an acre.

Now, you can calculate the volume of seed and fertilizer you need. As an example, using a desired seed rate of 100 pounds per acre and a fertilizer rate of 300 pounds per acre, the needed amount of each that the plot is:

- $0.4 \times 100 = 40$ pounds of seed;
- $0.4 \times 300 = 120$ pounds of fertilizer.

The exact same measurement technique applies to food plots that are square or rectangular in shape, the only difference being that you simply step off and measure length and width along the sides. A boomerang-shaped plot would

be measured as if it were actually a regular rectangle. A plot shaped like a "Y," would be measured in three segments, as if each segment was a rectangle and then all three added together for the total acreage. See, when your teacher told you that you would be using those math problems in later life, it was true. ■



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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Don Shoopman

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THE NEW MATRIX MONSTER

THE BIG 5-INCH VERSION SWIMS JUST LIKE A
REGULAR-SIZED MATRIX SHAD

Chas Champagne and charter-boat captain Ty Hibbs were having a ball this summer catching jack crevalle and the occasional large speckled trout off the coast of Florida.

Champagne was hopeful of catching tarpon on a new and extra-large soft plastic swimbait he had created, but the silver kings of the ocean couldn't be found, so he targeted jacks. As he did, he talked about a new artificial lure sure to pique the interest of saltwater anglers everywhere interested in catching bigger fish. "Big fish eat big fish. Small fish eat small fish," he said.

Champagne, whose artificial lure manufacturing company in southeast Louisiana makes the highly popular Matrix Shad soft-plastic lure, was using

a new 5-inch long swimbait to catch fish that day — a super-sized version of the Matrix Shad.

Champagne, Hibbs and Stephen Wicks, a long-time friend and part-owner in the company, designed the new soft plastic to look and vibrate in the water just like the traditional Matrix Shad — and they call it the Matrix Monster.

Champagne is as excited about it now as the day he introduced the Matrix Shad in 2013, and when he did the process in reverse and produced the smaller Matrix Mini in 2016.

A St. Paul's High School and University of Southern Mississippi graduate, Champagne said the Matrix Monster, which started in design a year ago to blow it up from 3 to 5 inches, should trigger strikes from speckled trout, bull reds,

jack crevalle, lemonfish and even tarpon.

Anglers who go out to fish the oil-field structures in 100-foot depths will want to have a supply of Matrix Monsters, and some bass anglers might want to try it, too, he said.

"We want to offer a product for every fisherman in the world, no matter what species they target," he said.

The idea is to make a million baits in a few popular colors, as opposed to a few baits in a million colors, he said.

"Matrix Shad has proven itself as a good product. Now we're offering a lure with the same lifelike presentation for monster fish. It swims exactly like the original one that's so popular. We've already put it to the test and it ended up being exactly what we were hoping it would be," he said. "So all three lures (Matrix

The new Matrix Monster, a 5-inch version of the Matrix Shad, swims just like its namesake — and is an already-proven fish-catching machine.

Shad, Matrix Mini and Matrix Monster) swim exactly the same in the water and look exactly the same — except they are small, medium and large.”

The Matrix Monster should hit the market this fall, and they’ll likely disappear quickly.

“It’s a fish-catching machine. It’s a great product,” Champagne said. “I can’t wait to use it on speckled trout, whenever they come in. We just need cool weather.”

If you’re wondering if the Matrix Monster might be too large for speckled trout, Champagne said it isn’t.

“Not if you’re catching 20-inch (speckled trout) or better,” he said.

For sure, it should produce fish in states where anglers rely on bigger artificial lures to put trophy sized speckled trout in the boat.

“We wanted to create a lure for anglers in other states that like a larger profile bait for speckled trout and redfish. When you go to Texas and Florida, they throw a lot of big swimbaits,” he said.

A 1-ounce jighead “fits it very naturally,” he said, adding that a 5/0 hook also matches up with it perfectly.

And Matrix Monsters are durable, just like the Matrix Shad.

“You can probably catch 100 speckled trout on one. I caught 10 jack crevalle on one the other day. And that’s 20-pound fish,” he said.

As for color names, Champagne said he’ll let anglers decide via a poll on his website.

For more information, go to matrix-shad.com. ■



Don Shoopman fishes for freshwater and saltwater species mostly in and around the Atchafalaya Basin and Vermilion Bay. He moved to Louisiana in 1976, and he and his wife June live in New Iberia, La. They have two grown sons.

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STICKS AND STRINGS

Sammy Romano

Thick early season cover, such as these briars, leads to narrow shooting lanes and fleeting opportunities.

'DRAW' YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS

TIMING YOUR DRAW IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU'LL DO WITH A DEER IN RANGE

Much of the allure of bow-hunting is the challenge it presents. Many things have to go right for a bowhunter to successfully harvest game.

First, the quarry has to be at close range and unaware of the hunter's presence. Then, the bow must be drawn without alerting the animal, and the shot has to be made accurately for a clean kill. Finally, the animal must be trailed for a successful recovery.

While each of these elements is vital to a successful outcome, one of the most important is drawing the bow unnoticed. This simple act will ultimately determine the outcome of the hunt.

TIMING IS CRUCIAL

Timing your draw is one of the hardest skills to learn. Think about this: a beginning bowhunter can hunt from a stand placed in the correct location by someone more experienced. After the shot, he or she can have someone else trail the animal and recover it. But at the moment of truth, when drawing

the bow and making the shot, the outcome rests squarely on the bowhunter. Proper shooting form and accuracy can be learned and practiced, but learning to time your draw properly can only be practiced in real time from the stand while in the presence of game. No amount of coaching can replace experience and time in the stand when it comes to this skill.

Each species of game presents its own challenges and requires a slightly different strategy. Since a majority of bowhunters target deer, that is the focus of this article.

Whitetails are often hunted in thick cover, and shots often have to be timed to take advantage of narrow shooting lanes.

