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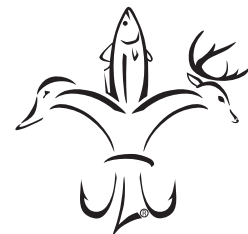
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Plenty of speckled trout call the Biloxi Marsh their summer home. Finding them is half the game; catching them is the fun half. Photo by Brian Carroll.

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Outdoor UPDATE

with
Bobby Cleveland



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

DESPITE THE HEAT, JULY HAS TREMENDOUS FISHING POTENTIAL

COAST OR INLAND, ANGLING ACTION IS HOT AS SUMMER

This month, as summer builds toward its excruciating, torrid peak, is a true test of will for Mississippi sportsmen. To be an outdoorsman in the South in July is a challenge.

Actually, leaving the air-cooled comfort of the recliner in the den and the beverage-filled refrigerator in the next room is the hard part. Finding something to do out in the heat is easy.

As you will find in this issue of *Mississippi Sportsman*, fishing opportunities abound, from the lure of the Gulf of Mexico to the rivers, lakes and streams. Our writers, including a couple of new contributors, show the way.

- Andy Douglas takes a look at five of the state's hottest small public bass lakes and explains that old proven lures and patterns are often the ticket to success.
- Saltwater writer Brian Cope heads out through the Mississippi Sound to the barrier islands and the Biloxi Marsh to solve the summer's speckled trout riddle.
- David Brown takes us to the lakes to power troll for crappie, discussing the techniques of force-feeding the fish as they summer in the deep waters of our biggest reservoirs.
- Phillip Gentry reminds us that there is no bad time for catching a mess of catfish, and in the summer, the "eating-size" cats will practically jump right into a frying pan.
- There's even a look at how small, expertly managed lakes

owned by state and federal agencies lend themselves to family fishing trips while the kids and/or grandkids are out of school.

• That's a lot of fishing for sure, but we didn't overlook our hunters. David Hawkins explains that turning predators, like coyotes, into prey can be both fun for the hunter and beneficial to other species.

So kick back, pour another glass of whatever, turn the thermostat down another degree or two, and enjoy this issue of the magazine. Then tomorrow, suck it up, and get outdoors.

Face it, deer camp is not going to get itself ready for the season, which for archers is only three months away. ■

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.

MDWFP COULD GET NEW WMA IN SOUTH DELTA

Mississippi wildlife officials are hoping they can close the deal on what could be the last chance the state has at obtaining a big block of prime, Delta hunting land for public access.

Through the Nature Conservancy, the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks could soon buy 17,000 acres of land adjacent to one of its existing wildlife management areas, Mahannah WMA, mostly in Issaquena County with some in Warren County, from its longtime owner, Anderson-Tully Lumber Company.

While the possibility of a new WMA — and what would be the second largest WMA in Mississippi — sounds great to many, it would end decades of traditions for other hunters with existing camps in the area. According to news sources, Anderson-Tully sent letters in early May to several large clubs revealing that it would be terminating leases on May 15.

The *Vicksburg Post* reported that the letters informed three clubs — Ten Point, Buck Track and Buck Bayou — that they would be given 60 days from May 15 to “remove all personally owned buildings, structures or other equipment from the property,” and that, “access to the property during the 60-day period shall be for the sole purpose of removing such personal property and for no other purpose.”

All three of the clubs are within the 17,000 acres in the proposed sale, which is inside the Chronic Wasting Disease Management Zone.

Anderson-Tully announced in March that it was selling its lumber mill in Vicksburg, but it sent letters to leaseholders, including an estimated 15 to 20 hunting clubs in the area, stating that the sale would not include the property, nor would it affect the leases. Less than two months later, the notices of termination of leases were sent.

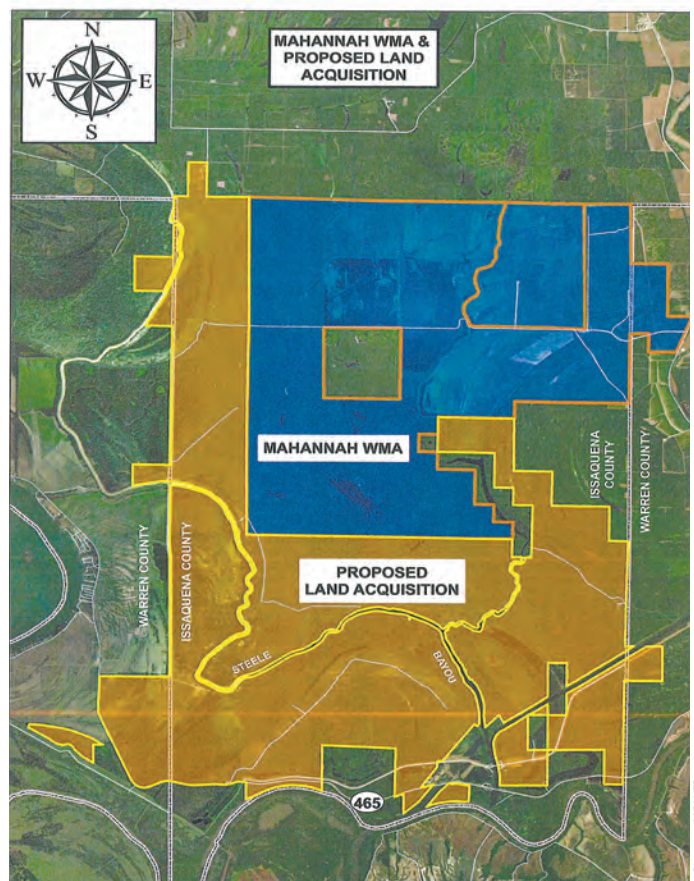
If the MDWFP does acquire the property, agency officials say it would be unlawful for it to lease the land for private hunting clubs, and it could be used only for public access hunting.

“What this acquisition would mean to the state is we will have in perpetuity 17,000 acres adjacent to an existing WMA,” Larry Castle, director of technical programs for MDWFP, told *The Clarion-Ledger*. “We will be able to manage it and provide opportunity.

“This is probably the last opportunity to acquire a contiguous tract of land of this size in the south Delta. It will be a milestone of true conservation. This will be something people will look at in the future and say, ‘Wow.’”

Castle said that a third party, the Nature Conservancy, a private conservation group with a history of helping the MDWFP acquire lands, brought the possibility of purchase to the agency. The Conservancy was instrumental in helping MDWFP purchase the land in southeast Mississippi now known as the Pascagoula WMA. The Conservancy bought 32,000 acres from the Pascagoula Hardwood Co. in the 1970s and later sold it to the state.

More recently, the Conservancy purchased approximately 2,100



acres in Green and George counties, which it later turned over to the Mississippi Forestry Commission. That tract connected the DeSoto National Forest and the Pascagoula WMA, providing the state with 450,000 acres of contiguous conserved lands. ■

NO ADDITIONAL CWD CASES CONFIRMED

In its last published announcement concerning Chronic Wasting Disease in April, the MDWFP said it has sampled more than 1,400 deer statewide, including 574 from the core CWD Management Zone in the south Delta, without finding an additional positive test.

The only deer that has tested positive was the single buck found near Steel Bayou in Issaquena County in late January CWD was confirmed and announced in early February.

Russ Walsh executive director of MDWFP’s wildlife bureau, also said that Louisiana parishes inside the 25-mile CWD Management Zone have sampled deer without a single positive test result.

That means biologists have yet to identify a core “CWD hot spot” similar to those found in other states, though considerable flooding in the 5-mile area around where the positive buck was located pushed a large percentage of deer out of that immediate vicinity. Testing will continue, and Walsh is still urging residents throughout the state to report any animals that appear sick or showing symptoms of CWD: weight loss, no appetite, insatiable thirst, walking in patterns, avoiding herds, head carried low, excessive salivation and grinding of teeth.

The ban on supplemental feeding in the six counties touched by the zone — Claiborne, Hinds, Issaquena, Sharkey, Warren and Yazoo — remains in effect. ■

[more updates...](#) ➤

SUMMER SWEAT = WINTER SUCCESS

From July 1, it's 93 days until the opening of archery deer season in most areas of Mississippi and 140 days before the opening of the gun season statewide.

Deer hunters know it takes a lot of summer sweat to create success during the season, and July is the start for many. "At some point, we will schedule a work day to visit the camp and organize a plan," said George Bennett of Jackson, a member of a club in Claiborne County. "And no, it's not a chance just to get together and grill steaks and have a few drinks, but of course, there's no rule that says we can't do that after the work when we're studying the pictures from the trail cameras."

"We'll identify the trails that need to be clipped and start on those. We'll decide where we're going to plant food plots and what seed we'll put in the ground, and in areas where there is no farming, we'll clear them of brush and put in some summer/fall plots. We might discuss where we want to leave stands, move stands or build stands and possibly start working on that."

In recent years, thanks to the increase in the use of and

dependency on trail cams, Bennett said his club waits until September to determine the final pieces of the puzzle.

"The pictures we get in the fall are more indicative of where the deer are wanting to be when the season opens," he said. "That cuts it kind of close for the archers, because we don't want to be intruding on the woods when they're getting ready. But we usually establish where they want to hunt, and we avoid those areas as much as possible. That's why it's critical that we get as much as the big-ticket

work days done in July and August. With a couple of weekends a month, with it mandatory that members make at least one a month, we generally can get it done. It's either come do the work or you pay a fine, which just means you're paying a bigger share of the food-plot budget." ■

July is the month when deer clubs in Mississippi begin the grunt work of preparing for deer season at camp work days.

Bobby Cleveland

more updates... >

PROPOSED 2018-19 DEER SEASONS

The Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks in May, proposed the 2018-19 deer seasons for Mississippi, with final approval to come at its June meeting after this issue has gone to press. Since most of the seasons are set by state statute, these are the likely dates:

Delta, Northeast, East Central and Southwest Zones

Archery: Oct. 1-Nov. 16 (archery equipment allowed during any open firearm season).

Youth: Nov. 3-Jan. 31 on private lands; on authorized state and federal lands Nov. 3-16.

Early primitive weapon: Nov. 5-16 (antlerless deer only, private lands only).

Gun with dogs: Nov. 17-Dec. 1.

Primitive weapon: Dec. 2-15 (weapon of choice allowed on private lands only).

Gun without dogs (still season): Dec. 16-Dec. 23.

Gun with dogs: Dec. 24-Jan. 16.

Archery/primitive weapon: Jan. 17-31 (weapon of choice allowed on private land; legal bucks only on open public land).

Southeast Zone

Archery: Oct. 15-Nov. 16 (archery equipment allowed during any open firearm season).

Youth: Nov. 3-Jan. 31 on private lands; on authorized state and federal lands Nov. 3-16.

Early primitive weapon: Nov. 5-16 (antlerless deer only, private lands only).

Gun, with dogs: Nov. 17-Dec. 1.

Primitive weapon: Dec. 2-15 (weapon of choice allowed on private lands only).

Gun, no dogs (still season): Dec. 16-23.

Gun, with dogs: Dec. 24-Jan. 16.

Archery/primitive weapon: Jan. 17-Feb. 15 (weapon of choice allowed on private land; legal bucks only on open public land entire season and on private lands from Feb. 1-15).

Wildlife officials are urging the public to report any deer showing obvious signs of disease, including CWD symptoms of lost weight, extreme thirst, low-carried head and odd walking patterns.



Courtesy Missouri Dept. of Conservation

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Some Mississippi WMAs will soon be open to hog trapping, according to the MDWFP.



DOOR OPENS FOR TRAPPING HOGS ON STATE'S WMAS

The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks took the first steps to legalize the trapping of feral hogs on some of its wildlife management areas when the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks approved the concept at its May meeting.

Rules, regulations and other details still must be developed before the public will be allowed to start trapping hogs, but the agency indicated it will not be a blanket opportunity to trap on every WMA.

"It will allow hog trapping as needed by permit," Russ Walsh, executive director of MDWFP's wildlife bureau, told *The Clarion-Ledger*, adding that the Commission's

approval simply opens the door to create the additional opportunity as sought by the public. "I think there's been some interest from the public in trapping wild hogs on WMAs, and trapping is efficacious in removing them. It would provide additional opportunity to use WMAs.

"We continually trap on WMAs and try to refine our methods. We are continually doing that to reduce populations, and certainly it will assist in reducing the population in addition to providing the public that opportunity."

Walsh said the agency's WMAs are certainly not immune to the spread of the hog population and the damage that

comes with the nuisance animals.

"A good number of our WMAs have hogs; there are increasing populations on some WMAs," he said. "Everybody is seeing an increase in wild hogs. It is not unique for us; that's for sure. Each WMA will have specific regs. WMAs will not automatically be open for hog trapping. We will allow hog trapping based on need."

Walsh said it was likely that the first WMAs to be open to trapping will be those that are entirely on state-owned lands, and it's likely that trapping will only be allowed outside of deer and turkey seasons due to baiting issues. ■

Hunting/Fishing **SCRAPBOOK**



Joseph Ford, 14, of Purvis, harvested this 5-pointer on Feb. 10, 2018, in Sumrall. This was his first racked buck.



Roy Koch of Covington, La., shot his first turkey on April 6, 2018, on his property in Jasper County. It had a 9½-inch beard.



Stan Wheeler of Columbus caught this lunker bass on a Zoom lizard.

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DEEP SEA FISHING RODEO STEPS UP WITH BIGGER PURSE

The 71st annual Mississippi Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo will be the longest in its storied history — six days, June 29-July 4 — at Jones Park at the Gulfport Harbor, and it will offer its biggest prize ever.

Any registered fisherman holding a new state record in either tiger shark or southern stingray at the event's ending will win \$25,000.

According to Mark Wright, a second-generation Rodeo weighmaster, that's \$5,000 more than the event has ever offered for a single fish. He said the Rodeo offered — and paid — \$20,000 for a record tiger shark in 2016 and a bull shark in 2017.

"It was very popular, and we decided to take it up a notch this year. Two local sponsors, Ronnie's Automotive and Design Precast and Pine, put up the money to cover the prize insurance policy," Wright said. "The only requirement is that fishermen must register prior to June 28 to be eligible for the tiger shark or stingray prize, and anyone entering a shark must possess an Atlantic Highly Migratory Shark Permit and Endorsement from NOAA."

Otherwise, the Rodeo will have its normal daily and overall prizes in both saltwater and freshwater divisions, as well as overall championships based on points accrued daily.

Saltwater divisions include: barracuda, black drum, blackfish (triple tail), bluefish, bonita, dolphin (Mahi-mahi), flounder, gar, gray (mangrove) snapper, grouper, jack crevalle, king mackerel, lemon fish (cobia), pompano, redfish, red snapper, shark, sheephead, Spanish mackerel, speckled trout, stingray, tuna and wahoo.

Freshwater divisions include: bream (all species), catfish, crappie, green trout (largemouth bass) and striped bass.

It costs nothing to enter and fish the rodeo, but fishermen are required to register before weighing in a fish. To qualify for the



David Rogers caught this 390-pound tiger shark in the 2016 Mississippi Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo to earn a \$20,000 prize. If he or anyone can beat this state record for tiger shark in the 71st Rodeo, it would be worth \$25,000.

Photo courtesy of David Rogers

tiger shark and stingray bounties, fishermen must register before June 28.

For more information, rules, regulations, and entry forms, visit www.mississippideepseafishingrodeo.com. ■

SHEEPSHEAD GET NEW RECREATIONAL SIZE, LIMIT

Mississippi has new recreational limits on sheepshead that took effect on May 16 after action taken by the Commission on Marine Resources.

Sheepshead, a popular and heavily pressured gamefish, now must be at least 14 inches in total length to be harvested, and the daily limit is set at 15 per day per angler.

Sheepshead are among the most striking saltwater fish in Mississippi's waters, with a white body with vivid black stripes. The coloration has led to a popular nickname "convict fish."

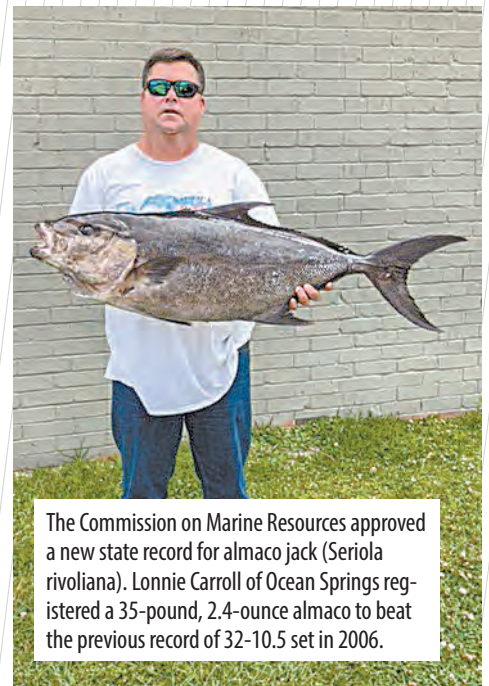
What they are is tasty, according to guide Kenny Shiyou of Bay St. Louis.

"A lot of people consider them trash fish, but when you clean them up right and get past that funny looking set of teeth they have, sheepshead are delicious," Shiyou said. "The flesh is white and flaky and is about as good as it gets."

