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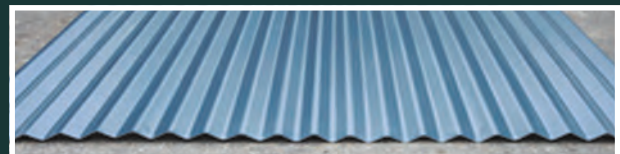
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Bridge the gap

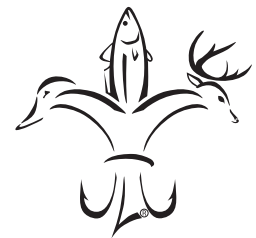


18
A time to kill



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Barrett Van Cleave arrowed this huge buck on Oct. 1, opening day of archery season in the area around Woodville where he was hunting. The season was barely 30 minutes old when he scored on this 157 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch buck.

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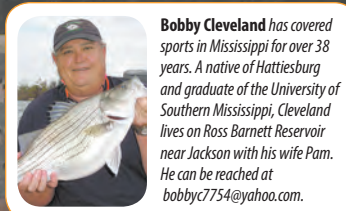


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BE THANKFUL IT'S NOVEMBER

OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND FOR HUNTERS AND FISHERMEN

ABOVE: Levi Haney, 6, was hunting his family's Delta farm on Nov. 26, 2017, when he killed the big buck he named "Captain Hook" with his Adams Arms .308.

November is a time to be thankful, and man, oh, man, is that ever true for Mississippi sportsmen.

Want to fish? The action is fantastic, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Tennessee border.

Want to hunt? If it walks, flies or lives in trees and is considered a game bird or animal, there's a pretty good chance that at some point this month, the season will be open.

Obviously, that includes deer, and, rightfully so; whitetails dominate the spotlight and the headlines.

This edition of *Mississippi Sportsman* offers three features that help set the tone for the 2018-19 deer season, which

transitions throughout November into various gun seasons.

- Mike Giles walks us through the different deer seasons and opportunities that the month offers, from youth to primitive weapon to the regular gun with — or without — dogs.

- Andy Douglas talks with heads of several deer clubs about how they manage to survive — and thrive — amidst rising costs and hunting pressure, and hunting tactics for club land.

- David Hawkins digs into the mindset of two hunters who worked hard to achieve their first trophy bucks last winter, and the impacts of that success.

But, we haven't overlooked fishing at all. Not one bit.

Phillip Gentry takes a unique look at how some of Mississippi's best catfish anglers approach suspended blues and flatheads in both rivers and reservoirs, and he finds that what was once an intimidating challenge is no longer so.

There's also a look at how Mississippi's coastal fishermen "bridge the gap" to catch boxes of edible delights as several species transition from offshore to inshore and gather on Highway 90 bridge piling.

In the next few pages, we'll look at the myriad other outdoor opportunities that November brings — ducks, small game, game birds — and more.

Let's go. ■

GET QUACKING COME THANKSGIVING WEEKEND

After what was, at best, a decent teal season in the latter part of September, Mississippi duck hunters are hungry for more. No, make that starving.

"My family loves to eat wild duck more than any other game — or steak, for that matter — and we did not have a very good shoot at blue wings (teal) in September," said Howard Travis of Olive Branch. "Our honey holes in the Delta were dry, so we were left with what we could find at the reservoirs, and that was pretty danged meager.

"My two partners and I hunted six of the 16 days and killed a total of 18 teal. That ain't much, not when you're trying to put enough grilled duck breasts on the table for my two young sons, my wife and me. My hunting partners were kind enough to give me the bulk of the birds, so we had one dinner of duck poppers and one pot of gumbo."

Not so much meals as appetizers, eh?

"Yeah, that's about right," Travis said. "I've already been told to do better when the real duck season starts, and you better know they meant it."

The three-part season opens Thanksgiving weekend, Nov. 23-25, reopens Nov. 30-Dec. 2, and then opens on Dec. 5 and continues through its conclusion on Jan. 27. Keeping the family fed on ducks could be a challenge this year.

"Yeah, I wasn't too pleased when I saw the duck-survey numbers from the federal guys last month," Travis said. "We had a pretty good season last year, thanks to those early cold fronts that pushed ducks in early. A lot of people had great hunts early, only to see it slow down in the middle of the season. We had ideal habitat on our lease, so they stayed. Then, they really poured in again about the second weekend in January and it was really good; I mean really, really good. We had limit hunts every day we hunted, and we hunted a lot. It was so good that we all three took a week of vacation, earlier than I generally would, to stay on them.

"When you read that there's a 13-percent decrease in all ducks — especially a 12-percent drop in mallards — expected in the migration, that is not a good omen. Last year, with the weather we had, maybe a 12- or 13-percent drop in ducks wouldn't have mattered. There's no guarantee we'll get that kid of early winter this year, which means January will be the key. That's usually the case anyway." ■

more updates... >



Bobby Cleveland

Mississippi duck hunters like Katelyn Rhodes can start shooting the day after Thanksgiving.

MISSISSIPPI'S DUCK SEASONS

All seasons statewide:

Nov. 23 through Nov. 25.

Nov. 30 through Dec. 2.

Dec. 5 through Jan. 27.

Youth days: Nov. 17, Feb. 2

Bag limits

Daily ducks: Six ducks per hunter to include no more than four mallards (no more than two of which may be females), three wood ducks, three scaup, two redheads, two canvasbacks, two black ducks, two pintails and one mottled duck.

Daily mergansers: Five mergansers, only two of which may be hooded.

Coots: 15.

Possession: The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit for ducks, mergansers, and coots.



Duck season won't really start rocking until late December or January, but hunters get four days in November (23, 24, 25 and 30) to hunt.

GOT PICS? We want 'em

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PLENTY OF SHOOTING ON THE WING

For waterfowlers who just don't want to wait for the duck season to get a little wet and muddy, there's the regular goose season that starts well in advance of duck season this fall.

The season opens statewide on Nov. 9, and the first segment runs through Nov. 25. From that point, the goose season is consistent with the duck season — Nov. 30-Dec. 2 and Dec. 5-Jan. 25.

"Opening goose season that early doesn't really affect us that much in the Delta," said Riley Barnes of Greenville, "unless you've got access to some areas with a strong population of local Canada geese. I know the feds don't like us to call them resident Canadas, but let's face it, that's what they are. They may migrate across the road, or maybe across the county line, but migrating from the north ... nope. They live here all year."

The early goose season isn't lost on Tony Weeks of Jackson, who makes use of it to take a few Canada geese from the upper area of Barnett Reservoir and a few spots on the main lake.

"The Rez is covered up in local Canadas, and you can shoot a few every time you go for a week or two," Weeks said. "Once the shooting starts heavy, like with duck hunters later in November, a lot of the geese will just fly to the lower end of the lake where hunting isn't allowed. I bet those parks and neighborhoods down there get even more crowded with the danged things.

"Before they go, it's pretty easy pickings, just like it was in early September during the early Canada season. They're kind of tame and used to seeing bass boats all the time. Unless you charge right at them, they'll just swim around you or fly right by you. It was kind of tough the first week of September because the alligator hunters were all up there. After they left, though, for about two weeks, we slayed those black-headed dumb birds. Then they got wise and moved to other areas."

Neither Barnes nor Weeks killed other goose species in November last year, when the season opened Nov. 10.

"The light geese (snows, blues and Ross') are around in the Delta, but they're in the middle of the fields, and there's so much grain, and it's usually just too hot to deal with the mud and all that," Barnes said. "I'd do it for a specklebelly, but we don't usually get specklebellies until much later, like December."

Added Weeks: "I don't know how long it's been since I've seen any other type of goose on Barnett Reservoir but a Canadian, and that's at any time." ■



Specklebellies typically don't arrive in Mississippi until the latter parts of the season.

MISSISSIPPI GOOSE SEASONS

All seasons statewide

Dates: Nov. 8-Nov. 25; Nov. 30-Dec. 2, and Dec. 5-Jan. 27.

Daily limits: 3 Canada geese; 3 white-fronted geese; 1 Brant goose; and an aggregate total of 20 snow, blue, and Ross' geese.

Possession limits: Three times the daily limit on Canada, white-fronted and Brant geese; no possession limit on snow, blue and Ross' geese.

Light goose conservation order:

Special season on light geese, including snow, blue and Ross' geese opened in October and ends Nov. 8; reopens Jan. 28 through Feb. 1; reopens Feb. 3 and ends March 31. There is no limit.



Mississippi's first season segment on light geese, including snows, ends Nov. 8 and doesn't reopen until Jan. 28.

OTHER MIGRATORY BIRD SEASONS

Doves, crows, rails, gallinules, moorhens and snipe are all legal at different times in November, and more Mississippians than ever are taking advantage of the opportunity. Well, at least some of those birds.

Mississippians love to dove hunt, and a lot of people will hunt them during the short time the season is open in early November. Having opened in October, the second part of the three-part dove season ends Nov. 7 in both the South and North Zones.

"How good the shooting is depends totally on the amount of food available after the corn and bean harvests," said Ginny Townsend of Cleveland. "After the farmers take their corn and beans in September and October, so much grain is left on the ground that it really scatters the doves. It's tough to concentrate them unless you've planned well and put out some late sunflowers. I don't care how much corn and soybeans or anything else is on the ground, if you've got sunflowers that headed out late, you will have doves."

Things will change in December and January when the third and final seasons open (Dec. 15 in the South Zone, and Dec. 22 in the North Zone).

"That scattered grain will pretty much be gone by then, or at least rotten, and that can concentrate the birds, including the migrators we get in the Delta from the upper Midwest," Townsend said. "This year we're excited that we can hunt through to Jan. 31; that's 16 days later than we've ever been able to, and it means that we'll have even more of the migrating doves. This ol' girl will be hunting just about every day I can. My husband and sons start deer hunting and then duck hunting, but not me. I'm in a group of about 15 men and women, with some kids, that only hunts dove. Between us, we'll have enough spots to hit so that we can find any concentrations and stay on them."

Another popular target is the crow, a bird that grew in popularity in the 90s and never stopped. The season opens Nov. 3, and there's no limit.

"If you haven't tried it, you need to, and don't wait until February like most people," said Jimmy Vance of Brandon. "I've got a buddy in the pecan business, and he got me started hunting them back in 1992, and I'm hooked. I bet I've killed a couple of thousand of them in the last 25 years, and I've probably helped others kill twice that many.


"My pecan-growing friend has five different groves throughout Central and Southwest Mississippi, and he told me I've probably saved his business \$25,000 to \$30,000 over the years. That's great. He keeps me in shelled pecans and let's me have all the fun I want."

Snipe season opens Nov. 14, but because they are found in duck holes and deer properties, the few snipe hunters in Mississippi wait until February after those seasons have closed. Snipe are legal through Feb. 28 with an eight-bird daily bag limit.

The seasons on gallinules, rails and moorhens, which were open the entire month of September, reopen on Nov. 23 and will be open through Jan. 1. None are very popular to shoot, except by camera. ■

more updates... >

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DEER 'BAITING' RULE CHANGES

Mississippi has made it legal to hunt deer within 100 yards or within sight of bait.

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A rule change proposed in September and given final approval in October by the Mississippi Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks removes the restriction that had prevented deer hunting within 100 yards of a feeder.

While it doesn't specifically mention baiting, the language stricken was part of Mississippi Code Title 40, Part 2, Chapter 2, Rule 2.4: Supplemental feeding of wild animals outside of wildlife enclosures. Unchanged in Rule 2.4 is a line that reads: "Nothing set forth in this rule shall be construed as authorizing or allowing the taking of deer or any other game animal or bird with the aid of bait."

However, along with a change several years ago that removed language requiring feeders be "out of line of sight," the latest change certainly does allow baiting,

and the reasoning given for the latest edit makes it clear.

It is a move, one MDWFP official said, that has been requested many times by sportsmen and mostly by archers, who have a very restricted kill range as compared to modern rifles.

"There had been requests before, some from bowhunters," Russ Walsh, executive director of the Wildlife Bureau, told *The Clarion-Ledger* newspaper. "The Commission looked at it, and it was their decision to do it."

The change was verified in a special phone teleconference on Oct. 12.

Another deer change adapted makes it illegal to transport a deer carcass into Mississippi from any other state, regardless of whether the state of origin has had a confirmed case of chronic wasting disease. Deer taken within the levees of

the Mississippi River in either Arkansas or Louisiana would be excluded.

Other exclusions include:

- Meat from cervids that has been completely deboned.
- Antlers attached to cleaned skull plates or cleaned skulls with no tissue attached.
- Cleaned teeth,
- Finished taxidermy and antler products.
- Hides and tanned products.

The Commission also announced its intent to make it illegal beginning July 1, 2019, to use natural scents or lures that contain natural cervid biofluids or other biological material. Those lures and scents will remain legal during the 2018-19 season, but not beyond. ■





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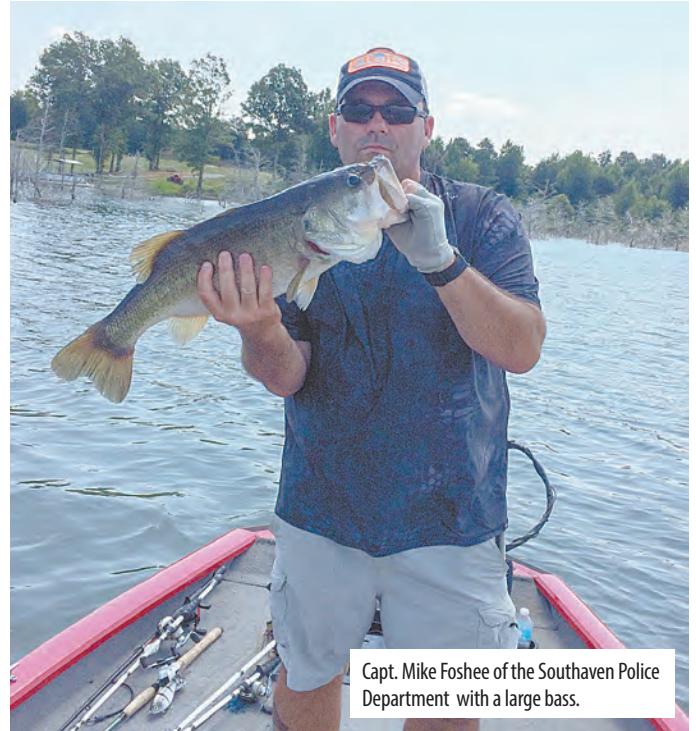
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LEFT: Romy Whistle of Nesbit started bowfishing a little more than three years ago and fell in love with the sport. She started purchasing equipment that first year and then bought a truck and boat last year. She says she caught a lot of grief from the guys early on but she's finally gained their respect this year. She mainly shoots in North Mississippi, but will occasionally go to Arkansas, Tennessee and Alabama.



Capt. Mike Foshee of the Southaven Police Department with a large bass.



Parker Chapman, 8, son of Joey Chapman and Jennifer O'Brien, caught this big bass from a private pond in Water Valley.



Brice Britton, Waylon Britton and Hunter Roberson had a great time fishing around Avon.

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TURKEY HARVEST REPORTING IS MADE MANDATORY

Successful turkey hunters will have to report their kills by 10 p.m. of the day of harvest.

David Hawkins

The Mississippi Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks proposed in September to enact the state's first mandatory harvest-reporting system that will be in effect during the 2019 spring wild turkey season.

In October, the Commission delayed a final vote on the proposal, but chairman Bill Cossar said it will be passed.

Called "Game Check" to be uniform with other states, the harvest reporting system will require turkey hunters to carry on his or her person a current harvest reporting record. That record can either be an MDWFP harvest reporting application on a smartphone with the hunter's profile and harvest history, a paper copy of the

MDWFP harvest reporting record, or a form improvised by the hunter with the required information.

The "Game Check" record shall be considered current when it contains the hunter's full name, harvest date for each turkey harvested and a harvest reporting confirmation number for each turkey harvested.

Before moving a turkey from the point of harvest, hunters must document their name and harvest date on the harvest reporting record. All hunters must then, by 10 p.m. on the day of harvest, report the kill to the MDWFP by either the MDWFP smartphone app, the MDWFP web portal or by telephone. They will receive a harvest report confirmation

number.

Harvest reporting records for hunters under the age of 16 may be possessed and maintained by an adult aged 21 or over when hunting under their direct supervision.

Commissioners had previously approved a ban on supplemental feeding of wildlife, including deer, from March 1 to the last day of the turkey season May 1, but in October, they decided to strike that proposed change. Cossar said there was overwhelming negative response from the public, so the commission nixed it in the conference call. ■

GIANT SALVINIA FOUND IN BARNETT RESERVOIR

Giant salvinia, an aggressive, non-native aquatic plant, has been found in the Pelahatchie Bay area of Barnett Reservoir near Jackson, the Pearl River Valley Water Supply District announced.

Efforts to eradicate giant salvinia will require multiple applications of multiple herbicides, which the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks (MDWFP) said will also have an unfortunate impact on native vegetation, such as lotus (lily pads) that is important to the bass population.

MDWFP first discovered giant salvinia in a small, isolated patch along the Bay's north shore early this summer, treated it and began looking for more. In August, the agency located more of the problematic plant in pockets spread through a five-acre area. It was surrounded by nets and containment booms, and the MDWFP began an aggressive spraying campaign to eradicate it.

After a series of extremely rainy days, the salvinia broke through the containment and was located in several areas, including parts of the southeast bank. Officials say it is also spreading by other means.

"We have found it in small patches of water in the middle of islands, out of the flow of water," biologist Ryan Jones said. "There's no way it could have traveled there by water and likely had to have been spread by birds, alligators or other wildlife."

Giant salvinia, an aquatic fern, is native to Brazil and was first found in the U.S. in South Carolina in 1995. MDWFP biologists say it is one of this country's most-dreaded invasive plants because of its rapid growth potential and the difficulty of eradication. Research has found that it is capable of doubling its biomass in 36 hours in

optimal conditions, which include warm, still waters — exactly what exists in Pelahatchie Bay.

If unchecked, the plant can take over an entire lake cove in a matter of weeks with mats up to three feet thick, choking out all aquatic life and making boating, swimming or fishing impossible in affected areas.

This is the second time giant salvinia has been found in Barnett Reservoir. In 2013, a biologist recognized a small patch in the

harbor at the Goshen Springs Boat Ramp on Mississippi Highway 43. It was quickly eradicated and removed from the water.

Since it is believed the plant is introduced to new waters primarily by boaters, PRVWSD and MDWFP officials say it is important that anglers and boaters clean, drain, and dry their boating equipment after each use to limit the spread of invasive species, and to report all non-native aquatic species they encounter to MDWFP Fisheries Bureau. ■

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Barrett Van Cleave has been among Mississippi's best bowhunters over the past decade, but even this opening-morning buck surprised him.

Photo courtesy Barrett Van Cleave

AN OPENING DAY HUNT THAT FOLLOWED SCRIPT

VAN CLEAVE'S PERFECT HUNT PRODUCES 157-INCH BUCK

Barrett Van Cleave has proven his skills as a bowhunter consistently over the past five years, working hard to not only produce massive mature bucks but then hunting them hard until they adorn his trophy wall.

But even he couldn't believe the great opportunity he faced on Oct. 1, opening day of the 2018-19 deer season.

To say it was perfect, well...

Only 30 minutes into legal hours at sunrise that first morning, Van Cleave put down a 157½-inch buck on private land near Woodville in southwest Mississippi.

It was a 5½-year-old buck nicknamed Footloose, like the movie, and the deer's actions seemingly were following a script.

"In all my years, I've never had a situation

so perfect that I had confidence going to the stand that I was going to be successful," Van Cleave said. "I knew where he was sleeping. I knew where he was eating. I knew the trail he was using. He was consistent. I had the (trail-camera) photos documenting his life, and it was the same day after day."

So confident was Van Cleave that he did something he rarely does early in the archery season — he hunted in the morning.

"That's something I just don't usually do," Van Cleave said. "Hunting in the morning in October, it's just easy to mess up, and when you mess up a buck, he gets nearly impossible to find. But this buck, Footloose, it was too perfect.

"He was walking a trail to a field that

allowed us to put up a double-stick lock-on stand just off a logging road, so I knew I could get to the stand and up in it with minimal sound. I was hunting with my friend, Slade Priest, who was going to video the hunt from the same tree (for an upcoming TV show). We were so close to the stand, that by the time we had gotten in place in the tree, we could still hear the truck crunching gravel. That was more than enough noise to cover any sound we may have made."

Within a few minutes of sunrise, Priest saw the buck exactly where it was expected to appear, traveling the same trail and walking right toward the trap that Van Cleave had set.

"Slade whispered to me, 'There he is,'" Van

Eliquatetus essumquis a cum antivel iumquatem volora net as dolorum, cus quia volo moloreratia soluptur?

