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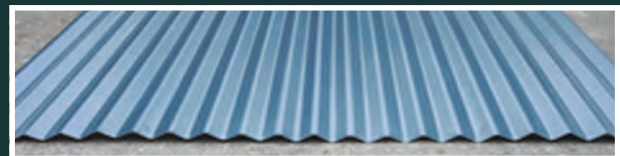
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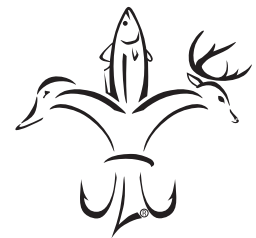


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Don't put your bass tackle away just because summer has arrived. Move offshore, move to cool, running streams or slide a plastic frog through a patch of lily pads and hang on. Photo by Jeff Burleson.



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Outdoor UPDATE with Bobby Cleveland

These 18- to 24-inch specks were caught on topwaters while wade-fishing on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.



JUNE IS ALL ABOUT FISHING

BUT THERE'S A LOT OF NEWS ABOUT HUNTING IN THIS ISSUE



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

Trivia question: Is there an open hunting season in Mississippi in June?

Think hard!

For 29 of the 30 days, the answer is a disappointing “no.”

However, the correct answer to the question as asked is yes, since the spring squirrel season that opened on May 15 ends on June 1. After that, nothing is open until July 1 when raccoon season opens. Only nuisance animals, like wild hogs, can be hunted, but technically there is no season on these beasts.

The focus of opportunities for Mississippi sportsmen in June involves water, whether it be the prolific marine waters of the Gulf of Mexico or the many streams, rivers, ponds and lakes inland.

This issue of *Mississippi Sportsman* takes

a look at some of the best fishing action available during the sixth month:

- David Brown talks to bass pro Jeff Kriet about how he finds and catches bass in deeper water. He also explains how bass pros shoot baits back under docks for summer bass, and how king mackerel fishermen rig up for big summer fish.

- Phillip Gentry talks to catfish experts who say many of Mississippi's largest reservoirs can be just as productive as rivers more famous for these whiskered fish. This story revolves around replacing the current of moving rivers with the drifting of boats to keep bait in the strike zone of big blues and fat flatheads.

- David Hawkins talks to lure designer and fishing expert Hoot Gibson, among others, about the fun of fishing lily pads and other vegetation in June as bass seek

the shade and the forage fish that thrive in the cover. Hint: Get ready to read about bass exploding on plastic frogs.

- Mike Giles also looks at bass fishing, albeit a totally different style. He talks to an angler whose dad started him down the path — or paths — to small streams and spring-fed lakes where the cool water turns on the action as summer approaches. His tips can help you enjoy these shady and productive waters.

- I head to the coast to talk to anglers about the use of popping corks to catch trout and redfish, including a look at two brands produced in Mississippi that are turning heads and filling fish boxes.

There's lots more to the June issue and lots more for a Mississippi sportsman to do this month. Let's go. ■

FEDS LOOSEN GRIP ON DOVE DATES

Mississippi wingshooters heard some good news in April when the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks approved the 2018-19 early migratory bird seasons, which will provide later hunting dates.

Dove hunter Gene Thompson of Grenada was ecstatic, thanks to new frameworks designed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

"We get to hunt through Jan. 31; are you kidding me?" Thompson said. "You just don't know how big that is for us true dove hunters in the Delta region. That's big. Really big."

This year, the feds pushed the back end of the frameworks from Jan. 15 to the end of that month, which gives hunters in the Delta a longer window for migrating birds to arrive from the grain fields of the Midwest.



Mississippi dove hunters will enjoy a first in the 2018-19 season, frameworks that don't end until Jan. 31.

Bobby Cleveland

"That's what I'm talking about, those big birds that come in late," Thompson said. "Some years, we get them in December, and sometimes it's not until early or mid-January. By moving us back 16 days, we get a bigger window, and that's the best news I could hear."

The season will start on the very first day available under the frameworks, Saturday, Sept. 1, in both the North and South zones.

In the North, the first season runs through Oct. 7 (37 days). The second season is Oct. 27-Nov. 7 (12 days), and then the long, 41-day third season opens on Dec. 22 and ends on Jan. 31.

South Zone hunters will hunt Sept. 1-9 (9 days), Oct. 6-Nov. 7 (33 days), and Dec. 15-Jan. 31 (48 days).

"A lot of people overlook doves in south Mississippi, but we do get some good shooting, and this year we'll get even more," said Roger Wilson of Hattiesburg. "The 48-day season in December and January will give us a better opportunity to kill some serious numbers."

The daily limit will be 15, with a possession limit of 45. ■

2018-19 DOVE SEASONS

North Zone: Sept. 1-Oct. 7; Oct. 27-Nov. 7; Dec. 22-Jan. 31 (total of 90 days).

South Zone (area south of U.S. Highway 84, and east of Mississippi Highway 35): Sept. 1-9; Oct. 6-Nov. 7; Dec. 15-Jan. 31 (total of 90 days).

Limits: 15 daily, 45 possession.

OTHER EARLY MIGRATORY BIRD SEASONS

The Commission also set other early migratory bird seasons, and the news is good for the small group of goose hunters who make use of the early resident Canada goose season.

Usually just a 15-day season, the federal framework now allows the entire month. Mississippi's season will open Sept. 1 and close Sept. 30 statewide, with a daily limit of 5 and a possession limit of 15.

September's teal season remains unchanged, both in length and limit. The 16-day season will be Sept. 15-30, with a daily limit of 6 and a possession limit of 18.

Other seasons:

Woodcock: Dec. 18-Jan. 31; daily limit of 3, possession 9.

Snipe: Nov. 14-Feb. 28; daily limit of 8, possession limit 24.

Moorhens and gallinules: Sept 1-30, and Nov. 23-Jan. 1; daily limit 15 singly or in aggregate, possession limit 45.

Rails: Sept. 1-Sept 30, and Nov. 23-Jan. 1. Limits on clapper and king rails are 15 singly or in aggregate, and 45 in possession. Limits on sora and Virginia rails are 15 singly or in aggregate, and 45 in possession. ■



With plentiful blue-winged teal, with numbers far above the long-term average population, hunters will get a 16-day September season.

Bobby Cleveland

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more updates... >

DUCK SEASONS REMAIN 'LIBERAL'

Mississippi duck hunters won't see much change in the 2018-19 season under a plan announced by the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, and they can only hope they see a repeat in the cold, winter weather that made for good hunting this past winter.

"Waterfowl breeding population estimates in 2017 remained high, and this will again allow states the opportunity to select a liberal hunting season of 60 days with a six-duck daily bag limit," said Houston Havens, waterfowl program coordinator for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP).

Tony Hughes of Southaven had a great season last fall and said as long as Mississippi gets early cold snaps, it will continue.



Waterfowlers will have another "liberal" season in 2018-19, and Mississippi hunters need a repeat of last year's cold winter to cash in.

Bobby Cleveland

"We got a lot of ducks in the Delta a lot earlier than normal, thanks to those two freakish cold fronts that dropped temperatures into the teens in early and mid-December," Hughes said. "We got ducks early, then, when they may have thought about heading back north, we got that second one that kept them here. Then we had that second snow storm in January that was the icing on the cake."

Mississippi will have a 60-day season in three segments and a six-duck limit. The Commission again chose to use six of the days to give hunters two three-day weekend seasons early before using 54 of the 60 days in the long and concluding third season. ■

2018-19 DUCK SEASONS

Statewide: Nov. 23-25; Nov. 30-Dec. 2; Dec. 5-Jan. 27.

Youth waterfowl days: Nov. 17 and Feb. 2.

Limits: The 6-duck daily limit can include no more than 4 mallards (no more than 2 of which may be females), 3 wood ducks, 3 scaup, 2 redheads, 2 canvasbacks, 2 black ducks, 2 pintails, and 1 mottled duck. The merganser daily bag limit will be a total of 5, only 2 of which may be hooded. Coots will have a 15-bird daily bag limit. The possession limit is 3 times the daily bag limit for ducks, mergansers, and coots.

GOOSE SEASON STARTS EARLY

Mississippi's 2018-19 goose season has been proposed, and hunters will have plenty of opportunities — including early — to chase the big, fat, honking waterfowl. The season has three splits and includes different limits for different species.

The seasons will be Nov. 9-25, Nov. 30-Dec. 2 and then Dec. 5-Jan. 27.

Daily goose limits are: Canada geese, 3; snow, blue and Ross's geese, 20 (singly or in aggregate); white-fronted geese, 3; Brant, 1.

The possession limit is triple the daily limit on Canada, white-fronted and Brant, while there is no possession limit on snow, blue and Ross's geese.

A Federal Conservation Order will also allow hunting of snow, blue and Ross's geese from Oct. 1-Nov. 8; Jan. 28-Feb. 1; and Feb. 3-March 31. There is no limit. ■



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David Rainier

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ALLIGATOR APPLICATION PROCESS STARTS JUNE 1

Applications for the 2018 public water alligator season will be accepted June 1-7 for the late summer hunt that attracts hunters of all types.

Bobby Cleveland

The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks will accept electronic (internet) applications for Mississippi's 2018 public alligator season between June 1 and June 7, with the drawing expected on or about June 13.

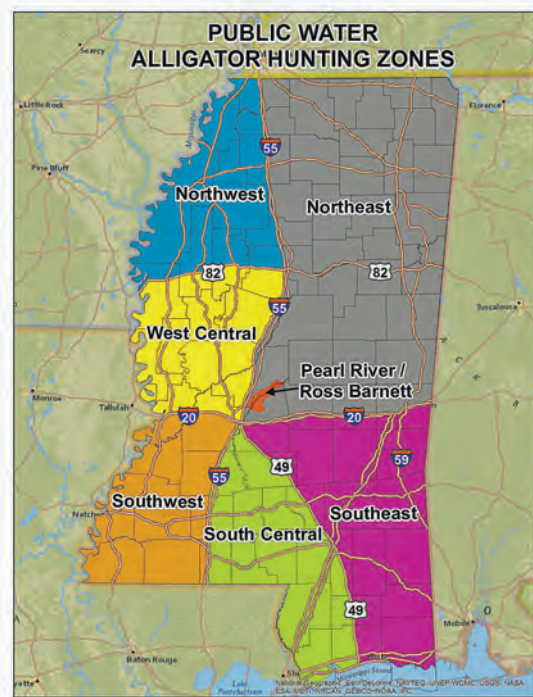
A total of 930 permits will be available in seven zones, under regulations approved in April for the 10-day season that opens Aug. 31 and ends Sept. 10. The new allocation numbers:

- Northwest Zone: 40 permits
- Northeast Zone: 130 permits
- West Central Zone: 180 permits
- Pearl River/Ross Barnett Zone: 90 permits
- Southwest Zone: 180 permits
- South Central Zone: 150 permits
- Southeast Zone: 160 Permits

The process for issuing permits will remain the same as in 2017, beginning with the online electronic application process via the wildlife agency's website, mdwfp.com. To be eligible to apply for an alligator hunting permit, you must be a resident of Mississippi, at least 16 years of age at the time of application, and you must possess a valid and unexpired hunting/fishing license.

Applications will be free, but electronic processing fees will be required. Applicants may only apply in one alligator hunting zone of their choice. Applications will be accepted on-line or at any point of sale location where Mississippi hunting and fishing licenses are sold. Applications will require an email address so that those selected in the random computer drawing can be notified.

Drawn applicants will be notified by email with a link to purchase their permit with a 48-hour deadline. Upon the purchase deadline, any unclaimed permits from the first drawing will be entered into a second drawing of available applicants. Drawn applicants from the second drawing will also be notified by email with a link to purchase their permit with a 48-hour deadline. A credit



card or debit card is required to complete the online permit purchase.

A private-lands alligator season is available to landowners in 34 open counties whose properties meet specific qualifications. Grenada County has been added for the private-lands season for 2018. Applications and instructions for private lands permits are available online. Applications with all required documents are accepted by mail to the Jackson Central Office beginning May 1 and must be submitted by July 1. ■



CWD UPDATE: NO MORE POSITIVE TESTS

The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks continues sampling deer for chronic wasting disease and continues to receive good news. Since a 4½-year-old buck was found dead on Jan. 25 from pneumonia related to CWD, no other deer have tested positive for the fatal disease.

According to Russ Walsh, wildlife bureau executive director for MDWFP, the agency has tested over 1,400 deer since Oct. 1, including 574 from the 25-mile CWD management zone (in Claiborne, Hinds, Issaquena, Sharkey, Warren and Yazoo counties). The only positive test was the buck found in Issaquena County. Any hopes that the test on that buck was in error or produced a false positive ended when a second testing of tissue from the deer returned another positive result.

Louisiana's Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has sampled deer within its lands that are in Mississippi's 25-mile zone, and none of those samples have tested positive for CWD.

Mississippi still has a ban on supplemental feeding in the six counties, including those lands not inside the 25-mile zone in those counties.

The MDWFP continues to ask the public to report any sick deer, especially those showing CWD symptoms: abnormal weight loss, loss of appetite, insatiable thirst. They tend to stay away from herds, walk in patterns, carry their head low, salivate and grind their teeth. These can be reported at mdwfp.com/cwd or by calling 1-800-BE-SMART. ■



Although no further deer have tested positive for chronic wasting disease, the MDWFP is asking the public to report any sick deer showing signs of CWD, including weight loss, emaciation and excess salivation.

Courtesy Wisconsin DNR

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- 82 Acres\$3,950/AC

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- 40 Acres\$2,500/AC

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LONGER SNAPPER SEASON OPENED MAY 25

Mississippi's Coastal fishermen are enjoying a red snapper season that will provide more opportunity in one year than just about all the last five years total — a season that opened May 25 and closes on Sept. 3.

It is a result of an agreement between the five states along the Northern Gulf of Mexico and federal fisheries management officials. It provides open opportunity for recreational anglers and state-licensed for-hire charter captains in waters out to 200 nautical miles from the coastline.

The season could close early, if at any time the assigned quota for recreational anglers or the state's for-hire charter boats is reached or if the Gulf-wide quota

is reached. There is also a chance the season could include a "time-out." MDMR said that it is possible that the season could close between July 9 and July 22, with the intention of insuring Mississippi's annual quota is not met before Labor Day. It will depend on pounds caught before July 4.

There is a different season for federally licensed for-hire vessels. That season is June 1 through July 21.

The daily limit is two snapper per angler, with a minimum length of 16 inches. ■



Bobby Cleveland

Mississippi's coastal anglers will enjoy a summer-long season for red snapper with a season that began May 25 and ends Sept. 3.

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EYES OF BILLFISH WORLD ON BILOXI IN JUNE

Biloxi will be in the world's billfishing spotlight June 4-10 when the Mississippi Gulf Coast Billfish Classic is held out of the Golden Nugget Casino and neighboring Point Cadet Harbor.

Officials are hoping to top the 120 teams that fished for over \$2.3 million in prizes in 2017. As of May 3, 121 boats had entered the 2018 event.

The divisions for competition include blue marlin and swordfish, both catch and catch-and-release, plus dolphin, tuna, and wahoo.

While the MGCBC is a week-long event, fishing will begin at 11:01 a.m. on Thursday, June 7. Boats can fish as long as they want, but the scales will only be open from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday, June 8 and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, June 9. Boats must be within a designated area by 6 p.m. Saturday to have fish accepted.

For more information, visit mgcbc.com. ■



The Mississippi Gulf Coast Billfish Classic will be held in Biloxi in June, with a pay-out expected to top \$2.3 million.

Bobby Cleveland



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BIG BUCK BOUNTY: BLALOCK'S BUCK BLOWS AWAY COMPETITION

By Cliff Covington

Joseph Blalock of Brookhaven, who just recently turned 14 years old, had the biggest deer at the recent awards breakfast for the 2017-18 Big Buck Bounty Contest at McClain Lodge in Brandon.

Blalock's 205½-inch Thanksgiving Eve buck sported 22 more inches of antler than its closest competitor. The monster 20-pointer was recognized as the winner in both the boy's non-typical by gun division and the best overall buck. He won a Primos Double Bull blind, a Blackout trail camera, a shoulder mount

from Dan Heasley Taxidermy, and a gun case from Van's Sporting Goods.

John Stowers of Canton was the winner of the safari at McClain Lodge. Stowers' name was pulled from a pool of the 137 hunters, aged 21 or over, who entered the Big Buck Bounty Contest during the 2017-18 deer season.

Nearly 200 hunters and family members attended the awards breakfast, along with representatives from sponsors.

Russ Walsh, executive staff officer with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, was the guest speaker for the awards ceremony. Walsh provided an update on the current status of chronic wasting disease in Mississippi and answered a variety of questions from those in attendance.

All final measurements for the contest were green, gross scores based on the Pope & Young or the Boone and Crockett Club scoring systems. ■

Women's crossbow, typical:

1. Elena Wisecarver 140½.

Men's crossbow, typical:

1. Stephen Henderson 147½;
2. Darren Johnson 147½;
3. Michael Nowicki 145½.

Men's crossbow, non-typical:

1. Russ Chandler 108½.

Boy's youth archery, typical:

1. Finn Norsworthy 151½.

Women's archery, typical:

1. Kelly Pugh 126½.

Men's archery, typical:

1. Timothy Hicks 180½;
2. Lance Wright 162;
3. Jay Barret 161½.

Girl's youth gun, typical:

1. Presleigh Stigler 144½;
2. Katie Boyer 139;
3. Trinity Craig 126½.

Boy's youth gun, typical:

1. Camden Lott 156½;
2. Pepper Heard 155½;
3. Cole Smith 151½.

Boy's youth gun, typical:

1. Joseph Blalock 205½ (also biggest buck in contest).

Women's gun, typical:

1. Susan Graves 160½;
2. April Massey 145½;
3. Betsy Pace 137½.

Men's gun, typical:

1. Phillip May 183½;
2. Chris Miller 169½;
3. Grady Griffin 167½.

Men's gun, non-typical:

1. Will Jones 195½;
2. Joseph Presley 154½.



Joseph Blalock, 14, of Brookhaven, won the youth non-typical gun division and biggest buck of the Big Buck Bounty Contest with his 205½-inch buck taken on a small tract of family land in Franklin County.

GOT PICS? We want 'em

Email images to: alicial@lasmag.com

All images will be considered, but those taken on the water or in the woods will have the best chance of being featured.

*Digital images must be sent in jpeg format. High-resolution images (taken on your camera's highest setting) will work the best. All images (physical and digital) become property of Mississippi Sportsman and cannot be returned.