According to Shiyou, the species has gained in popularity in recent years, perhaps because of tighter limits and restrictions on more traditional popular species.

"It's just like anything else, when one fish is more tightly controlled, you see more fishermen start fishing for another species," he said. ■

NEW JACK RECORD SET



The Commission on Marine Resources approved a new state record for almaco jack (*Seriola rivoliana*). Lonnie Carroll of Ocean Springs registered a 35-pound, 2.4-ounce almaco to beat the previous record of 32-10.5 set in 2006.

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The 2018 Louisiana Sportsman Show presented by Reed's Metals and Parish Tractor at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome in New Orleans is certain to be a hit with outdoors enthusiasts of all walks and interests. Deer hunters will be delighted to know that the Quality Deer Management Association is holding its National Convention in conjunction with the Sportsman Show. Duck hunters will be treated to a whole section of the Dome that features nothing but the newest and greatest duck boats and surface-drive motors. All outdoorsmen

should bring their wallet, because several retailers will be bringing in actual truckloads of gear to be sold at closeout prices. If that isn't enough, there is a full roster of speakers and educational seminars planned featuring some of the biggest outdoor celebrities and most accomplished hunters and anglers in the world.

Stay tuned to www.louisianasportsmanshow.com for more details as the show approaches. ■

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Even if your deer mount isn't complete, you can make arrangements with your taxidermist to bring the antlers to the contest. Besides bragging rights, there are even more reasons to enter the contest, namely a smattering of incredible prizes.

The contest again will be hosted by the Quality Deer Management Association South Louisiana Branch.

Deer may be dropped off beginning Friday but must be entered no later than 6 p.m. on Saturday. It's free to enter — just bring your unscored deer from the 2016-17 or 2017-18 seasons to the show.

Winners also be named in the following categories:

- Best Louisiana Gun
- Best Louisiana Bow
- Best Out-of-state Gun
- Best Out-of-state Bow
- Best Ladies
- Best Youth
- Best Muzzleloader/Crossbow

Your trophy doesn't have to be a state-record to win a prize, because everyone who enters the contest is eligible for the drawing; you could go home with a prize even if you enter a basket rack.

All deer will be scored by official Boone & Crockett and Pope & Young scorers. Of course, only those past the mandatory 60-day drying period will receive final scores.

Visit www.louisianasportsmanshow.com
for further details

Bucks entered in any previous Louisiana Sportsman Big Buck Contest are not eligible to win the contest but are eligible for prize drawings.

Bucks killed before the 2016-17 hunting season can be entered for scoring, but are not eligible for contest prizes. All entries will be displayed on the Big Buck Contest wall until the winners are announced July 22.

For complete Big Buck Contest rules, visit www.louisianasportsmanshow.com. ■

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KID'S ZONE

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INDUSTRY CELEBRITIES ABOUND AT THE QDMA National CONVENTION



A laundry list of experts that reads like a who's-who of personalities in the outdoor world will be at the QDMA's National Convention, with several attending the Sportsman Show in the Dome as well. Celebrities will be on hand for meet-and-greets and some of the most accomplished hunters and anglers will be giving seminars throughout the day. In live and online auctions, there will be lots of fantastic prizes, including a five-day all-inclusive Nebraska muzzle-loader hunt with Cuz Strickland that will be filmed for Mossy Oak's "Hunting the Country" TV show. Check out the QDMA Convention app for more details on the

online auction. This edition of the National Convention will feature more educational opportunities than ever before. Topics from the best supplements and food-plot plants to professional rattling and calling tactics are all on the roster of more than 20 seminars. At the Sportsman Show, a special must-see panel discussion on aging deer on the hoof will be held along with seminars on food plots, a farm-to-table demonstration about processing your own deer, and understanding wind, thermals and air currents. Also, don't miss hearing from deer hunting expert, author and Louisiana Sportsman columnist Dave Moreland. ■



Cuz Strickland of Mossy Oak



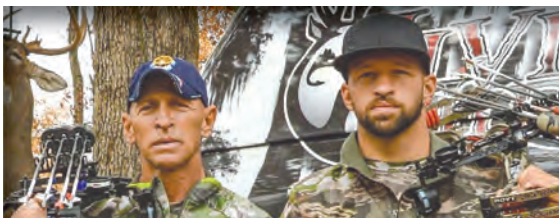
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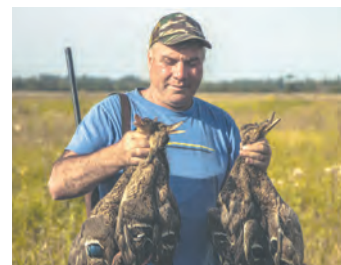
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- Big Bucks on Small Tracts
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- General Session
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- LA Expo Seminar "Bringing Families together through Archery"
- Founder's Firepot Social** (Friday Reception)

SATURDAY

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- Know Your Enemy: Latest Coyote Research
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SOLVE SUMMER'S SPECKLED RIDDLES

By Brian Cope

Brian Cope

Look for contrast when targeting Biloxi Marsh speckled trout during hot weather. They're usually somewhere near a change of some kind: current, bottom, color, depth.

Speckled trout anglers are pretty hard core about chasing yellowmouths, and while they may not think very often about oystermen when on the water, they should. That's especially true in Biloxi Marsh, where the handicraft of oystermen cultivate shellfish as well as attract untold numbers of trout. "Most of the bottom here is shallow, hard and shelly, and trout love

these areas," said Ronnie Daniels of Fisher-Man Guide Service out of Pass Christian, looking out over an area full of standing PVC poles marking oyster grounds in between the small islands that are plentiful in the marsh. After whipping a wandering bull redfish, Daniels and a client began catching what they'd come after: nice speckled trout that covered several size ranges.

>

“We catch a lot of good, eating-size trout here, but you’ve always got the chance to catch some true trophies,” Daniels said.

“Everything they want is right here; it’s just a matter of putting in the time, making the right casts and paying attention to what’s going on around a productive area. When you catch trout here, they aren’t alone. The particular area we caught them in is slightly more attractive to them than the rest of the marsh, and that could change daily — or even throughout the day.

“If could be that the water is slightly clearer; it could be that the current is more favorable or it could be that something is keeping the baitfish thick in that one small area for the time being. Good fishermen always pay attention to details and use them to their advantage.”

One of the details anglers should look for is something many folks simply don’t know about: PVC poles. They can turn a good day of fishing into a great one.

“The majority of these PVC poles are marking the boundaries between oyster grounds, but within each oyster ground, there is always one that really stands out,” he said. “It’s not in a line with the others, it often has a really distinct flag or other marker on it, and it is usually located near the center of each oyster ground. The oystermen do a lot of prep work here, and it’s always the area within their boundary that has the thickest concentration of shells. Trout love the slight change in depth and the structure created by these bigger mounds, which gives them opportunities to ambush baitfish.”

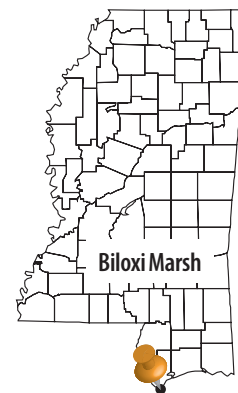
Oyster beds aren’t the only productive areas for trout in Biloxi Marsh, an area made up of too many small islands to count, helping to create numerous tide lines and current breaks. Trout love these areas, and you can catch your limit fishing here as well.

Daniels (228-323-1115) said it’s not just good anglers who notice the slightest details. The trout do, and that’s how his main speckled trout rig came about. He starts with a Matrix Shad and threads a Crappie Psychic Trout Trailer on the Matrix Shad’s hook. The Trout Trailer is a small

piece of heavily-scented soft plastic that is very thin, durable and wiggles even in the calmest of water.

“It adds smell, color and bulk to any lure you put it on, and it’s vibrating action really adds a unique action,” he said. “The Matrix Shad is vibrating in its own way, and the Trout Trailer is vibrating in a different way, so adding it definitely makes a difference. And it can help you add a color contrast if you use a different color than your Matrix Shad. That trailer is a little thing, but it makes a big impact.”

Daniels said you can fish his Matrix Shad/ Trout Trailer combos on the bottom, but he prefers to use them under popping corks, especially during the summer. He uses Odd-Ball popping corks, which he said are weighted favorably for maximum casting distance and control and allows him to use ½-ounce jigheads. If the water is more than 6 feet deep, he will change to ¼-ounce jigheads whether using a



A double handful of bragging-sized speckled trout is a distinct possibility for anglers who learn which areas of the Biloxi Marsh have the habitat needed to attract baitfish and gamefish.



Brian Cripe

LEAVE THAT REEL HANDLE ALONE

When using popping corks in the Biloxi Marsh, allowing the current to position your lure is sometimes much easier

and more effective than relying on casting accuracy alone. And just as the current carries baitfish along the edges of all the marsh islands, then crashes them into crosscurrents, eddies or slack water, it does the same with your lure and popping cork — as long as you allow it.

And because that's where the baitfish end up, so do a lot of trout.

Instead of simply making a cast to a likely looking spot, then working your popping cork directly back to the boat, anglers can cast upcurrent, then just snap their wrists as their cork rides

the tide. Instead of actively retrieving their lure back to the boat, only reel enough to keep the line tight and let the current do the rest. This lets you cover a lot of productive water quickly and keeps your lure in the strike zone longer.

Many anglers reel all the way in once the current pushes their cork even with the boat, choosing not to let the cork float downcurrent, but that's not always the best option, especially if a visible oyster mound, tide line or small creek is nearby. Allowing the current to carry your lure creates a natural-looking offering as the pop of the cork also draws attention.

It's worth noting again that Ronnie Daniels of Fisher-Man Guide Service cautions anglers not to reel too quickly after you give the cork a pop, even if it's just to reel in the slack while allowing the current to do the work. The most-effective way is to snap your wrist, creating the popping noise, allow the lure to sink to its maximum depth and then pop it again. ■

When fishing for trout with a popping cork rig, slow down your retrieve so the lure settles back down on its leader before every pop of the cork. **BELOW:** A big group of PVC pipes jammed into the bottom usually indicates oyster shell beds below — great places to find speckled trout in the Biloxi Marsh.



Brian Cope

popping cork or not.

Popping corks aren't difficult to use, so even beginners have plenty of success, but Daniels said that attention to detail is important and can make a big difference in success rates.

"A lot of people pop the cork, and then pop it again too quickly. You want to pop the cork, which brings the lure up close to the surface, and then you want to wait long enough that the lure sinks



Brian Cope

to its maximum depth before popping it again," he said. "You can reel the slack in between pops, because that's not moving the lure, but you just want to make sure you're letting that lure sink in between

pops. I cannot stress the importance of that enough."

Daniels uses Penn Spinfisher 3500 spinning reels paired with his signature series of rods made by Parker Poles. He worked with this Mississippi-based rod company for more than two years to help craft what he considers the perfect trout rod for these waters.

"It's a 7-foot-2, medium-power rod with a fast tip," he said. "It is built in a way that gives you maximum casting distance, but it also has a strong-enough — but soft-enough — hookset that helps catch trout without ripping through their soft mouths."

Daniels spools up with 30-pound braid and a leader of 30-pound monofilament. He'll go to a fluorocarbon leader during the winter but said the water clarity during summer rarely calls for it.

It's easy to wonder where to start when fishing in this vast area, which, although directly south of Biloxi, is actually in the state waters of Louisiana. But since

continued on page 30

Guide Ronnie Daniels of Pass Christian relies on a combo lure: a Matrix Shad on a jighead, with a Trout Trailer combo, preferably of different colors.

the area is loaded with specks, Daniels said anglers don't need to be too picky. He also said anglers shouldn't spend much time in a spot that isn't producing.

"There's so many trout out here and so many spots to catch them in," he said. "You don't want to waste time if you're not catching them pretty quick. Don't be shy about moving on, even if it's just a short distance. There's plenty of fish, and they are plenty hungry."

"Trout fishing is kind of a puzzle, and that puzzle can change slightly each day, but the pieces of the puzzle are pretty much the same. They like contrasts, such as contrasts in color, contrasts between current, water clarity, bottom depths and structure. Anything that is near something else that is different, no matter how subtle, is a good spot to find trout waiting to ambush baitfish, and the Biloxi Marsh is made up of such areas."

One piece of that puzzle is lure color. Daniels' top



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three for his Matrix Shad are Magneto, UV and Holy Joely, all basically white or clear with different accent colors in their flecks. Daniels has tried the Trout Trailer in every color it's made and said the best color combinations can change daily —even hourly — so he keeps plenty on hand.

The wind isn't usually as big a factor during the summer as it can be during other seasons, but when the wind does get up, Daniels said the ride from Pass Christian will be tougher than the fishing.

"You can always position your boat in a way that allows you to cast with the wind, and unless the wind is really screaming, you can usually find an island or a series of them to position your boat next to in order to minimize

the wind's impact on your fishing," he said.

While a moving tide usually plays a bigger role than time of day, Daniels said during summer, the early morning and late afternoon are usually better because of the mid-day heat.

"You'll usually get a hot bite early, then things will slack off a bit when the sun gets up high, but you can find the trout in deeper water then. Then during late afternoon, the bite picks back up all over the marsh," he said. ■



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

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CLASSIC BAITS FOR STATE-LAKE BASS

Don't go for the latest fad in lures. The old reliables will do just fine on these five smaller state-lake bass factories.

By Andy Douglas

Opportunities abound in the Magnolia State to bust a big bag of bass. Mississippi is full of time-proven lakes of the highest rank. Whether it's lily pads in a cove, stands of cypress trees, flooded, dying timber, deep creek channels, grass beds, submerged trees or fields of stumps — we have it all.

“When I think about classic Mississippi bass fishing, I’m thinking Ross Barnett,” said bass pro Brock Mosley of Collinsville. “Some people have mixed feelings about that, because it can be tough, but bass fishing anywhere in Mississippi can be tough. I like Ross Barnett though, I always have.”



LARGE LAKES AND RESERVOIRS LIKE ROSS BARNETT

draw a lot of attention, anglers and tournament fishing, and fishing them can be tough.

Fortunately, the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks operates 20 lakes across the state that offer another option for anglers to get in on some fishing that's unmatched. These intensely managed lakes cover more than 4,000 acres of water.

Take a look at five of them, and some

effective, old-school lures that will land you in the middle of some great bass fishing.

CALLING PANTHER LAKE

When bass fishing is discussed, one of the first lakes that come to mind for Magnolia State anglers is Calling Panther, which is 5 miles west of Crystal Spring in Copiah County. It has become

one of the state's hottest bass-fishing destinations. There are a lot of bass — and some ridiculous-sized bass — hiding out in the 512-acre state lake.

To grow really big bass, there must be an abundant food supply.

"The lake holds an excellent forage base, with threadfin shad, crawfish, frogs, and bluegill bream being the primary food sources," said Ryan Jones, a regional biologist for MDFWP.



Whether it's standing timber or dying timber, Mississippi has it all, with plenty of classic bass fishing available.



Mississippi has a lot of picturesque waters with plenty of classic bass fishing available. INSET: When nothing else seems to work, try time-proven soft plastics to get the big boy in the boat.

The area's topography consists of steep hills and deep hollows, which provide a lot of features to target below the surface, a tremendous amount of cover and structure for the bass to hide and hunt for food — and that includes your favorite lure. When the lake was initially filled, there was a significant amount of standing timber along with numerous deep creek channels.

Jerry Brown, MDWFP's state lakes coord-

inator, remembers when the lake first opened

"It looked like a flooded forest," he said. A time-tested lure that works well at Calling Panther is the plastic worm — like an original Mister Twister purple firetail. Rig it Texas-style, and it won't be prone to hang up in the underwater timber.

Elizabeth Moree, a pro staffer for Fishing Frenzy, said, "I like a black, Zoom Trick Worm for fishing the structure at Calling Panther; junebug (and) red also works as well. And, sometimes, I will go to a Senko."

Rig a Senko wacky style, let it fall into a channel and get ready. Top colors are classic watermelon, junebug or other natural colors.

"My favorite time to fish here is spring for big bass, but when the July weather turns hot, I will target the creek channels," Moree said.

LAKE BILL WALLER

Located in Mississippi's Coastal Region, 7 miles southeast of Columbia in Marion County, Lake Bill Waller is an old state-fishing lake that's been renovated twice.

Covering 168 acres, the lake was impounded in 1975 and blew out in the 1983 flood. It was repaired, restocked and reopened in 1985. It closed again in 2004, was renovated and opened back up in 2007.

If you like structure, Bill Waller is your lake.

"Standing timber still remains through-

out the lake, providing an enormous amount of structure for bass anglers," said Stephen Brown, an MDWFP biologist. "The ample stickups, stumps and standing timber make it fun to fish, but not for the faint of heart if you worry about dinging your fiberglass boat."

The lake has lotus, white lilies and watershield that provide pads of all sizes. In addition to standing timber, three creek channels provide some deeper edge habitat for bass throughout the summer.

Bill Waller is well known for providing anglers with a good chance at trophy bass as well as catching numbers.

"Bass fishing in south Mississippi begins to heat up in January, which is markedly earlier than in the large central and northern reservoirs of the state," Brown said. "Despite all of the obstacles presented through timber and vegetation, Lake Bill Waller produces a great bass population, providing anglers a better than average chance of landing an 8- to 10-pounder in late winter and early spring."