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

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

Adding to the perfect set up — the scripted walk, an ideal southeast wind that blew away from the deer — were two deer already feeding in the small food plot where Footloose was headed.

"Two does had entered the food plot from the northwest corner and luckily didn't get downwind and bust us," Van Cleave said. "They took his full attention for the most part, allowing me to shift my feet and get ready to come to full draw. I heard Slade whisper '29' (yards). I drew the bow and settled the pin on his heart, and just as I was applying tension to the trigger on my release, Footloose picked his head up and turned to walk away.

"By not letting down immediately I was

stuck at full draw for 90 seconds waiting on him to swing back around and give me a clear shot at his vitals. Those 90 seconds felt like 10 minutes. I took my head off of the string and tried to relax as best as possible at full draw."

Van Cleave had time to reminisce, thinking back to years of watching Footloose mature and the encounters they'd shared. All the deer-management planning, hundreds of hours of brutally hot summer preparation, all of it, came down to the next few seconds.

"He finally turned and worked his way back to me, and I settled my face back on the string," he said. "Slade whispered '27' and I buried the pin on the bottom of his heart and squeezed the release."

The shot was perfect, right through the heart. The buck bolted out of the field but didn't go far. The recovery was a closing scene that Van Cleave won't soon forget.

"Walking up to Footloose I noticed he was perfectly resting underneath a holly tree similar to a holly tree three ridges over, under which I had knelt in prayer at the end of a 3-year quest with a deer I



called Situation," he said. "It was Situation that taught me so much about bowhunting and life in general, and he was the reason I started letting bucks get to be 5 years old before we hunt them. It was a full-circle humbling experience.

"Finding Footloose, there was absolutely no ground shrinkage, his massive rack grossed 157½ inches and was sporting a G2 that stood 11½ inches with three kickers. It was 19¾ inches wide inside, and both bases were more than 5½ inches (in circumference)." ■

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November brings plenty of different opportunities for Mississippi deer hunters to put venison in the freezer: youth season, primitive weapons season and finally, gun season.

A time to kill

By Mike O. Giles



Hayes Nance was scanning the area around his stand, looking for a deer or any sign of movement, when, without warning, the woods came alive, and a couple of yearlings burst out, followed close behind by their mothers.

Nance was looking for a succulent doe to harvest, but he didn't want to shoot the mother of deer so young. He decided instead to watch and enjoy the deer feeding and playing in the field, and things settled down.

Eventually, the smaller deer and their mother left, ending the show, but opening up the opportunity for which Nance was waiting.

A big, mature doe came in alone and immediately started browsing on grass and tender shoots. Nance waited and watched until he was convinced that she was alone.

He readied his 7mm-08 rifle and centered the crosshairs on her vitals.

Taking a deep breath and holding, he slowly squeezed the trigger.

Ka-boom!

The gun roared, the bullet flew true for a quick and clean kill, and Nance had his first deer of the year.

It's a scene that has been and will be repeated thousands of times in November as Mississippi's gun season for deer begins, offering many different opportunities with various firearms throughout the month. Archers, who got their start in October, and also still busy in the woods.

Yessiree, it's November and harvest time in Mississippi.

YOUTH GET FIRST SHOT UP NEXT >



YOUTH GET FIRST SHOT

Before the month is over, hundreds of thousands of hunters will head to the woods to harvest deer for the freezer, for the wall and to add to the memory bank. Whether the goal is to harvest a doe with a primitive weapon, take a youth hunting or harvest a buck with a gun, it's possible in November. Just pick your favorite and get outdoors.

Youths ages 15 and under get the first shot, if you pardon, at gun season. The youth season opens Nov. 3 and gives kids two weeks before the regular gun season opens Nov. 17.

"We like to get out into the woods during the early youth hunt before everybody else gets into the woods," said Joey Daugherty of Clarke County. "We'll harvest a doe or two early if we haven't spotted any good bucks."

Daugherty takes his son, Lane, and stepson, Nance, as often as possible during the early youth season, using it as an opportunity for the young guns to harvest any legal doe or buck. After the regular season starts, it gets difficult for young hunters to see a buck during daylight hours.

A few days after Nance took his doe, Lane Daugherty was in a deer stand with his mother, Lori Daugherty, looking for a big deer he'd missed last season.

"He had missed a big, wide 9-point the year before on Christmas Day, and we saw the deer on camera that same night, so we knew he was alive," Lori Daugherty said. "Lane really wanted another shot at him, so he wasn't going to shoot a doe quite yet."

It didn't take long for Lane Daugherty to spot the buck; it came out late one afternoon during the first week of youth deer season.

"Lane shot the buck, and it had grown 12 points to go with a wide rack," Lori Daugherty said. "He shot the deer with a Savage 6.5 Creedmoor with a 129-grain Hornady bullet about 15 minutes before dark."

The buck was good enough to win the weekly prize at Jay's taxidermy in Quitman and made Lane's season for sure.

The Mississippi youth deer season gives young hunters a chance to harvest a deer before they are shell-shocked from hunting pressure and go nocturnal. If you've got a young hunter in your family, it is the perfect time to introduce them to deer hunting when the odds are stacked in their favor.

PRIMITIVE FOR DOES ONLY

Adults must wait two days longer than youngsters before getting a shot; beginning Nov. 5, they can only use primitive weapons and take antlerless deer only through Nov. 16. The



Mississippi provides all kinds of opportunities for deer hunters in November, from youth hunting to primitive weapons to full-on gun season later in the month.



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early primitive weapons season is open in four of the state's five deer zones, with the Southeast Zone the lone exception. It offers hunters a chance to get into the woods to help control the doe population while filling their freezers.

Wayne Edwards and his son, Scott, are both avid hunters, and a great percentage of their diet is made up of venison, a healthy, affordable alternative to store-bought meat. The family usually takes

While many people still prefer shooting blackpowder when they hunt with primitive weapons, others prefer the newer center-fires that come in the .444, 45-70 and .35 Whelen calibers. All are deadly and capable of shooting deer at very long range and not nearly as messy.

"I used to shoot the black powder but switched to the .35 Whelen after they came out with that," Edwards said. "It's deadly and can shoot a couple hundred yards with kill-



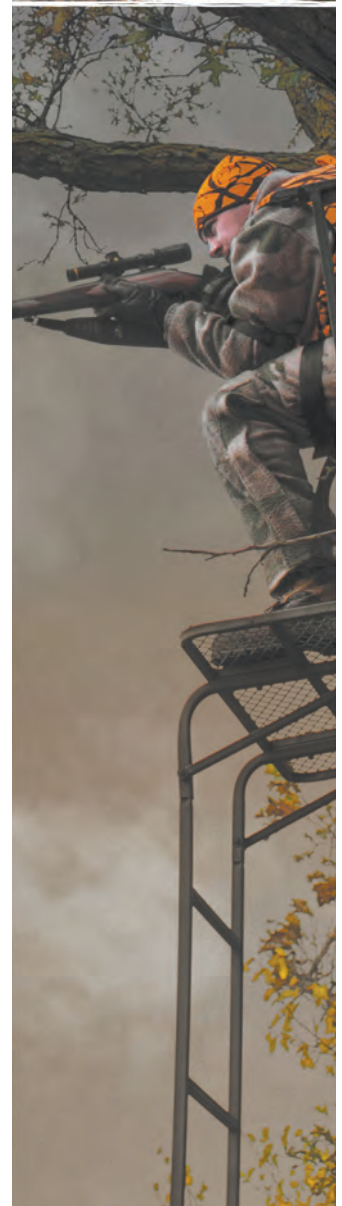
advantage of the early season, primitive-
weapons doe hunt to fill their freezer.

"We like to harvest three or four does and process them ourselves," Wayne Edwards said. "We'll use the meat year-round, so we like to get our does early so we can concentrate on the bucks when they start rutting. After those big bucks start chasing the does, we switch gears and look for horns and good bucks."

After missing this buck as a 9-point on Christmas Day in 2016, Lane Daugherty killed it as a bigger, wider 12-point during the 2017 youth season.

ing accuracy and knockdown power, too."

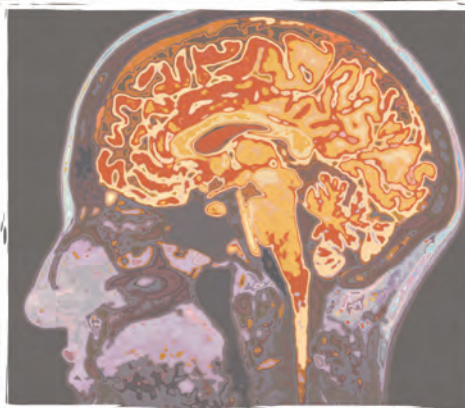
The more modern, single-shot rifles were cutting edge back in their heydays, and they're still pretty accurate and impressive today. One shot is all you get, but one is enough if you make a good one.



NOV. 17: THE BIG DAY UP NEXT >

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A TIME TO KILL



NOV. 17: THE BIG DAY

While November affords opportunities for bowhunting, youth hunting and primitive-weapons hunts, the big day is opening day of the regular gun season, which traditionally occurs the Saturday before Thanksgiving and is cause to celebrate. Deer camps are full, bonfires are lit and cookouts are planned. Whether you like to hunt with dogs, shotguns or rifles, the opportunities are there.

It's the first day that archers who have seen bucks stay safely out of bow range, or primitive-weapon users who saw big bucks while doe hunting can reach out and touch the deer at longer distances.

That's exactly what happened for Mark Giles of Meridian, one opening day. He had spotted a nice buck in trail-camera photos in the weeks leading up to the opening-day hunt, but he wasn't able to get a shot close enough during bow season. Opening day found the excited hunter in his stand, hoping to catch a glimpse of the deer.

"I hadn't been in the stand long when he came near me," Giles said. "He was a

shooter in the area I was hunting, and I couldn't pass him up."

Giles centered the crosshairs on the buck and squeezed his trigger until the 30-06 rifle roared. Another opening day buck was history.

He was hunting from an elevated stand overlooking a swamp bottom with deer trails running near his stand. He caught the buck slipping back to bed a little too late.

Obviously, the buck didn't know rifle season had opened.

HOT SPOTS

During the early season, most deer are in early season patterns and not yet too pressured by hunters and gunfire. Thus, any food sources are likely spots to find and harvest deer. Early season deer will feed on acorns, tender green fields, cutovers and any place that offers an easy food source.

Many youth hunters take advantage of late-afternoon hunts over green fields to harvest both bucks and does.

Wild persimmon trees, white oaks and water oaks offer deer succulent fruits, and you can bet they will take advantage of those early season treats, concentrat-

ing on the newly fallen persimmons and acorns.

While many hunters prefer to set up next to the fruit trees and acorn flats, many back off and watch those areas, preferring stealth and long-range shooting to harvest their bucks.

Still others, like Giles, concentrate on the trails leading from bedding areas to feeding areas. Time of day plays an important part in where you hunt, as the deer's pattern usually dictate when they will move between the areas.

Whether you want to hunt with a bow, muzzleloader, rifle or shotgun, there's something for everyone during the early season deer hunt. All you have to do is get outdoors and into the woods to experience the best of what the Magnolia State has to offer. ■



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

Writer's Thanksgiving morning buck

I love hunting cutovers that are between three and five years old, offer plenty of browse for deer and afford them security to feed openly during the day while never leaving the thick browse. Hunters who set up in elevated stands are able to spot deer — and pick out a good buck every once in a while — without ever being spotted.

That's exactly the situation I chose last Thanksgiving.

It was a morning hunt on the edge of a cutover, and my Millennium ladder stand was on the edge of a streamside management zone, facing west toward a series of ridges sloping off a hill.

Once in the comfortable seat, I turned around and quickly realized my plan was working perfectly. I was greeted with deer movement along the crest of the ridge about 225 yards away.

A nice buck with his tall antlers glowing in the early morning sun was leading the group. I had one opening to shoot before he went over the crest, so I put the crosshairs in the middle of the opening, and when he passed though, I squeezed off a shot.

The roar of the rifle sent the deer over the crest of the ridge. About 30 seconds later, the lead buck came running back towards me, about 80 yards further south. He stopped on a knoll to look in my direction.

I held off a second, preferring to let him get closer before taking a shot; however, it was unnecessary. The buck took two jumps, and then toppled over, disappearing into a drainage ditch.

The smaller bucks ran past where he'd dived off the cliff, stopping for a second to look before running within 30 yards of me. After a long 15-minute wait, I climbed down and walked up the hill to where I'd last seen him. I found him dead, facing head-first down the hill. He had run until he bled out and collapsed, the victim of a well-placed heart shot.

He never knew what hit him.

It was surely a day to be thankful for this hunter. ■

Mike Giles



The author had a lot to be grateful for last Thanksgiving, taking this 8-point, 210-pound buck with a 20-inch spread on the morning of the holiday.

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 • 51.85 Acres \$4,725/AC
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 • 91.83 Acres \$3,800/AC
 • 100 Acres \$5,552/AC
 • 115 Acres \$4,130/AC
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 • 125 Acres \$3,600/AC
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 • 884 Acres and home \$3,950,000
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 • 60 Acres \$3,850/AC
 • 95 Acres \$3,500/AC
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 • 420 Acres \$2850/AC

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 • 15 Acres \$2,500/AC
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• 43.74 Acres \$3,715/AC

• 77 Acres \$5,181/AC
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WAYNE COUNTY

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 • 98 Acres \$3,050/AC
 • 120 Acres \$1,500/AC
 • 220 Acres \$2,050/AC

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 • 493 Acres \$3,833/AC

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Bossier
 • 20 Acres \$2,900/AC
 • 26 Acres \$7,615/AC
 • 31 Acres \$8,225/AC
 • 75 Acres \$3,950/AC
 • 102 Acres \$2,950/AC
 • 120 Acres \$3,958/AC
Caddo
 • 16.8 Acres \$3,273/AC
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By Andy Douglas

HOW TO RAISE 'CLUBBING' TO AN ART

Tactics to keep hunting clubs vibrant and alive include changes in management of leased land, beyond just economic or membership moves.

Clubs can save bundles of money when it comes to food plots by utilizing what's already there along with what nature provides.

Joining a hunting club is a time-honored tradition in Mississippi and a way of life for many sportsmen. But in recent years, clubs in the Magnolia State have seen their fair share of hardships, challenges, and struggles.

Rising lease prices are a challenge for the average club. For most clubs it has caused one of two scenarios:

- The price of dues has increased, hitting hunters in the pocket book.
- Clubs have taken on more members to cover the total cost of the lease, often resulting in overcrowding.

“Our club has been affected by rising costs,” said Dustin Wilson of Attala County. “We see our lease prices rise every year. We didn’t want to take on any new members and put more hunters on the properties, so we went up on our dues.”

Absorbing the cost by increasing dues is a good solution to the uptick of lease prices, as long as members are in agreement and can swing it. For most clubs, however, this isn’t an option, and they take on more members, often resulting in added pressure on deer herds. Some come up with other solutions to make it lighter on the wallet.

Here are a few things that real Mississippi clubs are doing to address the issues.

MORE MEMBERS

Compensating for rising lease prices doesn’t always mean a club’s dues are going up. Taking on new members is a valid option, along with a few other outside-the-box ideas.

“We cater to the working-class guy, the guy that just wants a place to go hunting when he gets off work in the evenings or on weekends,” said David Hamblin, founder and president of Bennet Lake Hunting Club north of Tupelo. “Our members have agreed that we want to keep it affordable, so we’ve taken on more members than most clubs would entertain. We average about 75 acres per member.”

Each club has to evaluate its lease and deter-

Sitting on the camp’s front porch is just part of the club experience for Lincoln County hunter Shane McCullough. Joining a hunting club is a tradition for many Mississippi hunters.

mine the maximum number of members it can stand to avoid negative impacts on the local deer herd. This can vary throughout the different regions in Mississippi. When deer hunting is the main focus, clubs can consider taking on other types of hunters.

“We didn’t want to add new deer-hunting members on our Attala County lease, so we took on some turkey members,” Wilson said. “They pay half the normal price of a membership for access to turkey hunting only. This helps counter some of the rise in our lease prices.”

Bennet Lake Hunting Club also added turkey-only memberships, but it didn’t stop there. Members got incentive with revenue raising.

“We’ve started raffling items a couple of times a year,” Hamblin said. “A .45-70 donated by a member was raffled earlier this year, and soon we’re going to be drawing for a Ruger American 6.5 Creedmoor.”

continued >



HUNT CLUBS

Any means a club can come up with to generate revenue or save money by cutting costs and overhead will lessen the probability of raising dues. To cover the costs of food plots, many clubs are asking members to provide seed and fertilize as needed.

"Clubs can save bundles money by taking advantage of what they already have," said Eric Bean with G1 Habitats, "Many hunters don't recognize it, but most properties have a ton of natural browse and forage that deer utilize. It just takes a little education and recognition on each individual property. We help hunters and clubs with this."

Good habitat-management practices and putting to use what nature provides is the most cost-effective means of providing deer with extra forage.

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

Managing to relieve hunting pressure is a necessity for clubs when more members are present. Even when there's an excellent member-per-acre ratio, the same kind of tactics will yield better results for any property. Today's hunting clubs are putting sound practices into effect, and it's making a difference.

"Feeders or feeding deer isn't allowed on

our lease," Wilson said. "This cuts down on a tremendous amount of traffic ... filling feeders, checking feeders or checking cameras over a feeder. We plant food plots, and that's it. There's no joy-riding ATVs during deer season, either."

Like Bennet Lake, many clubs are limiting ATV traffic to specific times. Rules for gas-powered engine travel starts in September, a week before bow season opens, and limits the times ATVs can travel to avoid peak morning and evening hunts. Electric carts are exempt.

Taking on extra members does not always mean excessive pressure is added. Lots of clubs buy into the notion they need a ratio of 100 acres per member. Though it may be a good rule of thumb, it isn't always correct or the right philosophy for every club.

"Even though we've taken on more members, everyone isn't there at the same time," Hamblin said. "We have several members that will only make three or four hunts a year."

One idea many clubs are doing is keeping a logbook. Hunters sign into and out of areas or stands by dates. Members can see who's hunted where at what times and avoid hunting the same places over and over.

continued >

CLUB POLL PROVIDES BASE OF COST-SAVING IDEAS

Several hunting club presidents and/or board members surveyed about what they've done to help alleviate the financial burden their groups have faced volunteered some of their tactics to compensate for the rise in lease prices.

Relieving hunting pressure

- Limit ATV access, designate parking areas, and make rules for ATV quiet times;
- Reduce trail-camera usage with a cap on the number of cameras a member can set;
- Educate members how to access stands and decrease spooking deer;
- Limit guest hunting or eliminate guest hunting;
- Create a sanctuary in a central area of a lease;
- Raise dues and decrease membership numbers;
- Limits on deer harvest more stringent than legal state limits;
- Seek diverse groups of hunters like small-game, turkey or raccoon hunters as members;
- Banning feeders or feeding deer on a lease;
- Interview new members to get like-minded hunters in your hunting club.

Revenue generators

- Raise guest fees substantially;
- Invoke antler restrictions above state criteria with heavy fines for those not adhering;
- Create club raffles;
- Create fines for deer harvested under certain weight limits;
- Raise dues;
- Ask members for contributions above the cost of annual dues;
- Offer non-deer hunting memberships at lower costs such as turkey, raccoon or rabbit hunting only.

Deer clubs with a good turkey population can add turkey-only memberships to help raise funds without increasing pressure on deer.



Andy Douglas

Hiring an expert to evaluate the deer and the land, and to advise on such details as trail camera (see tree in background) usage can save the modern club time and money in the right situation.



SOME HUNTING CLUBS HAVEN'T SURVIVED

The rise in prices for leased hunting land has taken its toll on hunting clubs across Mississippi. Most have adapted by whatever means necessary, but a few haven't been as fortunate.

For the past 36 years, Red Dot Hunting Club in Jefferson County near the Union Church community has been a thriving club. Unfortunately, this year the only choice members had was to shut it down.

"We leased timber-company land," said Bill Farmer, long-time Red Dot president. "Our troubles started in 2009 when Georgia Pacific sold out to Plum Creek. Then, in 2016, Weyerhaeuser bought it. Even though we kept the same timber-company lease manager, the price of the lease doubled in the past 10 years. I attribute this as the No. 1 reason we had to let it go."

The days of paying \$200 or \$300 for a hunt-club membership are gone, and many hunters struggle to find a good lease at an affordable price.

"I noticed that when our price of dues reached near \$1,800, we started having trouble finding new members, and current members were having trouble paying it," Farmer said. "I had to dip into my pockets some years just to get the lease paid, hoping to find new members to reimburse myself."