One mistake beginning bowhunters often make is drawing too early. I often hear about a hunter drawing their bow while the deer is "behind a tree," or just before it steps into a shooting lane. Often, the deer either catches movement or hears the draw and instinctively freezes, with its vitals obscured by brush or the tree trunk.

This rarely winds up well for the hunter. The deer has no schedule and often stands still for several minutes, while the hunter is holding the full weight of the bow, as well as the holding weight of the draw. Eventually, the frustrated hunter is forced to let the draw down, and that motion often spooks the alerted deer.

A better option would be to wait until the animal's vitals are exposed, and then slowly draw when it is looking away or has its head down feeding. This way, if it freezes, its vitals are fully exposed for a shot opportunity. Watching a deer's front feet will also help in this situation. Just before stepping forward into a clearing, the deer will lift its front foot. This will help you to be ready to draw and shoot before the deer crosses the lane.

Deer that are walking steadily present a different challenge. It is generally best to wait for the deer to stop before taking the shot, but bucks are often on a mission and therefore steadily walking. These deer can be stopped by bleating with your mouth; however, you need to be ready to release the arrow quickly,

because their focus will shift to you.

Upon hearing the bleat, a deer will naturally tense its muscles, preparing to flee until it identifies the source of the unknown noise — increasing the odds of string-jumping. A good trick is to bleat after you are already drawn and on target, and as the deer is stopping, release the shot. This way, the deer's momentum will prevent it from reacting.

SPEAK A DEER'S BODY LANGUAGE

It also helps to watch a whitetail's body language before attempting to draw. For many years, white-tails were thought to be silent creatures, and although we know they make a wide variety of vocalizations, most of their communication is through posturing and body language.

For the hunter, learning to read this body language requires a lot of time in the stand observing deer. Generally, it is best not to draw when in a deer's direct line of sight, or if its ears are cupped in your direction. This will usually result in a blown opportunity. Also, if a deer is visibly nervous or on edge, it is best to wait for the animal to relax before trying to draw. Multiple animals means more eyes and ears, and will only make drawing unnoticed even harder.

Time spent in the presence of deer will allow you to gauge the "mood" or "vibe" of the animal(s) in front of you. If they are keyed up, it is better to wait and live to fight another day. Once deer identify the location of your

stand, especially catching your movement at close range, your chances for success are slim to none.

Most lessons are best learned the hard way, and I have learned far more from blown opportunities than anything else. Each missed opportunity offers a lesson. So spend as much time in the woods as you can this and every season, and learn all that you can. Bowhunting is truly an art, and nothing replaces experience when it comes to perfecting your mastery of it. ■



PICK YOUR SHOT:

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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.

TOOTIE COOKS 'EARNESTLY'

SHREVEPORT PERSONAL CHEF GETS
CREATIVE IN THE KITCHEN

It was just a short hop from the Residence Inn in Bossier City, La., to Chef Tootie's home near Cross Lake in Shreveport. But I didn't know what to expect.

It was a 5½-hour drive each way from home in southeast Louisiana, and she came highly recommended, but Boy was I surprised. She put on the culinary Ritz.

Tootie, it turns out, is a personal chef, so she can roll out the red carpet — one with taste buds on it.

Fried catfish, turnip greens and cornbread are holy manna in this part of the country. It's great food, and she can do it, but she can do creative things too. And she did.



The seared panko grouper on kale has an exciting and unique flavor profile. **INSET:** Cooking became a second career for Chef Tootie after rearing her children and then graduating from culinary school at age 35.

Her business, “Earnestly Tooties,” (318-617-6633) is a take-off on her name, Ernestine, and her late father’s, Ernest. He always liked to see her real name in press about her cooking, and to this day she wears one of his neckties to every cooking assignment.

She does meal prep, intimate dining, dinner parties and conducts private cooking classes, all in peoples’ homes.

Dinner parties are for eight to 12 people; she cooks, plates and serves the food.

Cooking classes are for people who want to learn basic to advanced cooking techniques.

She says her strength is Southern cooking, but that isn’t her focus. She describes her style as simple, yet bold. “I want the ingredients to speak for themselves and not be muddled ...

“Cooking is a creative adventure; it’s relaxing. I tend to hum while I cook. I’m ADHD, and my brain is always moving. This allows me to be creative and multi-task, but cooking reins in and focuses my energy. It centers me.” ■

SEARED PANKO GROUPER ON KALE

The choice of an offshore ocean fish may seem odd for a chef in landlocked Shreveport, but local cooks are blessed with a Farmer’s Seafood, a superb full-line seafood store.

“I learned how to cook kale this way in Africa” said Tootie. “I learned that kale is not just for garnish anymore. They prepared it

without the fish.

“The panko topping can be used on any seafood to add texture to the dish,” she added. Panko, a finely textured bread crumb made from crustless white bread, has become very popular in the last decade as a coating for seafood and vegetables. Here, it is used as a topping to add

a delightful crunch to every bite of fish.

The dish tastes like the sea and the garden at the same time. The green of the kale is very prominent, but definitely doesn’t overwhelm the fish and panko. And the sliced lemon adds a delightful tang. ■

RIGHT: The panko mixture should be toasted to a rich — but not dark — brown color for maximum flavor and crunch.

PREPARATION: Serves 2-4.

Wash fish and set aside. Remove stems from the kale and rough-chop it. Sauté the kale in olive oil set on high heat to start. Stir and lower to medium in five minutes. Add the sliced lemon olives and 1½ cups of water. When the added water begins to steam, reduce the heat to low and cover, stirring occasionally to cook the greens evenly. Turn off the heat when the greens are soft. While the greens are cooking, melt 2½ tablespoons of butter in a large frying pan, then add the panko, parsley, lemon zest and salt to taste. Toast the panko, stirring constantly over

medium-low heat until golden brown, turn off heat and set it aside. Salt and pepper the fish portions to taste. Add 1 tablespoon of butter and the olive oil to a separate pan and heat until bubbles form. Add the fish, patting each piece down firmly to be in contact with the pan. Turn each piece when the down side is lightly crusted brown. Frequently test for doneness by pressing the flesh with a finger. It is done when it feels firm rather than soft. Make four beds of kale. Place a fish portion on top of each bed, and top with the toasted panko.