The water remains clear throughout the year. It becomes stained right after large rain events but clears quickly. Clarity in July will be high.

Proven lures that produce are the Heddon frog or classic chartreuse Scum Frog worked across the pads. An Uncle Josh Pork Frog, rigged as a trailer on a weedless spoon, could tempt a lunker, too. Pulling a Jitterbug or twitching a Hula Popper next to the pads works as well. Hit the standing timber with a short rod and a Mepps spinner.

SIMPSON COUNTY LAKE

Acquired from the American Legion in 1961, this lake was closed and drained for repairs in 1991. Restocked and reopened in 1993, it's well known for its quality largemouth bass.

"The water is mostly clear, but it's fertilized during growing season," said biologist Jones. "During this time, clarity typically stays above 20 inches, with a shade of green."

A healthy and diverse forage base is available for Simpson's bass: bluegill, redear sunfish, warmouth, golden shiners, frogs and crawfish, according to Jones.

The lake, aka Simpson Legion Lake, is 5 miles north of Magee; it has plenty of areas for anglers to target bass: shallow coves with numerous stumps, creek channels, points extending into mid-depths and deep water, and deep structure along the levee. Big bass are sure to be under grass beds along the margin and hanging out near the deep ledges in the main-lake area when the weather is warm.

A lure that works well — and shockingly, a lot of anglers don't have in their tackle boxes — is arguably one of the best lures of all time: the original floating Rapala.

The Rapala can be fished from the surface to the darkest of depths. It's effective as a topwater lure fished as a wake bait at slow speeds just below the surface or as a twitch bait, almost like a popper. It goes subsurface on a fast retrieve and can be fished at a steady speed, burned or presented as a jerkbait. Colors that will produce strikes at Simpson are original shad,



Lawrence County fisherman Preston Dean relies on classic lures to bring in the big bass.

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shiner, and fire tiger.

Fish the edges all the way around the lake, which should keep you busy for a while. Try the shallow coves early and in evenings when it's cooler. Be patient; there's bass of a lifetime in Simpson Lake.

LAKE JEFF DAVIS

Lake Jeff Davis has been a bass-catching honey hole since opening in 1963. The 100-acre lake was completely renovated in 2010, with Florida-strain largemouth bass used to restock the lake. The MDWFP also increased the number of bream in initial stockings to help boost the forage base for bass. Today, the main food sources for bass are bream and crawfish.

Willow trees grew in shallow areas and in coves while water levels were down during renovation. Since then, they have started dying off from being submerged. The dead trees remain under the surface and provide excellent habitat for bass.

Lake Jeff Davis provides anglers opportunities for both numbers of fish and trophies.

"(This) has been a good year at the lake for bass anglers, with several large fish being caught," Jerry Brown said. "I expect that to continue as the initial stock of bass ages."

Good places to target bass are plentiful. Several patches of grass are located along the shoreline, along with fishing pier pilings and stumps in coves. Fishing the outside edges of the willow trees in deep water is a good idea during the summer.

Fish attractors were added earlier this year. The GPS coordinates are listed at www.mdwfp.com/fishing-boating/fishing-reports/lake-jeff-davis/.

"The water is clear at times in Jeff Davis; it can be so clear that it takes long casts so the bass won't see you," said angler Preston Dean from Lawrence County. "When it's hot, I will go to a medium- or deep-diving crankbait next to the levee."

The good ol' Bomber Model A works well in Jeff Davis. It's a go-to lure for July bass. Try one that's chartreuse with a black back. Dean also fishes white spinnerbaits in deep water close to structures.

LAKE BOGUE HOMA

The largest state fishing lake, Bogue Homa, is at the top of the list as one of the best bass hot spots in the region. The fishery is thriving, and large fish are common. Anglers will find good numbers as well as fish with trophy potential.

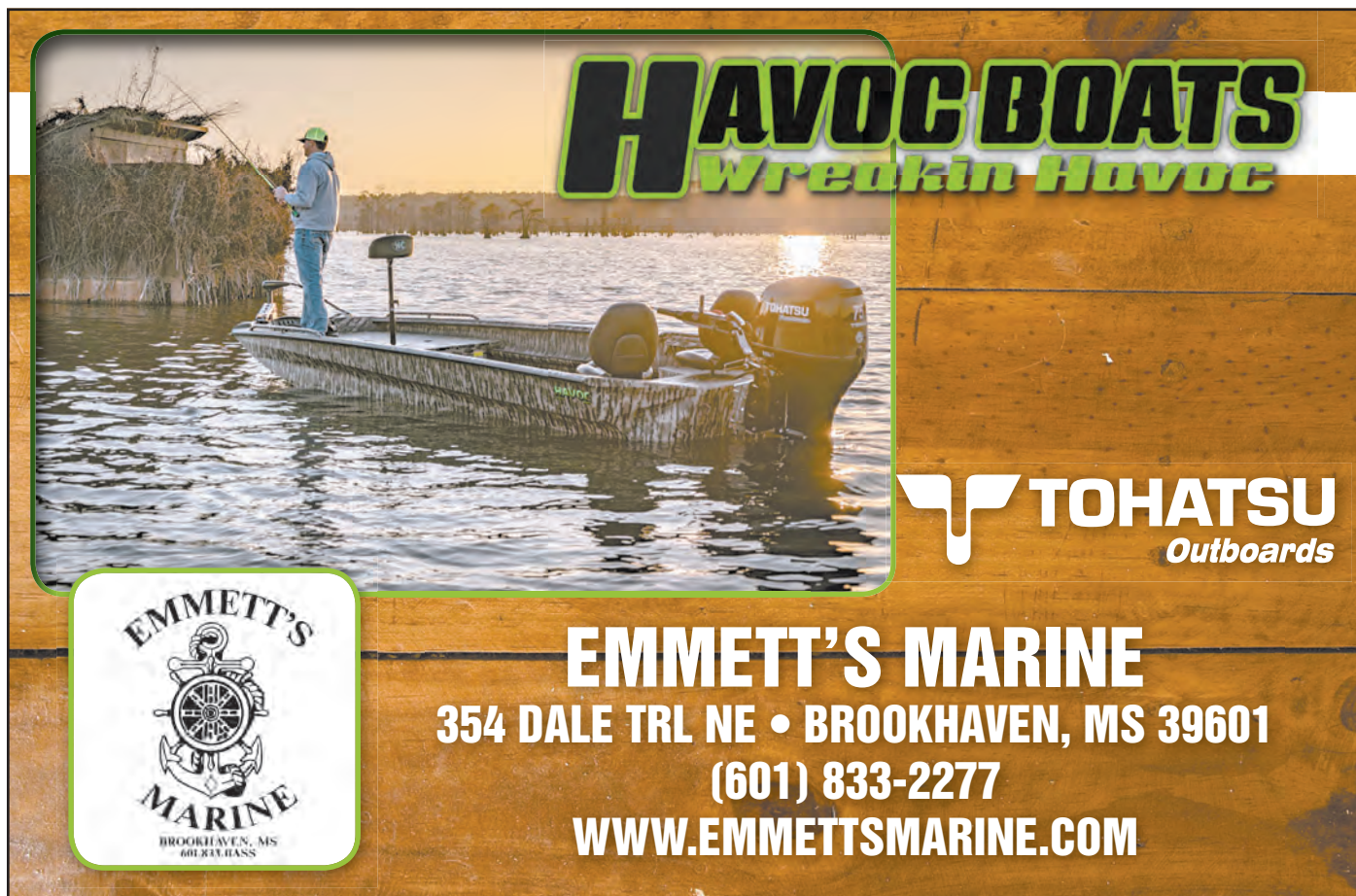
Cypress trees, knees, and stumps abound in Bogue Homa providing great bass habitat.

"It is a shallow but expansive reservoir with large flooded cypress trees in the middle to upper end of the lake. The lake contains submerged vegetation and some lotus and white water lilies," said biologist Brown.

MDWFP has reduced the amount of invasive plants to open up large areas of the northern end of the lake so some of the creek channels can be accessed.

"Since removing a large portion of the water hyacinth that was causing access problems, the water clarity has declined a bit," Brown said. "However, usually the lake is clearer in July when the rain

continues >>>



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lessens. It's a typical southern Mississippi lake, with a clear to tannic brown tint due to the pine forests in the watershed."

Cypress trees that line the upper main channel provide perfect ambush areas for largemouth. From summer into early fall, bass tend to hide on the shady side of the big trees.

Standing the test of time, the vintage Rat-L-Trap is a perfect



Nothing is more traditional than a Hula Popper lure. Many bass have felled victim to this old lure.

go-to lure for Bogue Homa.

"The shallow depth of the lake makes it perfect for lipless crankbaits," Brown said. "For a change of pace, try 8- to 10-inch plastic worms in motor oil and junebug colors fished along the gradual slopes of the channel and bounced around the cypress stumps," Brown said.

THE LAST WORD

A wealth of new lures are marketed every year, and anglers often bite on the latest-and-greatest fad. Most "new" lures aren't really new at all — just modifications to what was invented years ago. We tend to overlook or forget about the classics. Our great state flourishes with classical bass fishing waters and you will probably find all the time-honored lures needed in your tackle. ■



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

POWER UP FOR DEEP SLABS

By David A. Brown

It's true that subtle, patient presentations can prove very valuable to fishermen. We're often told that "Slow and steady wins the race."

That kind of thinking will put crappie in the cooler, but there are times when success comes from stepping on the gas.

For example, when crappie run deep during summer's swelter, anglers can up their game by ditching the creeping pace of traditional tight-line "spider-rigging" in favor of a more aggressive tactic called "power trolling." It combines stouter tackle with faster speeds to produce a go-get-'em technique that can turn the dog days into a howling good time.

KEEP IT CLOSE

UP NEXT 

Power trolling can put baits in places where summer crappie live; learn how to rig your baits for this productive technique.



David A. Brown



KEEP IT CLOSE

For perspective, crappie pro Les Smith of Senatobia compares power trolling to long-lining, another popular technique for presenting a spread of baits at a brisk pace. But power trolling, he said, allows him greater control and precision.

“If you think about long-liners, they’re basically using the same fishing technique we are; they’re just doing it behind the boat and away from the boat,” Smith said. “The big difference is that long-liners have to make big turns, just like crankbaiters, because they have the lines so far out behind them.

“We’re doing something similar to a long-lining technique, but we’re doing it off the front of the boat, like spider-rigging. You can see, on your graph, where your drops need to be, so you can keep all of your baits in the strike zone.”

Fishermen who power troll use rigs similar to those used by spider-riggers, with an in-line or slip sinker holding a jig or minnow rig holding vertically. Smith’s basic rig is a 4-foot piece of 10- to 12-pound clear monofilament leader coming off 15-pound main line, with a 1/8-ounce jig on a 6-inch dropper and a swivel at the end connecting the upper leader to a second leader with a 1/4-ounce jig at the bottom.

Power trolling for summer crappie involves tactics similar to long-line trolling, but it’s done from the front of the boat.

Traditional leadhead jigs work just fine, but for extra flash, and vibration, Smith likes an underspin-style head called a Fin Spin. He’ll rig the Fin Spin with curlytails, rarely using minnows.

To hold the rig vertically, Smith adds a slip sinker to the top leader before tying to the swivel. Another option is replacing the swivel and slip sinker with an in-line sinker sprouting tie-offs at both ends.

By comparison, spider riggers might use a 1/4- to 1/2-ounce sinker, while power trollers need 1 to 3 ounces. Trolling speeds are significantly different: power trolling at about .9 to 1.4 mph, compared to tight-lining at .3 to .5 mph.

“The fish will tell you, more or less, what they want,” Smith said. “Sometimes you’ll catch fish on the outside of a swing, and that tells you they want the baits faster. If it’s on the inside of a swing, they may want it slower.”

WHEN AND WHERE

Smith said power trolling is best used on bodies of water with lots of creeks and outlets — the same kinds of places you might tight line, but with a peppier pace.

“After the crappie’s spring spawn is over, those fish are moving back out and concentrating on the mouths of creeks, ledges, drop-offs, those sort of things,” Smith said.

Good examples include Mississippi’s four flood-control lakes: Sardis, Enid, Arkatabula and Grenada.

Don’t assume that all contour changes are equal in their attraction. Any prominent area might very well meet a crappie’s basic location preference, but Smith points to a key ingredient: food.

“I’m looking for great amounts of shad, because those fish are coming out and feeding up after the spawn,” he said.



David A. Brown

Following his charts, Smith said he's specifically looking for what he calls "tight contours" — areas with quick, 10- to 12-foot drops. Crappie seem to like these nearly vertical profiles, so locating them can mean hitting the jackpot.

Of course, every rule has its exception, and while sharp drops are most consistent, Smith said he also employs power trolling on an open flat.

"As summer goes on, these fish are heading for deeper water," Smith said. "We usually find them off the side of something."

While focusing on the contour variances generally ends up being his bread and butter, Smith said it's not a bad idea to slide onto an adjacent flat to take a peek around. Maybe it's a slow period; maybe you just need to break up the monotony. At any rate, diversity benefits the bottom line.

TACKLE 'UP'

UP NEXT 

Skarlis' secret to finicky deep fish: **Tadpole**

The Tadpole Diving Weight acts as a mini diving planer to get tiny crappie baits deeper in trolling situations.

When you dial in crappie holding in deeper areas but find fish in a picky mood, trolling tiny jigs, flies or stickbaits in front of them can present a challenge. Generally, letting out more line gets a lure deeper, but the longer your spread, the less control and depth accuracy you have.

Crappie and walleye pro Tommy Skarlis addresses the depth-control issue with the Offshore Tackle Tadpole Diving Weight, an oblong, powder-coated metal form that includes a narrow neck and a triangular arm that holds a sliding leader clip. A second clip affixed to the weight's upper end connects to your main line.

Skarlis suggests main line that's 2 to 4 pounds heavier than the 4- to 6-foot leader. This way, if you snag anything, you'll lose only the bait and not the Tadpole.

Noting his preference for a 1 mph trolling speed, Skarlis said he uses a No. 1 Tadpole for his crappie work. On deployment, a Tadpole runs with the leader clip positioned at the top of the arm, but on the strike, the weight pivots forward, allowing the leader clip to slide back so you fight the fish and not the diving weight. ■



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Power up for deep slabs



TACKLE 'UP'

Consider the physics of heavier weights, faster trolling speeds and the combined influence on your rods. In short, if you try and power troll with the same light, sensitive rods you use for spring spider-rigging, it'll look like you have a full house of hookups, but you'll likely miss any actual bites.

Power trolling requires a stouter stick and, about a year ago, Smith consulted with B'n'M Poles to help create the Pow-R Troll crappie pole. Built from high-density graphite, with 14-, 16- and 18-foot models available, these rods provide the balance of strength and sensitivity needed for the power trolling technique.

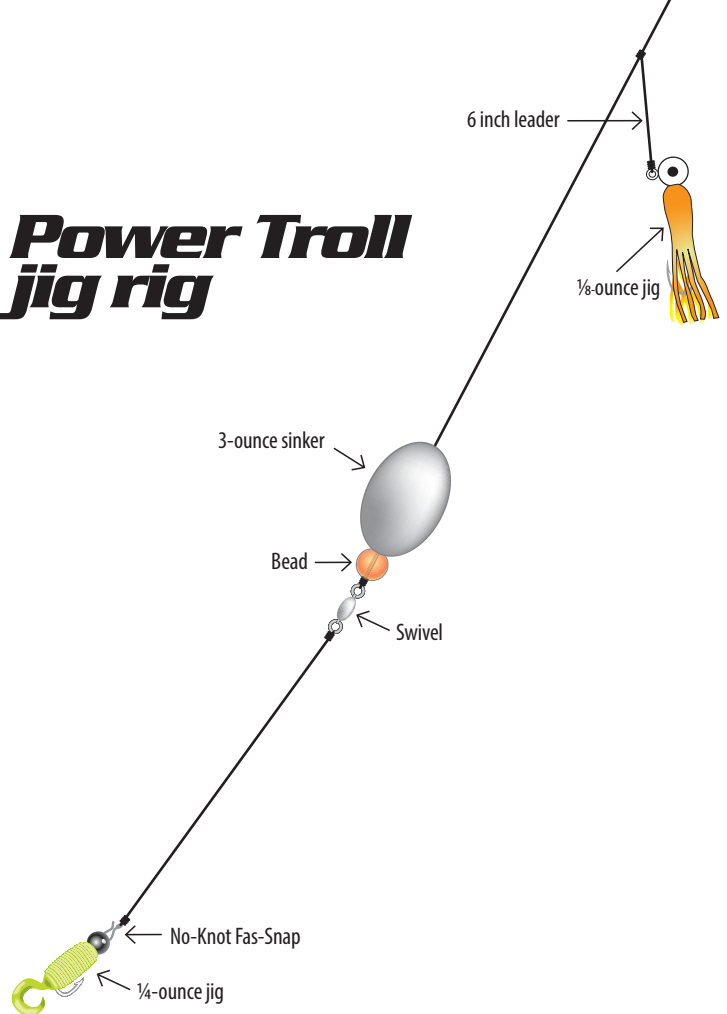
Preferring the 16-foot Pow-R Troll rods, Smith loads a B'n'M Pro 100 spinning reel with high-visibility, 15-pound Stren gold catfish line. The glowing line stands out so he has an easier time detecting the light bites.