Today's clubs have to be frugal and innovative when it comes to managing funds and keeping dues as low as possible without overcrowding the land. Each club is unique, and there's no one-size-fits-all solution. Every club will have find out what works for them to avoid the fate of shutting down. ■

NEED HELP? HIRE A PRO

Sometimes, everyone needs a helping hand, even a hunting club. Professionals are available to help clubs determine good management practices for their specific properties. They can also come up with strategies for hunting, stand placement, approaching stands, parking spots and even things never thought of for a particular lease.

With cost-cutting a big factor, why hire a wildlife-management expert? Actually, it can make found financial sense for some clubs when experts can find other, cheaper ways of management, or to offer ways to make the property more attractive.

The better a club can make a property, the easier it will be to attract prospective

members. The more successful a club can become will also justify any future increases in dues. Hunters will dig deep in their wallets for exceptional hunting ground.

Several companies that specialize in helping clubs or individuals improve properties, utilize what's available, and come up with smarter hunting plans. G1 Habitats in Hattiesburg is one such company.

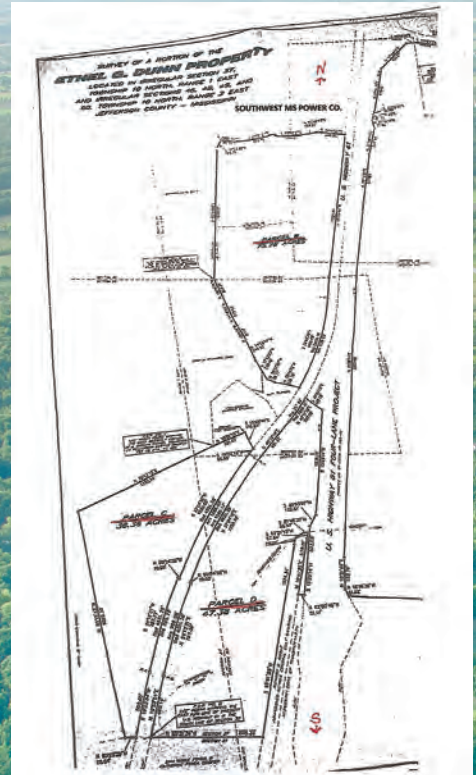
"We sit down with clients and come up with a property improvement plan," owner Eric H. Bean said. "Using satellite imagery and graphic design, I come up with a map that a hunting club president can sit down with their members and show them the layout of the property, including food plots, stand locations, bedding areas, travel corridors ... roads and water sources, and that just gets us started."

Every lease can be improved, and every club can come up with effective hunting plans. This is what it takes to minimize inadvertent contact with deer accessing different places on a lease.

"On the map, along with the stand locations, there will stand access routes," Bean said. "Hunters need to consider, 'I've got a stand hung; now how am I going to get to it without bumping deer? What's the wind for hunting this stand? How will I approach it?'" ■

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HUNT CLUBS

“We’re starting this year to keep a log on how many are hunting at one time and where, hoping to track pressure on different areas,”

Hamblin said.

This provides a way for club presidents and management to go back and look at real club data and determine peak hunting days and how many hunters were on the lease on any given day. Records may show some clubs having a membership ratio of less than 100 acres per member may actually have less pressure than clubs having 200 acres per member.

DEER SANCTUARIES

Hunting smarter is always a good idea and is crucial when the pressure is on. Hunters put pressure on deer; bucks and does want to avoid human contact. Clubs need to work toward creating a place where deer feel secure.

“Management is a big problem with many clubs,” Bean said. “There will be so many people coming and going, checking cameras, riding 4-wheelers or whatever. The deer don’t have a sense of security. If you can give them a place where they’re not encountering people on a regular basis, and then provide them with plenty of food, water and bedding, whether it’s 15 acres or 1,500 acres, it will improve the property to hold more deer.”

Each club needs to evaluate its tracts and come up with plans on stand placement and hunting the correct wind, along with how to access stands without bumping deer. Large



Careful planning in selecting a stand site can help cut costs and increase benefits. Clubs should include wind directions and approaches in their consideration.

numbers of clubs utilize topographic maps or aerial photos and create maps showing stands, plots, roads and waterways. With Mississippi’s weather patterns changing throughout the season, this tool will help hunters read the wind and determine the smarter approach on the hunt.

If you’ve found yourself in a club or managing a club that’s resulted in higher dues, more hunters or sometimes both, take a look at what other successful clubs are doing to offset the challenges. Every hunting club is different, and what works for one may not work for the other. The bottom line is that a deer club has to be innovative and willing to do what it takes to persevere in spite of today’s obstacles. ■



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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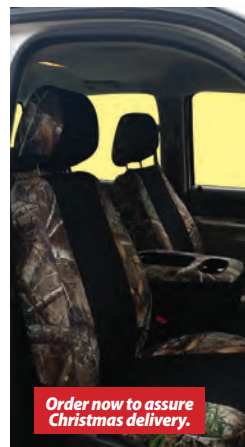
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BRIDGE THE GAP

Editorial and images by
Bobby Cleveland



Capt. Kenny Shiyou said the winter sheephead bite on the U.S. 90 bridge pilings is as dependable as fishing gets on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.



BRIDGE PILINGS NEAR MISSISSIPPI'S GULF COAST WILL PRODUCE FISH UNTIL WEATHER WARMS UP NEXT SPRING

With a forecast of 40 degrees and a 40-percent chance of rain, I was expecting a call to cancel a planned inshore fishing trip with two captains in Bay St. Louis the day after Thanksgiving.

And I wouldn't have been upset, despite having gotten up at 3 a.m., and left home at 4 for the three-hour drive to the coast.

Instead, I got this text message as I passed Hattiesburg at sunrise:

"We'll be waiting on you at the new marina down on the beach. — Sonny."

Then another:

"Call when you get this message. — Kenny."

My first thought was "These guys must be nuts." But at noon, four hours after I arrived, we were

back at their camp with a 120-quart fish box filled with fish, accomplished in three hours of fishing. The action was so hot I never got cold, and with overhead cover loaded with working-class traffic, I never got wet despite a constant drizzle.

It was perfect.

Sonny Schindler, ringleader of Shore Thing Charters, used another word.

"Told you it was crazy," he said. "If there's one positive thing we got out of (Hurricane) Katrina, it was this crazy fishing pattern on the new Highway 90 Bridge. Every fall and winter, the pilings load up with fish, and once you find the right piling, it's some of the easiest fishing we get all year."

“It’s easy in that we always get a box full of fish, the techniques are simple, and it’s not much more than a mile run to get from the dock to the fish.”

That trip happened in November of 2011, six years after Katrina. Since then, fishermen along Mississippi’s Gulf Coast have discovered similar patterns at other bridges across the major coastal rivers.

Combined, they give fishermen a perfect way to bridge the gap between the more popular fishing seasons of fall and spring.

In addition to the Bay St. Louis bridge, there’s the big U.S. 90 Bridge that spans the opening to Biloxi Bay, between Point Cadet in Biloxi and Ocean Spring’s Front Beach Drive, and the old U.S. 90 bridge that the City of Biloxi turned into a drive-on fishing pier.

Pascagoula features two bridges, the U.S. 90 Bridge that was built two years before Katrina and the Highway 619 Bridge that runs from U.S. 90 to the Naval Station.

DON’T BE SHEEPISH

The post-Katrina U.S. 90 bridges at Bay St. Louis and Biloxi are the best and easiest to fish for boaters. Both have easy access from nearby launches and each has miles of pilings that provide targets, both for fish to lay in ambush of bait passing on the tide and for fishermen to find those hungry fish.

Primarily, the targeted species are black drum, red drum — aka redfish — and sheepshead.

Yes, sheepshead.

“People’s be crazy if they turn their noses up at sheepshead,” said Capt. Robert Early McDaniel of Biloxi’s WhipaSnapa charters. “It is one of the tastiest, lightest and flakiest fish we catch. They can be a challenge to clean but easy once you learn, and whether you cook them whole or fillet them, they are fine eating. Think of them as small red snapper — very similar in texture and taste, only not usually as big or as easy to clean.”

Sheepshead have become more popular in this age of increased fishing pressure on a declining fishery resource.

“I’m certainly not sheepish about sheepshead any more, and neither should you,” said angler Tommy Lewis of Biloxi. “Years ago, I used to complain about catching them — called them bait stealers — and threw every one of them back. I was fishing at the old Highway 90 Bridge one day and reeled up about a 6-pounder and this woman was out there walking, and she passed me while I was lifting it up in my drop net.

“She heard me telling a friend nearby that it was ‘just another one of those bait-stealing sheepsheads’ and she couldn’t believe I was just going to throw it back. She took my fillet knife right there on the bridge and cleaned that fish in a minute or two, and it was beautiful meat. She said, ‘Easy, peasy’ and tossed the fillets in my icebox. I went home and cooked them and was back out there the next day targeting them. She came back by, and I gave her about five, and she walked home, got her car and came back to get them.”

Puppy drum — aka small black drum — are another popular bridge dweller in the fall. The first cousin to a redfish is an equally good-eating fish as long as it isn’t too large.

“Once they get over about 22 or 23 inches, I don’t keep them at all,” Lewis said. “They get kind of wormy and mealy, and they just don’t taste that good. But a 14- to 20-inch puppy drum, now that’s fine eating. I actually prefer it to a keeper redfish.”

Mississippi doesn’t regard the black drum as a sportfish and has no regulations regarding daily creel or length limits.

SHEEPSHEAD UGLY AND, BOY, WHAT TEETH ...

Sheepshead got their name for a reason: their faces forevermore look like those of sheep, with teeth that can do harm to weak hooks and an ill-placed finger.

“Do not, I repeat, do not put your finger in or near the mouth of a sheepee,” said guide Kenny Shiyou of Bay St. Louis. “Not if you value your fingertip. They may not can bite it off, but they’ll try.

“A good set of needle nose pliers is your friend, that and a good sturdy set of fish grips.”

After Katrina, as more fishermen have started catching more sheepshead around bridge pilings, they have become more popular, so much so that earlier this year, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources instituted regulations to protect the eager eaters. The new creel limit is 15 per angler per day, and only fish with a total length of 14 inches may be kept.

“I’m so glad they did that,” said angler Tommy Lewis of Biloxi. “In the past few decades, we’ve seen a domino effect on our different fish species. As restrictions got tighter on one species, like red snapper, it put more pressure on others, like triggerfish and amberjack and so on. Then those species got more highly regulated and restricted.

“As speckled trout, flounder and, to some extent, redfish, became harder and harder to catch inshore, we started seeing more people targeting

sheepshead. They are still plentiful, but the new size limit and catch limit will help keep them that way.” ■

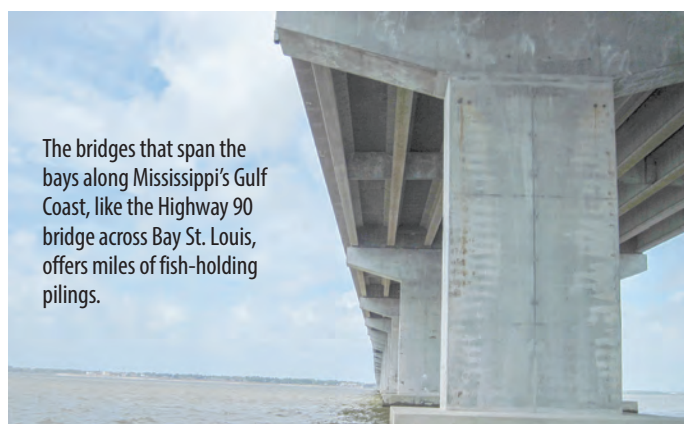


The mouth of the sheepshead is loaded with odd teeth, much like sheep, that can inflict damage on weak tackle and ill-placed fingers.

The other species that finds its way on to a hook around the bridges is the redfish, although, "They aren't nearly as plentiful as a puppy drum or sheepshead," Shiyou said. "We still catch a few each day, and as soon as they hit, we're pretty sure what it is. The sheepshead and puppies just kind of dig down to hold the bottom, but the reds they will try to take off on you."

PILING ON

The key to the bridge pattern is finding the hot pilings. "Just because we fish a lot, we've got a few that we like on the Bay St. Louis Bridge," Schindler said. "It's easier for us because we're out there so often, but it's not rocket science for people new to the bridges. You just pick one (piling) and start. If you aren't satisfied, just move to the next, then the next, then the



The bridges that span the bays along Mississippi's Gulf Coast, like the Highway 90 bridge across Bay St. Louis, offers miles of fish-holding pilings.

next.... Sooner or later, you'll hit on one that is holding fish."

Schindler said most of the pilings he visits are in water between 10 and 15 feet deep. On the U.S. 90 Bridge in Biloxi, McDaniel has deeper water to check, some as much as 30 feet deeper or more.

"You get on the pilings next to the ship channel, and it's deep," he said. "I usually start there and move to other pilings if they don't hold fish. Most of the pilings along the new bridge are anywhere from 10 to 20 feet. Know this; the deeper the piling the harder it is to fish. The deeper it is, the more the current, whether incoming or outgoing, can affect the vertical drop, and if you don't put the bait right against the piling, you might as well be fishing in Barnett Reservoir. You'd catch just as many sheepshead and drum at The Rez as you would several feet away from the piling."

Lewis doesn't have a boat and, unless he's fishing with a friend who does, he is limited to fishing from the old U.S. 90 Bridge fishing pier. He doesn't complain and keeps right on going.

"I can vertically drop my bait down to the piling and be right on it," he said. "I use a pretty stout, heavy-action bass rod and at least a 1- or 2-ounce weight, and I have used as much as 4 ounces in times of wind and/or heavy current. That way, I can make sure I'm getting my bait in the strike zone. I let it go all the way to the bottom and bounce it up and down, if I have to. Usually, if the fish are there — especially the sheepshead — they're going to hit it as soon as it shows up."

Lewis uses a converted crab net to get his fish to the bridge.



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BRIDGE THE GAP

"Kind of funny looking, but it works," he said. "I'm 68 years old, and I grew up in a family that loved to go crabbing. We had dozens and dozens of those drop nets growing up on Point Cadet. When I started fishing the old bridges after Camille (1969), I was knew exactly what I needed to get a fish up here. I took one of the nets and put a heavy-duty parachute cord on it with about 50 feet of length. When I get a fish up, a drop the net, pull



the fish over it and then lift it up."

Lewis had a tip for new bridge fishermen. "If you need a clue as to where to fish, look around the bridge at the railing and on the road itself," he said. "You will likely see some signs of fishing, either old smushed bait or blood stains from fish. Start there; somebody spent time there."

NO LIVE BAIT NEEDED

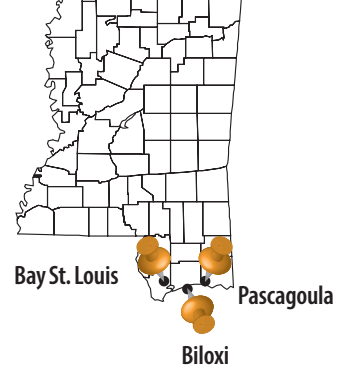
Because most of the tight-to-the-piling fishing is in the late fall and winter, live bait is difficult to find, but then, it's unnecessary.

"Doesn't require anything but dead shrimp," Shiyou said.

"Cut bait works," McDaniel said.

"If you're targeting black drum and don't mind catching a big one or two, you can use half a cracked crab," Lewis said. "Those big mammer-jammers will slam a crab in a heartbeat. I'll take a couple if I can find them, but I don't like to catch those big ones because I can't lift them up anyway."

Gearing up is pretty simple. Most boaters use the same gear they would for redfish and trout: medium-heavy to heavy action spinning or baitcasting rods, 15- or 20-pound braided line and a 12- to 18-inch piece of 10- or 12-pound fluorocarbon leader. The egg-sinker weight, ¼- to 1-ounce (more in extreme depths), is usually attached to the braid



above the swivel, with a bead to protect the knot. A 2/0 to 5/0 circle, octopus or Kahle hook — always stainless steel — is preferred, because sheepshead teeth will wreck wire hooks.

"Just take lots of gear, because you are going to break off a lot of it," Schindler said. "In addition to barnacles and the piers, there's a lot of post-construction rubble and stuff down there to break your line."

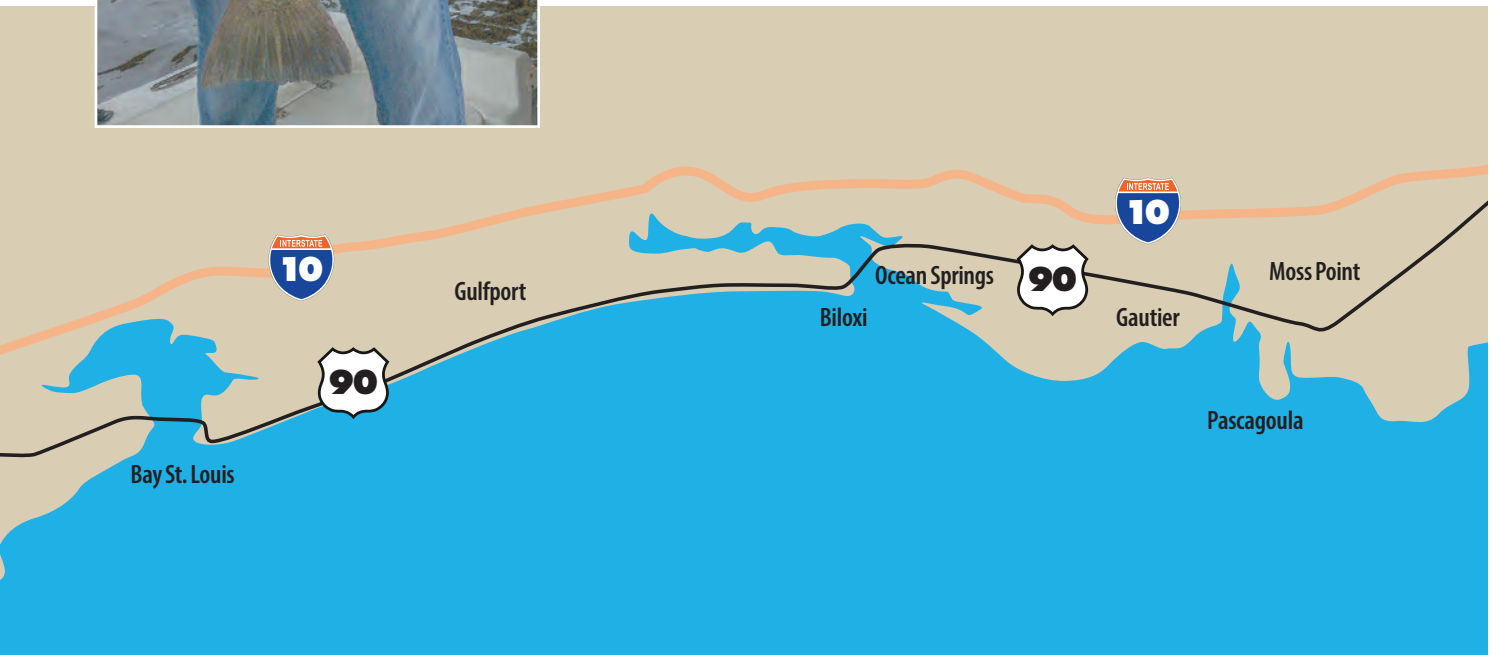
Added Lewis, "Always make sure your fluorocarbon leader is weaker than the braid. It's a lot easier and quicker to replace a leader than to have to put on a whole new swivel and sinker."

KEEPING CURRENT

As with any saltwater fishing, checking the tides and knowing when and in which direction the water is moving is critical in fishing the bridges.

"Any moving tide is better than a slow

LEFT: Black drum, the cousin of a redfish, is another piling dweller that can be readily caught in the winter. Big ones like this are best set free, but smaller ones are great to keep and eat.



Though not as readily caught as black drum and sheepshead, redfish are often caught around the bridge pilings in the winter months.

or slack tide,” Schindler said. “The moving water allows you to set up current and fish into the structure. Most fish feed into the current, so I think this makes it easier to sniff out the bait. It’s flowing into them.

“The only thing we change, based on the moving water is the amount of weight we use on our Carolina rigs or dropper rigs. Faster current, means more weight. Seldom will you ever need more than a 1-ounce weight. Just bring plenty of extras; there are plenty of big fish and plenty of snags.”

The new pilings on the bridges, with larger square bases just a few feet above the water, provide perfect targets.

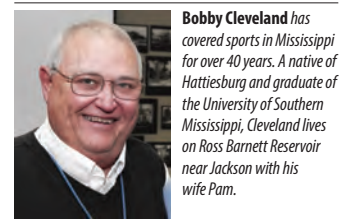
“One of the great things about fishing the bridges is that anybody can do it,” Shiyou said. “You don’t have to be an expert caster to put the bait right where it needs to be. We anchor and position our boat about 10 to 15 feet away from the piling, and it’s a short, easy flip cast to land the bait on those big square bases. With an open bale or open spool on the reel, you drag the bait to the edge



and let it fall to the bottom on free spool. That way, you know you’re in the right spot.”