Hunting/Fishing
SCRAPBOOK



This 10-point beauty was killed in Union Church by Matthew Talley.



Don Gilmore with a nice 8-point he took on public land in Yalobusha County.



Tyler Brooks, 9, shot his first deer during the youth weekend this past season on family property in Yazoo County. He was very excited to bag this 7-point.



Hanna Hood poses with her very first turkey. She killed it on March 8 in Holmes County while hunting with her uncle. The bird's beard measured 11 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches, its left spur was 1 inch, its right spur was 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ inch, and it weighed 22 pounds.



David A. Brown

GO OFF(SHORE) FOR BASS

By David A. Brown

Have no fear when bass pull out of the shallows for the summer; they'll still bite if you can find them in deep water and put a bait in front of them. These pros share their secrets.

The premise "one-size-fits-all" rarely fits in the bass-fishing scene, and it most certainly isn't the case for summer, offshore pursuits.

Sure, everyone has their favorite "wear them out" bait, but when bass spend the warmer months on those ledges, humps and other pieces of offshore structure, not a single lure will do all that you need from start to finish.

Sometimes, the bite slows, but you're still marking fish, so a change is called for. The way bass pro Jeff Kriet sees things, changes require a strategy and a schedule.

Kriet divides his offshore baits into "fish-finders"

and "big bite" baits. He'll use the former to sweep through promising areas to locate schools, but once he does, he transitions from a quantity-oriented focus to something aimed at quality.

FOR STARTERS

First up is a Carolina-rigged lizard with a $\frac{3}{4}$ - to 1-ounce weight that allows him to rumble across the target area and feel the hard spots, stumps and other irregularities that attract bass.

"With that big weight, I can reel it pretty fast, and that rig gets a lot of bites," Kriet said. "From there, a football head (jig) also gets a lot of bites."

>



When it comes to searching, Kriet finds that a Texas-rigged, 10-inch, ribbontail worm often puts a kicker in his livewell. The Carolina rig and football head can also add a day-making lunger.

With any of these, however, Kriet won't let himself fall into the trap of burning too much time with slow presentations.

"I'm going with the law of averages," Kriet said. "I know that in (offshore) tournaments, the biggest sacks I've weighed in are just about always on a big, moving bait. Typically, you're going to catch a bigger fish on something you're winding."

STAYING ON POINT

Maintaining the right angle to cast to the targeted structure is crucial.

"There's always a specific spot that holds 90 percent of the fish," Kriet said. "It's like a beehive; you have worker bees around the perimeter and then you have the actual hive. That's where I want to be — where the biggest concentration of fish is."

Bass pro Keith Combs knows this game, and it's why he hinges his fortunes on modern bass-fishing technology. Complementing the Humminbird electronics that lead him to the right offshore spots, his GPS-enabled Minn Kota Ultrex trolling motor blends the smooth response of cable steering with the precision location technology of SpotLock.

"It's precision. When I'm casting at something offshore, I'm throwing in the middle at a target, but I'm also referencing something on the bank," Combs said. "Everybody knows you need to keep your school fired up, but there's never been a tool like the Ultrex that helps us do that."

"When I'm casting, if I hook up, the first thing I do is hit SpotLock so I can concentrate on catching the fish, cull and then get up and make that exact-same cast without drifting off the spot. Besides side-imaging, this is probably the biggest

thing that's ever come along. This technology is effortless, and it allows you to focus on what you need to."

THE BIG GUNS

Once Kriet catches a couple of keepers in a row, he'll resolutely switch to a big crankbait, swimbait, hair jig or big spoon. The objective is to send something large and lively into the fired-up fish.

"The reason I do it quickly is that I don't want to catch 10 and then switch," he said. "The bigger fish are typically going



A big plastic worm, rigged Texas- or Carolina-style, can be a great big-fish bait fished in deeper water.

to be the first to bite in a school. When you get them fired up, if you keep throwing a football jig, a Carolina rig or a big worm in there, the 2-pounder is going to get it."

Reloading with a larger, more-aggressive bait helps him weed out smaller fish and gives himself a better chance of hooking a hefty one. The element of surprise only lasts so long, and then, time starts working against you.

"You want to catch the biggest fish in that school immediately, because every time you catch a bass off a school, you're repositioning that school," Kriet said.

COUNTING DOWN TO SUSPENDED BASS

Without question, the toughest bass to catch are the ones suspending over deep water. Without definitive cover to target, anglers find it difficult to reach and entice fish that are typically in a negative mood.

The challenge is to find a bait you can keep in the target zone long enough to convince the fish to bite.

"Late summer, early fall, the fish tend to suspend a lot," said bass pro Russ Lane. "They set up over the humps and ledges at night to feed, but when the sun comes up, they rise off the bottom and suspend over the drops. They'll be close to where they fed at night."

Lane's top choice for suspended fish is a 4-inch Big Bite Baits BB Kicker or a 3½-inch Suicide Shad on a ¼- to ⅜-ounce Buckeye jighead. He'll use a countdown technique to get the bait down to wherever he's seeing the fish on his recorder.

"If they're suspended 10 feet over 30 feet of water, you let that bait go down to a count of 10 and then slow-roll it back to the boat," Lane said. "That's a great way to catch suspended fish when they've seen lots of traditional baits. The swimbait just looks more realistic, like a shad swimming past them."

"You can make long casts with this bait and downsize your line, because the water is generally clear that time of year. Fifteen to 20 years ago, nobody fished for suspended fish, but now guys go out looking for them because a swimbait is such an effective way to fish for them." ■



David A. Brown

Bass pro Russ Lane actually targets suspended bass locating them on his electronics and counting a swimbait down to their depth.

When you locate a school of offshore bass, the biggest fish in that pod is likely going to be among the first to strike at whatever lure you're fishing.

The downside of repetitive casts to a spot is the fact that offshore anglers absolutely can move the fish. Summer typically finds bass schooled up, and their feeding competition often sends several fish following a hooked one to the boat. Eventually, the school can fragment, with half or more relocating.

"When you catch one fish and then another one and another one, it brings the school closer and closer; and before you know it, you're looking at them under your boat," said bass pro and offshore guru Randy Haynes.

When it happens, Haynes knows he could mark the spot, give it some distance and then fish it as he did the original spot. That's hardly his preference, because a fragmented school becomes less competitive, so they're not as likely to chase reaction baits. The more productive option, Haynes said, is to pick apart the relocated school with vertical presentations with a drop-shot or jiggging spoon.

CHANGING THE MOOD

Offshore rotation doesn't only apply to bait selection; you also want to give your spots time to rest. A common mistake, Kriet said, is staying too long on a spot. A better strategy involves visiting a good area several times during the day.



David A. Brown

"I won't sit on a spot for a long time," Kriet said. "Generally, if I sit there for an hour, there are good things happening."

A good way to determine when it's time for a break is to monitor the quality of your catches. If you notice the average size diminishing, you can bet they're wise to your game. Being stubborn and sticking it out only drives down productivity. But by giving the fish a couple of hours to tighten back, they will resume that aggressive competition.

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If you can leave and come back, you can do that all day. You'll catch a couple big ones, run around and hit a couple more spots, come back 30 to 40 minutes later and guess what? There's another big one, right where you caught one earlier."

Sometimes, it's just a matter of giving the fish something original.



David A. Brown

With a school of bass located in deeper water, a vertical presentation of a spoon, shaky head or bucktail can keep the bites coming.

Jordan Lee, a two-time Bassmaster Classic champion, likes Strike King's Bull Worm as an alternative to the standard rib-bontail, but he'll occasionally vary his presentations by rigging the big bait on a hefty shaky head. For 15 to 25 feet of water, or in a stiff wind, he uses a 3/4-ounce head, while a 1/2-ounce will do in shallower spots.

Lee said he uses this presentation when he thinks the fish have seen too many Texas-rigged worms dragging prone across the bottom. He's all about getting some elevation in that tail and making fish take notice.

Kevin VanDam, another also likes the shaky head option, but when he wants to jazz up the Bull Worm presentation, he'll rig it on a Strike King Structure Head and let the articulated design earn its place in the offshore bait rotation. ■



A full-time freelance writer specializing in sport fishing, David A. Brown splits his time between journalism and marketing communications (www.tightwords.com).



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June means bass blasting frogs, big fish seeking all kinds of food under lily pads.

By David Hawkins

pad pandemonium

Photo courtesy Hoot Gibson

*“The year’s at the spring, The days at the morn,
The mornings at seven, The pad-stems dew pearled.*

*“The blackbirds are fussing, The gators are sunning,
Bass are hitting topwater, All’s right with the world.”*

My apologies to Robert Browning for the misuse of his poem about such a pastoral scene, but lily pads, aka lotus, and a myriad of other blooming flora do tend to sparkle under the summer’s morning sun.

If Browning had been a modern angler instead of a poet, and if a black bass had exploded on his critter bait as he swam it among the pads, he might have chosen his words differently.

A topwater bite in the pads can have such an impact on man. Every bass angler has an opinion about lily pads. Some want to see them banished; others want to see them preserved. No matter your stand on the pretty aquatic flora, there’s no deny-

ing that June’s sun beating down on pads can be a magical time for bass anglers.

KA-Sploosh! “Fish on.”

Grass patches serve much the same function as pads, furnishing cover for baitfish and other bass prey. Being more open, grass allows a wider variety of lures to be fished. Topwater baits, jigs and plastic baits all do well, as do buzzbaits and plastic frogs.

Bass are comfort-seeking creatures, just as we and all other living things. During Mississippi summers, the bass will move shallow late in the day and feed shallow through the night. And as water heats and cools during the day, they will seek shelter under the huge leaves of the water lily. And why not? Shad, bream, lizards, snakes and crawfish also like the pads for protection from predators.

As every angler knows, where there is bait, there will be bass.

PLASTIC FROG CAN BE A HOOT UP NEXT >



PLASTIC FROG CAN BE A HOOT

There is probably no greater authority on the frog bait than Mississippi's own Hoot Gibson of Philadelphia. As my daddy would say, Gibson has forgotten more about frog fishing than most of us will know in a lifetime.

Not only is he an esteemed weed, grass and pad angler, Gibson invented the Scum Frog, a bait made in Columbus and distributed by Southern Lure Company for more than 30 years. Gibson has retired as a competitive fisherman and operates a tackle shop in the Philly, but retirement hasn't slowed his bass passion.

"There was a time when the frog was sort of a novelty lure anglers fished but didn't take seriously," Gibson said. "Today, everybody has one tied on and close at hand, ready to cast. It has changed from a specialty lure to a go-to bait."

Baseball legend Dizzy Dean, who settled in Mississippi, always said, "If ya done it, it ain't bragging." That fits Gibson when he wields the Scum Frog.

Aside from a few minor changes to improve the materials used in the manufacture of the Scum Frog, there has been little change in the original model over the past 30 years.

"I use it because it works; it's as simple as that," Gibson said. "There are 21 colors now, but I still use the original the most. It can be fished in grass, pads around structure ... anywhere, and will get bitten. I guess it sounds like advertising, but you can buy two Scum Frogs for about the same you'd pay for one of some of the other guys."

Gibson starts fishing in the back of pockets or coves and works out to the points, using a slow retrieve then speeding it up as if the bait is trying to escape a predator fish. He suggests getting the bait as far back against the bank as possible, trying to imitate a frog just jumping off the bank into the water. Landing on a pad is an added bonus.



David Hawkins

Using braided line or monofilament in the 17- to 20-pound range, keep the rod tip high enough to send a few vibrations to the bait as it rests. Ease the bait to the edge of the pad and swim it to the next pad, repeating the performance. If a bass is there, this slow, natural frog action will usually entice a bite.

"Frogs don't swim for the fun of it; the more commotion they make, the better the chance they will be eaten," Gibson said. "Where you have pads or matted grass, allow the frog to spend a little time in one place. Shake your rod tip just enough to make the bait put off some vibration. Then slip it along from that place to another. If a bass is targeting that bait, it will hit it at its first opportunity. If there is a hit and a miss, scoot the bait faster to another stop."

Gibson likes to fish Neshoba County Lake because a large part of the lake has a broken mat of vegetation. There are open pockets where the bass will hammer the bait when it gets close. Largemouths over 10 pounds have become common at this state lake, but it is far from the only lake in the state with good cover for frog fishing.

ABOVE: Farm pond bass will eat a frog, too. Josh Hawkins of Pelahatchie worked a little magic with a green Scum Frog last June. **BELOW:** The plastic frog has gone from being a novelty lure to being a go-to bait for most modern bass anglers.



David Hawkins

COMMON PADS AND PLANTS

“The three most-common species of water plants are American lotus, white water lily, and watershield,” said Jerry Brown, a fisheries biologist with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. “Barnett Reservoir has all three, plus a few others. Elvis Presley Lake near Tupelo has a lot American lotus in the upper end and has a good population of bass. Lakes with a good cover and structure also include Kemper County Lake, Calling Panther Lake and Lake Columbia. Lake Perry and Bogue Homa Lake also have good vegetation for topwater fishing.”

Most of the plants are well rooted in the lakebed, so they don't drift like water hyacinths. That allows shad and other baitfish to seek sanctuary amongst the roots and stems, so, naturally, that's where the bass are going to hang out. As water temperatures rise, bass will seek refuge from the sun under the pads as well, especially if the cover is near deeper, cooler water.

“Water hyacinths are free-floating and can cause a lot of problems,” Brown said. “They will block channels and disguise obstacles such as logs or stumps. They are also about impossible to fish, but I have no doubt some gamefish will hide under them.”

FOLLOW THE MOON UP NEXT >



David Hawkins

American lotus is found across much of Mississippi. The plant is pleasing to the eye and the underside is appealing to fish of all kinds.

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Joshua Hawkins of Pelahatchi landed this feisty bass on a white frog while fishing at Barnett Reservoir.



David Hawkins

FOLLOW THE MOON

Ronnie Farlow lives on Barnett Reservoir and fishes for bass at every opportunity. He hits the pads when the summer sun draws the fish to the shade, and he uses a variety of baits, including frogs, lizards, crawfish and worms.

“There are a dozen ways to fish the pads, and all of them will result in strikes,” Farlow said. “That’s where I always start, but sometimes the color or pattern needs adjustment. I think every bass angler will tell you to fish lighter-colored bait on sunny days and darker bait on cloudy days.”

Farlow has another couple of recommendations for pad-pounding bass fishermen. One is to follow the Solunar or moon tables and fish on those days with peak movement. These are most often when the moon is overhead or underfoot.

“I know a lot of people don’t believe in the moon phase having an impact on the bite, but I know it does,” Farlow said. “The other thing is to try to fish on a south or southeast wind — at least on The Rez.”

Farlow uses 15-pound Trilene 100-Percent Fluorocarbon for open water and 50-pound braid when horsing big bass from the heavier grass and pads. The fluorocarbon comes in handy when fishing the edges of the pads near deeper water. If bass aren’t taking the topwater offerings, try throwing a spinnerbait around the edges, working from shallow to deep, especially where fallen trees or other structure may be seen on the depth finder.

“Slow fishing is best in the pads,” Farlow said. “The water is

TIP!

.....
Mississippi Sportsman publishes a set of moon tables each month. Check the table of contents for their location.
.....

in the low to mid-80s by this time of year, and shad are getting under the pads. Bass are in a post-spawn pattern and will often be found where pads are near deeper water, like a cut, a creek or a channel. I’ll start in the pads with a variety of baits and



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Grass on points and around islands are great places to start looking for bass at Barnett Reservoir in June.

work my way out to deeper water. Work structure from several directions before moving on to a new place.”

PAD SECRETS

Lily pads are fish magnets, but they are only as useful to the angler as access allows.

Consider June as a month of rest for fish; the stress of spawning is over, the food sources are probably at a near peak and the water is warm. Pads offer a respite from the heat, a good food source and a bit more dissolved oxygen in the water.

Shad, bream, crayfish, worms, and more are under the pads, working to stay out of another critter’s mouth. But what good is such environment if an angler can’t get his or her bait into play?

The Pearl River Valley Water Supply District in conjunction with the MDWFP, has undertaken efforts to limit the spread of surface vegetation over the past several years. The goal is to eradicate non-native species — hyacinth, hydrilla, alligator weed and others — and only spray the pads and other native plants when needed to protect water access. If all goes according to plan, it will be a win-win for both fisherman and fish.

There is no rocket science involved in vegetation fishing, but seeing a big bass blast off on a frog in the pads can be a wonderful, awe-inspiring, poetry-producing event.

And, in that moment, all is right with the world. ■



David Hawkins

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



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Popping corks are lethal weapons for saltwater fishermen, especially the latest models that have hit the market. Learn how they can improve your catches this summer.

CORK IT, BUDDY

By Bobby Cleveland

Patrick McDowell uses one so he can sling his bait far enough to reach places where big redfish live, perhaps 50 yards past the point he can maneuver his big, deep-draft boat. Dan Smith uses one to add sound to his live shrimp offerings, hoping to entice any nearby specks or reds to join what they might think is a feeding frenzy too good to pass up.

Jerome Allen puts them on the lines of his young son and daughter so they can cast farther in the ever-present Gulf breezes and to see when they've gotten a bite. But, maybe it's Capt. Sonny Schindler of Shore Thing Charters in Bay St. Louis who gives the best reason of all for using a popping cork: "They work." >

Bobby Cleveland

Most fishermen on Mississippi's Gulf Coast consider popping corks a necessity for all the reasons given — and many more. They aren't new, and they long ago left behind the image of just a way to see when a fish takes a bait.

"Been around for a long, long time, but the ones we see on the market today aren't your daddy's popping cork," said Allen, who is from Biloxi. "Back when my dad first started taking me out on the Gulf of Mexico, 30 years ago, the only corks around were those cone-shaped Styrofoam ones that had the slit down the side and a U-shaped weight molded

the surface. 'That makes them think the other fish have found food, and they will come looking,' he'd say. All I knew was that I sure could cast a lot easier and farther than I could without one."

Four decades later and now himself a father and a boat owner, Allen has taught his kids to fish using the corks.

"Some look the same, but most of them don't," he said. "Dad bought them three for a dollar, but I paid \$21 for three of them last week. You can believe I tie them on to heavy, braided line with a much-lighter leader to the hook, so if a big fish breaks off, I get that dang \$7 cork back."