"Even with 2 or 3 ounces of lead, this pole doesn't even (bend) until about 2 feet off the tip, so you have a really straight presentation," Smith said. "B'n'M built this pole with a really sensitive tip so you can still see your tip move with those light bites, but they have a lot of backbone to handle those bigger weights and get those fish in when you catch them." ■



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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Crappie pro Dan Dannenmueller takes his rig-building seriously, and he's seldom caught without a suitable option for a given scenario. Single rigs, doubles, lighter weights or perhaps something with a faster fall — he likes to stay prepared for whatever a lake may throw at him.

Such effort means exactly squat if he can't promptly reach the rig he needs.

In the interest of organization and access, Dannenmueller has rows of individually packed Rig Rap boxes (rigraponline.com/) snapped into quick-release trays in his boat's center tackle storage. When he's fishing, he snaps several loaded Rig Raps into custom tracks next to his rod holders. In short, he can replace a lost/damaged rig or switch out rigs or lure colors.

For more cumbersome double rigs, Dannenmueller employs Tackle Buddy rollers (www.carlsonmachineandtool.com). Wrapping rigs around this rubber core ensures neat, convenient access and quick identification of specific design.

Doug Cherry, another crappie pro, values the same preparation, but he offers an inexpensive option for do-it-yourselfers using foam pool noodles.

"I can buy them on sale for \$1 apiece and I can cut (several) rig holders out of one noodle," Cherry said.

Matching the noodle width to the appropriate tackle tray affords a customized storage system that anyone can make.

Organizational options are many, so figure out what works for you and spend less time looking and more time fishing. ■

A section of pool noodle (below) makes for a great way to wrap pre-tied rigs for storage; rigs can also be stored in individual Rig Rap boxes (right).



Photos by David A. Brown

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A photograph of a coyote standing in a field of tall grass and brush. The coyote is facing slightly to the right but looking towards the camera. The background is filled with green grass and some brown, dried stalks.

TURN PREDATORS ...

INTO PREY

Summer coyote hunting is fun for hunters, beneficial for whitetail populations.

By David Hawkins

Look well at the face of a coyote. It seemingly has on its lips a sly smile, a blatant smirk suggesting confidence that it possesses woodscraft, patience and talent superior to human hunters, and that cynical superiority carries over into its fiendish, yellowish, eyes.

A hunter will have to go back to work, stop hunting at dark or just quit out of obligation to life or love. But the coyote lives on the land and owns the day and the night.

For the time being, the song dog, is paws down, the apex predator of Mississippi's wilds.

HUNTERS KILL A FEW COYOTES EVERY YEAR, AND AUTOMOBILES PROBABLY KILL JUST AS MANY.

Each winter, a few hearty souls operate a trap line and eke out a meager wage selling coyote hides, along with a few other furbearers. They do deer hunters a great favor, but when push comes to shove, few of those hunters will stand in their corner and defend the use of leg-hold traps.

Perhaps it's time for deer hunters to know the facts, that coyotes are to deer what raccoons are to turkeys — death on four legs.

HAVOC ON FAWNS

At a recent meeting of the Mississippi Trappers Association, Chip Davis, the organization's president, told attendees that in areas of high predator concentration, up to 70 percent of fawns dropped are killed by coyotes. Davis said that during the fawning season, coyotes will kill one fawn a day to feed their pups.

July is the peak fawning time in Mississippi, a fact not lost on the opportunistic coyote. Maybe they can smell the does as they go through the birthing process; maybe nature has given them the knowledge that a single doe in July may be about to drop, kicking into gear a centuries old game of follow the doe, hang back until she has to deliver, then grab the fawn as easy pickings.

Based on a study of coyote scat — found during the summer on so many dirt roads — fawns are very high on the menu. While a coyote's diet hasn't reached the level of the feral pig, it is coming perilously close. Carrion, rodents, insects, domestic pets, fruit and berries all share equal billing. During deer season, gut piles are frequent feeding stations.

"Coyotes are opportunistic omnivores; they prey upon resources that are most prevalent and most accessible, depending upon the time of year," said Ricky Flynt, a wildlife specialist with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. "They will also scavenge on any carcasses they come across. They are extremely adaptable and can become well adapted in an urban environment.

"Coyotes rarely attack humans, as they will avoid human activity at all costs, even in urban areas. Coyotes are known to occasionally prey upon pets — particularly during the denning season when they are protective of their young — and any other animals that may come near their den site. Some of the more common prey species are cotton rats, mice and insects — and they'll eat soft mast. Coyotes get the blame for many issues with game populations by association; however, most often, issues with game animals are more closely related to habitat conditions."

CREATURES OF HABIT

Ivan Pavlov used dogs in his study of conditioned response. The Russian would feed a dog, and at the same time, ring a bell. Over time, the dog would start to salivate when he heard the

bell, even if no food was presented.

In a similar situation, coyotes have learned to associate the sound of haying equipment with free food. The mower removes the tall grasses, exposing field mice, which scurry about the field seeking cover. Some coyotes have become brave enough to follow the tractor and mower while the farmer is working just yards away.

Garath Henry of Forest, who operates a haying operation in Scott County, has seen plenty of coyotes hunting his fields in



Modern sporting rifles such as this AR-styled varmint model are popular with predator hunters.

David Hawkins

broad daylight. Much of his farm borders the Bienville National Forest.

"The first few times I witnessed the occurrence, I was surprised by the animal's brazen bravery," Henry said. "I started keeping my pistol in the cab of my tractor and have managed to kill several over the years. When baling last year, one kept climbing onto freshly rolled bales to get a better look around for fleeing rodents. It ignored me in the tractor approaching on the next windrow.

"I didn't figure I could get close enough for a shot with my pistol, so the next day, I brought my .17 HMR in the cab of my tractor. The coyote skipped a day but was back on the following day. I eased open the door to the cab of the tractor and shot it with the .17 HMR. Sure breaks up the monotony of baling hay."

Other predators may be a bit older and wiser, waiting until

SUMMER TRAPPING REGULATIONS

Mississippi law allows for the taking of nuisance animals on private property during summer; however, readers are encouraged to contact the MDWFP or visit www.mdwfp.com for specific information concerning trapping licenses and restrictions. Nuisance animals include: coyotes, feral hogs, beaver, nutria, skunks and fox. Bobcats are not considered nuisance animals.

the humans and their machines leave before moving in for the kill. Not all those are shooters. Hawks, owls and buzzards are attracted to freshly cut fields as well. Bobcats have a tendency to wait until dusk before they prowl the edges to search for easy pickings. The same thermal-imaging equipment used in hog hunting does a masterful job on these cautious cats, which can be taken only during the Oct. 1-Feb. 28 season.

“Deer hunters may find some hay producers who will allow them to deer hunt in exchange for killing coyotes,” Henry said. “Those who lose calves to coyotes every year might welcome the sharpshooters. I don’t keep cows, but I know some farmers who have lost calves to hunting packs of coyotes. I do deer hunt and loathe the thought of those yellow devils killing fawns.”

CALLING ALL COYOTES

Predator calls range from simple to sublime. A hand-held mouth call is about as basic as they come. Blow into one end, and with a little practice, it will sound like the wailing of an injured rabbit. A fawn bleat will also work, but caution: deer could show up as well and bust your setup.

Electronic calls offer a wider range of options that may include crying puppies, squalling kittens, distressed chickens, and of course, wounded rabbits and other rodents. Most electronic callers have volume controls and advanced loud speakers for a more effective range.

Turkey hunters get a shot at coyotes in the spring. Annette Orr Whatley was hunting the Bienville National Forest near Forest late in the season when a large coyote became fixated on her decoy setup and soft yelping.

“The woods were quiet and still, and I was calling about every 15 minutes trying to get a late afternoon gobbler to fire off,” Annette said. “I saw movement directly beyond my decoy and almost immediately saw the big coyote. It was so focused on my decoy, I shouldered my shotgun before he responded to my movement.

“I could have killed it, but at the expense of my new decoy. It wheeled around and was gone in a flash. I have since talked to many hunters who have had coyotes and bobcats respond to turkey calls.”

Charles Golden of Taylorsville has a place on his farm, not far from Fisher Creek, where he disposes of deer carcasses, gut piles, the remains of cleaned fish and the cleanings out of the freezer. It is within sight of his house and across a small pasture.



Trapping coyotes is legal on private land across Mississippi during the summer.

Justin Rogers

“More often than not, buzzards find it first, but other critters, including coyotes, know the place is there,” Golden said. “I put up a trail camera there one day in the fall after killing a deer. After skinning and gutting the deer I took the hide and guts out to dump them. Coyotes were on the pile within an hour. I keep a .243 handy at the back door for just such occasions.”

EVEN ON THE GULF COAST

Dr. W.M. Hawkins of Gautier lives within sight of the Gulf of Mexico, in a suburban setting. A wildlife enthusiast, Hawkins suspected animals were coming into his yard at night, searching for scraps and morsels of food. Knowing raccoons had been coming to cat food that was outside, he put a trail camera near a large live oak and baited the location. Much to his surprise, a coyote showed up several nights in a row, looking for a handout.

continues >>>

An electronic caller playing a distressed rabbit call lured this song dog into a hayfield where the author shot him with a .223. **INSET:** Coyotes easily adapt in urban and suburban areas, such as this one caught on camera near the Mississippi Gulf Coast in Gautier. Fruit and vegetables had been placed at the backyard site to attract raccoons to the trail camera.

“There is a lot of coastline that does not have wide beaches, and I’ve seen coyote tracks there on a regular basis,” Hawkins said. “I believe the coyotes have learned that dead fish or other creatures they can eat wash up during the high tide and are deposited when the tide goes out. That may be the next place I hang a camera.”

“We are not allowed to discharge a weapon inside the city limits, and the coyotes appear to be somewhat transient. I have discovered that on the nights when I get pictures of the coyotes on my trail camera, my outside cats sleep in the live oaks in the yard.”

THE TRAPPING OPTION

Justin Rogers, owner of Bienville Outdoors, a company that specializes in trapping equipment, scents and lures, said coyotes will respond to lures year around.



David Hawkins

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“Cautious dogs will often circle a call until they can pinpoint the best approach, possibly busting the hunter’s location,” Rogers said. “But they respond more directly to a scent, using their highly sensitive olfactory system to process the scent. In summer, coyotes still travel log roads and game trails, so placing traps in these locations remains a good option for removing them from an area. Scents will bring them to the set more dependably.

“For summertime coyote trapping, there are several things to keep in mind. When at all possible, set traps in the largest amount of shade available in an area, especially areas shaded from noon until late evening. This keeps the animals from overheating and causing unnecessary suffering.”

The presence of a food source will bring coyotes to an area and keep them there. Trappers can use various scents to lure coyotes in search of food into their traps.



Rick Small

Rogers said that when choosing the type of bait and/or lures to use, stay away from tainted baits and lures with a heavy skunk undertone. These strong-tainted baits are more likely to attract non-target species, including opossums or skunks and even buzzards, and are more suited for winter conditions. Also, lures that are heavy with skunk essence have a tendency to spook summer coyote. Fresh baits and curiosity lures such as beaver castor and even sweet, fruity lures are very effective.

As a trapper, Rogers said coyote pelts are no good in summer, but removing dogs in the warmer months may give a fawn a chance to grow into adulthood. It’s important to remember the summer heat when trapping, and check traps on a daily basis. ■



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

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Family Ties

By Bobby Cleveland



Mississippi is full of small, public lakes that provide tremendous fishing for families when summer vacation arrives. Here's how to take advantage:

Bobby Cleveland

Doreen Conner was in the shade of a big pine about 30 feet from the bank of Simpson Legion Lake, with her two sons, ages 7 and 9, sitting on overturned 5-gallon buckets, fishing poles in hand.

"Larry! Larry! Son, your cork went under!" she hollered. "You got a bite!"

The youngest boy pulled back on his pole, but his orange bobber just popped

back to the surface.

"Well, you had one, son," Conner said. "You have to pay attention to your lines. We've got to have a few more fish if we're going to have enough for dinner."

The Conners were enjoying a shady May morning at the lake. She was up on a slight hill with a perfect view of the kids, "and where the breeze is hitting me head on."

They had a 50-yard stretch of the shore-

line to themselves, but the 100-acre lake between Magee and Mendenhall just off US 49 was dotted with similar groups trying their luck.

Among them were two more moms with kids, one whose husband was on active military service overseas, the other one, like Conner, a single mom hoping to get her children interested in something other than playing on electronic gadgets.

>



A grandfather was patiently fishing with two grandchildren, who seemed less interested in pulling fish from the lake than in digging in the dirt for more worms.

There were young adults on a date, several family groups and a couple of husbands and wives sharing a peaceful day, hoping it would end with enough fish to fry that night.

It did for the Conners. When little Franky was told by his mom to show off their catch, he held up a stringer of bluegill and redear that included about 15 to 20 hand-sized fish. Well, the size of a kid's hand, but large enough to make the traveling squad and be taken home.

"Hope they are as interested in helping me clean them than they are in catching them," Conners said, laughing. "Shoot, they'll be asleep by the time we hit the Jackson city limits sign."

The scene was surely repeated all across Mississippi on Memorial Day weekend, especially at state-owned lakes managed by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks or by the Pat Harrison Waterway District — small lakes ranging from less than 100 to as many as 500 acres, all a much-needed and valuable resource.

Conner put it best. "I needed a place or places to take my boys to fish, just like

my parents took me and my brothers and sisters when we were young," she said. "I know just enough about fishing, tying knots, getting tackle and baiting hooks to get by. When we moved to Jackson two years ago, I went online (www.mdwfp.com) and researched places to go and I found the state lake system and the state parks ... and that's how we got started. We've fished here a few times, Roosevelt and Lake Lincoln State Parks and that other lake down at Mize (Prentiss Walker Lake). That lake at Mize has some great bream and a lot of catfish, but this one here has been mighty good to us, too. This summer, I plan on taking time to try more of them, maybe get a cabin."

So many options

Conner will have a lot of destinations from which to choose, and that's if she just sticks with the MDWFP state lakes and parks. The Pat Harrison Waterway District system, headquartered in Hattiesburg, adds a lot more overlooked options, including cabins for extended stays. The U.S. Forest Service adds many, many more.

While fishing from a boat expands opportunities, most all of these lakes cater heavily to bank fishermen. Some have cabins, most have campgrounds

and all have pretty fair fishing.

"I live in Hattiesburg, and I've got a lot of opportunities within an hour's drive," said angler Tom Jackson. "I have a 16-foot, square-stern canoe that my son and I can fish out of with a trolling motor and paddles. That's all you need for the state lakes and the Pat Harrison lakes. We go just about every day that we can, and we have lakes that we go to for different fish.

"For bream, we go to Lake Perry at Bogalusa or Black Creek Water Park at Lumberton. For crappie, we go to Flint Creek Water Park at Wiggins, and for bass, we like Bogue Homa at Laurel, Bill Waller at Columbia and Simpson Legion at Magee. For catfish weekends, we book a cabin at Johnson State Park south of Hattiesburg and have a hard time loading the ice chests back in the truck — they're so full."

Jackson has raised his son fishing that

Plenty of parents and grandparents take youngsters fishing at state-owned reservoirs.



Bobby Cleveland

Bluegills provide plenty of summertime action for youngsters and their parents in Mississippi waters.

way, but he is facing a change.

"He's big enough now that he wants to get more on his own when we fish, so I'm looking at upgrading to two kayaks," said Jackson, whose son is 13. "He'll be driving soon, and I'm pretty sure I know he's going to fish. These small lakes have helped me raise a fisherman."

Northeast Mississippi is loaded with state lakes and parks that are worth a long drive for fishermen. John Thomas of Tupelo only has to choose a direction to travel, and he can be at a great fishing hole in a matter of minutes.

"Ever since they reopened Lamar Bruce Lake at Saltillo a couple of years ago, we've been going there regularly, and the fishing has been stupid great," he said. "My wife and I we take our grandchildren all the time to that lake, but we also go to (Elvis Presley), because we can catch so many fish that the kids don't get bored."

"One of my favorites, when a buddy and I can get away for a day, is to drive down to Davis Lake (a U.S. Forest Service lake) near Houston, just off the Natchez Trace. I caught a 10½-pound bass there two years ago — biggest I ever caught."

Thomas was sad when the lake at Trace State Park had to be closed for repairs to the dam, because the "Chinquapin fishing there was so tough to beat, big mammerjammers," he said. "I hope when they get it fixed and reopened that the chinqs (a.k.a. redear, shellcracker) come back as strong as they were. Until then, I can drive over to Tippah County Lake near Ripley. For parents and grandparents who don't have a boat but have kids that want to fish, it's perfect. The bank fishing there is outstanding. That's where the state-record chinquapin (3.3 pounds) was caught, and a little boy sitting just down from me last year caught a bluegill that had to be close to 2 pounds."

Cheap and clean up next >



Bobby Cleveland



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Pier- and bank-fishing opportunities abound on Mississippi's smaller, state-owned reservoirs.