Jerald and Glenda Horst are the authors of six excellent books on Louisiana seafood — *The Seafood Bible: Shrimp*, *The Seafood Bible: Crawfish*, *The Seafood Bible: Crabs*, *The Seafood Bible: Oysters*, *The Seafood Bible: Fish: Volume 1* and *The Seafood Bible: Fish: Volume 2*. Jerald and Glenda may be contacted at jerald@rockinghorst.com.



RED SNAPPER WITH ROASTED CORN RELISH UP NEXT >

TIP!

This recipe will work with any firm, white-fleshed fish: cobia, snapper — even hali-but or cod. But the portions are best cut from a fish large enough to produce thick steaks.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound boneless fish, cut into 4 serving portions
- 1 bunch fresh kale
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- ½ thinly sliced lemon with rind
- ¼ cup chopped stuffed olives
- 2 tbsp chopped parsley
- 3 ½ tbsp butter, divided
- 2 cups panko
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tbsp olive oil

RED SNAPPER WITH ROASTED CORN RELISH

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 half-pound skin-on red snapper fillets
- 4 large ears of corn, cleaned
- 2 large orange, yellow or red bell peppers
- 4 Hass avocados
- Juice of 2 lemons, divided
- 4 tbsp sour cream
- Salt and pepper
- 1 cup chopped red onions
- 2 tbsp finely chopped parsley + chopped parsley for garnish
- 16 cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
- 5 tbsp olive oil

**HOW
TO MAKE
IT!**



Everything in Red Snapper with Roasted Corn Relish is great, but the avocado mousse is so good you'll want to bathe in it. Once you taste it, you will want to use it elsewhere.

This dish, one of her inventions, was one that Tootie prepared as a special at Abby Singer's Bistro, where she was executive chef for six years. One of her signature dishes, it is one that she now prepares as part of her personal chef service. "I love snapper," she cooed. "It doesn't have dense flesh and can be cooked many ways — frying, pan searing, broiling, and it always produces a finished product you can be proud of. Just don't overcook it." ■

PREPARATION: Serves 4.

Wash the fish fillets and set them aside. Roast the corn and bell pepper by laying them on a gas burner, turning them to get all sides blistered. Halve the avocados, discard the seeds and scoop the flesh into a mini food processor. Add the juice of one lemon, sour cream and 2 teaspoons of salt. Blend to make a mousse and set it aside. Cut the kernels off the ears of corn and discard the cobs. Remove the stem and seeds and dice the peppers without peeling the blistered skin off. Mix the corn, pepper and tomatoes to make a relish and set it aside. Score the snapper fillets on the skin side with a knife several times, and salt and pepper them to taste. Add the olive oil to a frying pan and heat over medium heat. Cook the fillets four or five minutes, skin-side down first, until the skin is crispy. Flip the fillets and cook for 30 more seconds. Turn the heat off and give each fillet a squirt of lemon juice, but allow the fillets to rest in the pan. Daub a large smear of the avocado mousse in each plate and lay the fillet skin-side up diagonally across the mousse. Spoon the desired amount of relish over each fillet, garnish with parsley and serve.

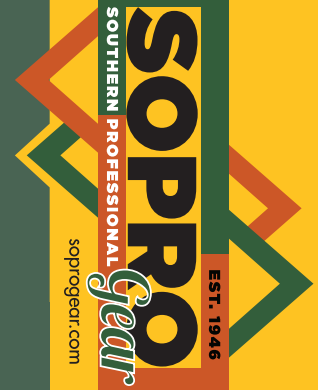
TIP!

If the corn isn't popping when the ears are being roasted, the fire isn't hot enough. You will need a gas stove to roast the vegetables for this dish.

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TREE STAND SAFETY TIPS

By Patrick Bonin

CONNECTING TO A LIFELINE — BEFORE EVER LEAVING THE GROUND — IS KEY

With bow season cranking up across most the state on Monday, Oct. 1, hunters will once again be heading into the woods and getting positioned up in their favorite trees in hopes of a close encounter with that big buck they've been watching on their trail cameras.

But using your climber or ladder stand comes with some risks, as accidents can happen fast at 20 or 30 feet in the pre-dawn hours in the deer woods. One misplaced step, a mud-caked boot or even an icy platform late in the season can lead to disaster.

Sean Ferbrache, chief operating officer for the American Hunting Lease Association, said the No. 1 tip for hunter safety is staying connected to the tree with a lifeline — before ever even leaving the ground.

1. STAY CONNECTED

"For being a simple rope, it's kind of a new thing. Attaching your safety harness to a lifeline while you're still standing on the ground, then proceeding up the tree, virtually eliminates tree stand falls," Ferbrache said. "If you're connected, you cannot fall to the ground.

"You might fall 2 or 3 feet and get a bit of a jolt, but that's nothing compared to falling 20 or 30 feet and having the ground stop your fall."

The key to the lifeline system is a Prusik knot, which can slide freely up and down the lifeline as you ascend and descend the tree — but cinches tight in the event of a fall.

The lifeline, which can be installed in the tree initially by using a lineman's belt, is positioned above the hunter's head up in the stand, and also attaches to the base of the tree to provide tension on the rope in the event of a fall.

2. REMOVE AND INSPECT YOUR EQUIPMENT

Not making the effort to remove stands after hunting season ends can sometimes have deadly consequences.

"Every one of us that hunts seriously hangs a tree stand, and you get it the way you like it and have it

in a good spot — and then you leave it," Ferbrache said. "It'll be there next year and the year after that. Some of us have even seen tree stands literally grown into the tree. . . .

"The problem with that is those cables rust, the straps get chewed on and dry rot, and they get wet and eventually deteriorate. You might hunt in that tree stand 10 years in a row, and that one time where you put all your weight on it and you're not buckled in is all it takes. Then boom — you're on the ground and you're lucky if you have a chance to get to a hospital, because there are people who don't survive that initial fall."