IT'S A RACKET

When Smith talks about the cork business being a racket, he is not talking about the cost. No, his latest discovery,

fish's attention and call him to a feeding frenzy, then this cork is the dinner bell of choice. It has rattles inside and out, both metal and plastic, to create multiple sounds, like more than one fish or one shrimp. And that ain't the half of it.

"This little jewel not only has a cupped top like the Styrofoam corks to create the glug-glug noise and round weights that bang around, it has a plastic propeller to give it a different little splash. It looks like small, plastic buzzbait blades."

On a recent fishing trip, Smith had three fishermen in his boat using the Blabber Mouth, and it was hilarious how it sounded like shaking maracas with a Latin band.

Seriously, it did, and Smith was kidded about it. He got the last laugh.

"You did notice that on my first cast along the point, it only took about 30 seconds of it drifting with that shrimp along that drop and me popping it twice to get the first red," Smith said.

Three reds hit on three casts, two slot keepers and a 15½-incher that was set free. Smith later caught another 15½-inch fish on the same spot with a hole in its lip.

"Probably the same fish," he said. "Reckon he liked that Blabber Mouth."

SCHINDLER'S LIST: A BOAT MONKEY?

A charter captain who often faces days on the water with casting-challenged clients, Schindler knows the value of having a good popping cork. His preference is a line of corks also made in Hattiesburg, the Boat Monkey.

"I'm not leaving the dock without the Monkey," he said. "I always have popping rigs on the boat, and we need them when we have novice fishermen. That's a big thing; the extra weight does help in casting. You get more distance, and it helps throw against the wind.

"But, popping corks produce fish when nothing else will. A lot of time, the water we fish in the marshes is dirty and the extra sound certainly helps bring in more specks and reds."

Schindler is willing to throw them anytime, in any situation, but there are some places that just simply call for a popping cork, like when he's fishing oyster beds in the Gulf.



Bobby Cleveland

The Boat Monkey, a popping cork made in Hattiesburg, makes a lot of noise when worked along the surface by an inshore fisherman.

into the foam. We were lucky if we got one or two throws with them before they started sliding up and down the line. But they worked.

"I remember daddy telling me to jerk-twitch the cork in a way to make it go bloop-bloop, like the sound a fish makes when it takes a minnow or a shrimp on

the Blabber Mouth, made in Jackson about three blocks from his body shop business by United Plastic Molders — makers of the original Fish Grip — is simply the loudest fishing device he's ever seen or heard.

"Dang thing is noisy, and I like that," Smith said. "If your objective is to get a

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POPPING CORKS

“I like them when drifting live baits over oyster reefs,” he said. “Most of the reefs we fish are in 4 or 5 feet of water. Setting the leaders under the cork, a foot or so off the bottom, works perfectly. The live bait or artificial bait is in the perfect strike zone, and you don’t ever have to worry about snagging up on the oyster shells either.”

“Another place I really like to use them is when we are fishing for redfish against the banks in the marshy areas. You put a live shrimp or minnow against that grass, under a cork, and give it a pop every so often.... It never gets old, watching that cork swim off in shallow water.”

WHY THE BOAT MONKEY?

“I am all Boat Monkey, for several reasons,” Schindler said. “No. 1, they are built with the best components, including heavy gauge wire that lasts much longer than other corks. No. 2, the metal washer in between the weight and the float is what makes all the noise. It also protects

The Blabber Mouth popping cork, made in Jackson, not only has a cupped face and beads to make noise, it has a propeller blade.

the float from getting beat up when you are popping it. No. 3, they are made locally, in Hattiesburg, by a father and son; Tommy and Asa Theus make each one. I think that is absolutely the coolest thing that a father and son get to do that together. I have fished with both of them, several times. Besides being good, honest, hard-working people, they both know how to fish, so they understand what works and what doesn’t.”

TRIPLE THE ACTION

Another unique use of the popping cork that Schindler employs is the summer fun of catching tripletail (black fish) on the surface.

“We always save our biggest live shrimp for the tripletails, and we put them on a hook, weightless, with no more than a foot of fluorocarbon leader under a weighted Boat Monkey,” he said. “When we run the lines of crab pots or other structures looking for tripletails and spot one, we pass it and then idle back up close, approaching downcurrent. Then we switch to the troll-



Bobby Cleveland

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ing motor, and the guy up front casts the popping cork past the fish and then reels it back into its strike zone.

"If there's anything more fun than seeing a redfish swim off with a popping cork in the marsh, it's watching a big tripletail roll off its side and swim over to check out the cork and see that shrimp. He has to eat it, and then it's on."

TRIPLE THE DISTANCE

One day last summer, when three of us were fishing for spawning speckled trout in the grass beds south of Cat Island off Pass Christian, I spotted a fish strike a shrimp on the surface at least 50 yards away on the opposite side of what had been a productive grassy spot.

Then we saw another, and another, and each time we could see shrimp hopping like mad to escape the melee. The problem was, to get to them while they were actively feeding, Capt. Tommy Sutton would have to cut through the middle of the grass and ruin the spot.

"I got this," McDowell said, reaching in

The weight of a popping cork helps anglers make longer casts, and often, that's the difference between connecting with a speck and coming up empty.

the rod holder for a long spinning rod with a rather large and well-worn popping cork that had 'fish killer' carved by McDowell into the Styrofoam. He let loose a cast that sailed like a Drew Brees Hail Mary.

"Gosh, can he sling it," Sutton said.

"Forevermore sling it," I added.

The cast landed a good 10 yards beyond the spot where the surface feeding had taken place. McDowell had to reel up slack to get the popping cork to pop — well, we guess it popped; it was too far to be sure. When he did, the cork disappeared.

"Got one," he said, "and it's a big one."

McDowell worked the fish through the grass to the boat and held up the fat, egg-laden trout for us to admire. He wouldn't wait for a picture, sliding the prize catch into the fish box before rebaiting his missile launcher and blasting off another mega-cast.

This one landed right on top of the action and the cork kept right on going, disappearing under the water.



Bobby Cleveland

continues on page 34

An advertisement for Z-Man fishing lures. The background features a large, detailed image of a fish's open mouth with a lure inside. The text "CROSS THEIR EYES!" is written in large, stylized, red and white letters at the top. Below this, it says "Designed by BASS Elite Pro David Walker". There are two product descriptions: "CROSSEYE FLIPPING JIG" and "CROSSEYE POWER FITNESS JIG". Each description lists features like "Built around a heavy duty 4/0 VMC® flipping hook" and "Hand-tied 100% silicone skirts and wire trailer keeper". The Z-Man logo is in the bottom right corner, along with social media icons for Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, and the website "zmanfishing.com".

POPPING CORKS

"Got another one, guys," McDowell said, with a devilish laugh. "What you waiting for?"

This one was even bigger, maybe 5 pounds — the biggest of the five trout he caught in six casts with his spinning gear and weighted cork.

"Had that thing so long it's about beat up," McDowell said. "My boat isn't really made for redfish or speck fishing. My wife said I could buy a boat as long as it had a cabin; that eliminated a trolling motor, and the boat's size means I can't go shallow. I knew I needed something I could throw a long, long way, so I found this big cork, added weight to it and matched it to a spinning rod that could handle it."

McDowell's homemade rig was a game changer for him in the marshes at the west end of the Mississippi Sound, and it was a winner that day on Cat Island.

FOR THE BIRDS....

In early April, on a trip to Catfish Lake just west of Golden Meadow, La. — hey, it was the only place open to fish during that cold, windy stretch of weather —

Sutton, Smith and I struggled with reds before managing to find 11 keepers on spinnerbaits.

Back at the dock, brothers John and Jimmy Guidry of Galliano, La., came riding up in their 14-foot john boat. In it were two rods, each with rather mundane-looking popping corks, two big smiles and an ice chest into which they simply couldn't stuff another trout.

"We didn't get the limit, unless you consider we got the limit that we can put on ice," John Guidry said. "Probably 30, maybe 35. Caught them under birds out in (Catfish Lake), just right out past where you break out of the channel beyond those oil rigs."

They explained that they had caught 15 good ones before lunch fishing over oyster beds, then stopped and run errands for their mom.

"We came back because we thought we could get 15 or 20 more before dark, but before we could get to the oyster beds we saw birds diving," John Guidry said. "We got this small boat without a trolling motor so we couldn't get too close. We switched from live shrimp to tandem-rig jigs under the corks to make long casts

and to keep the jigs near the surface.

"We were catching them two at a time, and then they stopped. The birds broke up, and we thought it was over, so we started to run back to the oyster reef. We never made it. The birds regrouped about 200 yards from the first spot and started diving again. We ran over and caught 'em again, just as fast as we had the first time. We had to cull a lot of small, undersized fish, probably 20 or 30, so we were steady catching fish, usually two on a cast."

Why'd you stop? We had to ask.

"Well, 15 this morning, and 30 to 35 this afternoon, that is our limit," Jimmy Guidry hollered with a smile as big as the marsh. "I'd have never thought I could catch trout like that under cork with tandem hair jigs, but boy, it sure did happen." ■



Bobby Cleveland has covered sports in Mississippi for over 38 years. A native of Hattiesburg and graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, Cleveland lives on Ross Barnett Reservoir near Jackson with his wife Pam.



Tommy and Asa Theus of Hattiesburg make the Boat Monkey line of popping corks and show proof of its success.

Sonny Schindler

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COOL RUNNINGS, HOT BASSING

Don't overlook fishing on smaller streams and rivers, especially during the summer, when current and cooler water keep bass active and hungry.

By Mike O. Giles

Ken Covington steered his boat to just the right spot in the shallow creek, putting his father and favorite fishing partner, Jerry Covington, in position to pitch a white spinnerbait near a promising brush top. *WHAM!* A lunker bass smashed the lure near the brush, and Covington fought with all his might against the stubborn fish, which refused to go quietly. That's typical behavior for feisty, cool-water creek bass. They are turbocharged versions of pond or stillwater bass. They're revved up and will snatch the rod from your hands if you're not paying attention.

The younger Covington netted the fish, the perfect memory of one of the last fishing trips they'd share before Jerry passed away. Experts and veterans at stream-fishing, the two fished almost every stream and creek in east Mississippi and west Alabama over the past 40 years, learning more than a few things about finding and then catching ravenous cool-water bass. Add to that a backstory of the family being in the wholesale minnow and bait business for more than 60 years, giving them a little extra time to do some product testing.

For the Covingtons, cool-water creek or stream-fishing means fishing in the creeks too shallow and too small in which to put big bass boats, yet big enough to fish with a canoe, kayak or 2-man vessel like their favorite Uncle Buck's Pond Prowler.

Father taught son that under overhanging trees with cool, flowing water, bass will bite most of the year, even through hot summers, since the water rarely gets warm like in ponds, lakes and reservoirs. An added treat is that you will rarely see another angler on these small hot spots, as many people just don't want to spend the time and effort involved since they can't launch their big boats there.

This story includes Covington-proven tips for cool water stream bass.

THE EARLY MORNING BITE

During the warmer months, bass in streams are aggressive and will hit almost anything on the surface at the break of day,

as well as at last light. Early and late, the Covington pattern usually involves topwater lures for the excitement, fun and smashing action that it provides.

"Dad always liked to throw a topwater bait with a prop, and he caught a lot of bass on the old Dalton Special, a topwater that had a propeller on the rear," Ken Covington said. "He caught a lot of bass on that bait early and late in the day."

Jerry Covington liked fishing topwater prop baits around stumps and logs, and especially beside logs lying near sandbars. Cast that topwater by a log and hold on.

"If the bass are active on topwater, I'll throw a black popping frog sometimes, too," Covington said. "You can throw that frog in the brush, over logs and retrieve it back through the brush and not get hung up, but you might get a bone-crushing strike, too."

Bang-O-Lures, Baby Torpedoes, Tiny Torpedoes, Rattlin' Chug Bugs, Rapalas and Rattlin' Rogues are all good topwater lures for creek bass; they will catch fish when they're looking for that topwater bite.



STREAMS TO CONSIDER

According to Ken Covington, these popular creeks and streams in east Mississippi and west Alabama are well worth a visit: Chunky River, Chickasawhay River, Okatibbee Creek, Sucarnochee Creek, Sipsev River, upper Pearl above Philadelphia, and Okatoma Creek.

Ken Covington prefers fishing in an Uncle Buck's Pond Prowler in creeks and smaller lakes because he can sit upright and still maneuver in just inches of water. **INSET:** Ken Covington likes to use a big jig to catch big bass on stumps and other cover in small streams.

BE READY AT FEEDING TIME

Creeks are no different than any water in some respects, one being that bass will become active and feed during short periods of time. That's when you can really catch them, but you must be ready when that time comes.

While Jerry Covington liked to catch them on topwater any time he could, Ken Covington likes to catch them any way he can, and when they're active, he's going to do something a little different.

"I like to fish fast and catch the active bass, so I like to throw something like a swimbait or Fluke," he said. "You can fish that anywhere and not worry about getting hung up. If the water's clear, I like to fish a lighter color like a white or chartreuse, and I'll cover a lot of ground until I find where the bass are."



Jerry Covington caught this 5-pound plus bass on his favorite big fish lure — a big, white spinnerbait. He caught the bass while fishing with his son, Ken Covington, on Okatibbee Creek below Meridian on one of the last trips that Covington made with his son after a lifetime of fishing creeks and streams together.

SLOW DOWN IN THE HEAT

"When it gets hot during the summer, you need to slow down a little and work the holes and good spots a little bit slower," Ken Covington said. "When the bite got tough, Dad always seemed to catch more than me. He was patient and fished slower. I wanted to fish fast, and that's not always the best way to fish."

Covington has learned to vary his retrieve when things get tough. "Sometimes, I'll use a shaky head with a trick worm or with a crawfish," he said. "Fish that shaky head around stumps, brush and still water above and below swift-water shoals or narrows. You might also use a Texas-rigged worm."

BIG BAITS = BIG BASS

"If you're looking to catch big bass, then a big jig is the way to go," Covington said. "I can take a black jig with a crawfish trailer and really catch some big ones when the time is right. But you've got to pay attention to what you're doing when you fish a jig in the creek, because I rarely feel the big ones hit the lure."

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Think small creeks need small lures? A peak inside Jerry Covington's tackle box shows a variety of crankbaits including Bandits, Normans, and Bombers.

"They simply suck it in and start swimming towards the boat or swimming sideways, and the only way you can tell you have a bite is by watching the line. It's hard to see when you're fishing current, but if it's doing anything different, then set the hook."

Covington likes to fish jigs with stiff rods and really stick bass when he's sure they have the lure.

"When they're really active, they almost take the rod out of your hand," he said. "But when they're finicky, you'll barely feel them, and that's when you must pay attention and have your reflexes finely tuned or you're never know you had a bite. Don't be afraid to jack his jaw."

While Ken Covington prefers fishing big jigs, his father liked to fish big spinnerbaits, simply because he caught a lot of big bass on them. The big spinnerbaits have a bigger profile and put out a pulsing vibration with the blades that entices bass to hit and allows the angler to be able to feel the slightest strike, thus making it easier to feel that bite and set the hook. Never overlook jigs or spinnerbaits when you're fishing for a big bass.

JERRY'S FAVORITES

While many anglers overlook crankbaits when fishing small creeks and



streams, they were an important part of Jerry Covington's arsenal.

"Daddy had a box full of crankbaits, mostly Bandits," Covington said. "He loved to fish those 300 series Bandits, and he always caught a bunch of fish on them, too. Whether we were fishing on the Tombigbee River, Sipsey River, Okatibbee Creek or any other smaller creek, he was going to use that Bandit and catch fish on them."

Covington likes to fish brightly colored crankbaits like white or chartreuse, and he also likes to throw a black and white Bandit with a spot on it.

"I can only remember one time when I beat him, and that was when we were fishing a little deeper water and I had on a Bandit 400 series and they were really tearing it up," Covington said. "I don't know if it was getting deeper, or just getting deeper and working a little slower, but, whatever the case, they liked the 400 series over the 300 series that day."

KEY COVINGTON SPOTS

Current breaks: "We always do better after a slight rise in the water during the summer," Covington said. "A summer shower might give it a slight rise, and the fish really seem to turn on and feed. When that happens, fish above and below stumps, logs, brush tops and anything that is causing a current break. The bass will feed on anything that swims by."

Mixing water tributaries: "If the creek is muddy then look for any small streams or water runoffs that have clear water coming into the muddy," Covington said. "The bass lay in the muddy portion and hit anything that comes into that mixing area."

Shoals or narrows: Almost every stream in east Mississippi and west Alabama has areas where the creek narrows and current speeds up over shoals or rocky areas where the water

If you doubt small cool-water streams won't produce big bass, Ken Covington shows the painful truth that indeed they do have rod-breaking lunkers.



flows faster. Covington targets areas just upstream of the shoals or narrows and the area just below as bass will stage at either place looking for an easy meal.

Above and below launch site:

While many anglers put their boat in at one location and fish down to a take-out point, the Covington way is to put in at one spot, fish upstream first, then fish back to the landing. They'll also fish downstream to a certain point and then come back with the trolling motor.

"In some of the creeks, you'll need a trolling motor with a lot of thrust," Covington said. "I have a 70-pound thrust motor that we use on some of the creeks so we can make it back to the ramp."

By fishing above and below the launch site, you have more time to fish and less time need to ferry one vehicle to the launch site and another to the take out site.

Nothing beats experience, and the more you fish the more you'll recognize key spots like stumps, logs, bushes, sandbars and areas that hold bass. Jerry Covington once told his son about certain stumps he'd caught big bass beside many years earlier, and then he'd catch another from the same one.

If you're looking for hot fishing action this summer, grab a few lures, a couple of rods and a friend, and head to the nearest stream or creek and get in the game.