Cheap and clean

A big attraction to fishing at the state parks, state lakes, Pat Harrison and U.S. Forest Service lakes is the cost.

At MDWFP lakes, kids under 16 fish for free. Seniors 65 and older and disabled fishermen pay \$3 daily or \$32 annually to fish from the bank, a \$5 daily fee for fishing from a boat and \$150 for an annual pass that includes every guest in the boat. Anglers ages 16 to 64 can fish daily from the bank for \$5 and from a boat for \$7, and an annual permit is \$52 to fish from the bank and \$150 from a boat that includes all guests.

At Pat Harrison, daily lake-use fees are \$5 per person, with a \$10 boat launch fee that includes owner's lake use fee. Boats rent for \$20 per day at lakes where they are available. Seniors ages 65 and over and disabled anglers can get a lifetime permit for \$250 that includes boat launch, fishing for both spouses and park entrance. The annual entry fee for all others is \$50, and the annual boat launch fee is \$100.

At U.S. Forest Service lakes — and they are greatly under-utilized — the fee is a simple \$5 per vehicle per day.

"I don't care whether you fish from a boat or the bank, those are cheap rates," Thomas said. "The main reason is that these lakes are so user friendly. The banks, especially in the best fishing areas, are clean and mown. That's important, because if my wife sees a snake on the ground, we're out of there ... and in a hurry. Our grandkids like to sit and play on the ground, and that's easy on our minds when it's so clean."

Larry Pugh, fisheries bureau chief at the MDWFP, said that when the agency thinks about enhancing lakes and piers, it's because bank fishermen are foremost in their minds.

"We create bank-fishing opportunities in several ways, from creating earthen piers when possible during renovation — and wooden piers where possible — and then placing fish attractors in close proximity where bank fishermen can reach them," said Pugh, who managed about 10 lakes when he was the Northeast Region fisheries biologist. "We manage fish, which is what people think we do, but more than that, we manage fishermen, too. We strive to create the best fishing opportunities for every person, regardless of whether they have a boat or a fish from the bank and whether they fish for bream, bass or catfish."

Rick Dillard, a U.S. Forest Service biologist who supervises management of several lakes, said his agency's goals are similar to that of the MDWFP.

"We want a safe, clean, fish-producing environment that lends itself to a quality fishing experience for any angler," he said. "We have big lakes with great facilities for that, but we also have dozens of small watershed impoundments on our national forests that are ideal for short outings for fishermen or families who are able to handle a more natural and remote style of fishing."

Mississippi's national forests offer slightly more than 6,100 total acres of water in small lakes, impoundments and oxbows that are open to fishing, as well as 650 miles of creeks and streams.

"From as small as about 5 acres to as big as 750, we've got lakes to fit any family," Dillard said.

Camping and Cabins up next >



Bobby Cleveland

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Enough keeper-sized bluegill for a fish fry is the goal of a lot of family fishing trips during the summer.

Camping and cabins

Just about all MDWFP lakes and parks offer camping, and most state parks have cabins. Some of the developed U.S. Forest Service lakes have camping areas, too, or commercial campgrounds nearby. Pat Harrison lakes have plenty of camping space, and most have cabins available.

Take this to heart: if you want to rent a cabin at any of the lakes for a fishing vacation, plan



Bobby Cleveland

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• 51.85 Acres	\$5,014/AC
• 99 Acres	\$3,787/AC
• 125 Acres	\$4,300/AC
• 127.5 Acres	\$4,200/AC
• 151 Acres	\$4,200/AC
• 200 Acres & Camp	\$1,120,000
• 209 Acres	\$3,348/AC
• 278.5 Acres	\$4,000/AC
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• 132 Acres	\$2,651/AC

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• 82 Acres	\$3,950/AC

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• 114 Acres	\$1,400/AC
• 69.5 Acres	\$2,500/AC
• 40 Acres	\$2,500/AC

JEFFERSON COUNTY

• 2260 Acres & Lodge	\$8,300,000
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JONES COUNTY

• 21 Acres	\$2,000/AC
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• 52.51 Acres	\$2,092/AC
• 335 Acres & Camp	\$653,250
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• 87.49 Acres	\$2,857/AC
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• 20 Acres	\$4,000/AC
• 17 Acres	\$4,000/AC
<i>Desoto</i>	
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<i>East Baton Rouge</i>	
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<i>East Feliciana</i>	
• 479 Acres	\$2,290,000
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<i>Sabine</i>	
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<i>Tangipahoa Parish</i>	
• 35 Acres & Home	\$389,000
<i>Webster</i>	
• 958 Acres	\$1,252/AC
• 55 Acres	\$3,400/AC
• 113 Acres	\$3,200/AC
<i>Washington</i>	
• 150 Acres	\$3,993/AC

early and make reservations; they book fast.

“That’s the ticket down here,” Jackson said. “The Pat Harrison Waterway system has great cabins at Little Black Creek Water Park, Maynor Creek Water Park and Flint Creek, and that’s just the ones we’ve used. All are air conditioned and heated, which in Mississippi is an absolute must. If you got children, or even better, grandchildren, and you can get away for a week, the cabin stays at a lake are priceless.

“You wake up every morning on the banks of a lake with your boat or canoe or whatever, already launched and waiting for you to get in and go fishing. You take a break and come in for a cool lunch, maybe a nap, and then back to fishing for the afternoon bite. Take this to the bank: a fish fry at a lake cabin with fish you caught that day or the day before is the best meal you will ever eat.”

Told what Jackson had said, Conner’s reaction was wonderful.

“Oh Lord, yes.... Oh my God, that’s exactly what I want to do with my kids this summer,” she said. “As soon as I get home, I’m going to get on the computer and start Googling these cabins



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Pat Harrison Waterway:

<http://www.phwd.net/index.html>

MDWFP: <https://www.mdwfp.com/fishing-boating/>

U.S. Forest Service:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/activity/mississippi/recreation/fishing>.

and lakes and pick one for me and the boys. These bream are going to taste good tonight at home, but I can just imagine how much fun it would be and how good it would be to fry them at the lake, eat them watching the sunset and then doing it again the next day.

"Yes sir, I'm going to look that up as soon as I get home." ■



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



Bobby Cleveland



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By Phillip Gentry

SUMMER-SIZE catfish tactics

The hottest months may not be the best time to target trophy cats, but numbers of smaller fish are available for the taking across Mississippi.



For anglers looking for a mess of eating-sized catfish, Mississippi has a lot of choices from state lakes, to rivers, to reservoirs and the mighty Mississippi.



Depending on what type of catfish angler you ask, July is either a great month to be on the water or a great time to stay home.

It's all a matter of size.

Fishermen who target trophy catfish will tell you that summer is not an ideal time, but those simply looking for a cooler full for a fish fry believe it's just the right time.

So forget the 50-pound fish and go small.

The bonus is that good, eating-size catfish are available just about anywhere you look across the Magnolia State.

Mississippi's three most common species of catfish are channels, blues and flatheads. Each has its own peculiarities that are more pronounced as the fish age, but for fish in the 2- to 5-pound range — the size that makes for the best fish fillets — all three can somewhat be grouped together and fished for in the same manner.

To help supply the main course for your summer fish fry, here's some tips on finding and catching summer catfish.

START WITH THE STATE LAKES...

According to David Berry, former state lakes coordinator for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, some of the best and most-available resources for eating-size catfish are right around the corner from most fishermen — and the MDWFP's state lakes and state park lakes are underutilized.

All of the state lakes are stocked with channel catfish and get an additional influx of eaters after the spring and summer fishing rodeos held on most lakes. Berry said the average fish isn't huge, something in the 2- to 2½-pound range, but the numbers are there.

"I could probably count on one hand the number of people who fish strictly for catfish on all our state lakes," Berry said. "It's a very underutilized fishery. Most people head for the rivers, and a lot of them are more interested in netting or trot-lining.

"As far as rod-and-reel anglers, we just don't get that many who are targeting just catfish."

...BUT THE RIVERS DO RULE

Often, the best catfish holes on south Mississippi rivers will be in the middle to lower reaches, along tree-lined banks. Fishing bank holes presents a bit of a challenge when compared to deep areas near the center of the channel. Anchoring a boat is more difficult, as surface currents will try to force the boat to the bank, while bottom currents draw baits to the side. Practice and experience with anchoring pay off, and additional

time spent insuring a good anchor position often pays off in whiskered fish.

Angler Neil Sargeant of Hattiesburg spends much of his summer fishing time on the Leaf River near New Augusta, and he has mastered anchoring skills.

"I like to anchor my johnboat upstream from a likely hole and let the current wash my baits back to the fish," said Sargeant, who swears by catalpa worms as his No. 1 catfish bait for the river. "I give each spot about 30 minutes, and if I've not gotten a bite by then, it's on to the next spot."

Albert Fortenberry of New Hebron grew up along the banks of the Pearl River in Lawrence County. He runs trot lines nearly year-round and has been doing so most of his life, enjoying the fellowship of running lines with friends, spending a weekend camping on the banks of the river, catching bait, cleaning fish and enjoying the outdoors.



“The average channel cat we’ll catch is about 3 pounds,” Fortenberry said. “Blues will average about 5 pounds, and the average (flathead) is going to run about 6 or 7 pounds. If you fish hard over a weekend, you have a good chance of seeing some decent-sized flatheads and a couple of blues that will go 8 to 10 pounds.”

Bob Crosby, who guides on the Mississippi River, focuses much of his effort on deep holes and washouts created by wing dikes near his hometown, Vicksburg. These washouts typically have plenty of deep water — anywhere from 60 to over 100 feet, depending on the river stage — and some structure inside the hole that will provide a current break to protect catfish.

“Most of the dikes come out of the water at Vicksburg at about 14 feet, but they’re all out at 12 feet,” Crosby said. “If water con-

continues >



“Splat fishing” around roosting cormorants can produce some good catfish in a short period of time. **INSET:** Fresh caught bait from the waters you are fishing, where legal, is a great way to match the hatch for catfish.



Phillip Gentry

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ditions remain steady at this level, meaning not a lot of rapid ups or downs, it's no trouble to fish the scour holes at the end of the dikes. That's where I catch the majority of my catfish."

When setting up in the Mississippi River, boat positioning is critical; your boat needs to settle close enough to reach the right areas with your baits. You must account for the direction of the current, then back off the distance of the cast plus the amount of anchor scope.

"The average dike is probably a couple hundred yards long," Crosby said. "You can anchor up on the edge of the dike, where the main current is blowing through the cut out. Catfish will hold right on the edge of the main current and the slower current. Use your graph, find the fish and anchor up on them."

While the Mississippi River is known as the land of giants, plenty of eating-size catfish are available. Crosby's advice for catching numbers is to match your bait size to the size of the fish you're targeting.

RESERVOIRS CAN PRODUCE

The flood-control lakes in northern Mississippi are often overlooked for their catfish potential because of their tremendous crappie fisheries. Whether you're talking Grenada, Arkabutla, Sardis or Enid — and even Barnett Reservoir near Jackson — catfish often take a back seat to crappie and bass.

That's just fine with David Wall, who fishes Grenada along with many other summer catfish anglers.

Wall is quick to point out that commercial catfish baits may work for some, but he'd much rather "match the hatch" by using fresh cut bait right out of the lake.

"Don't come to Grenada Lake unless you've got some shad," he said. "That's the best bet. Of course, they'll bite anything, but shad is their natural bait."

Wall said that like himself, most commercial catters on Grenada have been fishing the lake for a long time. They understand the bottom contours that catfish find to their liking, and they fish those locations. He said anglers who are unfamiliar with catfish habits on any of the reservoir lakes could do worse than just be observant for jugs and fish those areas.

A feature around the shallow areas that can attract catfish is a site where cormorants roost. The birds sit up in the trees, and their droppings fall in the water. Wall said it's like having automatic feeders for the fish. Local catfish anglers refer to it as "splat" fishing.

"I wouldn't anchor under any of the trees because of the bird droppings," he said. "But catfish hang around those long points and islands after those droppings."

Wall said it's also best to take the wind and the waves from pleasure boats into consideration when looking for catfish during summer.

"Fish the side the wind or the waves are washing on," he said.

"That mixes up the water and churns up the bottom and gets the food chain started. Catfish will always come to that side to see what there is to eat." ■

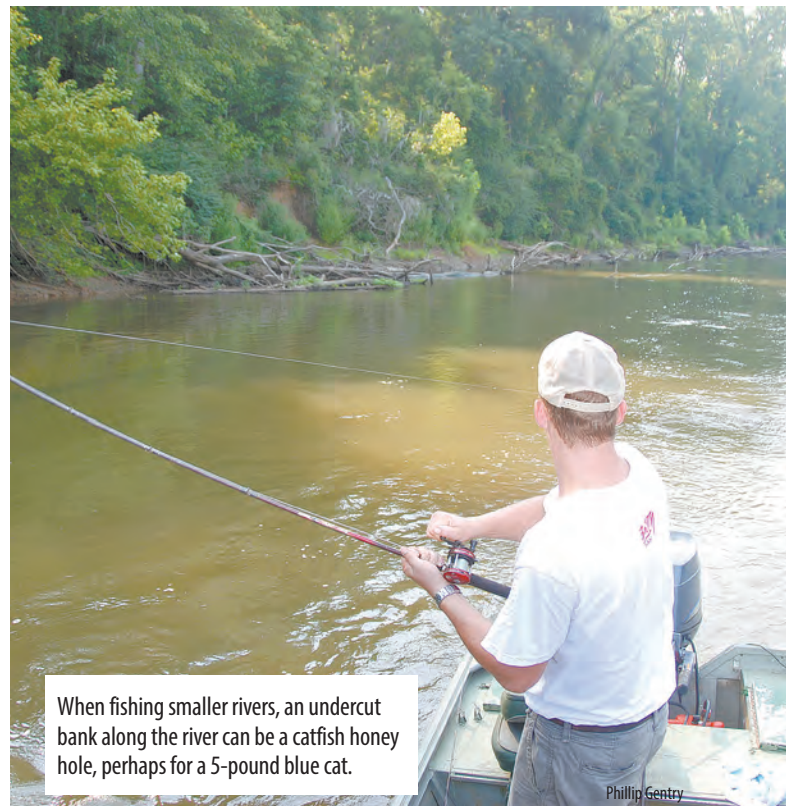


Phillip Gentry is a freelance outdoor writer and photographer who hunts and fishes for just about everything that's legal.



Mississippi's state lakes offer overlooked catfish hotspots, usually right around the corner.

Phillip Gentry



When fishing smaller rivers, an undercut bank along the river can be a catfish honey hole, perhaps for a 5-pound blue cat.

Phillip Gentry

A catfish's olfactory system, which includes many baffles in its nostrils, allows it to detect small traces of scent in large volumes of water, which makes them vulnerable to all kinds of baits.



Phillip Gentry

Choosing bait: It needs to stink

Catfish have some of the most-sensitive senses of smell in the aquatic environment, thanks to folds in tissue inside their nostrils.

The average catfish has 140 folds, also known as baffles, in their olfactory system, compared to a largemouth bass, which has as few as 13. Because of the increased surface area involved in olfactory detection, catfish can sniff out a scent at a rate of one part per billion parts of water.

So, it's good to fish with something that is odiferous.

Stinkbaits or prepared baits are hands down best for catching numbers of smaller channel cats, perhaps due to their maturing olfactory sense. However,

experts agree that if you want size over quantity, then try some form of native baitfish cut into chunks. You'll even catch bigger channel cats than by using prepared baits. For blues and flatheads, nothing beats live fish or cut fish.

Threadfin shad, gizzard shad and skipjack herring are favorites among catfish anglers, and they almost always produce. Other fish like carp, buffalo, drum or perch are popular and will catch fish. If available, start with shad or skipjack and throw some alternatives in the mix if the fish are picky. The guts of a skipjack are prime material.

Worms, especially big, juicy night crawlers, are also effective, and their use opens the door to a productive pattern.

While trolling the bottom for catfish has netted a lot of good fish through the years, veteran angler Hank Lyles believes that pulling the bait just off the bottom, right into the face of a hungry and feeding catfish, works even better.

"I hit on the idea of trolling a whole night crawler under a cork a couple of years ago," Lyles said. "You'd be surprised at how many big catfish will lay up in 3 to 4 feet of muddy water during the summer, and I mean during the middle of the day."

To combat spooking shallow-water fish, Lyles pulls a pegged

crappie float weighted with a split shot. He can set his bait about a foot off the bottom and slow-troll sandy stretches of bank where the frequent waves from boat wakes continually wash the bank. He uses a 1/0 or 2/0 hook under the rig.

The wave action is enough to call catfish into the shallows, and a great trolling run would be right along a mud line.

"I guess the waves and commotion washes a lot of worms and mussels loose," Lyles said. "The other bonus to this kind of trolling is that you wind up catching a good number of big shellcrackers that are hanging out in the same area." ■



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Fast-growing crappies need a lot of food. In Southeastern reservoirs, that food often is threadfin shad, but big crappie benefit from larger forage, like slow-growing gizzard shad.



WHY ARE CRAPPIE SO BIG IN FLOOD-CONTROL LAKES

IT'S A FORAGE THING: THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF THE RIGHT SIZE OF BAITFISH

Mississippi's flood-control reservoirs — Arkabutla, Enid, Grenada and Sardis — are regarded by many anglers as the best in the country for big white crappies.