After each season, Ferbrache said he cleans up his stands, and then does preventative maintenance like painting, replacing bolts and inspecting cables to make sure they're ready for the following fall.

3. BUCKLE YOUR SAFETY HARNESS

This one seems like a no-brainer, but you probably know someone who insists that harnesses just aren't comfortable, or the tether interferes with their draw.



Wearing a safety harness and attaching yourself to a lifeline before ever leaving the ground are keys to tree stand safety.

"Wearing a full-body safety harness is a necessity — no more waist belts that don't really do the job," he said. "A full-body safety harness that goes around your legs and under your arms has to be buckled on every time," Ferbrache said. "It's the cornerstone of tree stand safety; you've just got to be buckled in."

And the beauty of the harness in combo with the lifeline is that you're literally always connected before making your first step up the tree.

"Honestly, my balance isn't what it was 10 years ago," he said. "So you get 20 or 30 feet up in the air and you step from a skinny ladder onto a skinny platform — things can get wobbly pretty fast.

"If that tree stand slips out from under you and you weren't already connected, you might be wearing your harness — but you weren't buckled in."

So this season, take those extra steps to make sure you're extra-safe up in your stand — if not for you, then for your family members.

"Falls are unnecessary and are 100-percent preventable," Ferbrache said.

"The average age of a person who falls from a tree is 47. It's those of us who know better that are the ones falling.

"That's surprising to me, but the numbers bear that out." ■



A B C BUILDING BLOCKS OF TREE STAND SAFETY



A ALWAYS REMOVE AND INSPECT ALL YOUR EQUIPMENT BEFORE USING

35% of falls involved inspection elements

Source: 10 State Multi-Year Study, May 1995, 2017



B BUCKLE YOUR HARNESS SECURELY

86% of fall victims didn't wear a harness

Source: 10 State Multi-Year Study, May 1995, 2017



C CONNECT BEFORE YOUR FEET LEAVE THE GROUND

99% of fall victims injured were not attached

Source: 10 State Multi-Year Study, May 1995, 2017



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Andy Crawford

PREP YOUR REELS NOW FOR 2019 SEASON

USE CORROSION X IN THE RED CAN, GUIDE SAYS By Andy Crawford

The 2018 fishing season is almost over for those of us diehard hunters. We'll trade in the rod for a rifle or shotgun, and spend the rest of the year in the woods or a blind.

And we all too often just prop our rods in the corner and forget about them until we need them next year — only to discover a season of coastal fishing has left enough gunk in the spinning reels to seize them up.

That's sure to cause problems with the wife when you order replacements.

But veteran guide Capt. Brent Roy said a little TLC could save you money later.

All it takes is a small squirt of an anti-corrosion product called Corrosion X.

"I'll back off the screws of the side plates just enough so I can squeeze the little straw into the hole, and I hit the button once," Roy said.

He then tightens up the screws and turns the handle.

"I turn the handle about 50 times to let that liquid get into the gears, and then I'm done," said Roy, who owns Venice Charters.

It's important to note there are two versions of Corrosion X: one in a red can and another in a green can. Use the red

version, which is a liquid instead of a gel.

"It will creep into all those gears, and it breaks all that stuff up," Roy said.

The return on the small investment in time will amaze you.

"That makes a huge, huge difference," Roy said. "When I get (the reels) out in the spring, they are ready to go."

Corrosion X is so good at its job that the impact lasts for a long time.

"You don't have to put Corrosion X in each year, but if you do it every couple of years your reels will last a lot longer," he said. ■

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MAKE GOOD SHOT WITH YOUR WEAPON, THEN WITH YOUR CAMERA

Hunters in Mississippi who take trophy bucks rarely turn down a trip to the taxidermist, even though a quality mount may cost hundreds of dollars. But few spend time taking quality photos of their kills. A shoulder mount over the fireplace will showcase a quality animal, but photographs from the day and place of the kill will better capture the event.

To make a great photographic memory, hunters need to be prepared and have a good digital camera ready in case a great buck ventures into range. While a professional-level camera will take photos of the best quality, the technology available in most consumer-grade digital cameras is more than adequate.

Today's cell phones do much more than just make and receive calls, and if their cameras shoot more than 5 megapixels, they are a valid option after a trophy buck hits the dirt. The key is to keep the phone/camera perfectly still to take the best shot.

Settings are important, and while hunters can fine-tune the white balance, focus, aperture and shutter speed, trust the auto functions on cameras and smart phones in most conditions.

If you have a digital camera, a small tripod can be helpful and can be purchased for as little as \$20. Also, almost all cameras have a timer feature that can be used in concert with a tripod to take photos of the hunter with his trophy when no help is available.

The only manual setting that should be adjusted is the flash. Even when sunlight is plentiful and the auto-flash indicator doesn't turn on, adding flash can make a good shot fabulous. Adding flash is especially good when the sun is high, because shadows can ruin a great shot, and hunters are likely to be wearing a hat or cap that will cover his or her face with shadows. A flash eliminates shadows, and during low-light conditions, it provides the light necessary to bring out colors and the fine detail in a crisp, quality photo.

Beyond equipment, the biggest part of taking a good photo is the setup. The best photos are taken from the woods or in a natural setting where the deer was killed. Too many times, cameras aren't pulled out until the deer is on the driveway, in the skinning shed or at the gas station where the background is ruined by an assortment of unwanted objects. Don't

let anything in the background take away from the photo.

The person holding the camera should set up several shots of the deer and hunter from different angles, while always keeping the sun at the camera's back. Any time the sun is off to one side or the other, it will cast shadows and can create glare that will ruin a photo. On extremely bright, sunny days, a few shots should be taken in a shaded area with the flash activated. While good sunlight is a positive, too much can cause the hunter to squint, and unwanted glare is a risk.

The best photos include the entire hunter and deer with just a little extra space all around. Fill up the frame with the subject; you need to be relatively close to the subject for the camera's flash and focusing capacities to take effect. You can always crop the photo later.