You'll be glad you did. ■



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

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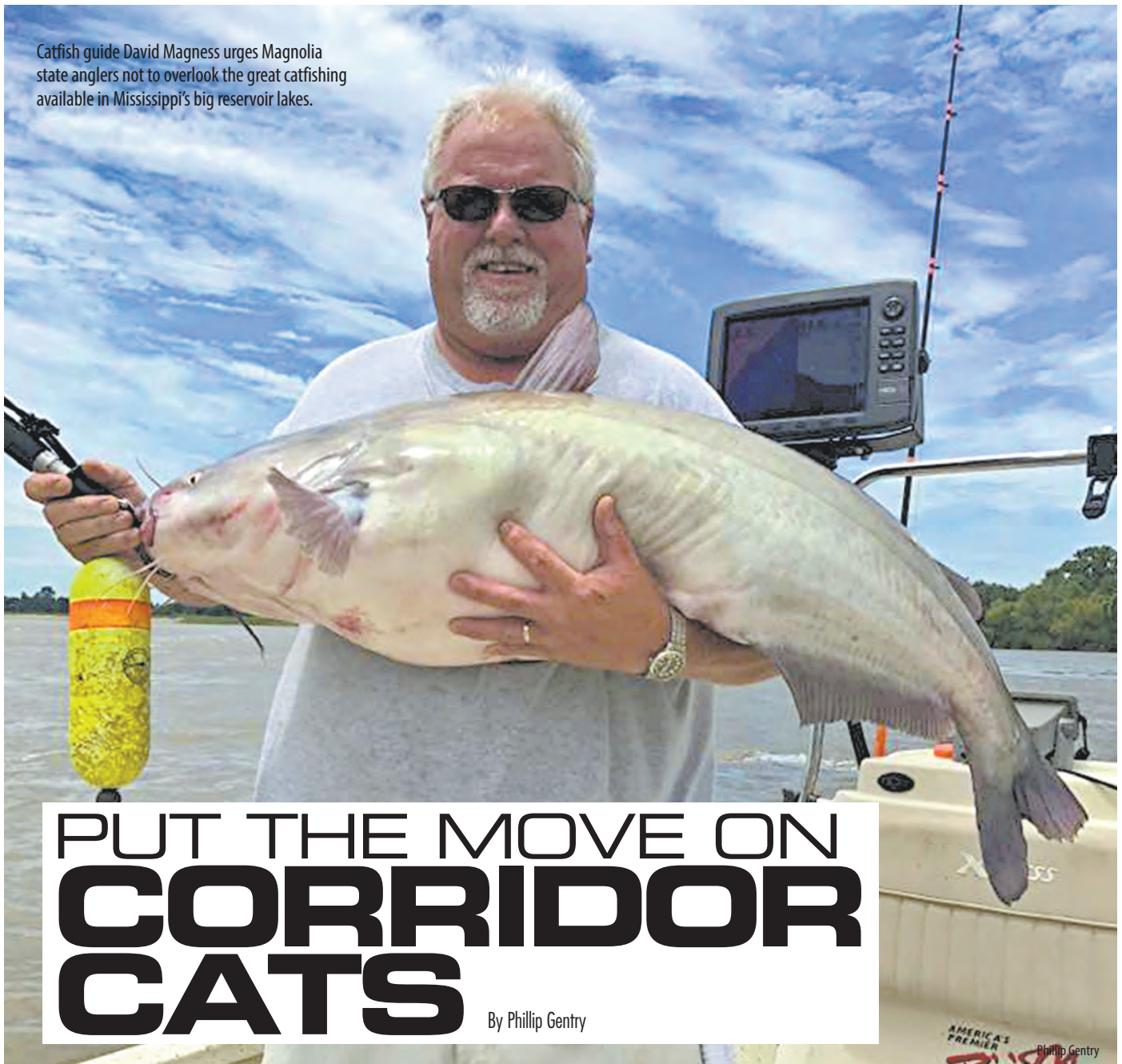
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Catfish guide David Magness urges Magnolia state anglers not to overlook the great catfishing available in Mississippi's big reservoir lakes.



PUT THE MOVE ON CORRIDOR CATS

By Phillip Gentry

Without river current to keep things moving, anglers targeting catfish on Mississippi's four I-55 corridor lakes can learn some tricks about putting baits in front of big fish.

Anyone who has spent any amount of time fishing on one of the flood-control lakes along Mississippi's I-55 corridor has witnessed boats trolling back and forth with rods hanging off their sides.

Multiple-rod trolling is one, if not the most-popular, tactic for targeting slab crappie in these U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lakes.

But the next time you pass such a boat, you might want to focus on

what kind of fish is coming over the gunwales. It might not be a crappie, especially if it's being pulled into David Magness' boat.

Magness, from Hernando, is a trophy catfish man and part-time guide in northwest Mississippi. His first love is fishing for big, blue catfish on the Mississippi River. With his home only a stone's throw from Lake Arkabutla and not much further from Enid, Sardis and Grenada lakes, he and

several other catfishing fans realized they might be overlooking some good catfish action right under their noses.

"There are definitely some good fish to be found in these lakes," Magness said. "I've caught several catfish in the 20- to 30-pound range, and you'll see hand-grabbers catch them almost twice that size. They're in there along with numbers of smaller fish."





Most catfish anglers are lost without current. It's ingrained in trophy catters that water flow brings food to the fish, dictates boat control when setting up, and even determines how much lead is attached to the terminal tackle in order to keep the bait on or near the bottom where catfish feed.

The only logical conclusion from that traditional thought is that if you are fishing on water that doesn't move, it would be wise to make the boat move. That's how trolling for catfish was born.

"We call it draggin', but in other parts of the country, they just call it trolling or drifting, even though you're relying on the trolling motor to move the boat forward. Average speed is about .5 or maybe even .7 miles per hour as the water warms up," Magness said. "Some folks just use flat lines, but in the last couple of years, we've started using planer boards to move the lines out away from the boat."



Post-spawn catfish will be moving toward deeper water, but they'll also be feeding up as they recover from their reproductive duties.

Structure Snake weight slithers through cover

The real secret to the catfish rig used by angler David Magness is the weight, a specially designed model made and sold by his fishing partner, Rusty Jackson of Olive Branch, through his website, bigrivercatfishing.com.

Jackson named the weight "Structure Snake" because of the flexible way it bends and crawls around heavy cover. The Structure Snake is a long, slinky weight, coated in high-density polypropylene thermal plastic that allows the weight to drag across and through obstacles without hanging up.



Rusty Jackson

The Structure Snake was designed to be the most snag-resistant weight available. It is available in a variety of sizes and colors.

"The Structure Snake won't hang up on the bottom," he said. "That's what you want. You want to be able to troll through standing timber, across rocks, laydowns, whatever, because that's where the big catfish will be."

Jackson discarded several shell materials before settling on his current design. Many anglers use parachute cord stuffed with buckshot to make homemade weights, but the material and design rarely stands up to tough conditions.

"I also designed this weight with a snap so you can change out from a heavy weight to a lighter weight when you change water depths, and so you don't have 5 ounces of weight slapping against your rod when you're running down the lake," Jackson said. ■



Phillip Gentry

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Put the move on corridor cats



David Magness said the tactics he uses for trolling for catfish in lakes will also work in rivers.

Magness said the basic setup involves six to eight rods stationed around the rear gunwales and stern of his boat. He uses 7½- and 10-foot B'n'M catfish rods spooled with 80-pound braided line. His bait rig revolves around a three-way swivel. One eye is tied to the main line, while the second eye has a 3- or 4-foot section of 50-pound Hi Seas monofilament leader ending with an 8/0 hook.

A split crappie float pegged at both ends is attached to the leader about 4 to 6 inches from the hook. The float helps keep the bait off the bottom and clear of snags. Magness attaches a slinky weight to the third eye to weigh down the rig and crawl over the bottom.

"You want to look for humps, ledges, holes and channels, the same kind of stuff you would anchor up on to catfish, but you're just going to troll through them," Magness said. "I especially like a ledge. I can troll on top or get down in the channel."

To find such areas, Magness relies on a Navionics Platinum Hot Spot map integrated with his sonar unit mapping system. He will get on a contour line and use that as a road map.



Photo courtesy David Magness



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Destination Information

HOW TO GET THERE: The most northern of the I-55 corridor lakes, Arkabutla is 12 miles south of Memphis, Tenn., and 13 miles west of Hernando, on Scenic Loop 304 off I-55. Heading south, Sardis is next in the I-55 corridor, east of the interstate between Como and Sardis and about 10 miles northwest of Oxford. Enid is about 20 miles south of Sardis; the dam is partially visible from I-55 north of Enid. Grenada is the southernmost of the lakes, located just east of I-55 at Exit 206 at the town of Grenada.

RAMPS: Each lake has several launching sites. For a complete listing of available public boat ramps and launches on Mississippi's reservoirs, by name, visit the MDWFP website and go to the Ramp & Piers page at <http://home.mdwfp.com/Fisheries/rampspiers>.

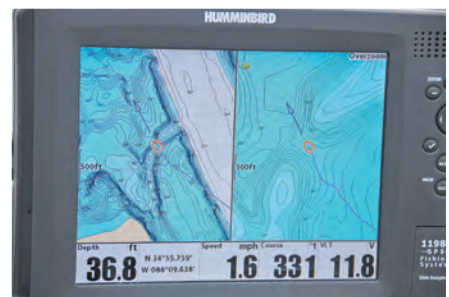
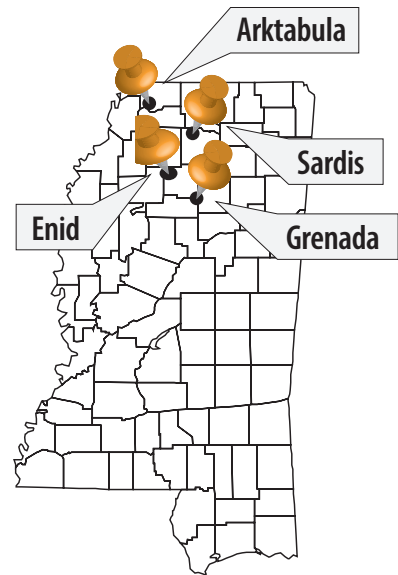
TECHNIQUES: While river catfish tend to stack up in current breaks in moving water, reservoir catfish tend to be more scattered. Trolling on inland reservoirs requires the boat to move, dragging baits

across the bottom, to search for catfish. Veteran anglers David Magness and Rusty Jackson troll between .5 and .7 miles per hour using several rods pulling slinky-weighted rigs across the bottom. They often employ planer boards to pull the lines out to the sides of the boat to create a wider swathe of bait coverage. They use electronics to find holes, ditches and ledges, as well as logs and stumps.

BAITS: While most catfish baits will work, the pros like to catch indigenous bait species caught from the reservoir they are fishing. Cut or whole shad are usually the baits of choice.

GUIDES/FISHING INFO: David Magness, Cat'N Aroun' Guide Service, 901-356-1008, catnarounguideservice.com; Rusty Jackson, Big River Catfishing, 901-619-5619, bigrivercatfishing.com.

|| Catfish anglers who troll use bottom-contour charts as a roadmap, looking for holes, ledges and channels to troll through.



Phillip Gentry

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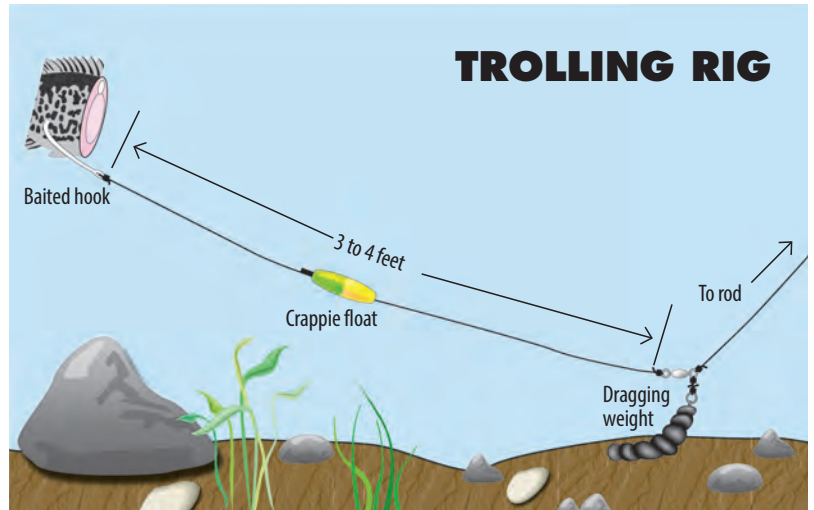
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In June, the catfish are in post-spawn. I'm mostly referring to blue cats, but this tactic will catch plenty of bigger channels as well as the occasional flathead, too. In post-spawn, they're going to be dropping back into deeper water, and they'll start to get hungry again to build back strength."

Magness' favorite bait is shad, and preferably any bait that he can catch from the lake he is fishing. Surprisingly, catfish can be picky about their food, especially during the brief post-spawn period, but homegrown baits are hard for them to turn down. "A lot of folks will go back behind the dam to these lakes and catch bait using a metal basket that they lower on a rope along the edge of the dam structure. Most of these fish are shad, but the law says you can't keep them alive for fear of mistakenly intro-



ducing Asian carp into the lake. The small carp and threadfin or gizzard shad look a lot alike," he said. "I'm cutting them for bait anyway, so putting them straight on ice isn't a problem."

“I'm cutting them for bait anyway, so putting them straight on ice isn't a problem.”

Another method for catching bait is using a cast net around sandy areas; boat ramps are usually pretty good for this. Magness will throw the net several times before daylight and fill his cooler with bait. Ideally, he's looking for 4- to 6-inch specimens to cut, but if the take is smaller, he's not opposed to stringing 3 or 4 of them on a hook.

Magness is particular about his hook choice. "I use a Daiichi D82 7/0 hook. It's kind of an improved circle," he said. "The hook will set itself like a circle hook, but you can also jack him up when you see the bite and not pull the hook out like a true circle hook." ■



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

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This catfish fell for a bait being pulled under a planer board.



Phillip Gentry

Fishing on a higher plane

Using planer boards to separate trolling lines is a tactic that has been around for a long time, but anglers continue to re-invent it, tailoring it to the species they are targeting.

Bruce DeShano of Offshore Planerboards in Port Austin, Mich. (offshoretackle.com), has seen just about every species of fish caught on a lure or bait deployed behind one of his boards.

"In any situation where you have current, either generated by the boat or the water you're fishing, you can use planer boards to separate your lines and move them out away from the boat to get more coverage and to prevent spooking fish by the presence of the boat," DeShano said.

For catfish-specific tactics, using a planer board with a slinky weight creates two bends in the line between the fish and the end of the rod. Guide David Magness said that's not an issue of concern when trying to get a good hookset.

"We're using big natural baits, so there's no reason for the fish to want to spit the bait," Magness said. "His instinct is to grab the bait and turn and go back to his hiding spot. With the boat in forward motion, there will be sufficient tension for the hook to set itself. Most of the time, when you see the board moving backwards, he's already set the hook." ■

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STING THE KING

By David A. Brown

Ruthless aggression is the name of the game for king mackerel — so big baits and wire rigs are key when tackling this toothy predator.

Lean, mean biting machines, king mackerel pack a mouthful of sharp teeth that'll make short work of monofilament or even fluorocarbon line. These fish are also notorious for snipping baits in half and missing single-hook-rigs. A double dose of frustration, to be sure, but this worthy opponent can be beaten — with the right equipment.

Solving both of these problems, savvy anglers employ rigging wire for leaders, and for building the all-important “stinger rig” — a main hook trailing a treble “stinger” on a short piece of wire. This arrangement not only repels those wicked choppers, but it also ensures the king gets snared no matter how it bites.

Now there are definitely tastier fish in the Northern Gulf, with tuna, cobia, snapper and speckled trout all coming to mind. So, why go to the trouble of trying to outmaneuver such a headache-maker?

Well, why did people pay big money to see Mike Tyson fights they knew wouldn't last one full round? Ruthless aggression — since the days of Rome's gladiators, ruthless aggression has always been a marketable commodity.

And if ever there was a fish that truly does not care; it's the kingfish. “Reckless abandon” simply doesn't do them justice. No, this is full-throttle, vicious savagery in its truest form.



“These fish can skyrocket out the water 20 to 25 feet, they’re very acrobatic and you

get these big, long runs,” said veteran Gulf angler Bill Butler. “When you have that (reel) clicker running like it’s about to blow out the side, it’s a great feeling. These are very aggressive fish — and there’s a lot of them.”

Capt. Donnie Jackson, who runs Tails Up Offshore Fishing, offered this perspective: “It’s very fast-paced; a lot of action. When they’re feeding, you can’t get two lines in the water. If the bite’s on, we try to put out bait after bait to take advantage of the opportunity.”

So, you want a front row seat to the bite show? Butler and Jackson shared their insights on the key areas of baits, rigging and fishing strategy.

MEAL FIT FOR A KING

This one’s as straightforward as it gets: Big, fresh, live baits are the surest path to giant kings. Troll plugs, spoons or rigged ballyhoo and you’ll catch all the little ones you can stand, but when 50-plus-pounders are there for the taking, why burn daylight on the riffraff?

Butler is fond of big hardtails (blue runners), bluefish and big greenies (threadfin herring). Jackson seconds that opinion, and adds in bonita and menhaden, aka pogies.

Pogies are almost exclusively a cast-net deal, but anglers often use Sabiki rigs — strings of gold hooks on dropper loops with a weight at the bottom — to nab hardtails and greenies. When Butler’s looking for whopper hardtails or bluefish, he’ll fish a double shad rig (lead heads with plastic shad tails).

“When you get the cleaner water, the bigger baits will be on the surface, so we’ll throw a green and white or a yellow and white shad rig,” Butler said. “You rip the shad rig or a

The basic stinger rig puts a hook at both ends of the bait to prevent short strikes.

Gotcha plug across the top of the water and your bigger hardtails will eat it. Usually when you catch one, you’ll catch two.”

WIRED FOR SUCCESS

Whatever the bait, both anglers know that their only hope of boating a giant fish with scissors for jaws is to rig up with a stout, wire “stinger” rigs. Essentially, it’s a single hook set through the nose or forehead of a live bait, trailing a treble hook on a piece of wire hanging from the bend or the eye of the lead hook. By positioning hooks at both ends of the bait, a stinger rig greatly improves your chances of snaring whatever bites.

Wire is also necessary for leaders, as a big king’s choppers occasionally reach past the bait. Butler says he’s not interested in wasting time with smaller fish, so he snells his lead hooks and trailing stingers directly onto his 90- to 130-pound, 7-strand wire leaders.

“I’m not a believer in small wire,” Butler said. “These are predator fish; they’d eat a shoe, so when he hits, we’ll catch him. You go through so many 40-pound cookie-cutter fish to get a big one and you don’t want to spend 30 minutes on every fish.

continues on page 54

RIGHT: A string of plump hardtails — kingfish candy.



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"Also, with lighter wire, one fish and your rig is done. But with that 7-strand, we can catch more fish per rig."

Dead ribbonfish, aka "silver eels," make dandy big-king baits, but you have to manage that lanky profile with a specialized rig. Replace the standard nose hook with a narrow jig and enough sequential stinger segments to cover the size of the eels you're trolling. Set the jig through an eel's jaws (bottom-to-top) to keep the mouth closed while trolling and pin those stingers along the flank with enough slack to allow a swimming motion.