The piling patterns across Mississippi’s Gulf Coast is an ideal way to beat the winter weather — short runs, quick catches, and easy fishing.

It is the perfect way to bridge the gap between fall and spring. ■



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

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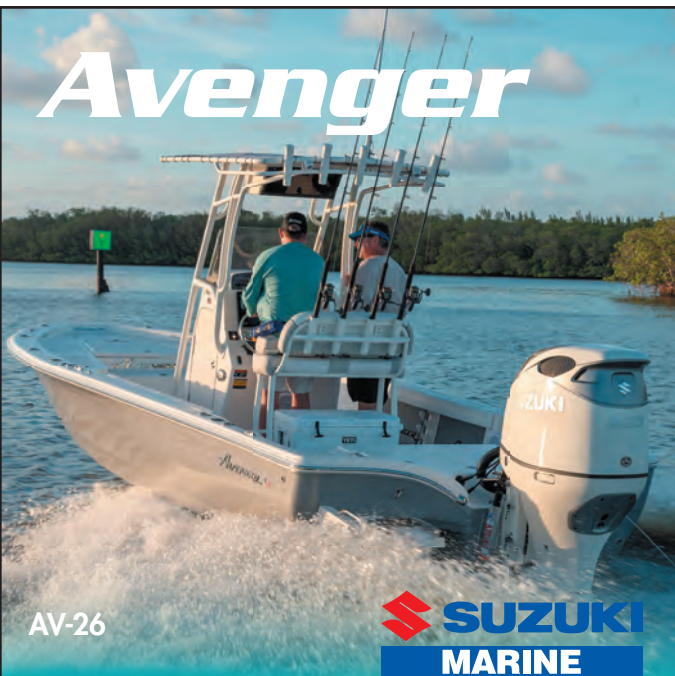
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Rick Small

THE TIMELESS ALLURE OF HUNTING

By David Hawkins

Being in the woods and taking nice deer, has changed the lives of more than just one or two hunters. But these two stories will do for now.

For every hunter, there is a shaft of light, an opening in the woods or a corner of a green field, where his or her buck of a lifetime stands in regal splendor — albeit in a dream.

It remains there, broadside, while the hunter collects his or her nerve and takes the shot, which naturally will be accurate and true.

Admit it, you have been that hunter; I know I have been and will be again. When the anticipation of seeing game no longer stirs my soul, I will case my

gun and hunt no more. Moreso, I'll be dead and buried.

Every November, the promise of another deer season comes to fruition. Archery season arrived last month, and early youth seasons and special antlerless seasons have taken place. For most Mississippians, however, the Saturday before Thanksgiving is and will always be the opening of deer season. The gun season opens for all.

Some hunters are prepared, others, well, not so much. Some have never technically allow the season to close,

with only the window for harvest suspended for eight or nine months. These are the men and women who walk their properties, keep trail cameras operating all year, practice predator control and follow the accepted best practices of herd management. In their opinion, the investment in time and material will never be wasted.

For others, there is an adage about blind hogs and acorns that will ring true through time.

>

“DEER HUNTING IN MISSISSIPPI IS A FLUID PROCESS,”

said William McKinley, deer program leader for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. “Since deer were restored to the state in the last century until present, many changes have taken place, both in the laws and the attitude about hunting them. It remains the goal of the MDWFP to provide the greatest opportunity possible to the hunting public.

“For that reason, the regulations are constantly being adjusted. The overall health of the statewide herd is excellent. There has been one reported case of CWD in Issaquena County. MDWFP is planning increased statewide sampling of in an effort to locate and combat this disease.”

McKinley said hunters should have very good opportunities to harvest deer on lands managed by the state and other governmental entities. Rain has come when it was needed and mast crops look fair — which should result in increased food-plot use — and deer should be plentiful.

One of the more-recent tendencies by hunters has been to allow young bucks to get older before harvesting. With the advent of trail cameras and increased knowledge of deer biology, hunters are allowing more bucks to mature before harvesting them.

What follows is a big-buck thread that binds the heart and soul of most hunters to the way of life that keeps them dreaming of that special buck, standing in that special place, at least once in their lifetime. Some have been here before, while others are relative newcomers to the passion of the chase. Some enjoy record-book hunts that inspire them to make a lifestyle change, while others are simply delighted to score a buck worthy of being mounted and put on the wall.

Joey Rigby of Forest killed this life-changing buck last deer season. His club had named it Junior, but at the age of either 5 or 6, it was no small fry — scoring 177½ inches B&C.

Maybe it will stir your spirit and kindle your passion for the eons old activity we call hunting.

B&C TROPHY CHANGED HIS LIFE

Joey Rigby of Forest loves deer hunting, and he has a testimony about how it has changed his life for the better.

For five years, Rigby collected trail-camera images and sightings of a buck members of his club had named “Junior.” On a January day in 2018, the buck made the mistake of stepping out into a power line with a doe. Rigby saw the resulting photo and started planning.

“There was a shooting house closer to the plot where the deer was feeding and chasing the doe,” he said. “Fortunately for me, no one was hunting there that day. Needless to say, I was in that shooting house the next day.

“To say I was anxious was an understatement. I had already allowed a nice 8-point and a big 6-point with perhaps a 17-inch spread, to walk that season.”

Rigby began to come to terms with the

he could just get that buck.

“The deer reappeared with what I believe was the same doe,” Rigby said. “God held up his end of the deal, and I’m holding up my end as well.

“I was baptized the following Sunday and have been learning and accepting more of what the Lord has planned for my life ever since.”

Junior was scored at 177½ inches at the Big Buck Bounty in Meridian, making the Boone and Crockett Club’s all-time record book. He was aged at 5½ or 6½ years.

ONE FOR THE WALL

Hunting came naturally for Lisa Albright. She and her brother began hunting with their father when she was between her 10th and 11th birthdays. She loved being outside and being involved in all those things that take place in the preparation of the land that add to the anticipation of the actual hunting time.

By age 15, Albright had put her hands on the first deer she killed. Over the next 40 or so years, she added many more bucks and does to the family larder. Along the way, she matured as a hunter, setting goals and, determining the steps to see those goals come to fruition.

Time has not dimmed her passion, in fact, time has just given her the skill set to make her goals more obtainable.

“Hunting, especially deer hunting, is in my blood,” Albright said. “As long as I can get to the woods I’ll do it. I’ll hunt until the day I die if I’m able.”

One Christmas, Albright asked Santa Claus for her very own Old Man tree stand, and her request was granted. She took another of step toward becoming a complete hunter.

Albright was all in at that point. The next time she went hunting, her first hunt in the new stand, she asked to be dropped off and wanted to stay in the woods all day. She settled into her tree and became one with nature, for more than just a day.

“I didn’t see a deer I wanted to shoot that day, but I proved to myself and my



Photo courtesy Joey Rigby

possibility of harvesting Junior, prayed to God for the opportunity, and made promises, too, like joining the church, changing his lifestyle and living better if

A longtime hunter, Lisa Albright of Raymond always had a dream of a buck to hang on her wall. She reached her goal in December 2017, in Holmes County, with this tall and lengthy trophy.



Photo courtesy Lisa Albright

family I was capable of going it alone,” Albright said. “It was a long day, and there were some times I thought about coming down and packing out, but that was not in the cards.

“The woods were so peaceful, (and) while there are few human sounds, the woods are anything but silent, quiet maybe, but there is lot to hear if you will just listen. All kinds of birds, squirrels and other critters are there — and you will see them if you have the nerve to be still and quiet.”

One of her goals as she grew to be a mature hunter was to kill a buck worthy of a shoulder mount, one to hang on the wall.

It took a few years, but it finally took place.

“It all happened on an afternoon hunt in Holmes County,” Albright said. “I went to a shooting house that was bordered by a creek to the right, and across the creek and tree line was a huge, harvested peanut field. There was a long, narrow food plot directly in front of the shooting house that ran along the creek and another small, round food plot out the left window of the shooting house.”

Albright said there was always a small doe that everyone saw when hunting on that side of the property; it showed up in her food plot and stayed most of the afternoon.

“As the day faded into late afternoon and the sun started to descend, I had about four does burst into the small, round food plot to my left,” Albright said. “I got my rifle out the left window ready, thinking that maybe a

good buck was chasing them. I kept waiting but nothing appeared.

“So I just watched those does feed around. I was going back and forth checking both fields. I had that small doe in the field in front and the four does

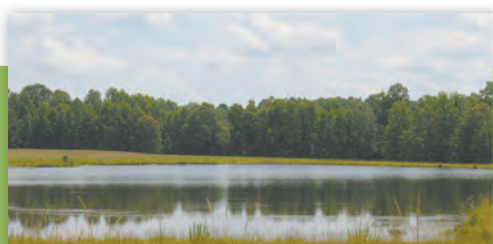
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HUNTING LAND ON 457 ACRES FOR SALE



- Location:** The property is located 14 miles south of Florence, MS in Simpson County.
- Size:** 457 Acres
- Roads:** Roads have been built along the high fenceline and throughout the property
- Utilities:** Electric and Butane, rural water supplier, working well, and treatment system on site
- Lakes:** 2 Fully stocked lakes and 2 smaller ponds
- Homesites:** Fully Furnished Lodge, 2 Private cabins, a detached bunkhouse, and a poolhouse
- Other structures:** Large Skinning shed
- Wildlife:** Approximately 100 animals on site: Red Stags, Axis, Fallow, & Blackbucks
- Price:** 1.9 Million

Surrounded by a high fence and beautiful accent gate, this 457 acre parcel is located just 30 minutes south of Jackson in Simpson County. The majority of the property is hardwood timber with scattered pastures, wildlife openings, 2 fully stocked lakes, and 2 smaller ponds. After a long day in the field or by the lake, sit back and unwind in the fully furnished Main Lodge or one of the two private cabins. With a total of 8 bedrooms, 5 full baths, and 2 half baths; there is enough room for 22 guests! After a dip in the heated swimming pool in the poolhouse, relax around the firepit on the deck of the main lodge or catch a movie in the media room at the Lodge.



Please Contact: Joni McClain, Owner/Broker • Blue Diamond Realty • 601-672-7999 • Joni@mcclain.ms

ALLURE OF HUNTING

Joey Rigby watched his trophy buck grow by the year from age 2½ to 4½, adding mass and inches along the way.

in the small field to my left when I realized there was movement at the far end of the long food plot directly in front. It was a buck, and this one was a shooter. I changed windows with my rifle, took a deep breath and bleated. He stopped, and I centered on his neck and took the shot.”

The buck dropped where he stood.

“My daddy taught me to shoot them in the neck.... They drop in their tracks,” Albright said. “Dad was right.”

The buck, a long time in coming, was a surprise visitor.

“He had to have crossed the peanut field and the creek to be



Photos courtesy Joey Rigby

where he was when I shot him,” she said. “I had never seen this deer before. I was simply in the right place at the right time, and everything happened very quickly. Had I kept my eyes on the other food plot for even few seconds longer, my buck would

have crossed the bottom of the food plot, and I would have never seen him. He scored 128 and made a beautiful mount. I am so proud of him.”

Today, Albright lists that peace that hunters know as one of the reasons she hunts whitetails. The other is to fill the freezer. Her family enjoys all the different ways venison can be cooked and eaten.

“I encourage those with no experience, who want to get involved in hunting, to try to find a mentor, a veteran hunter to show them the ropes,” Albright said. “I was lucky, it was the way our family lived. Outdoor activities were important, and still are.

“Some women think I’m a tomboy, and maybe to a point that may be true, but hunting is not just a man’s game,” she said. “And I am no less feminine for loving the woods. In most cultures around the world the woman are the primary hunter-gatherers of the family. I’m just doing what comes naturally.” ■



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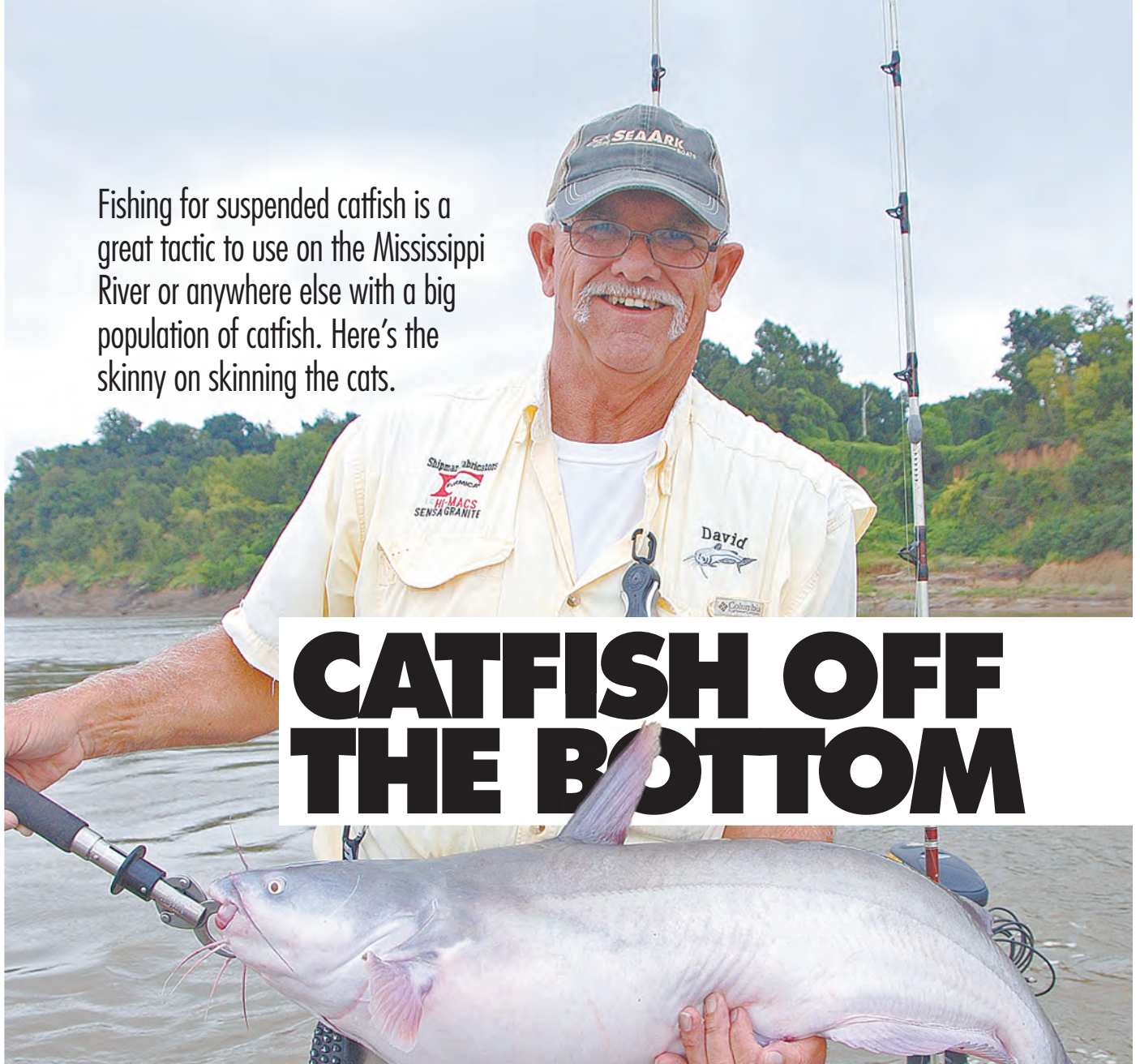


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David Hawkins is a freelance writer living in Forest, Miss. He can be reached at hawkins2209@att.net.

Fishing for suspended catfish is a great tactic to use on the Mississippi River or anywhere else with a big population of catfish. Here's the skinny on skinning the cats.



CATFISH OFF THE BOTTOM

By Phillip Gentry

Think of all of your hunting and fishing pursuits, and imagine your quarry in its preferred environment.

- Mourning doves sit on power lines along Delta grain fields.
- White-tailed deer peer out from hardwoods groves.
- Largemouth bass lurk in lily pads.
- Crappie hang out in brush piles or along contour changes.
- And catfish lay on the bottom.

Granted you'll find each of these animals in different surroundings, except, by popular belief, catfish.

Catfish are bottom-dwellers. Everybody knows that. Why would you look for them anywhere else?

As hard as it is to comprehend, catfish don't always lay on the bottom of the river, lake or pond — or whatever body of water you find them. Sometimes, catfish suspend. That's right, they swim up off the bottom and hang out near the middle of the water column or even close to the surface.

Like a lot of fish, a catfish's eyes are positioned on top of

its head. This doesn't mean catfish rely solely on their eyes to find things, such as food, but it does suggest they can and do look up — and even sometimes swim up off the bottom.

David Shipman of Corinth is a big believer in catching suspended catfish. It's something he has done ever since a day 35 years ago when he was fishing for bass on Tippah County Lake with a buddy.

The boat they were in had an old flasher unit for sonar, and Shipman kept seeing marks at 17 feet while fishing in 30 feet of water. After dropping a whole night crawler over the side of the boat down to 17 feet, Shipman spent the remainder of the trip hauling in 3- to 5-pound catfish.





It was a lesson he never forgot, and one that serves him well in his current past-time as a tournament catfish angler.

Shipman fishes nearly every type of water that holds catfish, but he is especially fond of the Mississippi River because of the number of trophy sized blue catfish it produces. He uses a number of tactics to catch catfish in Big Muddy, including bumping and anchoring, which are both bottom-fishing tactics.

But he said his strength is catching suspended catfish. “Suspend fishing works year-round but probably produces better during the cooler months, starting in November and running until March,” Shipman said. “Unlike the other bottom tactics, it doesn’t work as well in areas of heavy current but will still produce fish no matter where you try it.”

Shipman sets up his boat with a rod on each corner. His preference is B’n’M Magnum catfish rods ranging from 7½ to 10 feet long. With each rod secured in a rod holder, he will drop baits on a modified Carolina rig and use his trolling motor to bump around so that baits and the line stay vertical in the water column.

“I usually don’t go over a half-mile an hour and sometimes even slower,” Shipman said. “First, you want to get into an area where you are marking catfish. Sometimes, they might be suspending right off the bottom, and other times they might be halfway to the surface, regardless of the water depth. I’ve seen fish suspending at 35 feet over 70 feet of water.”

One of Shipman’s favorite scenarios is to find catfish suspending over structure. A brush pile is a frequent example, and fish are in a neutral or even a negative feeding pattern. They’re just sitting there.

“On days like that, you have to aggravate them to get them to bite,” he said. “I’ll put a big, ol’ chunk of skipjack herring right there in his face and bump around until he bites it.”

Once the fish bites, the odds are definitely in Shipman’s favor. He uses anywhere from 65- to 100-pound braid on his reel and threads a 2- or 3-ounce egg sinker on the line. He will use up to 16 ounces of lead if he’s in that heavy current he prefers not to fish.