The 5-pound, 3-ounce, world-record white crappie from below Enid Dam supports that contention. Vehicles with license plates from across the Southeast and Midwest parked at launching ramps lend further support. But crappies swim in waters throughout the United States. What's the deal with the flood-control reservoirs?

In past months, I have explained that low water levels in spring can curtail successful spawning. Loss of young crappies through the water-control structures (entrainment) during the winter and early spring — when huge volumes of water need to be released to maintain flood storage — can greatly reduce the number of crappies that survive the win-

ter. Spawning success and overwinter survival affect recruitment: the numbers of crappies available to anglers. This time, the subject is what is known and not yet known about why growth rates of flood-control reservoir crappies are among the fastest in the country.

It is an axiom of fisheries management that fast growth requires an abundant food supply, but an abundant food supply is a function of both the amount of prey and the number of crappies sharing the resource. In flood-control reservoirs, the occasional weak year-class means fewer crappies competing for food. The loss of crappies to entrainment also reduces the competition for food.

It is also true that the abundant food has to be the “right” food — readily available, easily captured and large enough to provide a net energetic gain. That means more energy gained from what is eaten than energy expended to capture and process the meal. But the forage needs

to be small enough that it can be easily captured and ingested. This might be the missing piece of the puzzle.

Keith Meals, a fisheries biologist for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks who oversees fisheries management in the flood-control reservoirs, suggests that gizzard shad provide the “right food” for the big crappies. He has sampled 3-pound crappies with 7-inch gizzard shad in their stomachs.

Biologists rarely regard gizzard shad as good crappie forage. In many lakes and reservoirs, gizzard shad grow to 8 inches in one year and 10 inches or larger in two years. These big shad are too large for most crappies, even the giants in the flood-control reservoirs. Throughout reservoirs in the Southeast, threadfin shad are often the dominant forage for crappies, because they do not grow as large as gizzard shad. But gizzard shad in the flood-control reservoirs grow slowly.

“Research has found gizzard shad in

Sardis Reservoir grow to 3.4 inches at age 1 and 6.3 inches at age 2, a size easily eaten by a big crappie,” Meals said. “That is slow growth for gizzard shad compared to many waters; and the lengths at ages 2, 3 and 4 are significantly smaller than in Bay Springs Lake on the east side of Mississippi.”

If slow-growing gizzard shad are the right forage and contribute to the fast growth of crappies, then solving the mystery of big, fast-growing crappie requires understanding why gizzard shad grow slowly.

The flood-control reservoirs are less productive than many other Southeastern reservoirs due to the low-fertility soils in their watersheds. Possibly, discharge of most of the water volume of these reservoirs also flushes out nutrients that commonly accumulate in other lakes and reservoirs with more-stable water levels. The low nutrients support minimal amounts of plankton eaten by young gizzard shad, slowing their growth. And the low water levels during fall and winter may also limit the food available to larger gizzard shad that feed on organic matter on the lake bottom. Less food for shad results in slower-growing shad.

But if the lakes have low productivity, conventional wisdom predicts low numbers of shad too, but shad recruitment is generally good in the flood-control reservoirs.

Research on Sardis and Bay Springs was designed to find out why shad recruited well at Sardis but not at Bay Springs. A major difference between the lakes was the size of zooplankton. In Bay Springs, zooplankton in spring were mostly large adults. While these big zooplankton were the right forage for larger shad, they were too big for small shad, so most small shad starved. However, zooplankton in Sardis were small in spring as water levels rose after U.S. Army Corps of Engineers rule curves — provided rainfall was sufficient — and plankton populations expanded. Small zooplankton were the right forage for shad fry and resulted in high shad recruitment. Numerous shad meant more of the right forage for crappies, but the low productivity and low abundance of food resulted in slow growth of shad. Hence, a lot of “right-size” gizzard shad.

Clearly, important questions await in answers, but waiting is not necessary to enjoy the great crappie fishing in Mississippi’s flood-control reservoirs. ■



WATER WIZARDS:

Low water levels in fall and winter may result in some weak spawns and year-classes of crappie in flood-control reservoirs, but if gizzard shad don’t grow too quickly, lower crappie numbers may help to spur strong growth rates in remaining slabs.



Hal Schramm is an avid angler and veteran fisheries biologist.

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LUNKER LINES

Paul Elias

Paul Elias has been a consistent competitive pro bass angler because he knows where to look for bass each month.



JULY: FROG TIME AT ROSS BARNETT

BASS FISHERMEN HAVE IT MADE IN THE SHADE WHEN SUMMER ARRIVES, BASS MOVE TO PADS

July is when bass in Ross Barnett go to the lily pads that are plentiful in the reservoir, which is a relatively shallow lake, holding numbers of 5- to 6-pound fish.

The baitfish and the bass most often hold in the shade of the lily pads in the hot months, waiting to ambush bait. Some of the most-exciting fishing of the year will take place then, because the bass will be feeding at the surface.

Three types of lures pay dividends at Ross Barnett this month: a walking bait like a Zara Spook with a clear belly and a shad-colored back, a black or white rubber frog and a shaky head worm. I'll have four lures tied on the four rods on my boat deck — a white frog, a black frog, a walking bait and a shaky head — ready to be fished once the bass tell me where they are and what they want to eat.

LOW-LIGHT FISHING

At first light, I'll start fishing the edges of the lily pads with a walking bait on a 6-foot-10, medium-action Shimano baitcasting rod with a Curado K 7.5:1 reel spooled with 30-pound bass braid with a 23-pound White Peacock fluorocarbon leader. Since the sun isn't up, bass don't need the shade the lily pads provide.

The biggest bass will move out of the thickest part of the lily pads and roam around the outside edge in the deeper, cooler water. You won't catch numbers of bass on this walking bait, but your odds of taking a bass 5 pounds or better are extremely good — early in the morning



Largemouth bass start to gravitate this month to lily pads on Ross Barnett Reservoir.

and late in the evening.

Because I want this topwater lure to swim close to the lily pads without getting hung up, I'll use a fast retrieve in the extremely clear water for the first hour of daylight to get a reaction strike. I don't pause the lure at all but keep it coming all the way back to the boat. If you stop the walking bait, the bass will have time to see it longer, follow it a ways and then back away from it. A fast retrieve means the bass must make a quick decision of whether or not to eat the bait.

PROBING THE PADS

My favorite lily pads to fish are those above Highway 43. I keep 7-foot-6, heavy action Shimano rods with 7.5:1 Curado K reels and 50-pound bass braid with black or white frogs tied on. I tie the line directly to the eye of the frog's hook.

If I see any movement in the pads or hear bream smacking underneath while I'm fishing a walking bait, I'll put that rod down and grab one of the frog rods, casting it to the spot. I'll use this exciting way to fish, until the last hour of daylight,

when I'll pick up the walking bait again.

Any time you fish a frog, don't expect to catch more than 50 percent of the bass that attack. If a bass doesn't eat my frog, I'll twitch the frog in the same area where I've gotten a bite earlier to resemble an injured frog. Sometimes, bass will follow the rubber frog under the lily pads and attack it just as the lure reaches the edge of the lily pads.

SCHOOL DAYS?

While you're fishing the rubber frog, you may spot bass schooling on top. Lay down that rod, pick up the walking bait and cast to that school. Once the school quits breaking the surface, put the walking bait down. Pick up the shaky head worm, which I fish on a spinning rod, and cast to the place where you've spotted the school of bass. On the spinning rod, fish with 15-pound bass braid and an 8- to 10-foot leader of 12-pound fluorocarbon. I'll tie on a 1/8-ounce jig with a 6-inch, Mann's shaky head worm in junebug to catch the most bass. ■



TOPPING OUT:

If bass school at the surface around lily pads, pick up a rod with a walking bait tied on. When they return to deep water, cast a shaky head worm into the same area.



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



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NEVER TOO EARLY FOR TRAIL CAMS



The author's son aligns a trail camera to see what's cooking in the deer woods.

A question I was asked by a deer hunter the first week of June stands out as July rolls around. He wanted to know in what stage bucks' antler growth would be, but the big question was, "Would it be worth it to put cameras up?"

My considered response was that bucks would be showing anything from "nubs to hat hooks" but in 30 days, you'll be seeing some early definition of the

bucks' racks.

In my viewpoint, as a huge proponent of the use of trail cameras pretty much year-round, there is nothing but upside when you can keep an eye on your deer herd and your hunting property during the offseason. If you are relatively new to the use of trail cameras, there is no better time than now to begin testing ideas and learning all you can. Over time, you will pick up the "where" and "how"

regarding surveiling your unique hunting property with a web of trail cams. For me, early scouting with trail cameras generates a continuous stream of photographic data from the preseason time frame right on through hunting season. My mantra is to have as many cameras out as possible, to obtain more photos rather than less, and to have them out early at as many varied locations as efficiently feasible. As the data

comes in, I comb through and analyze it, looking for new information, surprises, trends or patterns — and to just get a general idea of what exactly is going on in my deer woods.

LOCATION, LOCATION

I have on many occasions been accused of being fanatical about trail cameras, and if the accumulation and analysis of vital records — as I refer to my photo data base — fits that description, then I am guilty as charged.

The hunter/land manager should have the mindset of looking at his/her property as a field laboratory that is ripe to reveal things such as herd density and composition, age structure, adult sex ratio and fawn recruitment. Is it expensive to have and to maintain a web of cameras? Not now, as the price for quality trail cameras has dropped a great deal in recent years.

Battery life and battery replacement cost was once a big issue when D and C batteries were the norm, but with most cameras now using from eight to 12 AA batteries, greatly improved battery life and much-lower seasonal battery costs have been the result.

All hunting properties are not created equal from the standpoint of what will work to your best advantage when camera scouting. Some properties will be hilly and even rugged, while others will be flat, with agriculture fields or hardwood bottomland. Still others will be covered with plantation pines, and so forth and so on. In other words, the camera techniques that work well in one location might not work at all in another.

The obvious point here is that in order to maximize your efforts and gain your best advantage, your goal will be to obtain photos of game animals, especially whitetails. Just like the old real-estate cliché, success depends on location, location, location. Your trail camera should be where deer are concentrated for many reasons, which would include food sources — agricultural and hunter introduced — water sources, especially in a time of drought,

The most interesting trail-cam photos aren't always of bucks growing their antlers.



and travel ways and pinch points, to name a few.

DETAIL ORIENTED

The No. 1, most-obvious location for a surveillance camera is overlooking a feed station or mineral-attractant site, but this only works if supplemental feeding is allowed where you hunt. If it is, try and place any camera that overlooks a feed site close enough to be able to see detail but far enough away to be able to get the whole site in the frame. Place it high enough to be out of a deer's normal sight plane, for example, just above head height.

If you can put a camera in an elevated orientation, tilt the upper side of the camera housing at a sufficient downward angle to be face-on to the feeder. The camera can be canted slightly downward by placing a piece of a stick between the upper part of the camera and the tree trunk on which it's mounted.

The key to my success with using trail cameras over the past 10 or 12 years has revolved around effective camera placement and not the use of fancy or expensive cameras. I use basic brands and models that are economical and readily available to every hunter. ■



TRAIL CAM LOCATIONS:

- Field edges and corners
- Access points to food plots
- Supplemental feeders and mineral stations
- Heavily worn travel routes
- Pinch points and funnels
- Woods road intersections
- Active communal scrapes during the season



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, mature southern whitetail bucks is his favorite pursuit by a country mile.

STICKS AND STRINGS

Sammy Romano

Garmin's Xero Bow Sight combines a rangefinder and a bow-sighting system in one unit.



TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT THIS NEW SIGHT

GARMIN COMBINES RANGEFINDER, LASER-SIGHTING SYSTEM FOR BOWHUNTERS

Each year at the Archery Trade Association's trade show, there's usually one new product that has the most "buzz" around the show. No matter where you go, this "buzz-worthy" product enters the conversation; you can hear people talking about it as you walk up and down the aisles.

Usually, it's the hottest new compound or crossbow, but at the most-recent show, all eyes were on the new Garmin Xero Bow Sight.

This sight has features and advantages never before offered in the archery world, and many archers were quick

to take notice. Garmin has long been a magnum force in electronics and GPS technology, and now it has brought that experience to our industry.

FIRST OF ITS KIND

Garmin's Xero Bow Sight is the first bow-mounted, laser rangefinder and sighting system that measures the angle-compensated distance to the target, and then provides an exact LED sight pin for the shot. This offers several advantages over previous technology, one of which is less movement due to no longer needing to raise a rangefinder to your eye and

then lower it to draw your bow.

A typical shot scenario will go something like this: When a shot at an animal or target is presented, the archer simply squeezes the grip mounted pressure switch, which illuminates an LED ranging dot in the sight. The archer then places that dot on the animal's vitals — or the target — and releases the pressure switch. At that point, the LED will move to the correct aiming point, and the archer uses that LED as a sight pin.

There is no need to consciously choose a correct pin; the Xero sight automatically adjusts for distance. Another huge

advantage is a shorter shot time. Many times, I have ranged an animal, only to have it turn to an unfavorable shot angle while I am trying to get drawn.

Also, because there is only one pin displayed at a time, the archer's sight picture is much less cluttered. I especially appreciate this fact as I age, and multiple pins begin to blur together for me.

In the past, bow-mounted rangefinders have been extremely heavy, adding a lot of weight to the setup and drastically affecting its balance. When I first held the Xero sight, I was immediately impressed with its relatively light weight. At slightly less than 15 ounces, it is lightweight and feels great on my Mathews Halon 6. It must be calibrated to your individual bow, but setup is menu-driven and prompts you throughout the process. And brightness of the LED pins is easily adjusted to an archer's eyesight for precise, crisp aiming points that are easily visible. Within 30 minutes, this sight can be set up and sighted in out of the box on most setups. Range to target is clearly displayed at the top of the sight on an LCD screen. but it's not necessary

to read because the correct pin is automatically illuminated.

TWO MODELS

The sight comes in two models, the Xero A1 Bow Sight and the Xero A1i. Both offer the same basic functionality, but the Xero A1i offers several advanced features, including dual-color (red or green) LED pins, multiple arrow profiles and a laser-locate function. I believe the green LED pins (A1i only) will offer an advantage because it differentiates them from the initial ranging pin (which is red).

The laser locate function enables the user to "project" a waypoint to where the animal was standing at the shot, as well as where it was last seen or entered cover, and sync that with some handheld Garmin GPS units or the Garmin watch.

If there are any drawbacks to the new sight, they are cost and legality. Suggested retail for the Xero A1 is \$799.99, and the Xero A1i is \$999.99.

And although it is legal in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and the South in general, the unit is currently not legal in

every state, so check regulations where you will be hunting before purchasing one.

That being said, the simplicity, clear sight picture, quicker target ranging and shorter shot time — coupled with less movement — makes this product a game-changer, especially for spot-and-stalk hunting out West.

Stop by your local Garmin dealer and check one out for yourself. ■



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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LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman



LIVETARGET'S SCALED SARDINE TWITCHBAIT

DETAILED, REALISTIC LURE IS IRRESISTIBLE TO
MULTIPLE SALTWATER SPECIES

A veteran saltwater fishing guide out of Sarasota, Fla., has an artificial bait that looks so much like the real thing, it's irresistible to speckled trout, redfish and snook in the shallow waters he fishes along the coast.

Another professional angler and television personality, Henry Waszczuk, has the same realistic looking artificial lure in his arsenal, one blackfin tuna can't resist in the warm waters of the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico.

Both rely on LiveTarget's Scaled Sardine twitchbait. LiveTarget's floating and sus-

pending models, which hit the market in 2012, are available in 3- and 3 ½-inch versions.

Waszczuk said the artificial lure "is the most-lifelike representation of a sardine that I have ever seen ... whether they are brand new or old classics, like the sardine twitchbait, they fool fish — every time."

The North Port, Fla., outdoorsman starred as an offensive lineman in the CFL before spending his days at the office in a Boston Whaler. He is host of *Fishing the Flats TV* and *Fins & Skins Celebrity TV* series.

In April, Waszczuk and his 33-foot Boston

Whalers were 35 miles offshore from Venice, Florida, fishing in 100-foot depths.

"A group of fish that we also thought were AJs (amberjack) got active about 80 yards away, so we quickly repositioned the boat, and I grabbed a lure that has become a big confidence bait for me: a LiveTarget Sardine Twitchbait. I made a long cast out in front of the group, twitched it hard twice, and the water absolutely erupted with foam and fury," Waszczuk said.

"I rig with 40-pound braid and 50-pound fluorocarbon leader, and this fish's first run nearly spooled me ...

LiveTarget's Scaled Sardine twitchbait comes in 3- and 3 ½-inch floating or suspended models, and is available in four color variations.



During battle, I started to realize that we weren't hooked up with an amberjack. I was astonished with my first glimpse of the fish shimmering beneath the boat — indeed, we weren't wrestling with a stout AJ, but instead a monster blackfin tuna, the biggest I had ever hooked on an artificial lure."

The huge 35-pound blackfin was boated.

"A fish that old and big has seen a lot of lures in its day, and I truly believe that my sardine twitchbait was the reason I was able to seal the deal," Waszczuk said.