For extra enticement, try a "double-trouble" rig with two live hardtails, greenies or pogies staggered on a pair of stinger segments. The baits fighting against one another create a cluster of activity that big kings can't resist.

Another creative option originating in the Carolinas is the Zombie rig. This one positions a rigged ribbonfish on a wire leader trailing a stinger-rigged live hardtail. The appearance of a predator keeps

the hardtail struggling to flee, while the whole drama looks like easy pickings to opportunistic kings.

Yet another tip for attracting attention involves accessorizing your rigs. Skirts, aka "dusters," comprise a metal sleeve surrounded by strands of Mylar or other flashy material that pulse and flair in the water. Slipping a duster or simply a colored bead onto your leader can help kings locate your bait when overcast days or rough water impair visibility.

SPREAD IT OUT

Slow trolling a spread of baits around emergent or cut-off rigs is the main deal for big fish. Jackson said he's looking for that pretty "king green" color that's not crystal clear, but not too dingy. From his experience, returning to the site of past success is usually a good move.

"I like to say that big kingfish are creatures of habit; they'll keep coming



Keeping several rods ready with multiple rig styles allows you to quickly diversify your presentations.

back to the same places year after year," he said. "I've kept a log book of where I've caught big kings and a lot of times, they've been within a mile or so of where I caught them the year before."

Marking baitfish on the sonar always bodes well, but Butler's also watching for topside clues. Specifically, baitfish behavior will tell you a lot about the kind of day they're having.

"When you see those big schools of hardtails spread out, they're relaxed, but

continues on page 56

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54 Mississippi Sportsman | June 2018

LOAD THE WELL

Everyone appreciates a packed livewell, but minding the details of kingfish bait collection can advance your trip's success.

Here's a roundup of important points to consider:

- If you remove an entire Sabiki rig from its package prior to securing both ends, you'll have a mess on your hands. Make life easy by tying your line to the rig, affixing the weight to the swivel clip first and then pulling each Sabiki segment off the packaging card one at a time.
- In a hurry, it's easy to reel the upper-end of a Sabiki rig into the eye of your rod tip. To avoid tangles and eye damage, add a plastic bead to your line before tying to the Sabiki.
- Fresh, lively baits perform best and look the most attractive to predators, so use a de-hooker to minimize touching — and drop each bait off the Sabiki rig directly into the livewell.
- Keep watch for surface "raining" — baitfish rising to the surface. Sling Sabiki rigs around the school's perimeter, but don't bomb the school or they'll sound.
- Multiple Sabkis will maximize the bait effort, but watch your spacing and give everyone room to operate because hooked baits tend to tangle adjacent lines.
- When sharks detect your bait gathering, they'll be naturally drawn to the feeding opportunity. If bite-offs persist, find another bait spot or you'll end up burning rigs — and valuable daylight.

- David A. Brown



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when you see them tucked tight to the rig, that means something's eating them," he said.

You might think that slow trolling live baits around a massive existing food source would be futile, but it's just the opposite. Terrified baits huddle close, so when yours come sauntering by the outskirts, that vulnerability flips the king's feeding switch.

Rough weather may curtail how many lines you can fish, but when conditions allow, Jackson wants a half-dozen baits in the water. First, he'll deploy big baits, often those ribbonfish, on two downriggers. He'll stagger the depths with one about 30 feet off the bottom and the other at mid water column.

On top, he'll set four flat lines at progressively shorter lengths. First is the longest, and this "shotgun" bait goes back about 80 feet. He'll set a mid-range bait at 50, add one at 25 and then drop one right behind the boat in the turbulent prop wash.

That prop bait often produces memorable moments — suffice it to say that 5 feet of silver missile launching maybe a rod-length off the transom is better than dark-and-bold coffee.

Butler's trick: Tow a large, dead Spanish mackerel on the long shotgun line. Kings love munching on their smaller cousins, so giving them an easy opportunity often pays big dividends.

Tip: When setting a downrigger bait, anglers often twist the line before putting it in the release clip to create a loop for the clip to grip. Do yourself a favor and don't wrap the line around your finger while forming the loop because big kings won't hesitate to grab a bait mere feet from the boat — and if a smoker hits the jets with

line spun around your finger, you'll likely have a much less impressive handshake.

TO CAPTURE A KING

When your presentations convince a big king to chew, it's gonna be fierce, and it's gonna be fast. Expect a couple of monster runs and lots of trickery near the boat, so crew cooperation is critical. One man on the wheel, one on the rod and everyone else clears the spread to avoid tangles.

"Once we get a fish on, we leave out one bait close to the boat," Butler said. "Those other fish hear all that commotion and that excites them. A lot of times we get another big bite that way."

Now, if there's one step in the big king process that'll make you look silly, it's the gaffing. No telling how many tournaments were lost or how many friendships broken with a last-second mistake that inadvertently bumped the line and freed a nearly-caught whopper.

"No 1: Pay attention," said Jackson. "It's easy to get excited when a big fish is coming in, but that's the time for everyone to get locked in. I like to gaff the king

above the lateral line, so it doesn't bleed."

Once a king starts running out of gas, it will make big death circles by the boat, similar to a tuna. On the rod, you want to gradually steer the fish higher in the water column as each pass heads away from you. When the circle comes back around, reel down to gather line and keep the fish heading upward.

Once the fish surfaces, lay the gaff across the back — always behind the line — and smoothly pull it into the fish. Controlled movements win; frantic stabbing — not so much.

In and out of the water, the king's teeth are some of the sea's most formidable. Don't underestimate the biting power of a big fish and keep your fingers well away from the business end. Long-handled hook pluckers will keep you out of harm's way. ■



A full-time freelance writer specializing in sport fishing, David A. Brown splits his time between journalism and marketing communications (www.tightwords.com).



TIP!

The King Master Biloxi opens the Gulf tournament season May 31-June 2 out of Point Cadet Marina. First place is worth \$100,000.

A hooked kingfish is a tricky opponent, so take your time and don't ever horse it in.

IT ALL ADDS UP TO MORE FISH IN THE BOAT.



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TAKE A SHOT AT SUMMER BASS

By David A. Brown

'Shoot' your bait back into the dark recesses under a dock, and you'll get more looks from hungry bass that dig the shade. Here's how.

Shade, shelter and feeding opportunities; it's no wonder bass don't want to leave their docks. You pluck a few from the perimeters with moving baits and maybe flip a couple off those outside posts, but consistency hinges on your ability to take it to 'em.

In a word, that means "skipping."

Bass pro Andy Montgomery tempts his dock bass with a Strike King Tour Grade Skipping Jig fitted with a 4-inch Rage Bug. The jig's 60-count silicone skirt provides lots of flare, and the flat-sided head skips like a wet stone. But ever the picky perfectionist, Montgomery gives each one a cosmetic makeover.

- Check the skirt. Pieces move in the package, so he make sure it's straight and even.
- No clumping. Gently rubbing the skirt fibers in a downward motion eliminates the sticking that can mar a presentation.

"I want the skirt even, because I don't want it to fall to one side or the other," Montgomery said.

- At little trim. Full skirts can impede skipping through excessive water drag, so Montgomery gather the skirt between his fingers and cut off about 1/8-inch. He'll do so in three to four equal cuts to make sure his jig skirt bears an even edge on a compact package that allows plenty of action from his Rage Bug.
- Plastic tactic. For optimal efficiency, Montgomery bites four segments off his trailer's tail end. A shorter trailer means a more compact profile with a better skipping motion. Also, this adjustment ensures that his hook comes out just above the trailer's eyes — ideal for putting the point closer to the fish and thereby increasing hook-up success.





Bass pro Andy Montgomery carefully trims back the skirts on his jigs so they'll more easily skip back under a dock or other piece of shady cover, reducing the drag as the bait makes contact with the water.



David A. Brown

Favoring a V&M Pacemaker Skipping Jig with a chunk-style trailer, bass pro Hank Cherry fishes his jig on 20-pound Berkley 100-Percent Fluorocarbon. He prefers hanging his trailer for maximum profile, but if your skipping angle pushes a hung chunk up the hook shank, make a stopper by threading a piece of worm onto the hook.

PRESENTATION PROWESS

Cherry said an individual's height and the distance they like to be from a dock when skipping should determine rod length. For example, he stands 6-foot-3 and keeps his distance from docks, so a 7-foot-3 to 7-foot-6 rod suits him well. However, a shorter person who casts from close range will want to drop down to a 6-foot-6 or 7-foot rod.

Montgomery, who uses a 7-foot-1 heavy-action Daiwa Tatula rod, agrees and notes that he prefers an underhanded roll cast. That, he said, is why rod length is so important.

"If you use too long of a rod, you'll hit the water, and that longer rod will force you to use a (different) motion," Montgomery said. "If you fit the rod length to your height, it will prevent you from hitting the water. You can skip with a sidearm motion, but you're

way more accurate with an underhand cast."

Reel retrieve speed also plays a key role in Montgomery's dock game. He likes the Daiwa Tatula CT 8:1 for its T-Wing System, which reduces the friction that baitcasting reels on rods with narrow line guides face. The T-Wing releases line through a wider top section on the cast and then funnels retrieved line into a narrow, lower channel for better control and even spool distribution.

The higher gear ratio might raise a few eyebrows, until Montgomery explains the logic. Dock skipping, he said, inherently creates a lot of slack, but the peppy reel speed allows him to quickly gather the excess and get to work.

Cherry adds this technique tip. "Wherever your eyes are going, that's where the bait will go. Some people underhand skip better than sidearm skip; you just have to do whatever is within your mechanics.

"Some of the best dock skippers don't do it like I do; I stay 20 to 25 yards off and skip sidearm. A lot of guys like to get tight and pitch-skip. You have to figure out what you're most comfortable with.

"I never get close to a dock because when I skip, my jig goes under the dock, to the bottom, one hop, and I swim it out. I never leave my bait on the bottom under a dock, unless it's on a rocky point where I'll crawl it. I feel like if the fish doesn't get the bait on the initial entry, with one hop, when I swim it out, that looks like it's fleeing, and the fish that's living there is going to get it."



SHOOT THAT THANG!

If skipping simply frustrates you — or perhaps you're teaching kids or other beginners — don't fret; take a page from the crappie angler's handbook and "shoot" your baits under the cover.

With a motion more closely resembling archery, shooting provides a handy option for zipping a bait back into the dock's shadowy reaches, without all the performance anxiety.

Aiming a spinning outfit at your target zone, pull the lure backward to load the rod from beneath, and then release it to shoot the bait into the target zone. You'll find that high-visibility braided line will show the light bites, as the line suddenly stops. Adding a 10-pound fluorocarbon leader to the braid complements stealth with abrasion resistance

Taking this specialty presentation a step farther, lure maker Gene Larew recently created a bait with a slower fall to stay in front of suspended fish. The Bass Shooter also maximizes the shooting momentum with a lengthy skipping motion. This sleek, 3¼-inch bait is made with a flat back with a hook alignment guide, a spade-shaped tail, and a keeled underside that makes the bait wobble and glide through the water column.

Specifically for the Bass Shooter, Gene Larew also created a Pinhead Hook with a wire weed guard and a weighted shank for even weight distribution.

Completing the package, Gene Larew Pull Tabs prevent accidental sticking by keeping your fingers well behind the hook. ■



Skipping a jig with an underhand motion allows anglers to get baits between portions of docks.

Gene Larew's Bass Shooter was designed to be "shot" back up under docks where bass hide.

GET HIM OUT

An important point to keep in mind: heavily structured docks. Particularly when skipping under docks with cables, your plan needs to include an exit strategy. Bass pro Jeff Sprague said it's all about sizing up the area before making your first skip.

He suggests these questions.

- How will you get the fish out?
 - What options does the structure offer?
 - Will you reach right or left of a piling? Over or under a dock cable?
 - Will you have to reach into the water or boat flip the fish?
- "Whatever the case may be, a guy has to already know in his

mind what he's going to do," he said. "Otherwise, you're wasting your time, because that fish will own you before you even have the opportunity to make that decision."

No doubt, dock-skipping can be an intimidating and nerve-racking venture; but this is a truly a no risk-no reward deal. Some may follow the plan of "hook 'em first and then worry about it," but a well-conceived plan serves you better in the long run. ■



A full-time freelance writer specializing in sportfishing, David A. Brown splits his time between journalism and marketing communications (www.tightwords.com).



Bass pro Andy Montgomery relies on jigs skipped under docks for summer bass.

GETTIN' FRESH

Hal Schramm

Sustaining quality fishing in aging reservoirs will require providing good habitat for bass and for anglers.



ENHANCE HABITAT, FISH WILL RESPOND

TABLE ROCK STUDY POINTS TO STRUCTURE HELPING FISHING

Table Rock Lake is a 43,100-acre impoundment on the White River in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas and Missouri that was built in 1958.

Although this scenic lake continues to provide good fishing, 60 years of water-level fluctuations have severely depleted woody habitat and continue to curtail the establishment of aquatic vegetation. A project led by Missouri Department of Conservation added more than 2,000 structures composed of brush, rocks and stumps to restore habitat and sustain quality fishing.

NOT YOUR AVERAGE BRUSH PILE PROJECT

The \$4 million project funded by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Bass Pro Shops, Missouri Department of Conservation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service took six years to complete. Specialized equipment was used to add tons of structure. For example, a barge for placing the rock and stumps was 35

feet long, 14 feet wide and capable of carrying and dumping 4,000 pounds.

Water quality is the foundation for good fish habitat, and efforts were directed at reducing nutrient and sediment inputs. An incentive and education program encouraged lakeside property owners to pump out septic tanks before they failed. Another program helped willing land-owners stabilize stream banks to reduce sediment inputs to the lake.

WAS IT A SUCCESS?

Biological assessments indicated an increase in bass abundance and angler catch rates. SCUBA surveys revealed bass preference for hardwood brush and log piles, while crappies preferred cedars.

Shane Bush, a biologist with the Missouri Department of Conservation who coordinated the project, noted five reasons why the project was worth the money and the extensive effort:

- Anglers and guides are fishing the new habitat and catching more fish.
- Structures will provide desirable fish and habitat during low-water years when flooded shoreline cover isn't available.

- The septic tank pump-out program prevented the addition of 550 pounds of nitrogen and 120 pounds of phosphorus per year, improving water quality.
- Stream-bank stabilization conducted on 3,000 feet of bank reduced sediment input and encouraged similar projects.
- The program demonstrated what can be done to rejuvenate aging reservoirs and provided guidance on how to manage habitat more efficiently and economically.

MORE BASS INFO

A radio-tracking study of largemouth bass conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey, Missouri Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and Missouri Department of Conservation provided some important details about how bass used added structure.

Statistical analysis revealed that presence and type of structure, water depth, and distance from shore affected bass habitat selection during day and night.

Among structure types, rock and ledge areas were used the least. Woody structures were used more than rock and ledge, and natural woody structures

and installed woody structures were used similarly. Of natural woody structure, “complex woody structure” was used more than “simple woody structure.” Simple woody structure is logs with few branches, and complex woody structure is brush piles. The complex woody structure provides smaller cavities for fish — both bass and their forage — to hide.

Interestingly, boat docks were used most often by bass. This may be specific to steep-sided, cover-limited Table Rock, but nevertheless, it demonstrates that this form of “added habitat” can be a good place for anglers to locate bass.

Day and night locations differed little among structure types, but bass were located in shallower water and closer to shore at night. Daytime depths averaged about 20 feet deep, and nighttime depth averaged about 10 feet.

These findings can help anglers locate bass and help guide future habitat-enhancement efforts. Installing woody fish attractors in 10- to 20-foot depths will have the greatest benefit to bass. In reservoirs with widely fluctuating water levels, fish-attractor placement should be at a variety of depths to benefit fish and anglers during high and low lake stages.

A final note. The Missouri Department of Conservation does not stock bass or crappie in their large, public reservoirs. They rely on the long-term benefits of good habitat to provide quality fishing. Good habitat is good for the fish and good for fishing. ■



Hal Schramm is an avid angler and veteran fisheries biologist.



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LUNKER LINES

Paul Elias

Paul Elias depends on his depth finder to locate the ledges and see the structure and bass at Pickwick before he ever starts chunking and winding.



BET ON PICKWICK'S LEDGES DURING JUNE

WHEN BASS HEAD FOR DEEP WATER, LOOK FOR CHANGES IN THE BOTTOM THAT WILL HOLD BAITFISH AND BASS

Pickwick Lake is a great ledge lake. Although you primarily will be fishing for and catching largemouths there in June, when you get a strike, you don't know what you'll reel in, because all types of fish and baitfish will be running those ledges. All of the Tennessee River lakes are extremely fertile and home to an abundance of baitfish. During June, the ledges are the structure you can bet on to find and catch bass.

We'll fish these Pickwick secondary ledges — not the river ledges — many different ways. In June, bass will be holding on the first ledges you come to between the river-channel ledge toward the bank. The weather is warming, but it's not quite enough to move bass out to the deep-water river ledges just yet.

We'll also fish secondary points and bars. This time of the year, I've found the best Pickwick bassing to be between Second Creek and the Natchez Trace. This area has many ledges and bars

with underwater creeks cutting through them. Generally, you'll see some grass starting to grow on some of these bars in June. My favorite two June places to fish at Pickwick are mussel-shell bars on these secondary ledges and the ends of those bars.

CRANK 'EM UP

I'll start off with Mann's 15+ and 20+ crankbaits in gray ghost or brown back/chartreuse colors. The gray ghost represents shad, and the brown back/chartreuse represents bluegills. I'll put my boat over deep water, cast to the tops of ledges and fish for about 100 yards above the underwater ditch, down the sandbar, around the end of the ditch, through the mouth of the ditch, around the other end of the ditch and 100 yards below the ditch.

I'll be fishing these crankbaits on a 7-foot-6 Shimano glass composite rod with a Curado 200K casting reel that has a 6.2:1 gear ratio and 20-pound test

White Peacock fluorocarbon.

CAROLINA RIG 'EM

If I can't get a bite on the crankbaits, I'll fish a Carolina rig on this same rod and a 7.5:1 Curado reel. I'll have 50-pound bass braid on the reel with a 2-foot leader of 23-pound fluorocarbon. I'll use a 1-ounce slip sinker up the line with an orange bead under the weight and a barrel swivel tied to the braid and the fluorocarbon. I'll fish with a No. 4/0 wide-gap hook tied to the leader and a 6-inch plum-colored Jelly worm. I've learned over the years that the Tennessee River bass like plum colors for soft plastics. I'll ease that weight on my line through the shell beds, cast upcurrent and bring the Carolina rig downcurrent.