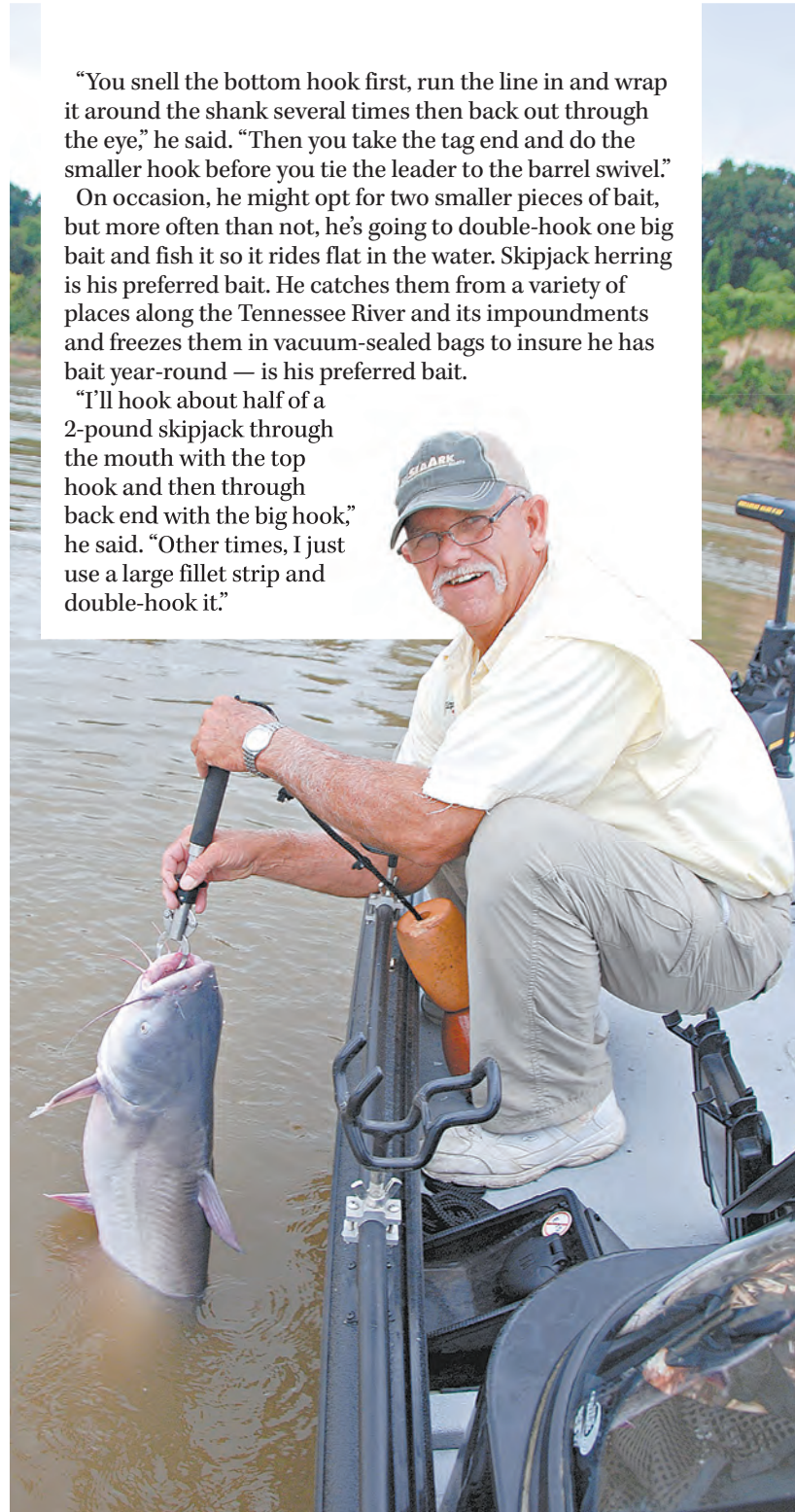
Adding a round rubber bumper to protect the knot from the weight, he ties a heavy duty barrel swivel to the main line and then up to 3 feet of 60-pound mono for a leader. On occasion, he may use just a single hook, but if he’s tournament fishing or targeting big catfish, he will double snell two hooks about 7 or 8 inches apart. The bottom hook is a 5/0 or 7/0 circle hook, with a 3/0 or 5/0 circle hook snelled in line above the larger hook.

BELOW: Angler David Shipman said catfish may suspend anywhere from just a few feet off the bottom all the way up to just below the surface.

“You snell the bottom hook first, run the line in and wrap it around the shank several times then back out through the eye,” he said. “Then you take the tag end and do the smaller hook before you tie the leader to the barrel swivel.”

On occasion, he might opt for two smaller pieces of bait, but more often than not, he’s going to double-hook one big bait and fish it so it rides flat in the water. Skipjack herring is his preferred bait. He catches them from a variety of places along the Tennessee River and its impoundments and freezes them in vacuum-sealed bags to insure he has bait year-round — is his preferred bait.

“I’ll hook about half of a 2-pound skipjack through the mouth with the top hook and then through back end with the big hook,” he said. “Other times, I just use a large fillet strip and double-hook it.”



SHIPMAN'S SUSPENDED CATFISH RIG



Skipjack herring are relished by catfish anglers who catch them during the fall and freeze them for year-round use.

If he's not actively marking fish up in the water column, Shipman said he will drop the rig to the bottom and turn the reel handle three or four turns so the bait suspends a few feet off the bottom. He doesn't like to get mud on the bait, surprising since catfish readily take bait off the bottom in the mud. "You also don't want to drag the bait on the bottom," Shipman said. "For one, it's too easy to get hung up on the bottom, but also the fish seem to react better with the bait off the bottom when they're suspended — probably has to do with their eyes looking up, I'm not 100-percent sure, but just don't let the bait hit the bottom."

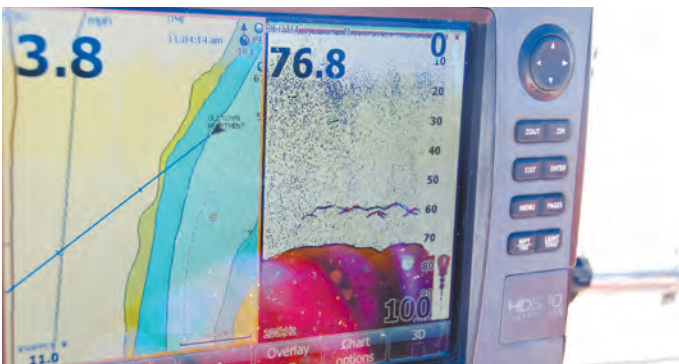
As for locations, Shipman lets his graph decide where he's going to fish. He said oxbows that are either open-ended or closed off from the main river are the kind of location that has consistently produced on the Mississippi River.

Oxbows typically don't have the same current flow as the main river, which might explain why catfish are more prone to get up off the bottom, as well as why suspend fishing for them works better. ■



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

**CATFISH SUSPEND,
WHY? UP NEXT >**



While catfish readily feed on the bottom, finding them off the bottom is almost a sure sign they're hungry. High-grade electronics will show their position.

65- to 100-pound braid main line



2- to 16-ounce egg sinker, depending on current

Bead or rubber bumper stop to protect knot

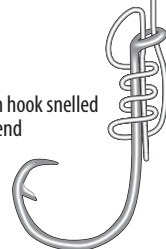
80-pound barrel swivel

3 feet of 60-pound monofilament leader

Upper hook snelled inline



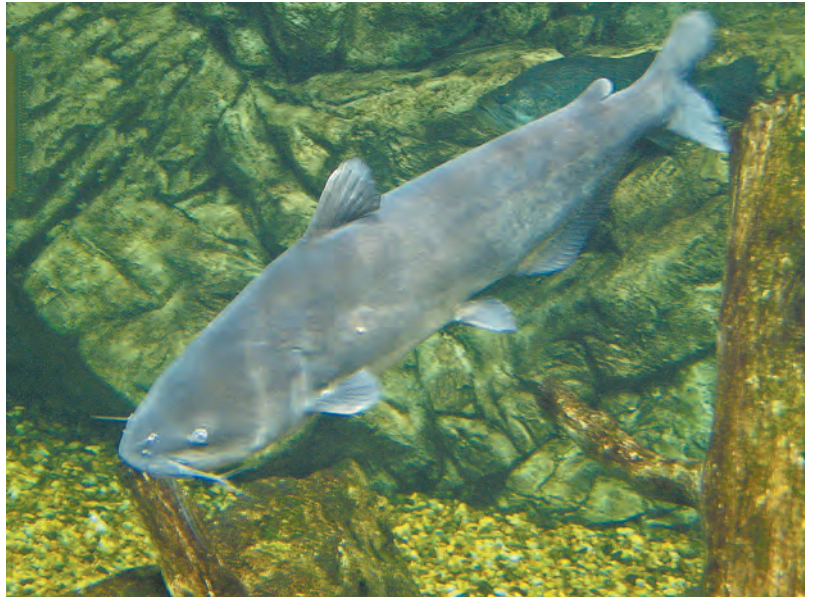
Bottom hook snelled to tag end



> CATFISH DO SUSPEND, BUT WHY?

Biologists and anglers have theorized what causes catfish to suspend off the bottom at different times, with feeding, water quality, oxygen and thermoclines being the most-common answers.

In areas where other fish — including black or striped bass — are feeding on the surface, catfish are known to leave the bottom and shadow surface-feeding fish to take advantage of missed, wounded, or pieces of



Catfish suspend off the bottom quite often, but biologists and anglers are hard pressed to explain exactly why.

baitfish left over. Striped bass, in particular, are known for slashing into schools of baitfish to stun the bait, and then circling back to eat the prey. In some cases, the wounded fish sink to where suspended catfish are the next-level feeders without exerting the effort.

At other times, without current to keep them pinned to the bottom, baitfish are freer to move about in a large river and its tributaries. When catfish are feeding, it's a common scenario to see them leave the bottom and move into schools of baitfish.

During the fall turnover in reservoirs, water quality turns sour near the bottom, with low levels of dissolved oxygen. That could explain why catfish leave the bottom, but turnover is not a scenario to be found in moving water rivers.

"I suspect it has a lot to do with oxygen levels in the water and, of course, catfish are going to go where the food is, but I couldn't tell you exactly why they at times will suspend up off the bottom," according to angler David Shipman of Corinth. ■

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YAMAHA

RESERVOIR CATS ALSO SUSPEND BUT CAN BE CAUGHT

While the Mississippi River is probably the best-known catfish producer in the state, many of Mississippi's reservoirs also hold their share of decent blue catfish.

Brian Barton, a guide on Lake Pickwick, is another fan of suspended fishing,

which he hesitates to call a slow troll because he is moving at such a reduced pace.

"My controlled drift or slow troll, whatever you want to call it, is a vertical presentation that I use almost year-round," Barton said. "The only difference during the fall is that I am going to concentrate on humps and ledges in deeper water."

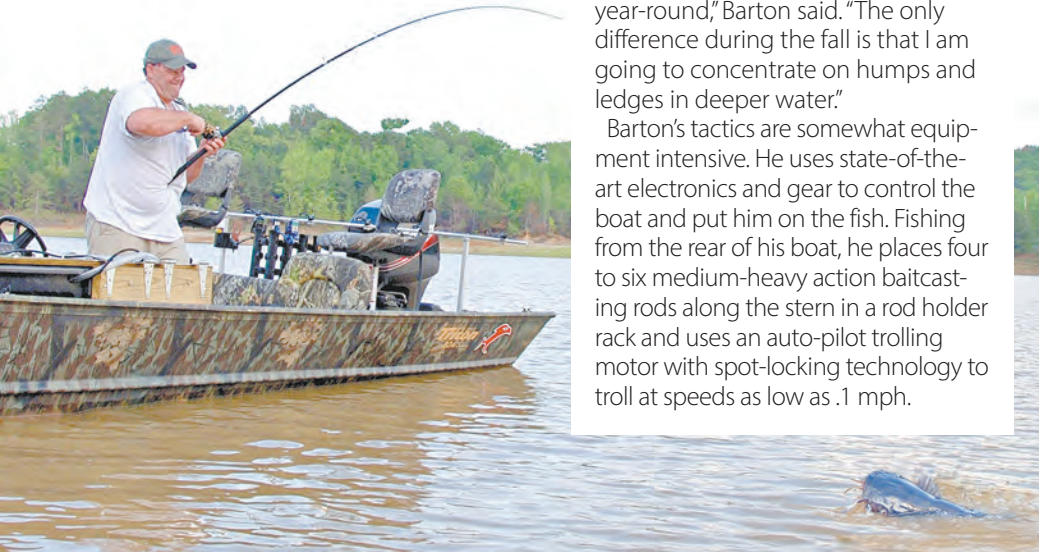
Barton's tactics are somewhat equipment intensive. He uses state-of-the-art electronics and gear to control the boat and put him on the fish. Fishing from the rear of his boat, he places four to six medium-heavy action baitcasting rods along the stern in a rod holder rack and uses an auto-pilot trolling motor with spot-locking technology to troll at speeds as low as .1 mph.

Pickwick guide Brian Barton explains that drifting or extremely slow trolling with lines vertical in the water is a deadly year round tactic on many reservoirs.

"There's not a rush to grab the rod and set the hook," Barton said. "Most times the rod will simply bow over slightly as the catfish takes the bait, and then he may take off to one side or head to the bottom. Just keep tension in the line and let the circle hook do its thing."

Barton, like most veteran catfishermen, relishes skipjack herring for bait, which he catches during their fall migrations and freezes for use during the rest of the year. The baits are then cut into bite-sized pieces and hooked on a 3-way rig that utilizes high test Vicious braid on the main line, a weighted dropper, and a 24- to 36-inch leader with a 5/0 circle hook.

"Pickwick is a good place to catch blue catfish," he said. "The typical-sized blue is probably between 10 and 15 pounds. But we also catch trophies that go up to 50, 60, and 70 pounds." ■



Philip Gentry

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By Phillip Gentry

If you were to survey any given piece of hunting property, there are areas that cry out to be hunted. A majority of times, these areas are soon saddled with a permanent hunting stand, be it a ladder, box or other permanent fixture. A hunter may even take one or more deer from that stand the next season, or it may be one of those rare stands that produces every season. But the reason that site was chosen is because it looked good to the hunter, not because it was conducive to the deer.

In fact, studies have shown that mature, trophy bucks learn to pattern hunters better than the hunter patterns the deer. Part of deer patterning hunters is their learning to avoid permanent stand sites. The best chance a hunter has to tag a good deer is by being unpredictable and catching that deer on his feet, in an area he never detected or suspected.

One of the best way to be unpredictable, undetectable and get the drop on a trophy buck is to hunt from a portable climbing stand.

CLIMB FOR THE PRIZE

Most deer hunters only get one chance at a trophy buck. Here's how hunting from a climbing stand can make that chance more likely to happen.

V



Kyle Clark, the owner of Doc's Deer Scents, has been hunting and patterning big deer in different parts of the country for most of his life.

He said several factors combine to allow the hunter to get the drop on a good deer: stealth, concealment and being in the right place at the right time. Using a comfortable, portable, climbing stand is part of that strategy.

Clark said stealth and the element of surprise work hand-in-hand with using a climber. Once he has identified an area a big buck is using, whether from scouting or images captured on a trail camera, he prefers to stay out of the area until it's time to hunt.

"Human scent control is always important," Clark said. "Several days before the hunt, I'll wash my clothes and body to make sure I'm as scent-free as possible. I repeat the process as soon as I leave the truck. The goal is to give the buck no idea I'm after him."

BELOW: A climbing stand allows deer hunters to circle the wind and always set up downwind from the direction they expect to see deer appear.

Clark is also going to hunt with the wind in his favor, and a climbing stand gives him more options than hunting from a pre-positioned stand or hunting somewhere else altogether because the wind is not right.

"A climbing stand also offers a certain degree of scent control, because I can hunt high or low, and I can even make back and forth adjustments in the stand, stuff you can't do with any other type of stand," he said.

If he's hunting before the rut, his preference is to find a travel route between bedding and feeding areas. He's not looking for a wide-open area and hoping on a chance encounter with the buck; he wants to be concealed and have a smaller window for the buck to detect his presence. Setting up on a travel route close to the buck's home area gives him that advantage. He will check the wind, then pick a tree off the beaten path but within range of the trail and climb it.



Phillip Gentry



After the rut, bucks won't travel far from their bedding areas to feed when it isn't dark. So climb a tree close to his core area and intercept him.

During the rut, Clark said all bets are off as far as patterning the daily movements of bucks. He describes it as a free-for-all when a buck's home range expands from one to 10 square miles. Being mobile is the key, and a climbing stand provides him with that mobility.

"I'm going to stay in the woods all day, if I can, but that doesn't mean I'm going to sit in the same spot all day," he said.

For all-day hunting, he wants a climber that's comfortable. Hunting from a climber is similar to living in an RV; if you decide you no longer like the neighborhood or things change, you can pack up and move.

Later in the season, Clark focuses on food sources but keeps other factors in mind. By this time of year, hunting pressure is taking its toll on mature bucks, and they will retreat to tight areas. Most times that means extremely thick areas in proximity to a food source, enough to meet their needs.

"You have a lot of hard mast that matures at different times," Clark said. "By late season, a trophy buck is not going to travel any more than he has to during daylight hours. You want to get as close to his core bedding area as you can without bumping him."

Many times, a thick area on the edge of open feeding areas

— think a clear-cut or grain field — will attract bucks. Clark warns that deer don't just wander through an open area. Using a climbing stand, he will identify trees that overlook ditches, depressions or other key travel corridors that provide bucks with a continued sense of security. That includes maintaining a stealthy profile.

"At the end of the season, he's on high alert. You don't want to be hanging out in the open on a tree, looking like an elephant on a toothpick," Clark said. "Choose a tree that gives you a good vantage point and where the likely travel area will be within range of your weapon, whether that's a compound bow, gun or muzzleloader, but make sure there's some reasonable cover in front of you and preferably some thick cover at your back to help conceal you." ■



Phillip Gentry of Simpsonville, S.C., is host of "Upstate Outdoors," a weekly radio show that can be heard on Saturdays at noon on WORD 106.3 FM.

BE SAFE WITH A SYSTEM

Hunter Safety System, Inc., was born out of a love for hunting and a desire to keep safe all hunters who use tree stands. Even so, it took a near-death experience to provide the impetus for the creation of the HSS harness.

In the fall of 2000, John and Jerry Wydner were hunting deer near Eufala, Ala., when John's tree stand collapsed beneath him. Because he wasn't wearing the harness that

came with his stand, he was headed to the ground and certain injury. However, he was able to catch hold of the top of the climber, and then shinny down the tree.

By the time he reached the ground, his clothing was torn, and he was bleeding and shaken. He immediately called for help. As soon as Jerry arrived, his first question was why John wasn't wearing his harness, to

||||| The Hunter Safety Systems harness was designed after a close call involving a collapsed deer stand.



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which John replied, "Were you wearing yours?"

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GETTIN' FRESH

Hal Schramm

This largemouth bass, and 19 more like it, was caught on a ¼-ounce, green pumpkin finesse jig with a small trailer after other baits, including a similar-sized, black/blue jig, failed to generate bites.



THE SEARCH IMAGE

WHAT TRIGGERS FISH TO BITE: A PRINCIPLE OF ANIMAL BEHAVIOR CAN HELP YOU CATCH FISH

Catching your target fish is easy some days, hard or even seemingly impossible other days.

After a summer of fishing for smallmouth bass, I had identified productive habitats and effective presentations for catching these hard-fighting bronzebacks. My confidence was severely shattered a couple days later when I fished all morning without a bite.

The lake had several rocky reefs, ideal habitat for concentrating big smallmouth bass, but none of the presentations that had been productive in lakes with similar habitat — drop-shot, small swimbaits, tubes, hair jigs, topwater poppers — would draw a bite. Despite great weather for a good bite, I wondered if the smallies were just “shut down?” The proverbial “lock jaw?”

After five fishless hours, I abandoned the “go-to” baits, put on a weightless, Senko-style stickworm and cast it to a shallow, rocky reef. A couple of casts pro-

duced a scrappy smallmouth. A couple of casts later, I boated a bigger smallie. Eleven more smallmouth weighing 2 pounds or more followed in the next two hours — all caught on the weightless stickworm. As a test of my newfound knowledge, I made some casts with the “go-to” baits. No takers.

This scenario certainly is not new to me, and I’m sure every angler, regardless of what fish they target, has similar stories. For example, on some days, crappies will only bite jigs of a certain color.

THE ANGLING ETHOLOGIST

Animals, from grain-eating birds to flesh-eating fish, reptiles and mammals, search for food. When they find it, they consume it, if they can catch it. But sometimes, they focus on a particular food item, often to the point of not feeding on other items. Ethologists — scien-

tists who study animal behavior — refer to this as a *search image*.

Research has shown that the search image is not necessarily the entire food organism, but rather just some aspect of the food item that signals its presence. For example, for a crappie feeding on threadfin shad, it might be just a flash of silver and gold that signals food. For a bass feeding on crayfish, it might be an oblong object hopping and gliding along the bottom, or maybe just the little puffs of sediment. Fish can learn, but their cognitive abilities are limited. The point is, the fish only needs to learn a little about the complex image that is their quarry.

The search image is not restricted to visual stimuli. Among other animal groups, chemical stimuli, including smell and taste, can be the search image. Vibrations detected by the lateral-line system may be part of a search image for a fish, but this, to my knowledge, is yet to be determined.

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GETTIN' FRESH

Hal Schramm

SOLVE THE PUZZLE

The search image is what attracts the fish or triggers the strike and, on some days, is essential to catching fish. Figuring out the key element of the image is the challenge. And it can be a difficult challenge. First, anglers have little idea of what fish see. To an angler looking into the water, a school of small shad appears as a swarm of dark forms occasionally flashing silver. What does a crappie see looking from the side or below? A weed-bed is a moving kaleidoscope of subtle colors. What search image does a bass use to see a camouflaged sunfish? Lure shape, movement, or color may determine whether your offering matches the search image.

Second, fish feed in a three-dimensional world, and position in the water column can be part of the search image. A bait on the bottom, no matter how much it looks

For two hours in the middle of the afternoon, we “wore out” smallmouth on topwaters. During that time, the smallmouth stopped biting bottom presentations that had been effective all morning.

or acts like a crayfish, will not fit the search image of a bass keying on shad or sunfish in the water column.