He won't get an argument from Geoff Page, the Sarasota-based guide who's been on LiveTarget's pro staff three years.

Page's blowups on the artificial lure come in shallower water. Speckled trout, redfish and snook eat the lifelike sardine hard plastic bait. Most of the time they hit it hard with a bite that rocks your fishing rod.

When Page uses the topwater model, he relies on a few time-proven methods.

"For the floater, you can walk the dog and V-wake it just below the surface," he said, noting it's at its best on the toughest of days.

"When the fish are real spooky in real calm conditions, it's really good," he said.

The Scaled Sardine twitchbait suspending model works 1 to 2 feet deep, Page said, and is very effective.

Occasionally, he arms his Scaled Sardine twitchbaits with an in-line single hook, replacing treble hooks with a 2/0 Owner Single Replacement Hook X Strong. He believes the hookup/catch ratio improves.

"They are getting more popular with hard baits," he said.

REALISM IS KEY

Vic Cook understands Page and Waszczuk's fondness for the Scaled Sardine twitchbait. He's proud of it, too. LiveTarget's product and development exec, who has been with the company since its inception in 2007, was the lead designer on the

vision and product development team.

"It's one of our top saltwater lures in terms of catching all kinds of saltwater gamefish, probably our best-selling topwater lure," Cook said. "It's my favorite. It's my go-to."

Both 3-inch models weigh 7/16 ounces and the 3 ½-inch floater weighs 5/8 ounces, while the suspending bait weighs 1 1/16 ounces, he said. They are available in four colors: ghost/natural, ghost/amber, silver/green and natural/metallic.

They all look and act like the real thing. Also, each has a rattle.

For more information on the Scaled Sardine twitchbait and other LiveTarget artificial lures, go to www.livetargetlures.com or call 888-231-4448. ■



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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COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver

If you haven't been outside for a while, let me warn you, the temperature is leaning heavily toward the hot side. Cool days are in the mid-80s, and hot days steam into the 90s, with humidity numbers almost as high. Still, it's comfortable most evenings to cook on your deck or patio.

A meal of fresh, tasty seafood, especially prepared outside, is the ideal summer food, and this recipe fills that bill. Shrimp are considered by many to be the tastiest crustacean, and they tend to make a good showing

during July. It's a good time to enjoy them, whether caught on your own or purchased from your favorite fishmonger, whose prices are typically pretty fair.

This is a simple and tasty way to enjoy a meal of shrimp. They've been growing for a while deep in the creeks in estuaries and are moving out into open water and heading for the ocean. This movement is a signal that it's time to

begin harvesting some of them, and shrimpers in both states happily oblige. Every shrimp boat and seafood market will have fresh-caught local shrimp just waiting for you.

As Bubba Blue so eloquently acknowledged in the movie *Forrest Gump*, there are numerous ways to enjoy shrimp. Whenever the weather allows, the ideal preparation involves being outdoors. That brings grills, smokers, campfires and more into play, and each outdoor gourmand has his or her preferred way of preparing shrimp. This one is a play on the idea of "shrimp on the barbie", but introduce the barbecue flavor to the shrimp in a unique fashion. It may not replace everyone's favorite recipe, but I'll bet anyone that tries it will prepare it again.

A word to all who prepare this is to have your favorite beverage ready before you get near the grill. Once the shrimp reach the grill, they cook quickly and it's soon time to eat. ■



MANGO BARBECUE SHRIMP

HERE'S A NEW TAKE ON "SHRIMP ON THE BARBIE"

TIP!

If you like your barbecue shrimp crunchy, pull them off the grill and finish them by broiling in the oven for about two minutes.

When hot summer days give way to cooler evenings, it's time to fire up the grill and barbecue some fresh shrimp for a tremendous meal. **INSET:** Marinate shrimp for four hours in Caribbean Mango.

MANGO BARBECUE SHRIMP

This recipe came to be from a “What if?” conversation. Everyone likes shrimp cooked on their grills, but it was time for a new flavor and a new preparation. This recipe is for the mildest version to satisfy the mildest palates. There are numerous ways to kick it up a notch, and I find the easiest is to sprinkle it lightly with powdered chipotle peppers. They have a smoky flavor that doesn’t overpower the mango marinade unless you get really heavy handed.

I begin with fresh, local shrimp, and I don’t particularly care for the largest ones, which tend to get a little chewy when cooked. Nice shrimp, like in the 21- to 25-count (per pound) size are easy to clean — they must be shelled and deveined — make a nice presentation, hold the right amount of barbecue chips to get the right flavor and remain tender when cooked. I plan this allowing a half-pound of shrimp per person.

I have done this with several mango marinades but prefer Taste of Inspirations’ Caribbean Mango. This is a Food Lion house brand and compliments its light, sweet flavor with an inexpensive price. It is pretty low in salt, and I don’t add any, but you may like a little more. I add enough coarse-ground black pepper to see a few specks, and if you would like to add ground chipotle peppers, this is the time to do it.

After marinating the shrimp, add the crushed barbecue potato chips. I was a little surprised at first, but how you add them affects the flavor. If the shrimp are rolled or dredged in the crushed chips, the barbecue flavor is a little more pronounced, but the cooked shrimp aren’t as crispy. If you are going to add the crushed chips this way, I suggest crushing them in small

amounts and storing them in Ziplock bags and using them one bag at a time. The marinade wets the chips, and they don’t bind to the shrimp as well after a while. I hold some of the ground chips in my hand and roll the individual shrimp in them, then get more chips when it becomes moist and doesn’t stick as well.

Putting the shrimp on the grill tray and sprinkling them with the crushed chips keeps them crispier, but the barbecue flavor isn’t as pronounced. It doesn’t get into the marinade and flavor the shrimp while they are cooking but is an external flavor.

This is a different take on preparing “shrimp on the barbie.” We enjoy it and think you will also. The most-difficult and time-consuming part is peeling and deveining the shrimp, but it’s worth it. Some seafood markets will do that for you if you like. After the shrimp are peeled and deveined, it’s easy sailing

One thing to remember is that all seafood dishes are best with fresh seafood, especially if caught the same day. Enjoy! ■

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 pounds shrimp
- Caribbean Mango marinade
- 1 large bag barbecue potato chips
- Grill tray
- Non-stick cooking spray
- Sea salt and coarse ground pepper
- Ground Chipotle pepper (optional).

PREPARATION:

Peel and devein shrimp. Salt and pepper to taste. Put shrimp in Ziplock bag and cover liberally with Caribbean Mango marinade. Allow to marinate in refrigerator for 4 hours.

Preheat grill to low/medium. My grill is a bit hot, and this works well on low. Put corn on grill in husks. It needs to cook 10 to 15 minutes depending on grill temperature and to be turned halfway through. Crush the potato chips finely, but not to powder. Spray the grill tray with non-stick cooking spray.

This is where you decide if you would like this with more crunch or spicier. For a spicier taste, pick up a little of the crushed potato chips and roll each shrimp in it before putting them on the grill tray. For a crunchier taste, arrange the shrimp on the grill tray and then sprinkle them with the crushed potato chips.

Cook 3 to 5 minutes, depending on grill temperature, and do not turn. Do not overcook. The little parts of the shrimp you can see will turn reddish pink when it is ready. Don’t be afraid to taste one to check how well it’s done. That’s the reward for being the cook. If you want

the crunchiest shrimp possible, this is the time to remove the not quite done shrimp from the grill and finish them for a couple of minutes under the broiler in the oven.

Serve while warm.

I serve this with grill roasted corn on the cob and creamy rough cut slaw. Some of my friends like dipping sauces. I don’t care for cocktail sauce with this, but it works with tartar sauce and sriracha sauce. For tartar sauce with a little more spice, but not the heat of sriracha sauce, mix some tartar sauce with your favorite hot sauce. ■

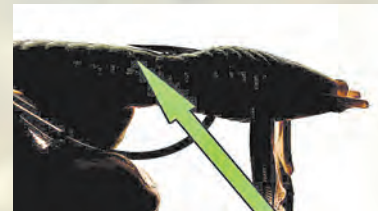


Barbecue potato chips are a key element in this shrimp recipe, and corn on the cob is a great addition.



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

The tip of this swimbait hook lies just beneath the surface of the soft plastic lure, allowing it to run through grass without getting snagged.



If you hold your lure up to the light and can see a gap between the hook point and the lure, it's not weedless and is subject to getting snagged in the grass.

HOW TO SKIN-HOOK A SOFT PLASTIC LURE

SIMPLE TIP KEEPS YOUR RIG WEEDLESS

By Devin Denman

Photos by Devin Denman

You've probably heard it before: the only constant in Louisiana is change.

Mardi Grass Pass opened in 2011, and the MRGO was dammed off two years before that. Since then, marsh that had grown accustomed to higher salinity is now experiencing a "freshening."

As a result, a lot of aquatic grass has been growing in the marsh.

Sometimes it will choke out entire ponds — you probably don't need to look far to read fishing reports from disgruntled anglers complaining about the thick stuff.

Jigheads get mired in the grass, so old inshore tackle and techniques don't necessarily work as well as they once did.

Because the game has changed, inshore anglers have to adapt — and skin-hooking your soft plastic lures is one way you can do it.

WHAT IS SKIN-HOOKING?

It's a simple technique to mask the point of your hook from snags, including grass.

Skin-hooking is advantageous because it allows you to cast alongside and across thick grass, effectively presenting the lure to fish — but without getting hung up.

Look at the attached pictures and you'll see examples of what I'm talking about.

IS IT REALLY THAT NECESSARY?

Only if you want to keep your lure from snagging. Remember, it only takes that one piece of grass to put the kibosh on your cast.

If it appears the hook point is snug against the lure's body, try holding it against a light to see if any penetrates the space between.

HOW TO SKIN-HOOK A LURE?

Take the exposed hook point in one hand and gently pierce a thin layer of the soft plastic, or "skin," of the lure.

But go shallow — not deep.

WILL THIS AFFECT MY HOOKSETS?

It's a safe assumption it could hamper

some hooksets, but you won't have that problem if you skin-hook lightly enough, and whip that rod like the Hulk.

Remember, when fishing around grass, you may want to run a medium-heavy over a medium power rod — that's just my two cents.

ONE MORE BENEFIT

Skin-hooking helps your lure stay straight on a swimbait hook, instead of falling down. This is useful for the softer plastics that yield more action but don't last as long — ya gotta make the most of your dollars.

CONCLUSION

Good inshore anglers adapt to changing conditions, so try out this weedless setup. You'll be catching fish while everyone else is getting snagged and scratching their heads.

Tight lines, y'all.

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

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Capt. Kris Robert shows off a nice tripletail he caught in mid-May, one of the earliest times he's seen the fish show up in Lake Borgne.



TRIPLETAIL TRIPLE THREAT By Patrick Bonin

GUIDE SHARES TOP 3 TIPS TO CATCH MORE TRIPLETAIL

Photo courtesy of Capt. Kris Robert

Considered by many to be the best eating inshore fish, tripletail melts in your mouth and is the classic white, flaky fish many anglers crave.

Now is the time to be checking crab trap buoys or just about anything that floats, like a log or even a dead fish, because a tripletail might be lurking underneath it.

Capt. Kris Robert, with One Last Cast Charters, targets the fish around crab trap buoys in Lake Borgne. He shared

three great tips to catch more tripletail this summer.

1. USE 21-25 COUNT SHRIMP OR SMALLER

“For whatever reason, I’ve had big shrimp on the boat and pitched at them, pitched at them, pitched at them — and they’ll run right up to it, and then they kind of go away from it,” Robert said. “Somebody once told me they see that big shrimp with a big horn on it, and they don’t want to deal with that.

“All they’re feeding on is baby crabs and small shrimp that are coming through there or trying to hide out around that trap with them.”

2. WHEN A TRIPLETAIL GOES DEEP, GO DOWN AND GET IT

“If you go by a crab trap and the fish goes down, it really hasn’t gone anywhere. What I learned last year was to take a slip cork or a popping cork with maybe a 4-foot leader and slide it right

past that crab trap, and they'll come out of the depths and eat it," Robert said. "He's still hanging out down there — he's not going anywhere."

Robert typically uses only a 6- or 8-inch 20-pound leader and 40-pound braid to target tripletail floating up near the surface, along with a No. 3 kahle hook.

"I want to keep that shrimp as high up as long as possible. I don't use a sinker or anything, just cast it out there," Robert said. "I want that shrimp to be up high in the column so when it comes floating by that tripletail sees it. I don't want it going down too deep if they're floating on top."

3. WHEN YOU HOOK UP, RIP THE FISH AWAY FROM COVER ASAP

"A tripletail is similar to fishing for grouper or amberjack or lemonfish: If you catch one, you have to rip him out of that rig and start cranking down on him to get him away from that structure," Robert explained. "Well, you have to do the same thing with tripletail to get him away from that trap."

"I don't know how many times I've had people, and I tell them, 'When you set the hook, rip him out of there.' Tighten down your drag, rip him out of there, then once you get him away, you can loosen up the drag so he can start peeling off a little bit of line."

Robert likes to get upcurrent of a fish he's spotted, then just free-line the cork and shrimp back to within inches of the crab trap he's targeting.

"All of a sudden, you'll see that tripletail swim off and come upcurrent and grab the bait," he said. "Then you just

have to rip him away from that trap."

BONUS TIP: HEAD OUT EARLY

"If you're leaving at noon targeting tripletail thinking the sun is at its highest point and you'll be able to see them better, guess what? Guides are finishing their charters around 10 or 11 trying to get back, so the sun is up and we're running those same traps on our way back in.

"We're getting ready to beat them up on the way in, so by the time you launch the boat, you're going to be in trouble."

Editor's Note: For more information, contact Capt. Kris Robert with One Last Cast Charters at 228-284-9502.



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Berkley's 5-inch Grass Pig, shown here in swamp gas color, is a heavy soft plastic lure with lots of action that Devin Denman finds especially effective when targeting redfish across the Louisiana coast.

A KILLER REDFISH SWIMBAIT

BERKLEY'S 5-INCH GRASS PIG GETS IT DONE

By Devin Denman

Everyone has their favorite lure. Usually it's the lure they always catch fish on (duh), or maybe it's one gifted to them by someone well-versed in inshore fishing, like their grandfather.

I know I've had my favorites growing up, but over the years I've learned from anglers much smarter than me to step outside of my comfort zone and try new things — even those lures not designed with inshore fishing in mind.

It can be tough making that step, as fishing with something new on the end of the line can feel like going on a walk with your shoes on the wrong feet.

But the effort paid off and, after much use, I've discovered one versatile swim-bait redfish just can't ignore.

WHAT KIND OF SWIMBAIT, EXACTLY?

To be specific, it's a Berkley Grass Pig. It's a 5-inch soft-plastic swimbait that resembles a finfish, something more like a mullet.

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT IT?

It's heavy. I don't have an exact weight for you, but it's substantially heavier than other 5-inch soft plastic swimbaits. Plus, it's streamlined. And when you combine these two qualities, you have an artillery piece that's easy to cast a country mile.

In addition to this, the plastic used is pretty soft. This means it has great action, giving off a strong wobble indicative of a crippled fish that would make an easy meal.

Yes, I understand the downside to this is a lure that's easily torn, but six-packs of Grass Pigs can be had for \$3 depending on where you buy them. I think that's pretty darned good for 5-inch swimbaits.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE COLOR?

Berkley has a lot of colors available, but my favorite would have to be swamp gas, which is the color shown in the photo.

After that, I like pearl white silver fleck, black blue silver and watermelon,

depending on the conditions and the mood of the fish on a particular day.

HOW DO YOU RIG IT?

With a 6/0 Owner Beast Hook. It's pretty simple: Just screw-lock the nose, then rig the hook point up through the belly and out of the back.

In really thick grass, I'll skin-hook the bait so it doesn't snag at all. After all, redfish want to eat a delicious mullet — not a vegan salad.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

This article just scratches the surface of my use of swimbaits to catch redfish, not to mention everything else in my tackle box: jerkbaits, spinnerbaits, jigs, spoons, topwater lures and more.

I reveal all of that inside Inshore Fishing 201, my course teaching inshore anglers how to use artificial lures with casting tackle to create presentations fish can't resist.

It's a great way to save the expense of live bait, outfish it and target larger, harder-to-catch fish.

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

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Chas Champagne with Matrix Shad always keeps a close eye out for snot grass like this, because he typically finds redfish in the area.

SIGHT-FISHING SUPPORT

STINGRAYS, SNOT GRASS DEAD GIVEAWAYS REDFISH ARE NEARBY

By Patrick Bonin

If Chas Champagne, the owner Matrix Shad lures is cruising through marsh and duck ponds sight-fishing for reds — but doesn't actually spot any fish — he's typically keeping a close eye out for two other reliable indicators of reds in the neighborhood.

The first thing he's looking for is stingrays.

"It seems like when you're in ponds that stingrays are floating around in, those are the same ones redfish like," Champagne said. "If I'm daydreaming, texting or my phone rings and I see two or three stingrays in a row, I'll really start paying attention. However stingrays scavenge the bottom in those ponds and look for food, redfish must treat it the same.

"I see stingrays on a redfish's back all the time."

The second dead giveaway to redfish in the area is the stringy algae local anglers refer to as "snot grass."