LATER IN JUNE

By the middle of June, bass will move out to the river ledges, and I'll fish the same lures as I have on the secondary ledges. But my main go-to lure when

bass are on the river ledges is a ½-ounce, Mann's Preacher jig that's made of feathers and hair. I'll throw the jig upcurrent and swim it with the current, coming down the river ledges. I'll let the jig fall all the way to the bottom, make three or four cranks on my reel and let it fall back to the bottom again. I'll use this type of retrieve all the way back to my boat.

I'll fish the jig on 20-pound fluorocarbon with a 7-foot-3, medium-heavy Shimano rod with an 8.2:1 Curado reel. This feather-and-hair jig will produce numbers of a wide variety fish. You'll catch spotted, smallmouth, largemouth and white bass and stripers. You even may catch a catfish. This jig is white, and just about any fish that swims the Tennessee River will eat it.

You'll probably have to fish numbers of ledges before you locate a bass. However, once you do find the bass, remain in that area, since the bass will move up and down on those ledges. I hope to pinpoint three or four places where I can catch bass and will go back and forth to each of them several times a day.

WATER MOVES

In June, current usually will start running early in the morning, stop in the middle of the day and begin again in the afternoon. Your most-productive bass fishing will be when the current's running. On a good day in June, you can expect to catch 20 to 25 bass weighing from 1½ up to 5 or 7 pounds each. During a day of June fishing at Pickwick, I expect to catch at least one bass that weighs from 4 to 7 pounds. ■



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



If you've never caught any good smallmouths like this one, be sure to make a June trip to Pickwick, a lake that borders three states.



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HAPPY TRAILS

Bill Garbo

The author keeps an array of meds handy to deal with stings, itches and rashes.



PREPARE YOURSELF AND BE CAUTIOUS

TRIPS AFIELD DURING THE SUMMER CAN PRESENT SOME INTERESTING PROBLEMS

We find ourselves in the “in-between season.” Here in the Deep South, it is not only the season of insects, heat and humidity, snakes and poison ivy, but it is also the season of summer food plots, bush-hogging of fields and roads and weed spraying.

A lot of work needs to be done before next hunting season, but proceed with caution, because of the plethora of things out there just waiting to make your life miserable.

After 48 years in the whitetail woods, I have pretty much seen it all, but, as I found out yesterday, something is always out there that you may or may not be prepared for, that is ready to grab you. Recently, I decided to make a jaunt into the field. The weather was pretty decent for central Mississippi this time of year, with a low in the upper 50s and an afternoon high in the low 70s. As a precaution

against flying, crawling and slithering vermin, I wore long pants that were bloused into my tall snake boots, a long-sleeve shirt, and a hat for sun protection. I also had a can of DEET spray to apply to my boot tops, pants, sleeves and hat. In other words, I was pretty much ready for all contingencies. But we all know from experience how fast our best-laid plans can fall apart.

After leaving my truck, I sprayed down with the bug spray and began to walk across a freshly disked field. Before taking very many steps, I began to notice a building cloud of black gnats or midges that were orbiting my upper half. Forgetting the sage advice I had been given a year or so ago that DEET was absolutely useless against gnats and midges, I promptly took out my spray bottle and began to liberally spray my neck, ears, forehead, and wrists.

THEY ATE ME UP

Upon sensing the sweet elixir of freshly applied DEET, an absolute horde of winged gnats or midges suddenly appeared and began to light on every square inch of exposed flesh they could find, all the while, biting and chewing on me. They crawled up my sleeves as far as my biceps; they were in my ears, behind my glasses on my eyelids, forehead, and everywhere else in between. After no more than 30 minutes, having unsuccessfully trying to outrun them two or three times, I took off running for the truck. As I careened down the mud hole-pocked road, I rolled all the windows down, and then, upon hitting the blacktop, I took her up to about 50 mph for maximum suction, all the while continuing to slap and kill the few hangers-on that were still trying to extract a blood-meal.

Today, nursing my red-welted, itching

face and arms, the old timers' remedy for biting gnats is echoing in my head. The remedy is to apply plain, unsweetened vanilla extract to all exposed skin. That is a good tip for us all to remember. Unfortunately, I was fresh out of vanilla yesterday and forgot to bring a bee keepers suit along, so my outing was doomed from the beginning.

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT 'EM

You have to prepare for so many things this time of year. With the first hint of spring weather, I always wear snake boots into the field. Poisonous snakes are where you find them, so why even take a chance? Over the years, I have had several close calls with the big three: rattlers, moccasins and copperheads. Also, many sportsmen like to take their dogs with them into the field; if you do, bear in mind that a snake bite can be fatal to your loyal companion.

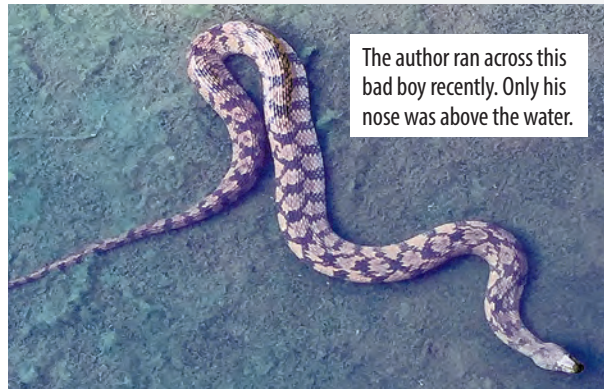
Some people, including me, are highly allergic to yellow jacket and wasp venom, and even a single sting can potentially put them into anaphylactic shock. I have to carry along or keep handy a medical

kit that not only contains an EpiPen, but also has liquid Benadryl, Tagamet and a steroid dose pack. If stung, the key is to do everything you can not to have to use the EpiPen injector. As my doctor has coached me, this can be accomplished after being stung by immediately taking a 50 mg dose of liquid Benadryl, take a Tagamet pill, and then take the initial dose of steroid, as described on the prescription box, chewed rather than swallowed. Do all of this with your EpiPen injector right by your side.

If you are prone to anaphylaxis from stings, when was the last time you checked the expiration date on your set of EpiPens? Even if kept cool in an insulated bag, and the epinephrine appears clear in the injector, get a new prescription and replace your injectors on a regular basis. Replacement can be pricey, but hey, it's potentially your life that we are talking about. ■

GETTING READY:

We have just three or four months to get ourselves physically in better condition to lift sacks of seed and fertilizer, climb tree-stand trees, drag and load up a heavy buck, and hike in to scout or hunt. Get on a regular walking program. Join a gym and lift weights. There are so many ways to get ourselves in better shape to have a safer and more enjoyable next hunting season.



The author ran across this bad boy recently. Only his nose was above the water.



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

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LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

Two large J-shaped high-profile legs give the Cowboy its vibrating action.



RIDE 'EM, COWBOY

GARY YAMAMOTO'S NEW CREATURE BAIT HAS A FLUTTERY ACTION BIG BASS JUST CAN'T RESIST

Before Gary Yamamoto Custom Baits' soft-plastic creature bait, the Cowboy, was unveiled at the 2018 Bassmaster Classic in South Carolina, a few bass anglers were fortunate to have Ron Colby's latest creation.

And Tai Au of Glendale, Arizona — the No. 2 all-time money winner on the Wild West Bass Trail — was one of them.

"I know the lure just came out, but I've caught over 100 fish on it already," Au said earlier this spring.

"I was looking for something the fish haven't seen," Au, a 34-year-old Yamamoto rep said — and he got it from Colby. "If I didn't work for Yamamoto, I probably wouldn't tell anybody."

Distinguishing the Cowboy from the rest are the two large, J-shaped wide profile legs — the tail — under the body. It also features two sets of small, flapping appendages that give it secondary action.

VERSATILITY

The 4-inch long Cowboy can be Texas-

rigged, Carolina-rigged or used as a trailer on a football-head jig, a swivel-head jig and even a bladed jig like a ChatterBait.

"What's unique about the bait is there are no other creature baits on the market that I know of with a tail that moves so much. The tail's so big it moves perfectly through the water. It doesn't have any erratic action," Au said. "If you pitch a lot, you need a lure with more action, more movement. You need it to fall where it flutters. It's awesome to do that."

Before winter hit Arizona, Au caught bass consistently with the lure on trips he made in October, November and December.

At the 2017 WON U.S. Open on Lake Mead in mid-October, won by Phoenix's Justin Patti with 36.3 pounds, Au was in the Top 10 after Day 1 using the Cowboy.

His first fish was a 3½-pounder ("An absolute giant for Lake Mead," he said) that bit the Cowboy he had tied to 70-pound braid under a ¾-ounce worm weight.

"I went through every single pack. Long story short, I ran out of Cowboys," he said, noting he had five bags.

In December, which was unseasonably mild, Au took the Cowboy out for a test ride at Saguaro Lake, 41 miles from Phoenix. He punched the milfoil and had the kind of day bass anglers dream about, one that was recorded and can be seen on YouTube. "Anyway, my biggest five would have went 25 pounds," he said.

He repeated those results the next day after Colby, who lives in Page, Ariz., — home of Yamamoto's headquarters since its inception in 1983 — drove over to fish with him on Saguaro Lake.

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Au also is a big fan of the Yamamoto Flappin' Hog, another soft-plastic creature bait that was his favorite before the introduction of the Cowboy.

"This one (Cowboy) gives me the best of both," he said.

That was the goal, said Colby, Yamamoto's vice president of operations who celebrated his 16th year with the company in December. He had been tinkering with something like it for a few years but got serious when pro staffers kept bringing it up.

"I had been working on it for

a while. Guys were asking for a bait with more vibration, something with a bigger kick and a pretty big profile," Colby said.

"But when they put the pressure on me, put the screws to me, I committed. I'm pretty excited about it. It was in demand."

The Cowboy design he eventually came up with combined popular characteristics of the Flappin' Hog's shape and appendages with the wide profile legs of Yamamoto's Hula Grub.

"I beefed up the legs. I kept working with it a little bit until it put a lot of vibration out there. It seems to be doing the job," Colby said.

"What I like about it, too, is they

changed the formula," Au said. "It's a little tougher, lasts a little longer."

He averages three or four bass on one Cowboy, he said.

For more information on the Cowboy and other Yamamoto artificial lures, go to www.yamamoto.baits.com or call 800-645-2248. ■



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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STICKS AND STRINGS

Sammy Romano

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As the majority of our hunting population ages, crossbows have steadily moved to the forefront of today's archery market.

And TenPoint Crossbow Technologies has long been a leader in that segment, and they've continued that tradition for 2018 with the latest engineering and several new models.

The Stealth NXT is the culmination of this technology. With a smaller footprint, new cocking options, and new premium arrows, it offers a significant upgrade in maneuverability and performance from past models.

The first thing you will notice about the Stealth NXT is its narrow width. At only 11.3 inches axle-to-axle uncocked, and less than 6.5 inches cocked, this crossbow offers excellent maneuverability and limb clearance. It will be a dream to shoot in confined spaces, whether from a brushy tree, a ground blind or an enclosed box stand. This offers a huge advantage by increasing hunting opportunities.

The Stealth NXT is only 33.6 inches long, and weighing only 7.3 pounds, is relatively light for a crossbow. Its 13.5-inch power stroke propels arrows at speeds up to 410 feet per second. All of this with less than one-third of the noise of most other crossbows. The fact that it is so quiet will be key when shooting at jumpy animals like whitetails — and will help to offer additional shot opportuni-

ties if needed.

The Stealth NXT uses TenPoint's proven trigger design with a roller sear to reduce both creep and trigger poundage. The automatic MIM safety engages when the bow is cocked, and slides off silently to avoid spooking game. The Dry Fire Inhibitor prevents accidental dry fires.

I found the 3.5-pound trigger pull to be very easy, with very little creep. The semi-open trigger-guard design allows easy access with gloves on, while still providing protection to prevent accidental discharges. The arrow-retaining brush will not break like earlier spring-metal designs were prone to do. The machined aluminum rail and engineered optimum downward string pressure help to extend string life well beyond most other crossbows. And the dual flex limbs nearly form a circle at full draw, which helps contribute to this bow's high arrow speed.

When it comes to cocking methods, TenPoint offers several options for the Stealth NXT. The ACUdraw 50 sled uses ropes with pull handles to reduce draw weight by 50 percent. It uses a winch to crank the string back, reducing the draw weight to 5 pounds. The ACUdraw PRO also uses a crank, but it is 40-percent faster, totally silent and includes the new ACUtorq handle to eliminate the possibility of over-cranking the bow. TenPoint pioneered the bow-mounted crank cocking device, and they have perfected it over many years.

The Stealth NXT is worth a look for yourself. Its new technology and cool features will appeal to any hunter looking to up their game this year. You will be blown away by how smooth, quiet, fast and accurate this crossbow operates.

CHOOSE A PACKAGE

The Stealth NXT is offered in two configurations: the standard and elite packages. The standard package includes the TenPoint RangeMaster Pro Scope, ACUdraw or ACUdraw 50 Sled, three-arrow quiver, and three EVO-X arrows. The elite package also includes the EVO-X MARKSMAN scope and TenPoint STAG hard crossbow case.

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



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SEAFOOD BIBLE

Jerald & Glenda Horst

FORMER BIG LAKE GUIDE DISPLAYS BIG-TIME COOKING SKILLS

MARY POE SHARES TWO GREAT RECIPES

Rule No. 1 in our house is to never pass up a chance to put your feet under Mary Poe's kitchen table. Her recipes appear in three of the six *Louisiana Seafood Bible* books, and they're all great.

A speckled trout excursion

on Calcasieu Lake with her husband Jeff and son Nick was all the excuse needed to court her to cook for this column.

As usual, Poe, a still-perky, strawberry blonde, indulged us with two of her originals, and naturally, one of them was a fish recipe. The other was her family

recipe for one of our all-time favorite foods — crab cakes.

Mary and Jeff founded Big Lake Guide Service at Hebert's Landing in 1984, and she was an active guide for nearly 20 years.

"The sun and my fair skin, as well as two artificial hips, ran me off the lake," she said.

Jeff still guides every day, and he has been joined by Nick.

Although many people didn't know it, Mary has always cooked — much of her love of cooking came from her dad, Major Newlin, who enjoyed the kitchen.

Jeff says, "Her cooking is always just right. She's got a knack for putting the right amount of everything in every dish." ■



Mary Poe's crab cakes have almost no filler to hide the luscious taste of the crab meat. **INSET:** Mary's years on the water as a top-notch fishing guide overshadow her near-magical kitchen skills.

CRAB CAKES WITH AIOLI SAUCE

"The roots of this dish go back to my grandmother, Mary Newlin," Mary Poe explained. "She was from New Orleans, so she used Italian bread crumbs. My mother, Katherine Rentrop Newlin, modified it by using milk-soaked white bread instead of Italian bread crumbs.

"My dad said there was too much gunk in it, so she went to bread, then, when that didn't work, saltines. Back then, you could buy saltines already crushed.

"I don't like a lot of filling, but you have to have a binder, so I use saltines. I tried Panko, but it doesn't work inside a dish. It's better on the surface. The crackers hold the dish together, along with the eggs and the mayonnaise, but you won't notice them.

"Generally, when I eat crab cakes I want

AIOLI SAUCE PREPARATION:

Mix the ingredients together and set the mixture in the refrigerator to chill for at least 30 minutes.

CRAB CAKE PREPARATION: Serves 4.

Mix the eggs, onions, mayonnaise, Creole mustard, lemon juice, salt, black and cayenne pepper and Tabasco Sauce in a large bowl. Blend them by hand until smooth. Add 1 cup of crushed saltines and stir until the mixture is thick. Fold the crab meat in gently to keep from breaking the lumps. Place the remaining cracker crumbs in a shallow dish or plate. Form four equal-sized cakes with the crab meat mixture. Each cake will be quite loose at this point. Place

to eat crab.

"I thought that the bell pepper in her recipe overpowered the dish, so I deleted it. Mom used yellow mustard. I use Creole mustard just because I love it.

"Jeff loves this. I don't know if it's a true aioli, but it's what I call it. I usually make it with 2 pounds of crab meat, so he can have sandwiches with the crabs and sauce the next day. This is a pretty fast dish. I can whip it up in 20 minutes." ■



Mary crushes the saltine crackers by putting them in a plastic zipper bag and gently pounding them with a meat tenderizer.

each cake, one at a time, in the plate of crumbs and heap crumbs up over the edges and on the tops to put a good layer of crumbs on the cakes' surfaces. Set the cakes aside as they are breaded. Heat the oil and butter in a non-stick frying pan until the oil is hot. Fry the cakes until they are golden brown on both sides. Take extreme care to prevent breakage when turning the cake to brown the second side. Serve each cake with a dollop of aioli sauce.

TIP!

The proportions of the seven ingredients which make up Mary's aioli sauce can be varied to one's personal taste.

AIOLI SAUCE INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- Zest from 1 small lemon
- Juice from a half lemon
- 1 heaping tbsp. chopped fresh dill
- ¼ tsp garlic powder
- 4 dashes of Tabasco sauce
- 3 tsp. small capers

CRAB CAKE INGREDIENTS:

- 2 eggs, beaten
- ½ cup finely minced Vidalia onion
- 3 heaping tbsp. mayonnaise
- 1 heaping tbsp. Creole mustard
- Juice of 1 lemon
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp cayenne pepper
- ¼ tsp black pepper
- 2 big dashes of Tabasco sauce
- 2 sleeves of saltine crackers, crushed and divided
- 1 pound crab meat
- 2 tsp cooking oil or olive oil
- 2 tsp butter

FISH ALADDIN UP NEXT >



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.



FISH ALADDIN

INGREDIENTS:

- ½ cup chopped true shallots
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 2 tbsp heavy cream
- 1 pinch + a few strands of saffron
- 1 stick butter, cut into pats
- 3 tbsp lemon juice
- ½ tsp + 1 tsp salt
- 3 cups Panko bread crumbs
- ½ tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tbsp Creole seasoning
- ½ tsp paprika
- 2 large eggs
- 2 cups water
- 4 8 ounces. fish fillets
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp butter + extra pats

PREPARATION: Serves 4.