And third, the search image can change. The change might be seasonal coinciding with changes in the abundance of one forage relative to another. Or the change may be daily, such as bass keying on the shad spawn. The change can be on an even shorter temporal scale, such as variation in the amount of sunlight changing the vertical position of shad and other forage fish in the water column or the position of the forage on river ledges in the Tennessee River when subtle currents begin.

Fortunately, oftentimes fish are just searching for food — any food — and a



spectrum of lures can be effective. But on those days when tried and true lures and presentations aren't producing, give the fish a different look before concluding the fish aren't biting and heading to the house. ■



Hal Schramm is an avid angler and veteran fisheries biologist.



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LUNKER LINES

Paul Elias

Maynor Creek holds some 8- to 10-pound bass, and during much of the summer, they've probably been holding deep in the grass but can be caught once the grass breaks up some.



FISH MAYNOR CREEK FOR NOVEMBER BASS

BREAKUP OF LILY PADS OPENS UP PLENTY OF NEW WATER

On Maynor Creek, a 500-acre lake near Waynesboro, bass are generally holding shallow this month. The grass breaking up makes accessible sections of the lake that have been almost inaccessible to anglers earlier in the year; you can see baitfish concentrating in the grass and be able to catch the big bass that have been holding deep in the grass earlier in the year.

EARLY MORNING

I'll use a wide variety of lures that I've got rigged on several rods on my casting deck. When I launch my boat, I'll motor to the north end of the lake where a road on a small bridge crosses the water. There's riprap on both sides of the bridge, and I've identified this site as one of the best places to fish early in the morning. The two points of the riprap on either side of the bridge create a funnel for bass to move in and out of the shallow water. I always can catch several good bass there early.

First, I'll fish a pearl/white Mann's Reel 'N' Shad on a ¼-ounce jig head on a 7-foot-2, medium-heavy Shimano rod with a 7.2:1 Curado baitcasting reel

spooled with 20-pound White Peacock fluorocarbon. I'll start where the riprap makes a point under the bridge and fish down both sides of that point, making long casts. I'll reel the Reel 'N' Shad in that very shallow water next to the rocks where bass will be actively feeding on shad. When I'm 30 to 50 yards down the riprap, I'll turn my boat around and fish a Mann's Baby 1-Minus in grey ghost fairly fast on the same shallow side of the riprap back to my starting point, using a 6-foot-10, medium-action Shimano rod and a reel with 20-pound line.

Once I reach my original starting point, I'll put the Baby 1-Minus down and fish the Reel 'N' Shad around the other side of the point and then change out to fish the Baby 1-Minus back to my starting point. Next, I'll cross under the bridge to the riprap on the other side and follow that same procedure with the same lures.

After I fish the riprap on both sides of the bridge, I'll put my trolling motor down and fish all the shallow water on the north end of the lake above the bridge. I'll be keying in on the patches of lily pads and other cover I spot close to the bank with a ¼-ounce black buzzbait.

I'll be fishing it on 30-pound braid on the same 7-foot-2, medium-heavy rod and 7.2:1 reel everywhere I can fish around broken patches of lily pads.

Maynor Creek holds many big bass, and you may catch an 8- to 10-pounder. There also seems to be an abundance of 3- to 5-pound bass. I mainly use the buzzbait to cover a lot of water quickly. Where I find an open patch of lilies, I'll fish that Baby 1-Minus, throw the Reel 'N' Shad and still have a rod rigged with a buzzbait. I'll fish each lure where I can.

THE SUN'S UP

When there's plenty of daylight, I'll be fishing a Super Frog around the thicker lily pads where I can't fish the other baits I've been using. Early in the month, the vegetation won't be as broken up as it will be late in the month. If I'm fishing in early November, I may start above the bridge with the Super Frog on 50-pound braid on a 7-foot-6, heavy action rod and the same 7.2:1 reel. Later in the month, I'll fish the buzzbait there first. The Super Frog won't be as effective at the end of the month.



Fishing down the riprap early in the morning in water only 1 to 2 feet deep, you may be surprised at the size of November bass you can catch on Maynor Creek.

CATCH SCHOOLIES

As the sun climbs higher, you'll see schooling bass breaking the surface all over the lake. I'll leave the shallow water, go to the main body of the lake and search for schooling bass in the mouths of pockets, fishing the Reel 'N' Shad and the Baby 1-Minus, especially when bass are breaking on the surface and feeding. Once the bass go down, I'll fish a ½-ounce Little George and work it the same way I'd work a jig or a plastic worm: let it fall to the bottom, pump it up off the bottom and allow it to fall back. I'll also fish a 6-inch Mann's finesse worm on a drop-shot rig where I've seen schooling bass breaking the surface earlier.

NOVEMBER'S OUTLOOK

In November at Maynor Creek, you can catch numbers of good-sized bass — possibly 15 to 20 in a day of fishing — that weigh from 1 to

10 pounds each, once you determine where a school of bass is holding. Also, fish for bass that you can't see breaking on the surface in that same area. You may have a good number of 3- to 5-pounders in that one day's catch. Maynor Creek has made a comeback, and at this time of year, fewer people will be on the water. ■



Paul Elias of Laurel has fished 15 Bassmaster Classics and earned more than \$1 million, winning one Bassmaster Classic title. He also holds the record for a four-day BASS tournament with 132½ pounds on Falcon Lake.

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The author's nephews with a really nice southwest Mississippi buck.



GENTLEMEN, START YOUR ENGINES!

CHECK NEW REGULATIONS, USE UP NATURAL
SCENT PRODUCTS, WAIT FOR MSU STUDY

It's finally November, and we all know what that means. For fellow members of the deer-hunting community, the past nine months have been slowly and steadily building toward November.

Untold amounts of toil, sweat and treasure have been expended to get us where we are right now. It is a dizzying realization when you think about how many tractors, ATVs, pickups, trailers, farm implements, pounds of food-plot seed and fertilizer, sacks of supplemental feed, sticks of treated lumber, sheets of decking and plywood, gallons of diesel and gasoline, man-hours of labor, and on and on, until I run out of room to write. As we all know, deer season is a really big deal.

REGS CHANGES

To kick things off, let's first go over some important proposed changes that the MDWFP announced in late September to deer-hunting rules and regulations. The proposed changes should be enacted and become official by November, but do not assume anything. To be absolutely

certain, be sure to check the final regulations before you head to the woods.

Regarding deer season:

- Importation of cervid carcasses from ANY state, regardless of CWD status, is now prohibited.
- It is lawful to hunt less than 100 yards from feed or a feeder.
- Beginning, July 1, 2019, it is unlawful to use natural scents or lures that contain natural, cervid biofluids, or other biological material.

The first bullet point, of course, is relevant to any hunter who hunts outside of Mississippi, is successful and wants to bring meat, antlers, cape, etc., back to Mississippi. A cervid is a hoofed mammal of the "deer family" *Cervidae*, which includes whitetail deer, mule deer, elk, moose, caribou, axis and sitka, among others. Check the regulations closely, as the new requirements are very stringent.

The second bullet point means that it will now be lawful, starting with the 2018-19 season, to hunt deer less than 100 yards from and within sight of, feed

or a feeder. I was never really a fan of feeders and feed, but years ago, when it became lawful to feed under strict guidelines, I jumped on the bandwagon and employed them mainly during deer season for use with game cameras.

Even though regulations required that a feeder had to be at least 100 yards away from a hunter, and screened from view, a lot of hunters did abide by this regulation, but I always felt that many hunters hunted within sight of their feeders and used them as bait in spite of the regulations. So the regulations might as well catch up with reality.

The third bullet point is quite interesting since it outlaws the use of cover scents, scent bombs and lures that contain natural cervid fluids. But the good thing is, this new regulation will not go into effect until after July 1, 2019. This will give all of us time to go through our hunting closets and locate anything that will be unlawful after that date, and to use it all up this current season, which I plan to do. The key phrase is "natural



The author setting up a trail camera for pre-rut buck surveillance.

which began in 2016 with the capture of 55 mature bucks that were fitted with GPS tracking collars and ear tags and released. To enhance the result, a number of hunting clubs and landowners in and adjacent to the collared-buck release area have agreed to collect detailed information about when and where they hunt

throughout each hunting season of the study period, so that the effect of hunter pressure can be also analyzed. I absolutely cannot wait to see the results. ■

BUCKS:

Regarding the pre-rut, rut, and post-rut time frames, my personal experience has documented four broad categories of bucks:

- Resident bucks
- Range shifter bucks
- Range expander bucks
- Occasional traveler bucks



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.

cervid fluids,” so I will have to look closely at my stock of “doe-in-heat scent,” rutting buck urine, deer scent gel, aerosol estrus doe scent bomb and anything else similar that I might have on hand.

BUCK MOVEMENT

As we transition into the pre-rut period this month, if they are not already in place, get your trail cameras out. If you have at least a few years under your belt in the whitetail woods, you have probably noticed that across the breadth of a deer season you will see homebody bucks that pretty much live on your property all year, bucks that suddenly appear and stay through the rut, bucks that you have been watching that suddenly disappear, and last, bucks that appear maybe just once and maybe stay for a day or two and then vanish. Help in understanding this phenomenon is on the way.

The Mississippi State University Deer Lab is two years into a three-year study of year-round, buck-movement patterns. When finished, it should provide great insight into just what is going on. According to professor Steve Demarais, early returns are pointing toward the fact that 60 percent of bucks tend to have a sedentary personality, with the remaining 40 percent being more mobile and ranging around more.

The Big Black corridor in Madison and Yazoo counties is the setting for the study,

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CRACKIN' CRAW

BASS AND REDFISH FALL FOR THE ENTICING ACTION OF THIS 3-INCH BAIT FROM CAJUN LURES

If you want to catch bass or redfish, you better get crackin'. Artificial lure manufacturer Zach Dubois, who specializes in soft plastics, has watched the fairly new Crackin' Craw — a crawfish imitation — take the bass fishing world by storm. And to his pleasant surprise, it's also become a go-to bait for redfish along the coast.

"It's been selling all-year long for bass fishing," Dubois said, noting that Living the Dream bass-fishing guide Matt Loetscher used the Crackin' Craw as a jig trailer while fishing with Harold Allen in January. They had a winning sack of 28.74 pounds to win the Toledo Bend Texas Team Trail Tournament one weekend, and the following weekend they had 31.72 pounds to finish second in a Bass Champs tournament at Lake Sam Rayburn.

"But lately I've been selling a lot for red-fishing guys," he said. "I kind of noticed a

lot of guys were using more craw lures."

REDFISH COLORS

Realizing that, Dubois stirred the color pot and came up with some shades known to be loved by redfish, namely the blue crab, which is dark green with a blue swirl to it, and rouge candy — a clear color mixed with gold and red flakes. Naturally, some of the bass colors work, too, including white pearl, blue sapphire, junebug and junebug red, he said.

About the blue crab, he said, "It's an interesting color, a little more time consuming to make and produce. It has kind of like a blue sheen like crabs in the marsh. A lot of people use it."

The Cajun Lures Crackin' Craw hit the market in November, and its popularity has increased with each succeeding month.

Dubois had a soft-plastic crawfish

imitation in the lineup for Cajun Lures called the Poo Doo Craw with a thick, solid body, but he wanted to make a product that had even more action.

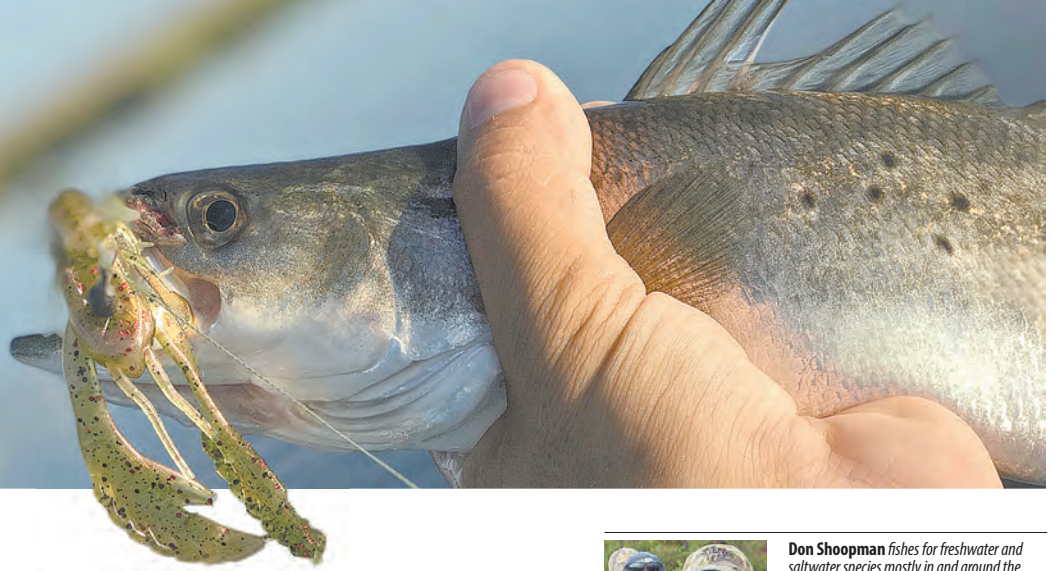
"I was kind of looking for a new design going forward, something a little different," he said.

Josh Clark of Jackson, Mich., who made the mold for Cajun Lures' highly successful Cooyon Croaker frog, answered the call and sent him a mold for what eventually would become the Crackin' Craw.

PINCER LAGNIAPPE

After some tweaking, the Crackin' Craw took shape and was ready to be fished. The salt-free soft plastic's body is about 3 inches long and the pincers are thinner, have a flared design and are raised at the ends to give more action.

And he quickly learned there was lagniappe with the claws. They stand up



While fishing for redfish with a Crackin' Craw, this speckled trout decided to eat, too.

when attached to a jig as a soft plastic trailer. Videos on his website demonstrate the claws in action.

"It's pretty neat," he said.

When retrieved at a tantalizing pace for redfish, the claws "swim" it through the water.

Dubois, a 26-year-old who has a degree in industrial design tried it out himself on the saltwater scene.

Dubois said redfish fishermen who are sight-fishing and kayak-fishing throw it a couple different ways, but using it as a slowly retrieved swimbait is very effective. That technique worked for him recently when he fished the marsh around Houma with Dillon Hymel of Morgan City. It was Dubois' first time using one of his bass creations for redfish — and he caught five.

"I was excited to do that," he said, noting he was using a Lazy Man hook. Other anglers Texas-rig it and peg a 1/8-ounce weight on the nose.


It got the name Crackin' Craw after he sent some of the first models to a friend, Lucas Ragusa of Gonzales, who said when he set the hook on bass, it "was like crackin' them on the head," Dubois said.


"That's kind of the one that stuck."

For more information on the Crackin' Craw and other Cajun Lures products, go to www.cajunlures.com. ■



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







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CROSSBOW SCOPES 101: SIGHT THEM IN CORRECTLY

THE PROCESS TAKES SEVERAL STEPS — BUT IT'S INVALUABLE WHEN THAT BIG BUCK WALKS OUT

Due to more liberal regulations and an aging population with more and more physical limitations, crossbow use has increased dramatically almost nationwide.

The heightened demand has led to many technological advances in both crossbow design and accessories. And the accessory that has seen the most improvement is the scope.

Better optics and newer features such as variable power, illuminated reticles and ocular lens adjustments combine to make these scopes much clearer and more accurate than ever.

A HUGE LEAP IN TECHNOLOGY

For many years, crossbow scopes were fixed power with multiple crosshairs. This enabled the shooter to have multiple aiming points without resorting to “Kentucky windage” — holding over the target at longer distances. The problem was that each manufacturer only made

one scope for many different crossbow models with varying speeds. This led to vast differences in the corresponding distances at which each crosshair was zeroed, depending on which model crossbow it was mounted on. Shooters had to learn distances through trial-and-error by shooting a lot of arrows at varying distances, often carrying a “cheat sheet” to keep track of them.

Higher-end, modern crossbow scopes, such as the Hawke Optics XB-1 that I use, allow the shooter to calibrate the crosshairs to exact 10-yard increments, making life much simpler. This is achieved by turning the variable-power ring to adjust the appearance of the gaps in the crosshairs.

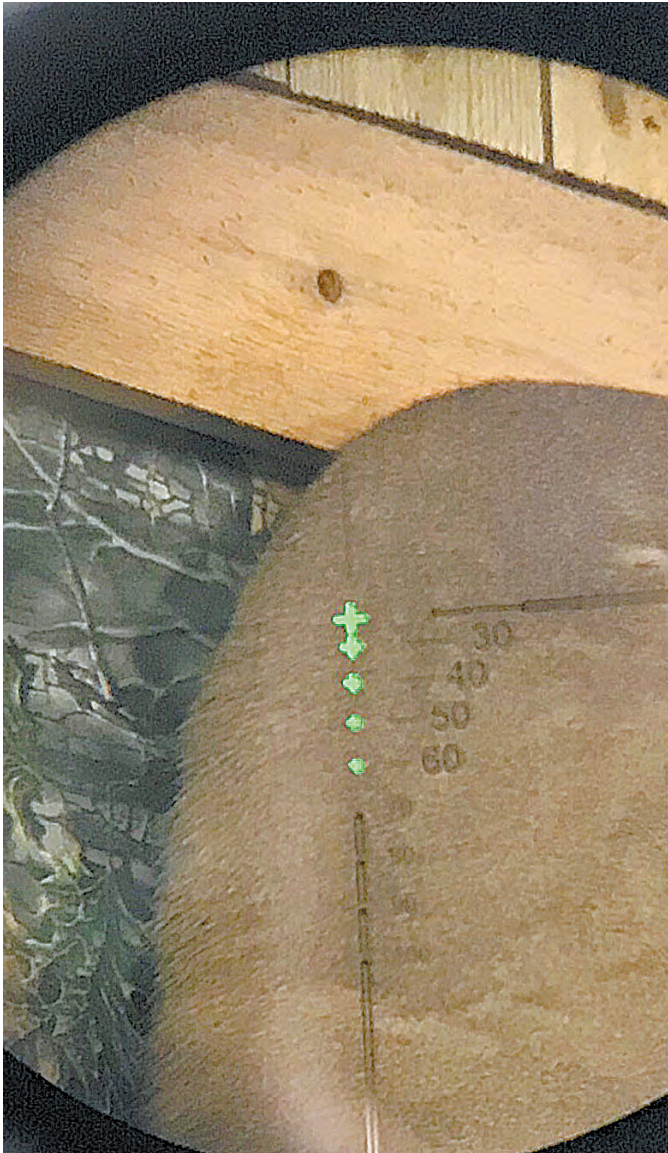
Unlike a variable-power rifle scope, where a hunter uses a higher power to examine his target better or shoot longer distances and a lower power for closer shots; once a crossbow is sighted in, the shooter never moves the variable power ring again. This is probably the most-misunderstood feature, and the one I get

more questions about than any other crossbow topic. This week alone, I've had eight to 10 phone calls asking for help about this exact issue.

ZEROING IN, STEP BY STEP

First, make sure that the scope is properly mounted, level and that all screws have been tightened on both the base and rings. Then, adjust the ocular focus ring at the back of the eyepiece until the crosshairs become clear and focused. Next, adjust the variable-power ring (aka speed ring) to the published speed for your crossbow. There is no need to chronograph your crossbow; you can calibrate the scope better by shooting at two distances. Next, zero in your top (20-yard) crosshair at a measured 20 yards using the scope's windage and elevation turret adjustments.

It is important to remember that these adjustments are being made at only 20 yards, because most scopes are ¼- or



ONE AT A TIME:

When sighting in a crossbow scope, start with the top crosshair and work your way down, shooting at a greater distance each time to keep your point of impact consistent at each range.

your scope out of calibration. Once you have your scope calibrated and are using a rangefinder to range a target, there is no reason to miss.

A little time spent on the range calibrating your scope will pay dividends when the moment of truth arrives this season. These scopes are an excellent addition to any crossbow that does not have a scope with this calibration feature. Try one out this year to improve your results in the field. ■



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.

½-minute of angle, meaning at 20 yards it will take five clicks to move your arrow's point of impact ¼- or ½-inch. In other words, you will be moving them a good bit more than when you zero a rifle at 100 yards.

Once you have the top crosshair zeroed at 20 yards, replace the covers on the adjustment turrets, since you will not have to move them again.

Now that your top crosshair is zeroed at 20 yards, move back to 30 yards. Shoot at the bull's-eye using the second crosshair from the top. Your arrow should impact the target in line with the bull's-eye left to right. If it hits the bull's-eye, you are done. If it impacts high, slightly turn the speed ring higher (counterclockwise) to lower the point of impact. If it impacts the target low, slightly turn the speed ring lower (clockwise) to raise the point of impact. Continue adjusting until the second crosshair is zeroed at 30 yards. When that's done, you should be sighted in at all distances. Check another distance — the third crosshair at 40 yards — and if this checks out, you are done.