A once-in-a-lifetime buck doesn't come into range every day. Hunters should take precautions to take the best possible photos to preserve these special events for a lifetime of memories. ■

— Jeff Bureson

DRAW A BEAD ON BACHELOR-BUCK GROUPS

Find bachelor groups of bucks before the season opens and you'll have a leg up on filling that first tag or two.

Hunters can pattern whitetail bucks twice a year, and both occur outside of hunting season.

The first is late in winter when they drop their antlers and new headgear begins to grow. The other, perhaps more important to hunters, is finding bachelor-buck groups late in summer.

Observing bachelor buck groups, when their racks are covered by velvet, is a key to early season success. The first task is to find where bachelor groups show themselves. It's similar to fishing; who would launch a boat at a lake that didn't have fish?

Next, get permission to scout for later hunting. Talk to the landowner, especially if you're on a road and see deer in an adjoining field. If you hunt public lands, find food plots or fields. Many landowners plant crops on land leased by states for public hunting. Soybeans are the No. 1 summer crop that draws deer. Corn fields are attractive after the cobs harden.

Next, get a good pair of binoculars. Never tromp around the edges of an agricultural field or surrounding woods unless you want to push deer to another area. Scout from long distance; a 300mm lens on a digital camera is good for studying deer if you don't have binoculars.

If you get permission to hunt, make a trip to hang game cameras aimed at trails leading to and from agricultural fields. Enter the woods at least 100 yards from a field's edge.

For your first hunting opportunity, pick areas for tree stands back from trails that deer use going to and from fields, 10 to 30 yards for archery, 80 to 100 yards for rifle.

Prevailing winds will push hunters to hang stands on certain sides of fields to remain downwind of the approaching whitetail. ■

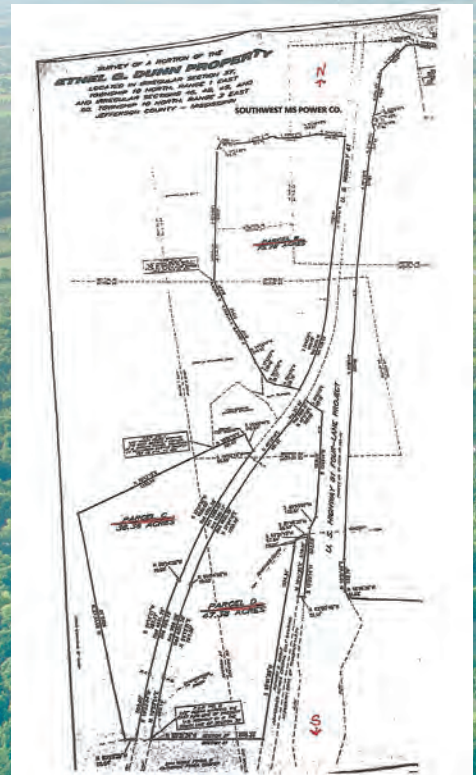
— Craig Holt



Craig Holt

PROPERTY FOR SALE

160 acres in Jefferson CO. MS. Frontage on west side of HWY 61 in Lorman MS and joins Southwest MS Power on North side. Frontage also on both sides of old HWY 61 headed south to Shankstown Creek. Mostly hardwood timber with scattered pine. Electricity available. \$4000.00 per acre.



Contact Donnie Williams
337-277-3369
dwilliams189@cox.net



Marlin's Model 1985 rifle is chambered for the .45-70 round, a heavy, brush-busting caliber that is death on whitetails.

GIVE A BIG-BORE GUN A CHANCE THIS SEASON

The rifle was removed from its case long before dawn. The rich, walnut stock showed the wear of a 146-year-old gun. The U.S. Springfield 1873 Trapdoor is not what many would consider a good whitetail gun. Indeed, the 400-grain, .45-70 caliber, bullet is a bit heavy for most hunters, with small, fast projectiles all the rage.

But in its day, this version of the U.S. Springfield was the go-to gun for long-distance hunting. The flip-up sight made

it capable of hitting targets out to 1,000 yards.

There is a joy in hunting with big-bore guns, be it an antique U.S. Springfield or Sharps, or one of the modern lever-action guns offered by Winchester or Marlin. Big-bore guns are fun to shoot and effective on deer at modest ranges, and they're making a comeback with many hunters and shooters.

When discussing big-bore guns, you

really begin talking about guns shooting .40-caliber bullets. These would exclude the big-bore guns used for dangerous game that are far bigger than those that would be at home in the whitetail woods. Mostly, we're looking at the .44 Remington Magnum, the .444 Marlin, .45-70, and the .45-70 Government. Marlin dominates this market with lever-action rifles chambered in these calibers.

A few years back, they increased the ante, partnering with Hornady to bring to the market the .450 Marlin, which carries a 350-grain bullet in a .45-caliber casing. The introduction of their "Guide Gun" series in these calibers was a big hit. Its carbine size and large capacity of enormous bullets piqued the interest of more than a few sportsmen.

The one mainstay is the .45-70, so named for its .45-caliber bullet, originally pushed by 70 grains of black powder. Whether you are a classic gun fan, cowboy-action shooter or a hunter who just enjoys shooting big bore guns, the .45-70 provides a lot of options to enjoy. Bullet weights range from 300 to more than 500 grains.

With the advent of the LeveRevolution bullets, pointed bullets can safely be loaded into tubular magazines. Their increased accuracy and range has helped spur the interest in these rifles by increasing the accurate range from 150 to better than 200 yards, and with recoil akin to that of a 20-gauge shotgun. The heavy bullet absorbs much of the force, and that makes shooting these guns a real joy and gives bucks plenty to worry about. ■

— Pete Rogers

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HUNTING SEASONS

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

WATERFOWL SEASONS

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

DEER SEASON

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

SALTWATER

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



OLD CYPRESS OUTDOORS TREE STAND

If you let bow season sneak up and you're in the market for a brand new lock-on-style tree stand this year, check out these rugged, lightweight stands from Old Cypress Outdoors in Bayou Vista.