Add shallots and wine to a medium saucepan and cook over medium-high heat until the liquid reduces to 2 tablespoons. Reduce heat to low and stir in the heavy cream and the pinch of saffron. Stir in the pats of butter to melt them, one at a time. Do not allow the mixture to boil or the butter will separate. Stir in the lemon juice and ½ teaspoon of salt. Strain the sauce to remove the shallots. Shake the strainer to get all of the liquid. Add the remaining strands of saffron for color, then set the sauce aside in the pan on the lowest heat possible. If necessary, set the pan half-on and half-off the burner. Pulse the Panko, 1 teaspoon salt, garlic powder, Creole seasoning and paprika in a food processor to chop

the Panko more finely and mix the ingredients. Taste and add salt and pepper if needed, and pour the breading mixture into a plate. Whip the eggs and water to make an egg wash. Dip each fillet into the egg wash, lay it into the breading, and pat the breading onto both sides. Place 2 tablespoons of butter and olive oil in a large non-stick pan or flat stove-top griddle and heat over medium-low heat until the butter is melted. Cook 2 to 4 minutes per side or until the flesh flakes easily with a fork. Add more butter pats, as needed. Serve with the sauce on the side of the fillet to keep the crust on the fish from becoming soggy. ■

With its light but savory sauce, Fish Aladdin is an elegant dish suitable for any occasion.

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Green trees offer crappie everything they could want, from maximum cover to abundant groceries. Cinder blocks help keep the trees in place.

HOW TO CREATE EFFECTIVE CRAPPIE BRUSH PILES

By Andy Crawford

Andy Crawford

When crappie finish their spawning rituals, they head to deeper water and look for two things:

Food and cover.

Brush piles provide both, no matter what reservoir you choose to fish. And that means brush piles can be a dynamite way to ensure summertime limits.

But there's more to creating effective brush piles than just loading up some wood and dropping it into the depths.

Living the Dream Guide Service's Jerry "J.T." Thompson spends a lot of time putting clients into position to dangle baits around brush piles on Toledo Bend, and he said it's imperative to keep green cover for crappie.

"People talk about PVC trees and man-made structures, but nothing works like green trees," Thompson said. "As soon as that green hits the water, the life cycle begins. Grass shrimp come in and lay eggs on the leaves, and the crappie come in and start feeding. The shad spawn in there, and the crappie come in to feed."

And, of course, the greenery provides maximum cover for crappie when they're not gorging themselves.

"I can show you pictures (from down-scan electronics) of crappie just jammed up in those tops," Thompson said.

The first thing Thompson and fellow guides do when creating a new pile is locate premium locations.

"I like ridges that drop into deeper water," guide Lamar Peterson said.

On a recent brush pile-building foray, Peterson pinpointed several ridges in 17 to 20 feet of water immediately adjacent to 35-foot depths.

"See how it drops off sharply?" Peterson said, pointing at the contour map on his GPS unit. "I want to be right on the edge of that."

The crew cut serious trees, some as tall as 20 feet. They tied cinder blocks to the bottoms, while closed jugs tied in the limbs in the tops of the trees keep them standing tall in the water column.

"I don't like my trees laying down," Thompson said. "That's why we like tall trees: Even when they wilt, they will be 6 to 8 feet from the surface."

So why a standing tree?

"Crappie like to get in the shade, so when it's standing up they can tuck in there," Thompson said. "If it's laying down, they can't."

If a tree tops out at the surface, they simply break off the limbs. Then, it provides plenty of clearance once it wilts.

It's important to note that a brush pile is only effective until the leaves fall from the trees.

"Once the leaves are gone, it won't hold fish," Thompson said.

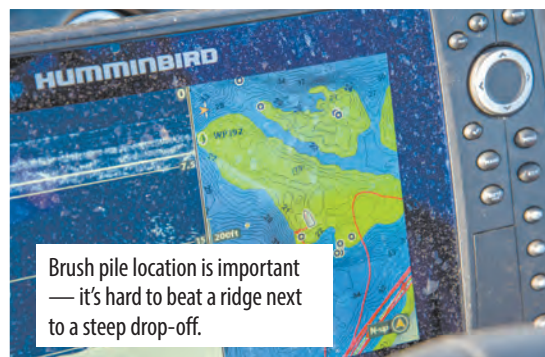
So these guides put a lot of time and effort into revitalizing their piles.

"We do this three times a week from the time the trees green out until the fall," Thompson said.

Oddly enough, he doesn't place piles around existing cover like stumps or flooded trees.

"A brush pile is a lot more effective when there's nothing else around," Thompson explained. "In fact, I've screwed up some really good stumps."

He said he believes adding brush to such natural cover changes water flow and creates something crappie don't like. So if he finds a stump or natural flooded wood on



Brush pile location is important — it's hard to beat a ridge next to a steep drop-off.

a contour, he leaves it alone and sets up brush piles elsewhere.

"Sometimes you can't do no better than what God did," Thompson said. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." ■

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TOP 3 TIPS FOR WINDY BASS FISHING

By Patrick Bonin

ELITE BASS PRO SAYS BLOWING
CONDITIONS ACTUALLY PROVIDE
OPPORTUNITIES TO CATCH

The old wind machine has been cranked up and blowing for what seems like almost all spring, and hopefully now a more typical summertime pattern will take over.

But some type of wind is pretty much a given almost every day in Louisiana, so waiting on those rare, perfect, windless days isn't much of an option if you actually want to make a trip any time soon.

Patrick Bonin

OPPOSITE PAGE: Bass pro Bernie Schultz shows off a nice bass caught in windy conditions this spring at Grosse Savanne Lodge in Cameron Parish during Shimano's "Cast Smarter" Media Conference.

Bass pro Bernie Schultz, a native of Florida, is certainly used to windy conditions, and provided a few tips to maximize your time out on the water — even when it's blowing.

During a recent stop at Grosse Savanne Lodge for a Shimano product presentation, he said the wind actually can provide you with an opportunity to catch fish — but stressed these pointers are geared to moderate breezy conditions, not gale warnings.

1. HEAD TO THE WINDIER SIDE OF THE LAKE

"Generally, wind gets things going. It stirs up the water column, gets baitfish moving and puts oxygen in the water. It's like the cycle gets accelerated, and things start happening," Schultz said. "I think a big mistake people make on a lake that has some depth is when it gets windy, they'll automatically go to the protected side — and they've taken themselves right out of the race.

"A lot of times the windier side of the lake is more active. The fish will stage in those areas looking for an opportunity. It's easier for them to ambush when baitfish are disoriented — and wave action can disorient. So don't always run to the lee side of the lake to get out of the wind.

"Let the wind be your friend — within reason — you just have to make it work for you."

2. SET UP DRIFTS WITH THE WIND

"You want to drift as much as possible and make your presentation downwind. Make the wind work for you — don't work against it. By putting the wind at your back and drifting down a shoreline or over a field of grass, you're spending more time casting and less time fighting the trolling motor.

"At that time, the trolling motor is only to correct your drift. Especially if you're fishing really shallow water, the less you use a trolling motor the better. Generally if I know where fish are on a shallow flat with grass, I'll drift through it then motor way around it to be as stealthy as possible back up to the upwind side, shut down and then drift it again. I may go over the same exact drift if it's still productive, or I may adjust the drift by moving over or zig-zagging the flat.

"The only time I'll battle the wind is if I'm working a specific target, like a duck blind or a dock or an isolated cypress tree — something that stands out that I think is holding fish."



3. KEEP THE LURE ABOVE THE FISH — AND RETRIEVE IT BRISKLY

"Make the fish come to you. They're looking into the wind. Early in my career, Rick Clunn taught me a valuable lesson: When fish are facing into the wind in clear water, you have a better chance of fooling them by bringing the lure from behind them," Schultz noted, speaking of lures with a rate of retrieve like jerkbaits, swimbaits, ChatterBaits and swim jigs. "It's over their head, and it looks like it's getting away. They have to choose right now — 'Do I bite it or do I let it go?'"

"It's kind of an ultimatum, and they have to react — and a lot of times they'll react when they normally wouldn't if it was going by really slow, when they might just ignore it or maybe move away from it.

"If a person is a lazy reeler, kind of slow with their retrieve, my recommendation is to get a higher gear-ratio reel and let the reel do the work. You can retrieve at your same rate, but you're taking in more line with each turn of the crank ..."

"A bass has incredible vision and sensory perception — they feel everything and see everything in clear water. So it's not a matter of him seeing or detecting your bait — it's how much time he has to see it, and many times in a windy situation, it's helping you. But the average angler is inclined to reel too slow. The fish is going to see the bait.

"If he can read the logo on the lure as it goes by, you're fishing too slow." ■

7 TIPS FOR MORE CASTING DISTANCE

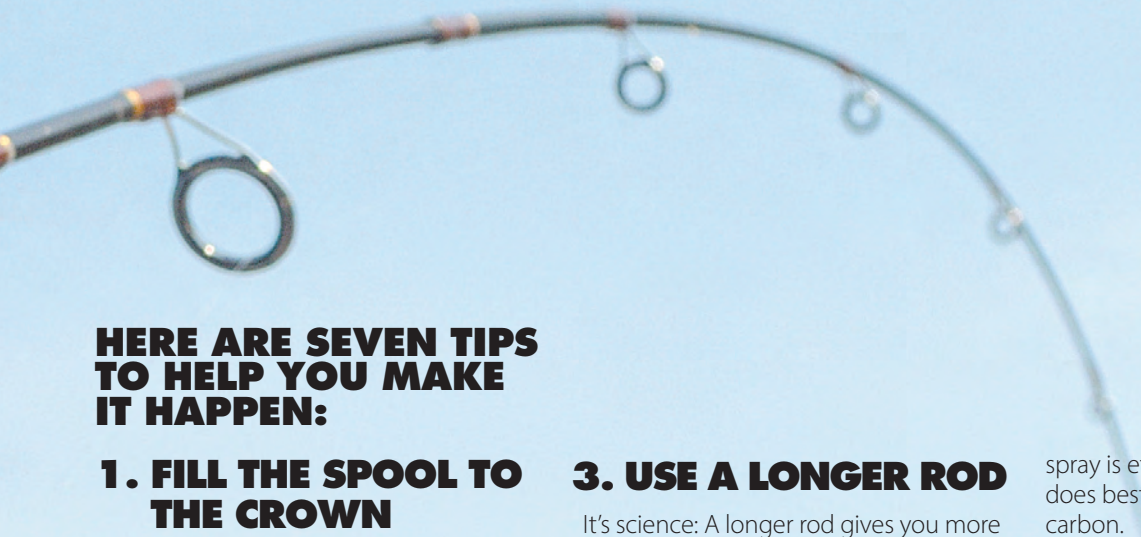
By Devin Denman

TWEAK YOUR SPINNING
RIG SETUP TO PUT MORE
FISH IN THE BOAT

Spinning tackle is the “go-to” for inshore anglers, often chosen over baitcasting tackle because of its ease-of-use, performance in strong wind and ability to chunk bait over long distances.

And like any piece of equipment, spinning tackle can be “tuned” to achieve maximum performance, resulting in longer casts and fewer wind knots.

Fine-tuning your spinning rig setup, and making sure you're using the right rod with the right-sized lure, are a couple easy steps to improve your casting distance.



HERE ARE SEVEN TIPS TO HELP YOU MAKE IT HAPPEN:

1. FILL THE SPOOL TO THE CROWN

Line peels off the spool at a 90-degree angle during the cast and, as it does, it slaps against the crown.

The crown is the lip at the top of the spool, and is normally beveled and smooth to decrease friction on the fishing line.

However, the crown gets in the way more and more as line leaves the spool.

The way to get around this is by filling the spool all the way to crown. Otherwise, a half-full spool won't cast as far because the line is constantly rubbing the crown during the cast.

The downside to this is that too much line will result in wind knots, so don't ever fill it past the crown.

2. REMOVE LINE TWIST

Twist in the line will cause it to fold on itself once freed from the spool, making it a contributor to wind knots.

Wind knots are to spinning reels what backlashes are to baitcasters, and they can ruin a good cast instantly.

Dragging a naked line from the boat, with about three-quarters of the spool out, is my favorite way to remove twist.

I have also reeled line off a manufacturer's spool through a thick book, with a C-clamp holding it shut, and onto the spinning reel. However, I don't particularly like this method because I feel it could damage the line.

3. USE A LONGER ROD

It's science: A longer rod gives you more leverage, which creates more power, and you guessed it, more distance.

4. USE THINNER-DIAMETER FISHING LINE

Thinner line is lighter and reduces the diameter of wound line on the spool on each cast, keeping a shorter distance between the surface of the wound line and the crown.

As explained earlier, this gives you an advantage of distance due to reduced friction.

5. SELECT THE RIGHT LURE, SIZE-WISE

A medium-light, extra-fast rod isn't made to chunk 1-ounce bank sinkers, and an extra-heavy, fast-action rod won't perform well with ½-ounce jigheads.

Take a look at your rod blank near the reel seat to see the specified lure weight. If you're casting outside of that performance envelope, then you're only reducing your casting distance.

6. GET YOUR LUBE ON

Break out the Reel Magic to douse the crown and rod guides to make them slippery slick.

I also give the spool a uniform squirt the night a trip to give it time to dry.

Trial and error revealed to me that silicon

spray is effective with braided line, but does best with monofilament and fluorocarbon.

7. CONSIDER DITCHING BRAID

I know this is heresy amongst many inshore anglers, but I've learned that one line isn't better than the other — they're just tools in the toolbox.

A buddy in Florida demonstrated this when he displayed his spinning combo equipped with — hold on to your seat — 12-pound fluorocarbon.

Line absolutely zinged off the spool. It seemed like the lure would never stop and, after measuring the distance, we found he was making consistent 50-plus-yard casts.

The redfish he catches are heavily pressured, making long-distance casts a must.

But I feel that if it works for him, it will work for us. My only caveat is that it could be ineffective around heavy cover. One run into heavy grass could spell doom for that line's tensile strength, ultimately costing you a fish.

CONCLUSION

It's easy to grow complacent with our tackle, especially if we're not exposed to the critique of other inshore anglers.

So take a minute to look at your spinning rig, and you may see adjustments that could improve its performance and ultimately put more fish in the boat. ■

SIMPLE HACK FOR CUTTING BRAIDED FISHING LINE

A LIGHTER DOES THE JOB QUICKLY AND CONVENIENTLY

By Devin Denman

The unique qualities of braided line make it a great “tool in the toolbox” for catching speckled trout and redfish.

It's sensitive because it has no stretch, and its superb strength allows thinner diameters, so we can pack more line onto our spools and make quality casts.

But like anything else, it does have a few issues to be aware of. . . .

CONS OF BRAID

It also saws into wood, tangles easily, digs into itself on the spool, requires backing, cuts into rod guides, slips through hook eyes and can very easily cut your hand.

All of these things can be amended in one way or another, but the most annoying aspect of braided line has got to be that it's a total pain to cut.

Thought it's not dentist-recommended, cutting monofilament or fluorocarbon only requires a sacrificial incisor — but not braid.

Gnaw all you want, and the braid will win. Even the “cutter” on standard pliers is useless. They work, but the blades eventually dull and need replacing. If not, the result is a frayed end that doesn't thread well.

Braid knots are just obnoxious — so small they sometimes stay wrapped around the hook eye where they can't be reached by cutters.

Leaving it there isn't acceptable, as few things look goofier than an eye with frayed knots on it.

A NEW SOLUTION

A bassin' trip to Toledo Bend revealed to me the most ingenious way to handle this dilemma of braided line.

See, I had made the trip with inshore fishing guide Captain Matthew Whitman, of Whitman's Guide Service (504-940-4120).

We had a blast exploring “the Bend” and learning from one another, though it was our first time fishing together.

While I struggled with a pair of pliers, I watched Matthew whip out a lighter and sizzle the braid off the hook eye, all in one swift motion.

It was so obvious — but I had somehow missed it all these years.

It's ingenious, really. All the problems with cutting braid I mentioned earlier are

learn here is not the inshore utility of a lighter, but the advantage of a good angler's network.

It's good to make fishing friends — and even better to maintain an open mind when fishing together.

I do, and as a result I get to assimilate their knowledge, becoming a better



Photo by Devin Denman

solved by a lighter that costs \$1 — not a \$30 set of pliers.

And to top it off, the line can't even fray because it's cauterized by the flame.

CONCLUSION

Using a lighter is a great tip that may help you out in a pinch, or simply make you look cool in front of your fishing buddies.

Yet I feel the most important thing to

inshore angler and putting more fish in the boat.

Tight lines, y'all. ■

Editor's Note: Devin Denman is an avid inshore fisherman who writes the Louisiana Fishing Blog. To read more of his articles, visit lafishblog.com.

TOP 3 SURF-FISHING MISTAKES

By Patrick Bonin

AVOID THESE COMMON MISSTEPS TO CATCH MORE TROUT ON THE BEACH

Plenty of speckled trout anglers are very content to stay dry and comfortable in their boats to catch yellowmouths — but for those who really want to dive in and have more of a “hand-to-hand combat experience,” nothing beats getting down and dirty with trout in the surf.

Yes, there are stingrays, and sharks might eventually steal some nice fish from your stringer. Treble hooks can definitely be a pain to deal with, unhooking undesirables is sometimes an adventure and your body might feel it a day or two after getting pounded by waves in the surf all day.

But in spite of all this, nothing beats hooking up with a nice speck on the beach with a topwater lure, and feeling the power of an angry trout in top condition that’s making a living in the surf.

So if you’ve never done it, give it a try. And if you have experienced it and are eager to go back for more, noted surf fisherman Sammy Romano shared these three common mistakes to avoid to maximize your time in the water.

1 WADING RIGHT OUT ON TOP OF THE FISH

It’s common for surf fishermen to wade right on through plenty of trout early in the morning to head out for perceived greener pastures on distant sandbars, he said.

“Proceed slowly and cautiously,” said Romano, the manager at Chag’s Sporting Goods in Metairie, La. “Make long casts. Don’t get on top of the fish, and if you feel like you are — if you start hooking fish 10 feet in front of you on the Gulf side — back up a little bit.

“Because you really don’t want to hook a fish on a short line — you want to have some room for him to play out.”

Sammy Romano holds up a nice speck caught on a recent trip to Curlew Island in the Chandeleur chain. Trout hit a variety of baits, including topwaters, suspending jerkbaits and soft plastics, but the key was being mobile and staying on the move to locate them.

2 FISHING THE TIME OF DAY — INSTEAD OF THE TIDE

If you wake up early and are in position at the crack of dawn, you’re guaranteed to get a great view of the sunrise — but not necessarily enjoy a great bite in the surf.