I recommend marking across the speed ring and scope tube using a paint marker so you can see if someone moves this adjustment. Do not move the speed ring again or it will throw






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COOKING WITH 'CAJUN SPICE'

THIBODAUX CHEF'S SEASONING LINE A PERFECT
COMPLIMENT FOR WIDE VARIETY OF DISHES



Buddy Callahan looks like anything but a Cajun with his curly blond hair, fair complexion, a stocky build and a grizzled Van Dyke beard. But the Thibodaux resident is Cajun through and through — and he definitely cooks Cajun. So Cajun, in fact, that he has launched his own food company, Buddy's Cajun Spice, centered around his personal

Cajun seasoning of the same name.

Buddy's Cajun Spice has a unique taste, with a distinct note of sweetness derived from cane sugar. Although he quickly gives his mother Beverly Boquet Callahan credit for inspiring his cooking interest, he also admits to cooking birds and fish over campfires.

"Mother cooked three meals a day, Cajun style: white beans, pork roast, carrots and ground meat.

"We always had good food. I grew up in modest circumstances but didn't feel poor. We didn't have a lot of money, but we lived a rich life. Our family was tight-knit."

He started in the cooking business after entering jambalaya cooking contests at Thibodaux Regional Medical Center, where he worked as a radiation therapist. He created what became Buddy's Cajun Spice to season the jambalaya, and he started selling it out of his home in Zip-Loc bags.

"I couldn't keep up with demand. Friends suggested that I get it made professionally." In 2010, Rouse's Markets accepted it and sales were good so they kept it on the shelf.

"... Whatever excites me is what I cook. Spanish, Mexican, Cuban, and of course Cajun are my deep interests. I cook wild game, especially deer burritos. I do this for hunters with their kill (985-713-1078)."

Callahan's full line of products is available at Rouses, Dorignac's Food Center, L & N Food Store in Thibodaux, La., French Quarter specialty shops and online at Buddyscajunspice.com.



With the tail segment left attached, Buddy's Bronzed Shrimp make an excellent finger food. **INSET:** Buddy Callahan's personality is as big and bold as his cooking.



INGREDIENTS:

2 pounds large shrimp tails
2 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp butter
1 lemon, quartered
Buddy's Cajun Spice to taste

BRONZED SHRIMP

Buddy started bronzing as a cooking technique, preparing fajita meat. He would flash-fry it, with what else — Buddy's Cajun Spice.

"I said, 'Let me try a thin-cut ribeye.' It was the best ribeye I ever ate," he recalled proudly. "I tried fish strips, thin-cut pork chops and then finally, shrimp. Everybody

loved the shrimp. I did a demo bronzing shrimp at Rouses, and I sold 15 12-can cases of the spice in four hours."

The dish is a good entrée and a great appetizer. It's a quick cook, too.

"This is the fastest dish you will ever want to cook," he boasted. "The only thing quicker would be to eat it raw."

PREPARATION: Serves 4-6.

Peel and deeply de-vein the shrimp, leaving the last segment of the tail attached. Season the shrimp generously with Buddy's Cajun Spice. Heat the olive oil and butter in a frying pan until very hot. Sear the shrimp in the oil

and butter while almost constantly turning and tossing them. Do not over-cook. Squeeze the juice of the lemon over the shrimp while stirring to mix. After plating, sprinkle the shrimp with additional Buddy's Cajun Spice to taste.

SEAFOOD BIBLE

continued



INGREDIENTS:

8 cups reduced salt chicken stock
1 package Buddy's Seasoned Gumbo Mix
1 14-ounce can cut okra
1 10-ounce can Rotel diced tomatoes & green chiles
½ pounds of crabmeat
2 pounds peeled medium shrimp
Chopped green onions to taste
Chopped parsley for garnish
Buddy's Cajun Spice for garnish

DOWN DA BAYOU GUMBO

BUDDY'S MIX FEATURES PEPPERED VINEGAR FOR A UNIQUE TASTE

HOW TO MAKE IT!

Down Da Bayou Gumbo has a unique taste that comes from peppered vinegar, while retaining its credentials as a real Cajun gumbo.

Although this dish uses a quick gumbo mix, it is Callahan's very own original recipe. He said that his grandmother's gumbo was the inspiration for it. "Although she had no written recipe, the only difference between hers and mine is that this one is gluten-free and doesn't have an oil-based roux," he said.

The dish has a subtle, but very unique taste that comes from peppered vinegar. Buddy keeps a jar of the homemade potion on his dining room table, where he uses it on everything from greens to white beans.

"Growing up, we used it like ketchup," he grinned. "I wanted my gumbo to be unique so I included it in the formulation of the mix. I wanted it to compliment the other ingredients, but not overwhelm them."

PREPARATION: Serves 10.

Bring chicken stock to a boil and remove from heat. Whisk in one package of Buddy's Seasoned Gumbo Mix. Return to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Add the canned okra and tomatoes. Return to a boil and simmer for 15 minutes. Add the crabmeat and the shrimp and simmer for 20 minutes. Serve over rice. Sprinkle green onions and parsley over each bowl of gumbo. Garnish the rim of each bowl with Buddy's Cajun Spice.



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.





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Bass pro Keith Combs said a topwater frog is a great all-around lure for shallow wintertime bass.

TOP 3 WINTERTIME BASS BAITS

NOTHING LIKE TOPWATER FROG EXPLOSIONS

By Andy Crawford

Bass pro Keith Combs has to put fish in the boat year-round, but he experiences what every other angler does during the summer: tough fishing, when five bites a day are what you hope for.

But that all changes as cool fronts push through the South, lowering water temperatures and putting fish back into a feeding mood.

"They're going to be easier to catch, as

a whole," Combs said. "The late summer gets tough because they're waiting on a weather change, cool temperatures.

"That's when the shallows come to life."

A Texas native, Combs said shad move into shallow water again, and predatory bass follow. However, there's also another baitfish we anglers often forget.

"Don't forget about the ones feeding on bluegill," Combs said. "Those are going to be hammers."

To make the most of his cooler-weather fishing, Combs depends on these three lures:

1. STRIKE KING HOLLOW BODY FROG

When bass head for the shallows, they often bury in the salad that grew up during the heat of the summer.

Sure, you could flip and catch some of those fish — but why not have fun with

topwater explosions? And the Strike King KVD Sexy Frogs offer everything you could hope for.

"I can throw it anywhere — around wood, vegetation," Combs said.

It's also a lure that can reach a lot farther than a punching bait.

"You want something you can make long casts with," he explained.

He simply skips the frog along until he reaches holes and thin spots in the vegetation, where he slows down a bit to allow any nearby bass time to get aggravated enough to blast the apparent hopper.

Another bonus to the lure is that he can cover a lot of water.

His rod of choice is a 7-foot-5, Shimano Zodias heavy-action rod matched with a Curado K 7.3:1 reel.

That high-speed reel ratio is important.

"When you hook them shallow, a lot of times they come at you (after the hookset)," Combs said. "I'm able to catch up with them with that reel."

2. STRIKE KING KVD HEAVY COVER SWIM JIG

This is another lure that allows Combs to cover water and catch numbers of actively feeding bass.

"I want a bait I can cover ground with," Combs said.

But it's extremely versatile, working in open water and around cover.

"I can fish it around weeds and wood, and I'm not going to get hung up," Combs said. "I try to contact weeds or wood occasionally."

His preference is for the 3/8-ounce version teamed with a Strike King Swimming Caffeine Shad.

He fishes his swim jigs on a medium-heavy, 7-foot-2

Shimano Zodias rod with a fast tip, paired with a Curado K reel.

3. STRIKE KING SWIMMING CAFFEINE SHAD

This soft-plastic is a versatile lure that really doesn't require a lot of attention to technique.

"It's just a steady retrieve," Combs said.

And it's perfect for when a fish misses a topwater skipped across vegetation.

"Some days, it's a great follow-up to

your frog," said Combs, who rigs it with a 3/16-ounce, 4/0 Owner weighted hook, and just casts and retrieves. Well, that's what he does most of the time.

"I might get it up and wake it across the top of the water," Combs said. "That works really well on a muggy, cloudy morning. The fish will get way up in the water column, and look for that wake."

His tackle setup is the same as with the swim jig. ■

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Glenn Young caught this redfish and a host of others on a Z-Man ChatterBait while fishing in October.



REDFISH SUCCESS WITH A CHATTERBAIT

By Todd Masson

Most Gulf Coast anglers have seen, either in person or in videos, redfish in water that's so clear, it looks like it should have been delivered by the Kentwood man.

But aside from that, even water that most saltwater anglers would call clean has some degree of stain or color to it. Sight range in such water is, at best, maybe 3 feet.

That means redfish have to use their lateral lines in addition to their eyes to feed, so lures that give off some type of vibration tend to produce more than those that are whisper-quiet moving through the water.

The Z-Man ChatterBait certainly does that. The lure has skyrocketed in popularity in local waters because it produces

when many other baits don't.

Certainly a portion of the productivity has to do with the flash the lure gives off as it's moving through the water, but it's no more than a gold spoon or traditional safety-pin spinnerbait with a gold Colorado blade.

What sets the bait apart, however, is its vibration. Tie one to the end of your line, and within three cranks of the handle, you'll swear you're retrieving a Rat-L-Trap.

Glenn Young, national sales director for Z-Man, put the lure to good use last month while fishing in Venice, La., for three days. It was just about the only thing he threw, and it put plenty of keeper reds in the boat.

He said, as a general rule, anglers who don't have success with ChatterBaits are probably fishing them too quickly.

"If I'm fishing a clean bank, I'll really slow it down to give those fish time to zero in on it," Young said. "Sometimes you can't do that because there's grass around, but even then, you want to slow it down in the clean areas between the grass patches."

The hits Young got weren't dainty. He didn't have to think about setting the hook, as fish practically ripped the rod from his hands.

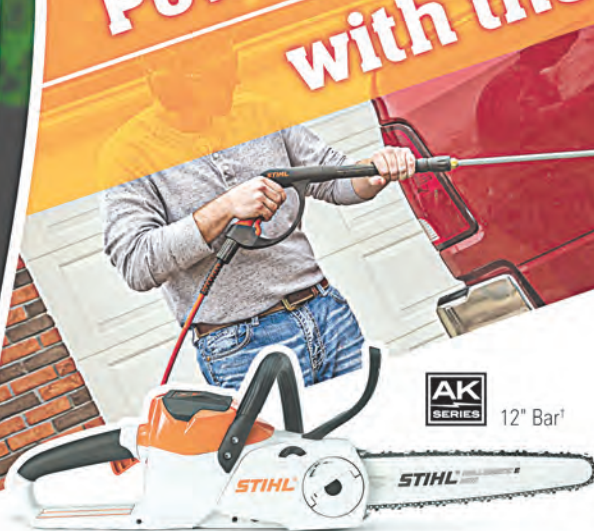
ChatterBaits come in a host of sizes and styles, but some are designed for bass fishing.

If you intend to target redfish with them, be sure to pick up the DieZel ChatterBait, which is made from hardier components for inshore fishing.

The bait retails for \$6.99. ■

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Mississippi pro Brock Mosley said a short, mono leader is all that's needed to provide a little stretch between braid and topwater lures like the Bill Lewis StutterStep.



Andy Crawford

ADD A TOPWATER 'SHOCK ABSORBER'

By Andy Crawford

MONO LEADER PROVIDES STRETCH

Topwater strikes make anglers' knees go weak, but the thrill of victory can quickly turn to crushing defeat when monster bass pull off.

And the current trend of using braid with topwaters contributes to those lost fish because of the lack of stretch inherent in the line.

"The line doesn't stretch, and straight braid to your topwater bait, with those treble hooks, something's going to give," said bass pro Brock Mosley said.

Solving that problem is as simple as creating a shock absorber between the main braid and his lures.

"On my Bill Lewis StutterSteps, or any walking bait in general, I'll put a mono leader on my braid," Mosley said.

Mosley, who is from Collinsville, uses 50-pound braid to ensure secure hooksets on long casts, but he said that mono leader is vital to preventing him from pulling the lure out of fish's mouths.

"The mono leader allows the fish not to pull off," Mosley said.

The danger of losing fish is compounded because of topwater lures' treble hooks.

"With treble hooks and that much pressure, it's easy to lose fish," Mosley explained. "This mono leader cuts down on your losing fish."

And the leader doesn't have to be very long — about 12 inches. In fact, Mosley said a long leader can actually be detrimental to success.

"It could be longer — it could be 18 inches, if you wanted," Mosley said. "You

just don't want it to be too long where it's catching the eyes on your rod when you're casting because that's going to weaken the knot (connecting the leader)."

He uses a Uni-to-Uni connection to secure the leader. And, while others use loop knots on walking baits, Mosley said he doesn't trust them.

"Every fisherman is different," he said. "A big thing is that you have to have confidence in your knots, and I don't have confidence in a loop knot."

It's important to remember, however, that mono takes a beating and weakens when fighting fish — especially big girls.

"Mono, you do have to re-tie after a couple of good fish," Mosley said. ■

Caleb Meyer recycles old lures like these by melting them down and pouring them into his own soft-plastic mold.



ONE MAN'S TRASH ... IS ANOTHER MAN'S TREASURE

By Todd Masson

Todd Masson

To some anglers, they're "gut piles." To others, they're "dead soldiers."

But to 13-year-old Caleb Meyer from Madisonville, La., they're tomorrow's fishing lures.

Every fisherman can look at the floor of his boat after a day's fishing and see scattered soft-plastic lures that were unceremoniously ripped off the hook and discarded to be replaced by a fresher one, a different brand or a new color.

Most sweep those baits into a pile with their hands, scoop them up and put them

on top of the overflowing garbage cans at their local marina.

But not Meyer.

He collects them, stores them and eventually recycles them into brand-new baits.

With the help of his parents, Meyer ordered a Golden Grub brand open mold in a design he liked, and ever since has been creating his own plastic worms from his and other anglers' discards.

"I just like making my own baits," he said. "It's fun catching fish on something you made yourself."

Meyer melts store-bought plastic when

he wants specific colors, and he'll also sort used baits into like colors. Mixing random colors usually results in baits that are grayish-brown — not very appealing to anglers, but the fish still like them.

He uses the lures in neighborhood ponds as well as in the marshes around Cocodrie, where he fishes with his maternal grandfather.

A vast assortment of soft-plastic molds is available at do-itmolds.com.

Most retail for around \$50. ■



DECOY SPREAD DETAILS

By Patrick Bonin

INCREASING REALISM
ULTIMATELY LEADS TO MORE
BIRDS ON YOUR STRAP

Larry Reynolds criss-crosses the Louisiana coastline multiple times each fall — cruising at 100 knots with a bird's-eye view from just 125 feet up, estimating the number of ducks that have arrived in the state's ag fields and coastal marshes.

The waterfowl study leader for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries since 2008, Reynolds spends several days each fall in the seat of an airplane staring out at a variety of habitat during those annual surveys.

As you might expect, in even the slowest of years, he sees thousands and thousands and thousands of birds — and

observes how they move about and interact on the landscape.

In the course of estimating the number of birds calling the Bayou State home each winter, he also comes across hunters' efforts at producing realistic decoy spreads from his seat in the plane — and well, let's just say some are better than others.

KEEPIN' IT REAL

"When I can look at a decoy spread and go, 'That doesn't look like ducks; I gotta believe a duck does the same thing,'" Reynolds said. "Hunters have to be aware of what ducks look like on the water. They

don't universally mix around, and they don't sit in large regular groups. When I see regularity, I know it's not ducks. Whenever there is a discernible pattern, I know it's not ducks.

"Ducks don't sit in a 'J'; they don't sit in an 'H' and they don't sit in two teardrops opposed to each other with a big lump on the levee between them."

On his 150-acre lease in the marsh in Cameron Parish, he keeps things pretty simple for the opening of the season.

"I start out in my biggest pond with a pretty good spread of 70 decoys," Reynolds said. "Typically, I start out with three dozen teal decoys, six hen mallard decoys



include a couple of hen mallard decoys, five teal decoys and couple of mallard decoys," he said. "So the adjustments that I make on my little patch of ground are primarily based on the behavioral differences of the ducks . . .

"Build some irregularity into your spread to increase the realism. No matter what, you're going to be more successful if you increase the realism."

SPINNING DEKES

As for spinning-wing decoys, Reynolds says they definitely catch his eye when he flies the January aerial survey while hunters are out in the field.

"When those spinning-wing decoys are on, I can see them for miles," he said. "They really do

look like ducks flapping their wings, so I can absolutely see why they attract ducks."

But Reynolds uses a spinning-wing decoy only during teal season. If you feature one in your spread during duck season, he suggests using it in moderation via remote control.

"If they're continuously spinning, you look at that and go, 'That's not realistic,'" he said. "They do it in a way that becomes predictable and overdone."

"My conclusion is that anyone that just uses a plain spinning-wing decoy for the entire season has definitely got to see a reduced response, and I think they'll probably see avoidance of their spread late in the season." ■

to represent mottled duck pairs, then I'll use a dozen or so pintail decoys out in the more open parts of the ponds.

"I'll throw in another two dozen or so gadwall decoys in small groups."

As the season progresses, Reynolds drastically downsizes his spread and seeks out smaller ponds on his lease as dabblers pair up and become less social.

"By the time the season ends, I'm hunting with typically a dozen decoys, and that will



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PUT A SKIRT ON - AND PUNCH THAT JIG

Todd Masson

BULK UP YOUR BAIT FOR MORE BITES By Todd Masson

Punch skirts are popular with many bass anglers because they turn normal creature baits into essentially jig presentations. Bass angler Jeff Bruhl put the technique to good use during a September bass-fishing trip to Venice, La., just before the river jumped up due to late-summer rains in the Midwest.

"It's just something else to catch their attention," Bruhl said. "It bulks up the bait,

and makes it look more like a bream instead of a crawfish."

Although some weights are designed to hold skirts in place, Bruhl fished his punch skirt below a pegged 1-ounce tungsten weight.

Since he's trying to mimic bream this time of year, Bruhl likes punch skirts with a lot of watermelon and a bit of blue and orange. His favorite is one made by Delta Lures.

When he fishes Venice, he punches the

rig through hyacinth rafts and matted hydrilla.

Bass pro Randall Tharp of Port St. Joe, Fla., is also a big fan of punch skirts, but he fishes them around spottier vegetation. He feels the skirts hang up too frequently when punched through matted grass, which kills his efficiency.

The skirts aren't exactly cheap, ranging in price from \$4 all the way up to about \$12. ■

THREE GOOD SPOTS, TWO TRICKS

By John J. Woods

ONCE YOU'RE IN THE RIGHT LOCATION, PUT YOUR DEER-HUNTING TACTICS INTO PRACTICE

Ever heard of a hunter catching a buck on a buzzbait? Sometimes it seems that deer hunters targeting trophy bucks are just like bass fishermen in terms of their pursuit. Each has their favorite spots to “test the waters,” and each has high hopes that the very next cast or shot will yield the trophy they seek.

When bass fishermen open their tackleboxes, they scan over a diverse cache of lure options, but their choice is secondary to where they plan to fish. Deer hunters are really little different. After they choose their area, they pull out their bag of tricks.

GOOD SPOTS

Practically every deer hunter has a list in his mind of favorite hunting places because of past success or a special memory. It's a place hunters count on year after year, and most of them will fall into three categories

- **Prime food plots.** These are definitely places that draw in deer for the greenery, usually of high quality when it comes to proteins and carbohydrates, the latter providing quick, burnable energy that deer require in the short term.

Deer hunters who utilize wildlife food plots should also strongly consider seed plant choices that bolster higher levels of proteins. Deer not only love to eat these plants as well, but the nutritional benefits are an added plus. Such crops include various clovers, millet, peas, alfalfa, cowpeas, soybeans and jointvetch. Quality stands of these plantings will also increase potential for harvest of bucks.

- **Staging areas.** These are areas on a property where does tend to congregate and hang out in numbers that seem larger than usual, where social behavior as well as feeding takes place. Food plots will be staging areas, but other types of spots can qualify. When big oak trees start to drop acorns, they can serve as deer magnets. So can soft-mast or fruit-bearing stands of trees, including persimmons. Honeysuckle bushes and blackberry thickets are similar sites worth scouting, but timing is everything, because the food availability is limited.

- **Habitat edges.** Hunters learn early in the game that unique mixes of habitat, referred to as edges, naturally draw deer. They may be frequent travel routes out of the general view or dark, shadow lanes where deer can slip around undetected. Finding these edges takes some careful scouting. Pond edges, grown-up areas between fields, the edges between fields and big timber, of the edges between different types of timber — pine thickets and hardwoods — are edges that deer will use. Any identified edge is worth scouting for buck activity. Just be careful not to stink it up.