They're made in the USA, weigh just 12 pounds and feature an aluminum powder coat finish, an all-weather seat, a 20- by 28-inch platform and come with a block system for safe and easy hanging with two hefty 8-foot ratchet straps with safety pins.

They're made by hunters, so all the bases are covered for safety, adjustability and comfort: Each stand features a three-point seat adjustment, multiple adjustment combinations to fine-tune the level of the platform, and adjustable arms at the base of the 'flat-back' seat that hug the tree for superior side-to-side stability.

And if you've ever struggled with your climbing sticks, Old Cypress employs a unique, silent interlocking system in which the sticks attach directly to the stand for easy backpack-style transport — no ratchet straps necessary.

Old Cypress Outdoor stands sell for \$189. Three 30-inch climbing sticks sell for \$140, or you can get the Run-N-Gun package which includes three sticks and the stand for just \$315. To buy a stand online or get more info, visit www.oldcypressoutdoors.com

LEUPOLD'S VX-FREEDOM

If you want a scope that can stand up to whatever you dish out, then check out the new Leupold VX-Freedom. Does it boast elite optical performance at a price you can't ignore? Of course. Can it help you unleash your rimfire rifle, dominate from any tree stand or tag out from across an open draw? Absolutely. Is it guaranteed to perform for life under the harshest conditions? You bet. No matter the task, the VX-Freedom is up to the challenge. With crisp, clear image resolution, unmatched edge-to-edge clarity and amazing low-light performance, this scope can't be ignored. And like all Leupold riflescopes, the entire VX-Freedom line is designed, machined and assembled right here in the USA with one purpose in mind — to give you the freedom to put a Leupold on any long gun you own, knowing it will perform for a lifetime.

More Info: www.leupold.com



HALO XL600 LASER RANGEFINDER

Never again will you have to guess how far away that gobbler is walking. The XL600 is a compact little tool that fits easily in your hand and doesn't carry a price tag that will knock you out. At 6X power, it's able to range objects out to 600 yards, and it's a must-have for turkey and deer hunters — especially bowhunters who can range objects near their stands long before that big buck arrives. Water resistant, it has AI technology that allows hunters not only to measure flat distances between rifle and target, but also account for the slope of the land. MSRP is \$119.99.

More Info: www.halooptics.com

New product submissions can be emailed to **Mark Boyd** at markb@lasmag.com or call 601-829-8080.

PLANO'S KAYAK V-CRATE

If tackle storage on your kayak is an issue (and it probably is), then this custom-designed tackle box for your 'yak is definitely worth considering. Plano's V-Crate is designed to sit in the rear cargo compartment of just about any kayak, and its unobtrusive two-piece design securely stores and protects your tackle in a unique V-shape that makes accessing items easy. Each angled tackle storage bay holds two large 3700-size StowAway tackle trays, secured by a quick release rubber strap. And the V-Crate provides ample space for an assortment of larger items in the center module's open bulk storage. Plus, the angled tackle storage bays as well as the center module feature drain holes to eliminate pooling water. The super versatile V-Crate also features a side rail system that allows for easy attachment of accessories, including rod holders. MSRP is \$119.99.

More Info: www.planomolding.com



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SCENTLOK OZ ACTIVE-ODOR DESTROYERS

Hunters, especially those that target whitetails, will go to great lengths to try and eliminate or cover their scents, knowing that while they might fool a buck's eyes and ears, they're less likely to fool its nose.

The folks at ScentLok have attacked the problem in recent years by producing clothing and related products to get and keep clothing odors to a minimum. Now, they've gone a step further, with a product to destroy existing odors.

ScentLok's OZ Active Odor-Destroyers are compact deodorizers that push ozone molecules into the air, where they destroy the bacteria and odors with which they come in contact. The Odor-Destroyers come in four sizes: OZ20 Vehicle Deodorizer, OZ20B Portable Deodorizer, OZ100 Small Room Deodorizer and OZ500 Large Room Deodorizer.

The OZ20 model, which plugs into a vehicle's cigarette lighter, worked well removing odors from a camper trailer being prepared for sale: the musty, mildew smell was gone overnight. The OZ20B has at least one great use: put it inside a plastic container where hunting clothes are stored to kill odors the night before a hunt. It comes with a rechargeable battery with an 8-hour life, has a USB charging cable and includes a 12-volt DC plug-in.

MSRP for the vehicle deodorizer is \$39.99, for the portable deodorizer, \$99.99, for the small room model \$99.99 and for the large room deodorizer, \$149.99.

More Info: www.scentlok.com



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 2018 PrimeTimes Wall Calendar. \$12.95 (plus \$4 s&h). Know the best days, best times, and their relative strengths for all of 2018 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 2018, the year's best periods, a look ahead at 2019, and more. Comes with FREE 2018 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for \$7.95, 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.

2018 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).

SPECIAL PACKAGE OFFERS:

- #1: **Wall Calendar, Astro Tables and "How to Know..." book...** \$19.95 (plus \$5 s&h).
- #2: **Same as #1, plus Software...** \$46.95 (plus \$6 s&h).
- #3: **Same as #2, minus book...** \$37.95 (plus \$5 s&h).

Send to: PrimeTimes 2018 - Dept. LS - 2487 NW 75th Ave., Ste. 100 - Ankeny, IA 50023

For credit/debit card orders, call 515-964-5516.