Romano recounted a trip to Elmer’s Island earlier this spring when he knew the tide started rolling around 9:30 a.m. — so that’s right about when he arrived.

“We got there and started catching immediately,” he said. “There was another angler who had been there since daybreak beating his brains in, and he was headed home with nothing. If he hadn’t seen us start catching and stopped, he’d have skunked. . . .

“I prefer an incoming tide, personally, but as long as you have moving water, you’re in the game. An incoming gives you clean, salty water pushing on the beach. Your bigger fish are almost always on the last hour or two of the incoming tide.”

3 USING THE WRONG ROD

Romano favors a 6-foot-8, medium heavy rod with either a fast or extra fast tip.

“You’ve got to have enough backbone. The fish in the surf are typically larger fish, and a lot of times there’s more current in the surf than inshore,” he said. “A 2-pound trout in the surf fights like a 5-pound trout in the marsh, so you don’t want to go out there with a little wimpy rod.

“Even more importantly, you have to be able to give that lure a pop. It’s when you snatch it that the fish typically strikes, and if you don’t get enough twitch on the lure — if your rod is loading up and not moving that bait violently enough — I’ve seen guys go out there with the wrong soft rod and they just can’t get the right action.” ■



Patrick Bonin

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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 2018 PrimeTimes Wall Calendar. \$12.95 (plus \$4 s&h). Know the best days, best times, and their relative strengths for all of 2018 with this information-packed, full-color, 11-inch by 17-inch, graphic peaks

-and-valleys forecaster. Includes rise and set times for the sun and moon, space to log your catches, "Timely Tips," plus fish and game symbols showing you each month's don't-miss periods. Also includes exclusive summary charts revealing the best and worst days of 2018, the year's best periods, a look ahead at 2019, and more. Comes with FREE 2018 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for \$7.95, plus \$3 s&h.

Book: "How to Know When to Go" by Rick Taylor. \$14.95 (plus \$4 s&h). 100 pages, 43 illustrations. A comprehensive look at the main factors influencing fish and game activity periods, plus how to devise an effective when-to-go game plan using any year's PrimeTimes calendars. Individual assessments of bass, panfish, deer, turkey, and more.

2018 Ultimate PrimeTimes software for PCs. \$29.95 (plus \$3 s&h, or no s&h if downloaded from web). The world's best forecaster allows you to fine-tune the peak times to your exact location, quarry, and even weather. Too many features to list here, including making your own App. For more details, please call us or visit our web site (see below).

SPECIAL PACKAGE OFFERS:

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

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

For credit/debit card orders, call toll-free **866-809-5063**.

2018 JUN	BEST DAYS				VALUE
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	
Fri 1	█	█	█	█	33
Sat 2	█	█	█	█	30
Sun 3	█	█	█	█	32
Mon 4	█	█	█	█	34
Tue 5	█	█	█	█	42
Wed 6	█	█	█	█	55
Thu 7	█	█	█	█	48
Fri 8	█	█	█	█	46
Sat 9	█	█	█	█	49
Sun 10	█	█	█	█	64
Mon 11	█	█	█	█	77
Tue 12	█	█	█	█	90
Wed 13	█	█	█	█	98
Thu 14	█	█	█	█	89
Fri 15	█	█	█	█	78
Sat 16	█	█	█	█	66
Sun 17	█	█	█	█	59
Mon 18	█	█	█	█	56
Tue 19	█	█	█	█	58
Wed 20	█	█	█	█	64
Thu 21	█	█	█	█	51
Fri 22	█	█	█	█	42
Sat 23	█	█	█	█	39
Sun 24	█	█	█	█	47
Mon 25	█	█	█	█	53
Tue 26	█	█	█	█	62
Wed 27	█	█	█	█	65
Thu 28	█	█	█	█	55
Fri 29	█	█	█	█	45
Sat 30	█	█	█	█	36
25 50 75 AVERAGE					

For more, visit primetimes2.com

LUNAR PERIODS					TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED	
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	LOW	Apogee	
11:01 pm	2:51 am - 3:53 am	8:30 am	3:16 pm - 4:18 pm	○	○	
11:44 pm	3:37 am - 4:43 am	9:21 am	4:02 pm - 5:08 pm	○	○	
Sun 3	4:23 am - 5:31 am	10:13 am	4:48 pm - 5:56 pm	○	○	
12:24 am	5:05 am - 6:23 am ☀	11:08 am	5:30 pm - 6:48 pm	○	○	
1:00 am	5:45 am - 7:13 am ☀	12:03 pm	6:10 pm - 7:38 pm	○	○	
1:34 am	6:23 am - 8:05 am	12:59 pm	6:48 pm - 8:30 pm ☀	○	○ HALF	
2:06 am	7:00 am - 8:56 am ☀	1:57 pm	7:25 pm - 9:21 pm ☀	○	○	
2:38 am	7:40 am - 9:48 am	2:56 pm	8:05 pm - 10:13 pm	○	○	
3:11 am	8:17 am - 10:43 am	3:57 pm	8:42 pm - 11:08 pm	○	○	
Sun 10	8:59 am - 11:41 am	5:01 pm	9:24 pm - 12:06 am	○	○	
4:24 am	9:42 am - 12:42 pm	6:08 pm	5:30 pm - 1:07 am	○	○	
5:07 am	10:34 am - 1:44 pm ☀	7:17 pm	10:59 pm - 2:09 am	○	○	
5:57 am	11:29 am - 2:49 pm ☀	8:25 pm	11:54 pm - Midnight	○	○ NEW	
6:53 am	12:31 pm - 3:53 pm ☀	9:31 pm	Midnight - 3:14 am	○	○ Perigee	
7:56 am	1:34 pm - 4:56 pm	10:30 pm	12:56 am - 4:18 am	○	○ HIGH	
9:04 am	2:38 pm - 5:54 pm	11:23 pm	1:59 am - 5:21 am	○	○	
10:12 am	3:43 pm - 6:45 pm		3:03 am - 6:19 am	○	○	
11:20 am	4:43 pm - 7:33 pm	12:09 am	4:08 am - 7:10 am	○	○	
12:26 pm	5:41 pm - 8:17 pm	12:49 am	5:08 am - 7:58 am ☀	○	○	
1:29 pm	6:39 pm - 8:57 pm ☀	1:26 am	6:06 am - 8:42 am ☀	○	○ HALF	
2:30 pm	7:34 pm - 9:36 pm ☀	2:00 am	7:04 am - 9:22 am	○	○ Summer	
3:30 pm	8:28 pm - 10:14 pm	2:32 am	7:59 am - 10:01 am	○	○	
4:28 pm	9:21 pm - 10:53 pm	3:06 am	8:53 am - 10:39 am	○	○	
5:26 pm	10:12 pm - 11:34 pm	3:40 am	9:46 am - 11:18 am	○	○	
6:22 pm	11:05 pm - 12:17 am	4:16 am	10:37 am - 11:59 am	○	○	
7:17 pm	11:56 pm - Midnight	4:56 am	11:30 am - 12:42 pm ☀	○	○	
8:09 pm	Midnight - 1:02 am	5:39 am	12:21 pm - 1:27 pm ☀	○	○ FULL	
8:58 pm	12:46 am - 1:48 am	6:25 am	1:11 pm - 2:13 pm ☀	○	○ LOW	
9:42 pm	1:35 am - 2:37 am	7:15 am	2:00 pm - 3:02 pm	○	○ Apogee	
10:23 pm	2:20 am - 3:28 am	8:07 am	2:45 pm - 3:53 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

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

For more information and samples of PrimeTimes products, visit our web site: www.primetimes2.com

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ALPS DOGGIE DUCK BLIND

You're pretty good at hiding yourself beside your favorite duck hole — camouflage clothing, some brush and maybe a little camouflage cloth — but that big, black, yellow or brown dog next to you is another story. He wants to see those mallards come into the decoys as much as you do, and he needs to see them splash down when you make a good shot.

So ALPS Outdoorz, which makes all kinds of great gear, has stepped in to help. The official manufacturer and licensee of Delta Waterfowl gear, it's added the Alpha Dog Blind to its 2018 product line.

The Alpha Dog Blind is very portable and collapsible; it sets up and breaks down in seconds, and it's no problem carrying on your back to and from the blind. Shaped like a tent, it proved to be plenty big enough for the 80-pound black lab that shows up on all of my waterfowl hunts, and the padded floor provided him with a nice place to wait for his workout. You can stake it down, and it has dual-swing front and rear doors for easy exit and entry. It comes in Realtree Max-5 camo and has an MSRP of \$99.

More Info: www.alpsoutdoorz.com



SHIMANO EXAGE BAITCASTING RODS

Fishermen ready to get a jump on bass this summer have a line of Shimano baitcasting rods to choose from that carry the usual Shimano quality — with a reasonable price tag.

The Exage line of casting rods includes nine models between 6-foot-10 and 7-foot-6, three of them specifically for fishing crankbaits, a popular summer weapon for anglers around the southeast. Those rods are 7-foot, 7-foot-4 and 7-foot-6. The 7-foot model is perfect for casting small- and medium-sized crankbaits, but go longer for the big, deep-diving baits that are required as bass move into deeper, summer patterns.

Exage rods are made from 30-ton carbon for light weight, sensitivity and durability, with split grips of EVA and cork. The rods are outfitted with Fuji Alconite guides.

MSRP for Shimano's Exage rods is \$99.99.

They are available at www.academy.com/shop/pdp/shimano-exage-baitcast-rod#repChildCatSku=113767081

KAHARA DIVING FROG

The Kahara Diving Frog is a great summertime bass lure, especially on waters that get choked with surface weeds this time of year. Unlike traditional hollow-body frog lures which stay on the surface full time, this one dives underwater, and even under lily pads every time the angler moves the lure. It then floats back to the surface when anglers pause their retrieve.

This lure is especially effective along the edges of weedlines and in lily pad fields that have open sections of water. It also brings in the bites when cast near woody structure like downed timber and stickups. The diving action, along with the pop and splash created by the lure diving, is sometimes all that's needed to entice a wary bass, which may pass on a topwater-only retrieve.

While the legs of many topwater frogs are short and have little movement during the lure's retrieve, the Kahara's legs are long and springy, and stretch their full length each time the angler moves the lure. The dual hooks are similar to other topwater frogs, ensuring solid hooksets.

The Kahara Diving Frog is available in eight colors and two different sizes.

More Info: www.optimumbaits.com



New product submissions can be emailed to **Mark Hilz** at markh@lasmag.com.

DAIWA J-BRAID

By Andy Crawford

Braid is perfect for flipping for bass, working corks for trout, battling shallow reds, and snatching offshore species off the rigs and wrecks — and there are a lot of options on the market. Daiwa's J-Braid offers all the advantages in a tightly weaved package at a price point that will make you smile.

J-Braid is made of the finest materials from Japan, from which eight strands of fibers are tightly woven to create a perfectly round profile. This process results in a much stronger, softer and smoother line that is more sensitive, while allowing more distance on the cast.

There are two options: x4 and x8. The former is the tightest weave, which makes it more abrasive and perfect for cutting through vegetation — which means you can wrestle fish out of grass easier.

The x8 version has less memory and is softer, so it's quieter moving through your rod's eyes.

The x4 is available up to 80-pound-test, while x8 is available up to 150-pound test.

They are available in dark green, chartreuse and multi-color formats.

One hundred sixty-five yards of x4 costs just \$10.99, and 155 yards of x8 retails for \$14.99. Filler spools also are available.

More Info: www.daiwa.com



Z-MAN TROUT EYE FINESSE JIGHEADS

By Andy Crawford

Z-Man's Trout Eye Finesse Jighead is the logical next step for a line of jigs that has offered a great fishing platform for swim baits.

This new offering features the same design and head shape as the standard Trout Eye Jigheads, but in a smaller format when finesse is needed to convince fish to bite.

These finesse jigs come with strong, 1/0 Mustard UltraPoint hooks that match well with smaller lures like Z-Man's ElaZtech baits, including the Slim SwimZ and StreakZ 3.75.

The jigheads feature oversized 3D eyes and molded keeper barbs to hold plastics securely in place.

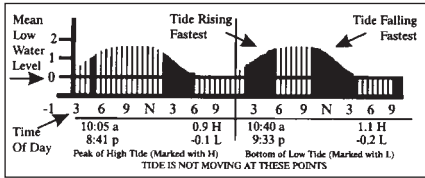
The Trout Eye Finesse Jigheads come in 1/8- and 3/16-ounce sizes with red, pearl, glow and gold eyes.

Three-packs retail for \$4.99 each.

More Info: www.zmanfishing.com

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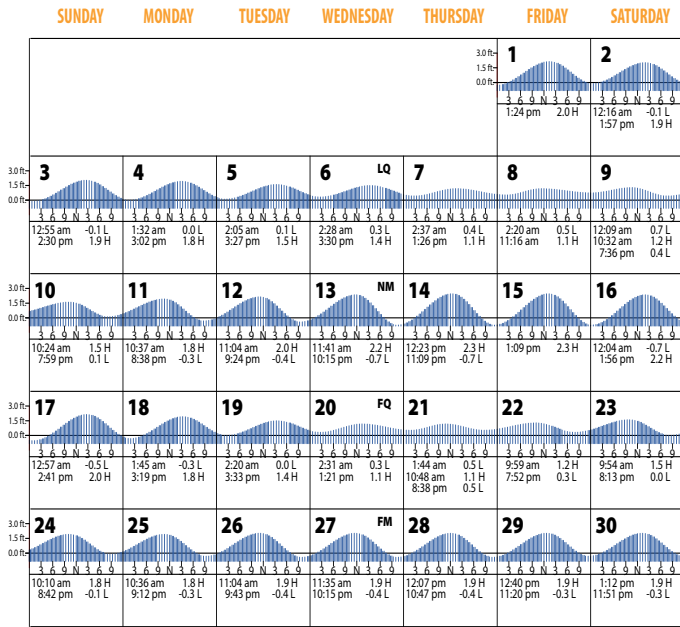


How to use the **SPORTSMAN** Tide Guide

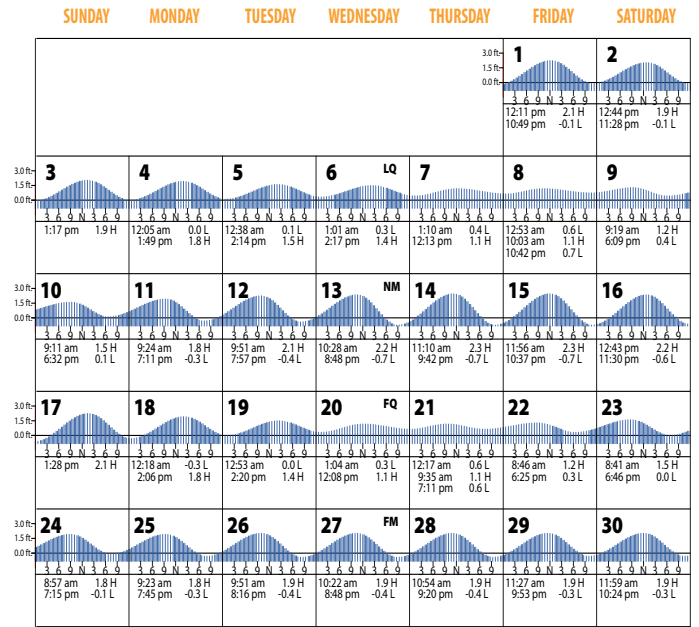
Fish feed most actively when the tide is moving. The Mississippi Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most active feeding periods each day in the TIDE GUIDE. Just fish those times indicated in black.

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

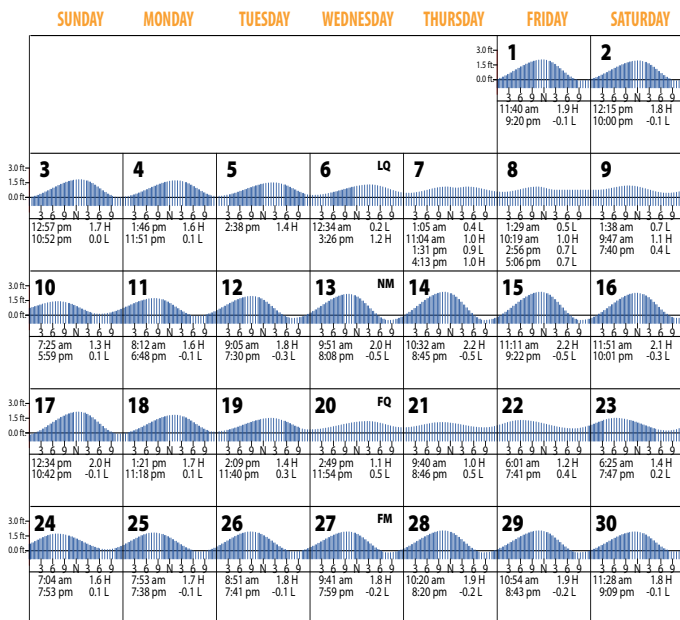
Bay St. Louis Entrance



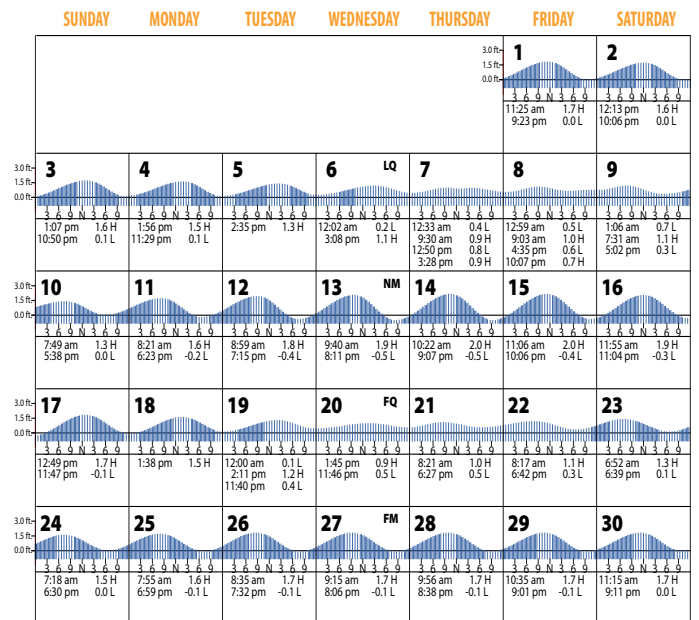
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