DEER DRAWS

- **Doe, buck decoys.** The use of manufactured deer decoys has really come on the scene in the last decade. Their use grows every season as deer hunters realize that, under certain circumstances their application is a real enticement to even wary bucks. But match decoy use to the stage of the rut. During the pre-rut, stage a buck decoy posed in a dominant, aggressive-buck stance, with its head up and ears laid back. During the rut, use a similar situation, but place the decoy on the edges of open habitat or back in the shadows where a real buck would be found. A single, doe decoy can be placed in the open so cruising bucks will stop and investigate. When the peak of the rut has passed, set up a doe decoy in a more submissive stance, with head down or straight out and ears only slightly cocked, like she's feeding.

- **Scents.** Bucks are attracted to natural doe scents that alert them to the receptive moods of a doe, but they aren't designed to always pull a buck to a place he's not headed. A good doe scent might slow a buck down just long enough to distract him, allowing a hunter a better opportunity for a shot. Some hunters use boot pads soaked in scent and tied to their boots so the scent is spread while walking to their stands. A drag rag performs a similar task. Some scents are hung with scent wicks on low-hanging branches. Try to set up the scents so they will be carried downwind to trails where you expect bucks to show up, or encircle your stand in all directions with them to attract bucks cruising in from all angles. ■



Food plots can be great spots to find deer feeding in November, because they need to load up on carbohydrates to retain energy for the rut.

Trout fishermen along Mississippi's Gulf Coast will move out of open water and back into marshes in search of speckled trout, which are moving shallow as the water cools in November.

HEAD DEEPER INTO MARSH FOR TROUT

NOVEMBER SPECKS MOVE SHALLOW

By John Phillips

Guide Matthew Tusa will be going deeper into the marsh this November to find speckled trout.

Based out of Bay St. Louis, Tusa fishes about 250 days a year, and he really loves those he spends on the water this month.

"November is a great month to fish the Gulf Coast because the water's cooling down, and the fish are feeding well and will be concentrated in shallow water," he said. "Rarely will I fish water deeper than 3 feet this month. We'll have to move deeper into the Biloxi Marsh than where we've fished in the spring and the summer. We'll travel about 10 miles from the east end of the marsh to fish.

"Since the water's cooler than it's been in the early fall, we'll be fishing shallow bays and points with jigs and grubs ... under popping corks.

"Also, we'll be fishing live shrimp this month, if we can get them, and live cocahoes. My favorite color this month is avocado with red glitter, electric chicken, pearl or glow with a chartreuse tail."

Generally, Tusa fishes with 20-pound braid with a 2-foot leader of 15- to 20-pound fluorocarbon connected with a Uni knot. He likes to fish the heavier line because he often catches redfish while fishing for trout.

"In November, locating live bait can be difficult," Tusa said, "but if you can find shrimp, they tend to be a good size. You may be able to catch live shrimp at the bayous and the bays at this time of year.

"If we can't get live shrimp, we'll carry live cocahoes. Most bait shops will have these if they don't have live shrimp."

Tusa said fishermen usually will catch trout measuring between 12 and 24 inches, as Thanksgiving approaches.

"The trout generally school up by size, so we may fish one point and catch 12-inch trout and then fish another point and catch 16- to 24-inch trout," he said. "In the marsh, the redfish can be rat reds or bull reds. This month, the bull reds begin to push up into the marsh, and the slot reds will start schooling up, six to 12 fish at a time." ■

RIDE NOVEMBER'S TIDES

When it comes to fishing along Mississippi's Gulf, everything is controlled by the tides. Guides and experienced salt-water anglers know how to deal with the impact of the rising and falling tides and its impact on the fishing.

But every fisherman has his own little bag of trout tricks.

Sonny Schindler of Shore Thang Charters in Bay St. Louis has always been a fan of the falling tide for speckled trout.

"The tides can be your best friend or your worst enemy this time of year," Schindler said. "I have always been a fan of the falling tide for trout.

"Any drain or ditch leading out of the bay or pond that empties into deeper water should hold trout. We watch for any signs of bait like shrimp, mullet, or minnows or birds."

When the bait comes out with the falling water, the fish will show up to feed.

"The trout may not be huge, but when you find them, they are usually stacked on top of each other," Schindler said.

"The other perk of fishing falling water out of ditches, drains or canals is flounder. Flounder are lazy fish. They will sit at the mouth of a ditch for days just to eat one minnow. The trick is to be in place and be ready for some steady action."

— John J. Woods

CRANK A CRAPPIE

By Phillip Gentry

OXBOWS ARE GREAT SPOTS TO TROLL CRAPPIE CRANKBAITS

Crankbaits designed for crappie fishing come in a variety of shapes, sizes and especially, colors **INSET**: Troll crankbaits when searching for crappie in November; they are among the best search baits in your tackle box.

Dan Kibler

Have you ever stayed up late and watched one of those high-pressure infomercials on cable TV? The guy with the big teeth and the slick hair and the fast talk tries to convince you that this contraption right ... HEEERRE ... can do everything from grow hair on your bald head to save you money on your car insurance.

That's the way some anglers are beginning to feel with all the talk about catching crappie on crankbaits.

Yeah, it's a great summertime tactic on some of the big lakes when crappie are suspended up in the water column, away from any kind of structure, so you don't risk running \$40 worth of tackle into the same stump. But they can't do everything, not this time of year.

Or can they?

"They work just as good during the winter too," said Brad Taylor, a guide and past president of the Magnolia Crappie Club. "I love to fish them during November in the oxbow lakes, places like Chotard and Lee, even on Lake Washington."

Oxbow lakes are strange animals. Some of them remain tied to the Mississippi River through a variety of inlets or run-out ditches so they are still subject to the whims of the Mighty Mississippi, while other oxbows are completely

disconnected. Most years, as November approaches, the river has subsided below the level of the oxbow, allowing it to settle down for the winter.

"The back-and-forth action of river water eats away the outside edges of an oxbow lake," said Taylor. "Most of them are crescent-shaped, so that makes the outside deeper and leaves sharp ridges. From late fall through winter, crappie will sit on those steep ridges and ambush baitfish. It can be a lot of open water to fish, which makes it a perfect scenario to pull crankbaits."

Ken Middleton of Glen Allan is hooked on crankbaiting during the winter both because of its fish catching abilities and its value as a search tool.

"You'll find fish anywhere from the surface down to the bottom. Starting in November, crappie will be really aggressive, and catching good fish is just a matter of trolling down those steep edges with crankbaits."

Middleton said that as the winter progresses, crappie begin to slow down and may not be as aggressive as they were earlier. He still relies on his crankbaits, but more as a search tool than a go-to tactic.

"Some of these oxbows are 3, 4, maybe 5 miles long," said Middleton. "That's a lot of lake to search and too much to troll by

just spider-rigging.

"That's why we pull cranks 'til we find fish. If they stay on the cranks, so will we, but if we can't catch enough on crankbaits, then we'll put out the tight-line poles and fish the school we've found."

Taylor fishes six rods at a time, each pulling a 3- to 4-inch crankbait behind the boat at a relatively fast speed.

"I know a lot of guys troll with their big outboard or a small gas kicker motor," he said, "but for me the most important piece of crankbaiting gear is a trolling motor."

In addition to a state-of-the-art trolling motor, Taylor has a strict regime on how he gears up for cranking oxbow lakes as the weather turns cooler.

"In my system, I use six trolling rods, three on each side of the boat — an 8-foot, 12-foot and a 16-foot," he said. "Each rod is equipped with an Okuma line-counter reel, and each rod is secured in a Driftmaster rod holder mounted in one of Driftmaster's T-5100 trolling racks.

"The different-length rods allow me to space the crankbaits out and provide the perfect blend of strength and flexibility to fish them. The line-counter reels are a necessity because they allow you to keep precise track of how much line is out, which is an important factor in how deep you're fishing." ■

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	Sept. 1-30	5
(Canada, blue, Ross, white-fronted, brant)	Nov. 9-25, Nov. 30-Dec. 2, Dec. 5-Jan. 27	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
Bigeye tuna	27" CFL@	no limit
Tripletail	18" TL	3/day
Spotted sea trout (speckled)	15"	15/day

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

FRESHWATER

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

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

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

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

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* Possession of certain species of sharks is prohibited.

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Hook-and-loop closures and plastic snaps keep your tackle secure, provide easy access and won't rust or corrode like zippers. The doublewide BinderZ retails for \$34.99.

More Info: www.zmanfishing.com



TINK'S BLACK LABEL

If one scent product is iconic in the deer-hunting industry, it's Tink's #69 Doe-in-Rut. So how do you make the best better?

The folks at Tink's, who have been branding and bottling their deer lure since 1972, have certainly tried. This fall, they've brought out a top-drawer version of the classic, Tink's Black Label, in limited quantities for hunters who want the best of the best.

Black Label is a doe-urine scent collected from does that are fed a special diet to keep them in optimum health, and it's in a concentrated formula collected from the peak of a doe's estrus cycle. Black Label comes in a 2-ounce bottle that's inscribed with the date the bottle was filled, so hunters know exactly how fresh it is.

Tink's Black Label has an MSRP of \$24.99.

More Info: www.tinks.com

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The Mammoth has a rotating, magnetic base and a 120-degree flexible head that allows it to be used as a desk lamp on a campground table or a perfect, angled light for working under the hood of a vehicle or ATV.

The Mammoth, which has a MSRP of \$59.95, is 9 inches long and weighs about a half-pound.

More Info: www.hybridlight.com



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ASTRO TABLES

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

The "Best Days" column is based on the ever-changing positions of the sun and the moon, rating each day on a scale of 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more solar/lunar influence that day is experiencing (see "Value" column or corresponding black bars).

The two Primary periods (Moon Overhead and Moon Underfoot) vary in length from one hour to three-and-one-half hours, depending on a number of important lunar cycles, such as how close the moon is to the earth that day and how high its orbit is. The solar symbols alert you to when a Primary period overlaps a major solar period (eg: Dawn, High-Noon, and Dusk). The secondary periods of Moonrise and Moonset last about one hour each... 30 minutes before and after the listed time. (See key at bottom of each month for more detail.)

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

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

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

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2018 NOV	BEST DAYS			
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL. VALUE
Thu 1	█	█	█	49
Fri 2	█	█	█	41
Sat 3	█	█	█	37
Sun 4	█	█	█	44
Mon 5	█	█	█	50
Tue 6	█	█	█	55
Wed 7	█	█	█	57
Thu 8	█	█	█	44
Fri 9	█	█	█	32
Sat 10	█	█	█	20
Sun 11	█	█	█	14
Mon 12	█	█	█	13
Tue 13	█	█	█	11
Wed 14	█	█	█	18
Thu 15	█	█	█	31
Fri 16	█	█	█	24
Sat 17	█	█	█	22
Sun 18	█	█	█	25
Mon 19	█	█	█	39
Tue 20	█	█	█	61
Wed 21	█	█	█	55
Thu 22	█	█	█	72
Fri 23	█	█	█	64
Sat 24	█	█	█	57
Sun 25	█	█	█	49
Mon 26	█	█	█	45
Tue 27	█	█	█	42
Wed 28	█	█	█	45
Thu 29	█	█	█	51
Fri 30	█	█	█	38

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LUNAR PERIODS					
TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED					
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT		
12:56 am	6:26 am - 9:36 am ☀	3:00 pm	6:51 pm - 10:01 pm	☾	
2:03 am	7:28 am - 10:24 am	3:41 pm	7:53 pm - 10:49 pm	☾	
3:09 am	8:28 am - 11:08 am	4:18 pm	8:53 pm - 11:33 pm	☾	
3:15 am	8:27 am - 10:49 am	3:53 pm	8:52 pm - 11:14 pm	☾	End DST
4:20 am	9:24 am - 11:30 am	4:28 pm	9:49 am - 11:55 pm	☾	
5:24 am	10:23 am - 12:09 pm ☀	5:03 pm	10:48 pm - 12:34 am	☾	
6:27 am	11:20 am - 12:52 pm ☀	5:39 pm	11:45 pm - Midnight	☾	NEW
7:29 am	12:16 pm - 1:34 pm	6:17 pm	Midnight - 1:17 am	☾	
8:29 am	1:12 pm - 2:20 pm	6:59 pm	12:41 am - 1:59 am	☾	
9:26 am	2:05 pm - 3:07 pm	7:44 pm	1:37 am - 2:45 am	☾	
10:20 am	2:55 pm - 3:57 pm	8:32 pm	2:30 am - 3:32 am	☾	LOW
11:09 am	3:45 pm - 4:47 pm ☀	9:24 pm	3:20 am - 4:22 am	☾	
11:54 am	4:31 pm - 5:37 pm ☀	10:17 pm	4:10 am - 5:12 am	☾	
12:34 pm	5:15 pm - 6:27 pm	11:11 pm	4:56 am - 6:02 am	☾	Apogee
1:10 pm	5:53 pm - 7:19 pm	12:06 am	5:40 am - 6:52 am	☾	HALF
1:44 pm	6:32 pm - 8:08 pm	1:02 am	6:18 am - 7:44 am ☀	☾	
2:16 pm	7:10 pm - 8:58 pm	1:58 am	6:57 am - 8:33 am	☾	
2:47 pm	7:45 pm - 9:51 pm	2:56 am	7:35 am - 9:23 am	☾	
3:18 pm	8:22 pm - 10:44 pm	3:56 am	8:10 am - 10:16 am	☾	
3:50 pm	9:00 pm - 11:40 pm	4:57 am	8:47 am - 11:09 am	☾	
4:25 pm	9:42 pm - 12:38 am	5:59 am	9:25 am - 12:05 pm	☾	
5:05 pm	10:28 pm - 1:38 am	6:02 am	10:07 am - 1:03 pm ☀	☾	FULL
5:49 pm	11:19 pm - Midnight	7:08 am	10:53 am - 2:03 pm ☀	☾	
6:41 pm	Midnight - 2:39 am	8:14 am	11:44 am - 3:04 pm	☾	
7:38 pm	12:16 am - 3:42 am	9:19 am	12:41 pm - 4:07 pm	☾	HIGH
8:41 pm	1:16 am - 4:42 am	10:19 am	1:41 pm - 5:07 pm	☾	Perigee
9:48 pm	2:18 am - 5:40 am	11:13 am	2:43 pm - 6:05 pm ☀	☾	
10:55 pm	3:22 am - 6:34 am	12:01 pm	3:47 pm - 6:59 pm ☀	☾	
11:48 pm	4:23 am - 7:23 am	12:43 pm	4:48 pm - 7:48 pm	☾	HALF
12:02 am	5:22 am - 8:08 am	1:21 pm	5:47 pm - 8:33 pm	☾	

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

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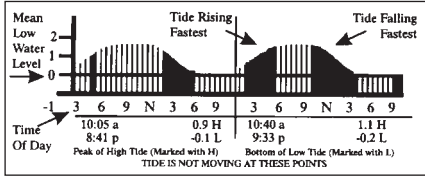
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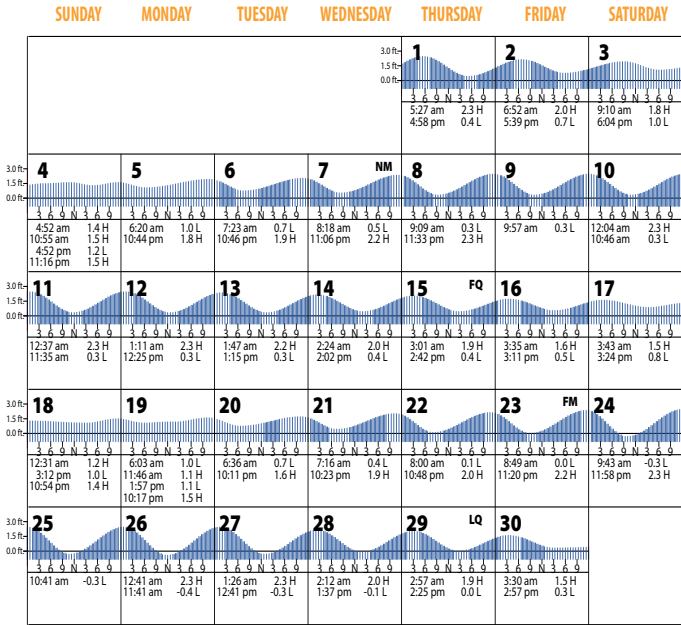


How to use the **SPORTSMAN** Tide Guide

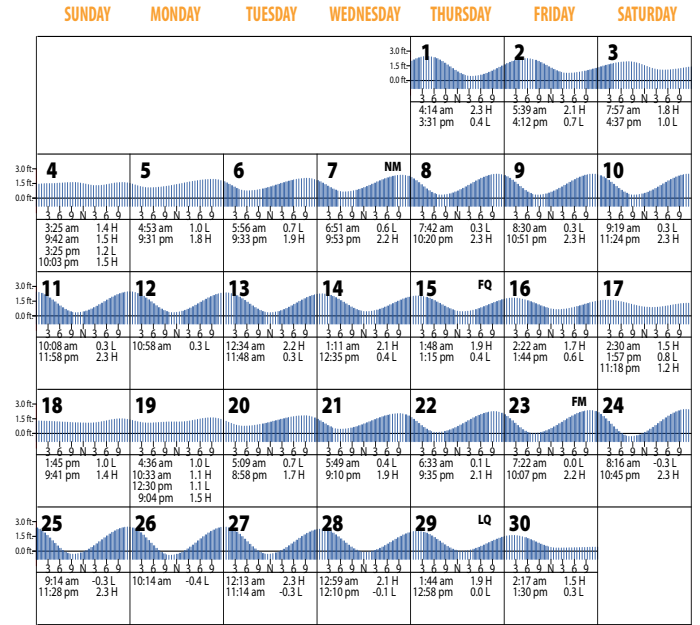
Fish feed most actively when the tide is moving. The Mississippi Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most active feeding periods each day in the TIDE GUIDE. Just fish those times indicated in black.

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

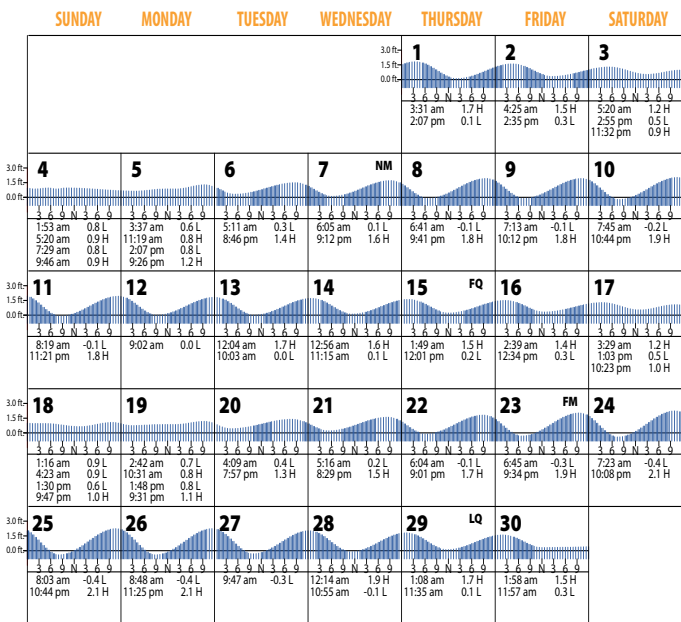
Bay St. Louis Entrance



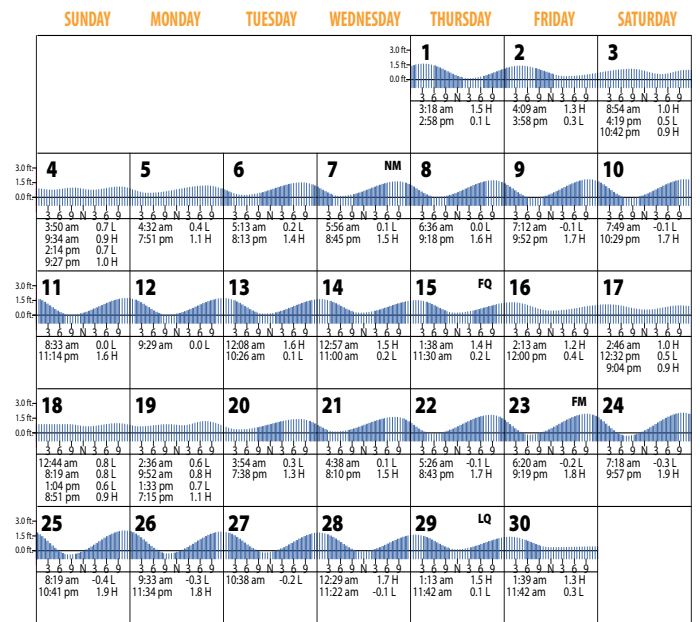
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Horn Island Mississippi Sound



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