2018 OCT	BEST DAYS			
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL
Mon 1	██	██	██	██
Tue 2	██	██	██	██
Wed 3	██	██	██	██
Thu 4	██	██	██	██
Fri 5	██	██	██	██
Sat 6	██	██	██	██

2018 OCT	BEST DAYS			
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL
Sun 7	██	██	██	██
Mon 8	██	██	██	██
Tue 9	██	██	██	██
Wed 10	██	██	██	██
Thu 11	██	██	██	██
Fri 12	██	██	██	██
Sat 13	██	██	██	██

2018 OCT	BEST DAYS			
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL
Sun 14	██	██	██	██
Mon 15	██	██	██	██
Tue 16	██	██	██	██
Wed 17	██	██	██	██
Thu 18	██	██	██	██
Fri 19	██	██	██	██
Sat 20	██	██	██	██

2018 OCT	BEST DAYS			
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL
Sun 21	██	██	██	██
Mon 22	██	██	██	██
Tue 23	██	██	██	██
Wed 24	██	██	██	██
Thu 25	██	██	██	██
Fri 26	██	██	██	██
Sat 27	██	██	██	██

2018 OCT	BEST DAYS			
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL
Sun 28	██	██	██	██
Mon 29	██	██	██	██
Tue 30	██	██	██	██
Wed 31	██	██	██	██

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		
11:54 pm	4:34 am - 7:56 am	1:32 pm	4:59 pm - 8:21 pm	☉	HIGH
12:54 am	5:30 am - 8:56 am ☀	2:31 pm	5:55 pm - 9:21 pm	☾	HALF
1:58 am	6:31 am - 9:53 am ☀	3:26 pm	6:56 pm - 10:18 pm	☾	Perigee
3:06 am	7:32 am - 10:48 am	4:16 pm	7:57 pm - 11:13 pm	☾	Perigee
4:14 am	8:36 am - 11:38 am	5:01 pm	9:01 pm - 12:03 am	☾	Perigee
5:22 am	10:39 am - 1:11 pm	6:20 pm	11:04 pm - Midnight	☾	Perigee
6:30 am	11:40 am - 1:52 pm ☀	6:56 pm	Midnight - 1:36 am	☾	NEW
7:35 am	12:39 pm - 2:35 pm ☀	7:31 pm	12:05 am - 2:17 am	☾	NEW
8:40 am	1:38 pm - 3:16 pm	8:07 pm	1:04 am - 3:00 am	☾	NEW
9:43 am	2:33 pm - 3:59 pm	8:44 pm	2:03 am - 3:41 am	☾	NEW
10:44 am	3:28 pm - 4:44 pm	9:24 pm	2:58 am - 4:24 am	☾	NEW
11:42 am	4:23 pm - 5:29 pm	10:07 pm	3:53 am - 5:09 am	☾	NEW
12:37 pm	5:15 pm - 6:17 pm ☀	10:53 pm	4:48 am - 5:54 am	☾	LOW
1:28 pm	6:04 pm - 7:06 pm ☀	11:42 pm	5:40 am - 6:42 am	☾	HALF
2:15 pm	6:51 pm - 7:57 pm		6:29 am - 7:31 am	☾	HALF
2:58 pm	7:37 pm - 8:45 pm	12:34 am	7:16 am - 8:22 am ☀	☾	Apogee
3:36 pm	8:18 pm - 9:36 pm	1:27 am	8:02 am - 9:10 am ☀	☾	Apogee
4:12 pm	8:58 pm - 10:26 pm	2:22 am	8:43 am - 10:01 am	☾	Apogee
4:45 pm	9:36 pm - 11:18 pm	3:18 am	9:23 am - 10:51 am	☾	Apogee
5:17 pm	10:12 pm - 12:10 am	4:15 am	10:01 am - 11:43 am	☾	Apogee
5:48 pm	10:50 pm - 1:02 am	5:12 am	10:37 am - 12:35 pm	☾	Apogee
6:20 pm	11:27 pm - Midnight	6:11 am	11:15 am - 1:27 pm ☀	☾	Apogee
6:54 pm	Midnight - 1:57 am	7:12 am	11:52 am - 2:22 pm ☀	☾	FULL
7:30 pm	12:07 am - 2:53 am	8:14 am	12:32 pm - 3:18 pm	☾	FULL
8:11 pm	12:51 am - 3:51 am	9:18 am	1:16 pm - 4:16 pm	☾	FULL
8:57 pm	1:38 am - 4:50 am	10:23 am	2:03 pm - 5:15 pm	☾	FULL
9:49 pm	2:30 am - 5:50 am	11:27 am	2:55 pm - 6:15 pm	☾	FULL
10:47 pm	3:25 am - 6:51 am	12:28 pm	3:50 pm - 7:16 pm ☀	☾	HIGH
11:50 pm	4:26 am - 7:48 am	1:24 pm	4:51 pm - 8:13 pm ☀	☾	HIGH
	5:25 am - 8:45 am	2:15 pm	5:50 pm - 9:10 pm	☾	HALE & PERIGEE

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

☀ = DAWN ☀ = HIGH NOON ☀ = DUSK

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

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REAL ESTATE

HAPPY JACK CABIN RENTAL. Great Fishing Lodge on the water with launch -Can Sleep 10- visit: www.LaCabins.com for booking & availability or call/text 504-628-7577

LAKEFRONT PROPERTY. 2 story, 2BR, 2 bath house with 1,500 sq. ft. living area and 85' x 12' deck overlooking White Oak Lake, 15 mi. from Camden, Arkansas. House is pre-furnished and surrounded by 23,000 ac. Poison Springs WMA. Hunt deer, turkey, hogs. \$75,000. Call Mike at 870-403-1104.

REAL ESTATE



10.69 ACRES NEAR CENTERVILLE MS. Hunting property with lots of game. \$65,000. (225)288-1862. 2RE-101/P

Classifieds

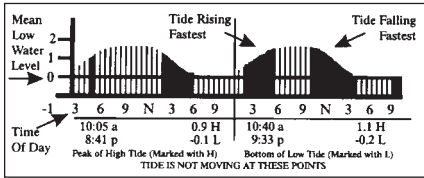
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REAL ESTATE



HUNTING CAMP FOR SALE
14.9 Acres only access to other hunting acreage. Asking \$120,000.00. Near Woodville, Ms. "Honey hole" 225-288-1862

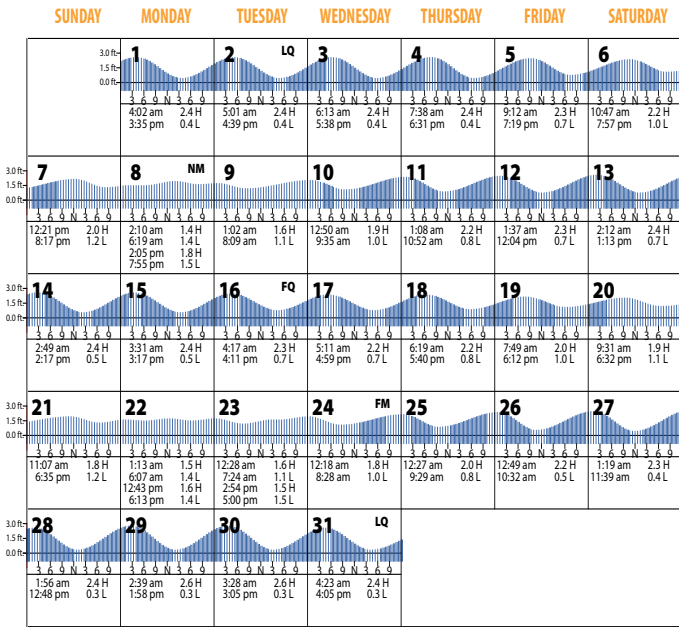


How to use the **SPORTSMAN** Tide Guide

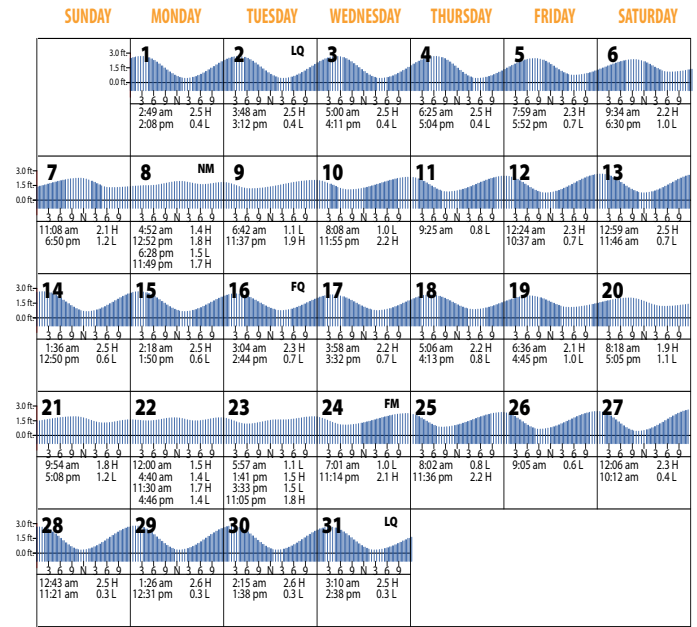
Fish feed most actively when the tide is moving. The Mississippi Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most active feeding periods each day in the TIDE GUIDE. Just fish those times indicated in black.

Be sure to visit our web site for more tide locations: <http://www.ms-sportsman.com>

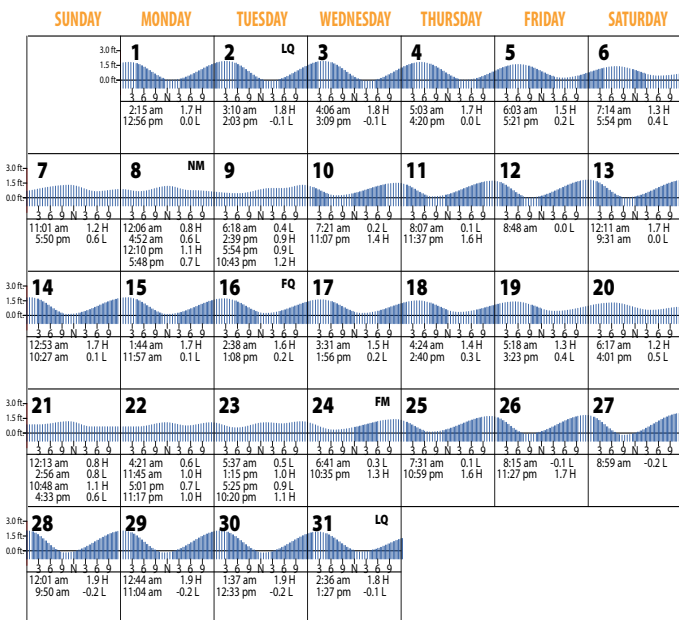
Bay St. Louis Entrance



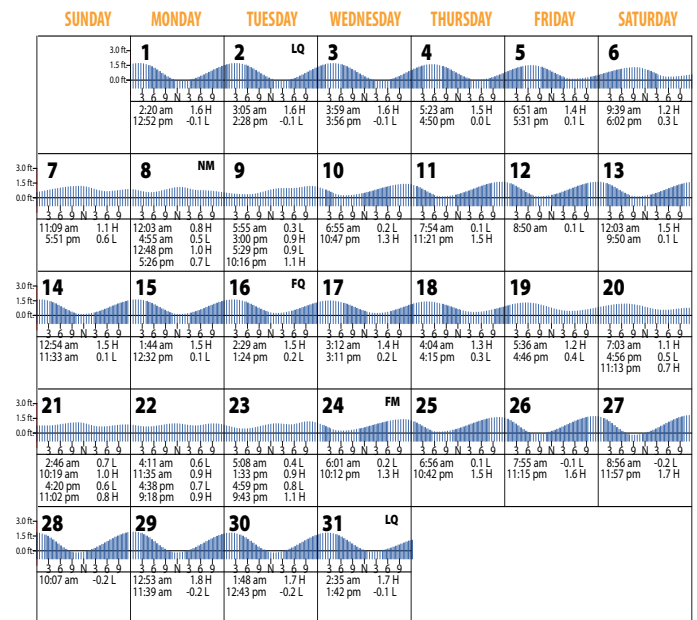
Biloxi Cadet Point, Biloxi Bay



Horn Island Mississippi Sound



Pascagoula Point Mississippi Sound



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