"When I'm up on my stand with the trolling motor and see stingrays, I start paying attention. But when I'm running around the duck ponds or canals or creeks and I don't really know where I'm going, and I'm wiggling and winding and zigging and zagging and going from Spot A to Spot B, if I start seeing this neon green stuff, I just shut it down," Champagne said. "I know they're there somewhere.

"Typically, they'll be on the edge. If it's too grassy or the water is real low, you have to get to where they can float over it. If they can't swim over it or around it, it pulls the oxygen out of the water and makes it hard for them to deal with. Once I find it growing on the banks or in the middles of the canals or ponds, I'll find an area deep enough that's got it — and that's



Photos courtesy of Chas Champagne

The Matrix Craw, rigged with a ¼-ounce swimbait hook, is Chas Champagne's go-to summertime sight-fishing lure because it's great for catching reds, but can also be used on cloudy days for bass in the marsh.

where some fish are going to be."

Champagne acknowledged redfish can get in all kinds of different grass, including coontail and hydrilla.

"But personally, my favorite is snot grass," he said. "It makes the water pristine clean, so you can see the reds from a mile away. It makes the redfish contrast real hard against the bottom, so you can see them real easy."

His go-to summertime sight-fishing lure is definitely the Matrix Craw, rigged on a ¼-ounce swimbait hook. Redfish slam it, but its versatility is key during the summer: He skin-hooks it to keep it weedless if he's in the thick stuff.

"I only blind-cast if the clouds pop up and I can't see them all that good," Champagne said. "If we go out there and think it's going to be a nice sunny day and it turns out to be a cloudy day, I'll just run that thing like a frog on top of the surface by reeling it in kind of fast, because those crawfish legs flap real good.

"Then you can catch bass — plus a handful of reds." ■



Recon Marines use the GOTWA technique to keep the team informed on each other's whereabouts. You can use it to let others know about your fishing plans — and what to do if you don't return.

Devin Denman

USE 'GOTWA' TO DEVELOP A GAME PLAN ON THE WATER

INFORM OTHERS WHEN YOU'LL BE RETURNING — AND WHAT TO DO IF YOU DON'T By Devin Denman

There are a lot of concepts I learned during my time in Marine Reconnaissance that I still use today. In this article, I am going to share a favorite you can use to go fishing safely.

THE GOTWA

This is a weird, incorrectly organized acronym (for ease of pronunciation) used by Recon Marines when conducting patrols — specifically when the team is to temporarily split up.

The idea is to inform everyone what's going on — and what to do if/when certain things happen.

WHAT DOES IT STAND FOR?

The acronym covers five main points:

G = Where I'm going

O = Others going with me

T = The time I will return

W = What to do if I don't return

A = Action taken if attacked

So, if I'm a team leader going over the

hill to conduct a recon with the point man, then I'll leave my assistant team leader there with everyone else, tell him I'm taking the point man, and that I expect to be gone a couple hours. Also, he is to raise me on team comms if I don't return by then, and if attacked, break contact and rendezvous at the nearest rally point. If I'm attacked, I will break contact toward the same rally point and we will reassemble the team there.

That's a little down and dirty, but you can see how this same technique can apply to inshore fishing, as in this example if you find yourself fishing out in Breton Sound.

G = I'm going to fish the long rocks all the way to Breton Island

O = Two of my friends, Mike and Ben

T = I'll be back no later than 6 p.m.

W = Call my phone. If I don't answer after the second attempt, call the Coast Guard, give them my boat's description and registration numbers and where I

said I'd be fishing

A = If we break down, we'll hang tight and call Sea Tow for marine assistance, then try to contact you. If things are really bad, we'll don our life vests (if needed) and prepare signaling devices for long-distance recognition by search parties.

CONCLUSION

I know this example was pretty down and dirty, too.

So this is not a template for you to copy, but to communicate the idea that danger does exist out there — and any situation can quickly deteriorate into a bad one.

The key is to have that safety net when it does, and using GOTWA helps to achieve that end.

Tight lines, y'all.

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

ASTRO TABLES

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

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

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

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

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	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	
Sun 1					33
Mon 2					34
Tue 3					37
Wed 4					40
Thu 5					48
Fri 6					61
Sat 7					55
Sun 8					53
Mon 9					67
Tue 10					78
Wed 11					90
Thu 12					96
Fri 13					87
Sat 14					74
Sun 15					61
Mon 16					53
Tue 17					49
Wed 18					49
Thu 19					56
Fri 20					43
Sat 21					35
Sun 22					33
Mon 23					31
Tue 24					39
Wed 25					48
Thu 26					56
Fri 27					61
Sat 28					52
Sun 29					44
Mon 30					37
Tue 31					35

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TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED					
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT		
11:01 pm	3:02 am - 4:18 am	9:01 am	3:27 pm - 4:43 pm		
11:35 pm	3:45 am - 5:07 am	9:56 am	4:10 pm - 5:32 pm		
	4:23 am - 5:59 am	10:51 am	4:48 pm - 6:24 pm		
12:07 am	5:00 am - 6:48 am	11:47 am	5:25 pm - 7:13 pm		
12:39 am	5:37 am - 7:39 am	12:44 pm	6:02 pm - 8:04 pm		
1:10 am	6:14 am - 8:32 am	1:43 pm	6:39 pm - 8:57 pm		HALF
1:43 am	6:52 am - 9:28 am	2:44 pm	7:17 pm - 9:53 pm		
2:18 am	7:34 am - 10:24 am	3:48 pm	7:59 pm - 10:49 pm		
2:58 am	8:20 am - 11:26 am	4:54 pm	8:45 pm - 11:51 pm		
3:43 am	9:12 am - 12:28 pm	6:02 pm	9:37 pm - 12:53 pm		
4:35 am	10:10 am - 1:32 pm	7:09 pm	10:35 pm - 1:57 am		HIGH
5:35 am	11:13 am - 2:35 pm	8:13 pm	11:38 pm - Midnight		NEW
6:41 am	12:18 pm - 3:38 pm	9:10 pm	Midnight - 3:00 am		Perigee
7:51 am	1:24 pm - 4:34 pm	10:01 pm	12:43 am - 4:03 am		
9:02 am	2:29 pm - 5:25 pm	10:45 pm	1:49 am - 4:59 am		
10:11 am	3:31 pm - 6:13 pm	11:24 pm	2:54 am - 5:50 am		
11:17 am	4:30 pm - 6:56 pm	12:01 am	3:56 am - 6:38 am		
12:21 pm	5:28 pm - 7:34 pm		4:55 am - 7:21 am		
1:23 pm	6:22 pm - 8:14 pm	12:34 am	5:53 am - 7:59 am		HALF
2:22 pm	7:17 pm - 8:53 pm	1:08 am	6:47 am - 8:39 am		
3:20 pm	8:08 pm - 9:34 pm	1:42 am	7:42 am - 9:18 am		
4:17 pm	9:00 pm - 10:16 pm	2:18 am	8:33 am - 9:59 am		
5:12 pm	9:52 pm - 11:00 pm	2:56 am	9:25 am - 10:41 am		
6:05 pm	10:43 pm - 11:45 pm	3:38 am	10:17 am - 11:25 am		
6:55 pm	11:32 pm - Midnight	4:23 am	11:08 am - 12:10 pm		LOW
7:41 pm	Midnight - 12:34 am	5:11 am	11:57 am - 12:59 pm		Apogee
8:23 pm	12:18 am - 1:24 am	6:02 am	12:43 pm - 1:49 pm		FULL
9:01 pm	1:02 am - 2:14 am	6:56 am	1:27 pm - 2:39 pm		
9:37 pm	1:45 am - 3:03 am	7:51 am	2:10 pm - 3:28 pm		
10:10 pm	2:23 am - 3:55 am	8:46 am	2:48 pm - 4:20 pm		
10:41 pm	3:00 am - 4:46 am	9:42 am	3:25 pm - 5:11 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.

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COOALLA COOLERS

The designers at Cooalla Coolers noticed most conventional coolers — even soft-sided ones — were bulky, clumsy to carry and took up too much space. So the challenge was accepted — and the result is a serious, high-quality, soft-sided cooler perfect for an active lifestyle.

Its sleek and lightweight appearance is packed with enough hard-core cool for the beach, the park or the back of an SUV.

And the fashionable exterior is constructed from durable, sweat-proof limestone-based neoprene sandwiched with advanced micro-cell insulation.

Its surprisingly large capacity is lined with a welded, puncture resistant, high-grade thermo material that virtually eliminates leaks and locks in the cold. The cooler also features rust-proof hardware, one-handed zipper technology, a textured, padded shoulder strap with a low-profile Velcro handle wrap, a convenient outside pocket with magnetic closure, and two-layer nylon webbing with daisy chain stitching for comfort and extra strength.

Cooalla Coolers are available in a range of colors and retail for \$179.

More Info: www.cooalla.com



FIELD & STREAM BUG-FREE CAMO

Field & Stream has added some lightweight hunting clothes to its product line, and although two particular items were designed for turkey hunters, they should be big hits for early-season archery hunters across the Southeast.

The Men's Insect Repellent balaclava long sleeve shirt features a trademarked insect repellent, No Fly Zone, thumb holes in the sleeves and a built-in balaclava with options for an adjustable hood and face mask — perfect in Realtree Edge camo for coolness, concealment and a bug-free hunt.

The Every Hunt lightweight cargo hunting pants are light, that's for sure, made with polyester ripstop material good for wicking away perspiration to keep hunters dry and comfortable. They feature plenty of pockets for accessories and an elasticized waist with belt loops.

No Scent C3 scent control is built into both shirts and pants, which retail for \$49.99 each.

More Info: www.fieldandstreamshop.com and www.dickssportinggoods.com



COSTA DEL MAR SUNGLASSES

Costa Del Mar targets fishermen with a large percentage of their sunglasses, and two of their latest offerings, the Cape and Montauk, are perfect examples.

Introduced in March, both styles feature wraparound frames that feature temple ventilation ports to make it tougher for the lenses to fog and also help wick away moisture and sweat.

The ultra-wide nature of the frames and the ear pieces in the temple area block peripheral light, important when you're trying to see down into the water. Both styles feature Costa's 580 lens technology that provides 100-percent UV protection and polarization, and they're available in both polycarbonate and glass.

Capes are available in four frame colors and seven lens colors; Montauks are available in three frame colors and seven lens colors.

More Info: www.costadelmar.com



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



STRUT COMMANDER'S SCARECROW CROW CALL

You think the guys from Duck Commander can make calls that command other game birds or animals to flock their way?

Apparently so. The Louisiana company debuted a handful of calls this past spring for turkey hunters, and one of them has uses beyond the spring season.

Duck Commander's Strut Commander division introduced six diaphragm calls — Sandman and Voodoo calls — plus an owl call dubbed the Hootie, and a crow call named the Scarecrow.

In addition to its designation as a locator call designed to elicit gobbles from tom turkeys within earshot, the Scarecrow is also a heckuva crow call for those hunters who like a little variety in their wingshooting.

MSRP for the Scarecrow is \$8.99.

More Info: www.strutcommander.com

4 HORSEMEN TACKLE'S POPPING CORK

By Patrick Bonin

A new cork is popping up with South Louisiana's inshore anglers, and it's getting a reputation for both durability and a sound that seems to be a hit with speckled trout and redfish.

Aaron Pierce and Roger Dowdy, co-owners of 4 Horsemen Tackle, started cranking out popping corks to test last summer and began selling them online in December.

Like many new products, the 4 Horsemen corks came about because the pair weren't satisfied with the performance of the corks they used while guiding.

"We couldn't find one that lasted and sounded good, with the right beads, so we started fooling around and testing and making our own," Pierce said. "Once we put the epoxy on the bottom, that was a game-changer for us because it locked in the bottom of the cork, which takes all the abuse. It holds everything together, and also helps make the lower-frequency sound which fish hear better."

But sound is only half of the cork's appeal, he said.

"The cork has extra heavy-grade wire, a compact shape you can cast a lot further with less tangles, and the beads and weight slide really easily to create the best sound of all the corks on the market," he said.

All 4 Horsemen corks feature a 130-pound Spro swivel, and are assembled in Pierce and Dowdy's hometown of Cut Off.

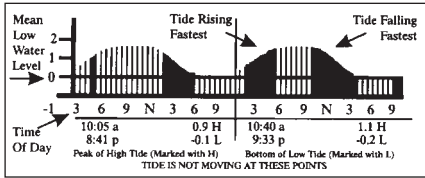
Three-inch poppers and oval corks (with 3/8-ounce weights) are available in yellow, orange and pink, and the 4-inch, 1/2-ounce model is available in orange only.

All corks, no matter the size, retail for \$7.50 each.

The corks are now available at many local tackle stores, as well as through the company's website.

More Info: www.4horsemantackle.com



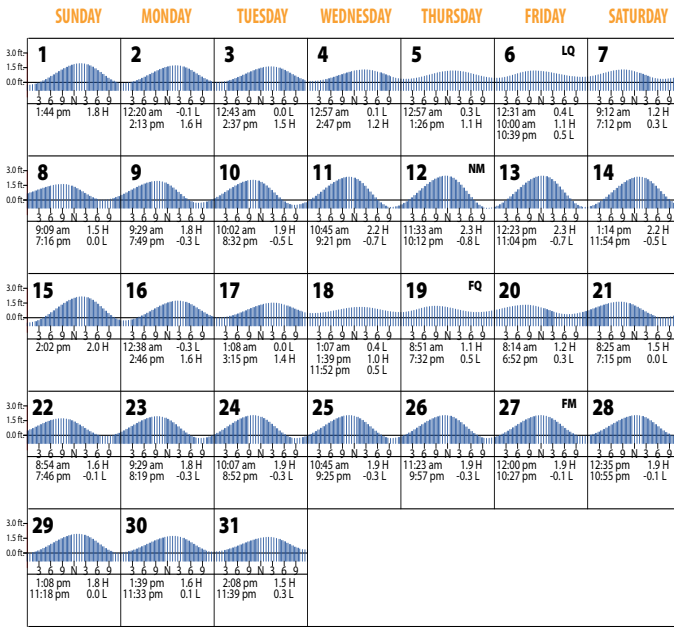


How to use the **SPORTSMAN** Tide Guide

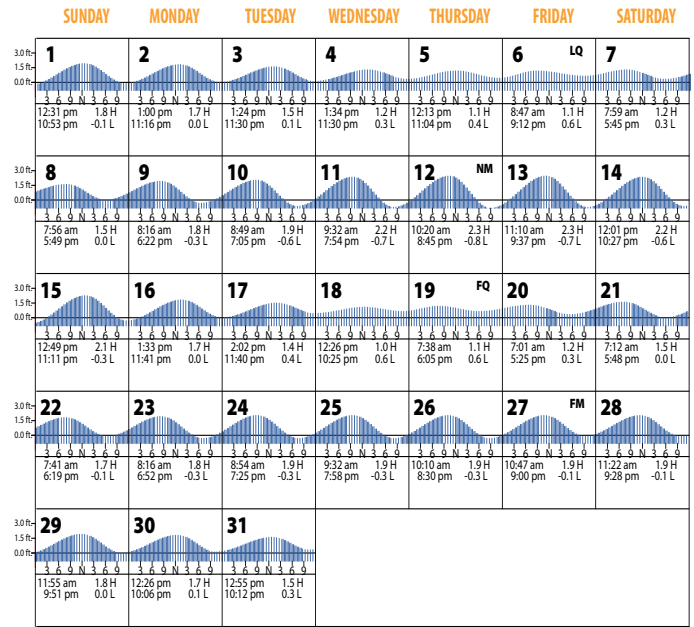
Fish feed most actively when the tide is moving. The Mississippi Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most active feeding periods each day in the TIDE GUIDE. Just fish those times indicated in black.

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

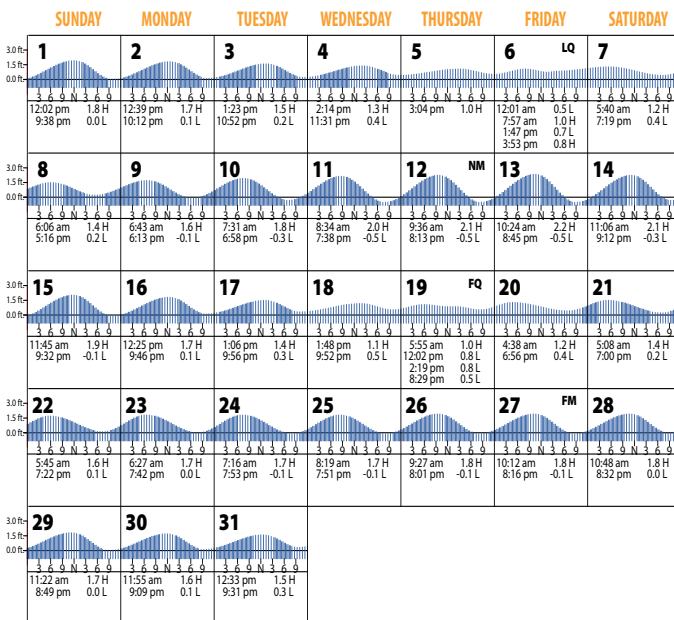
Bay St. Louis Entrance



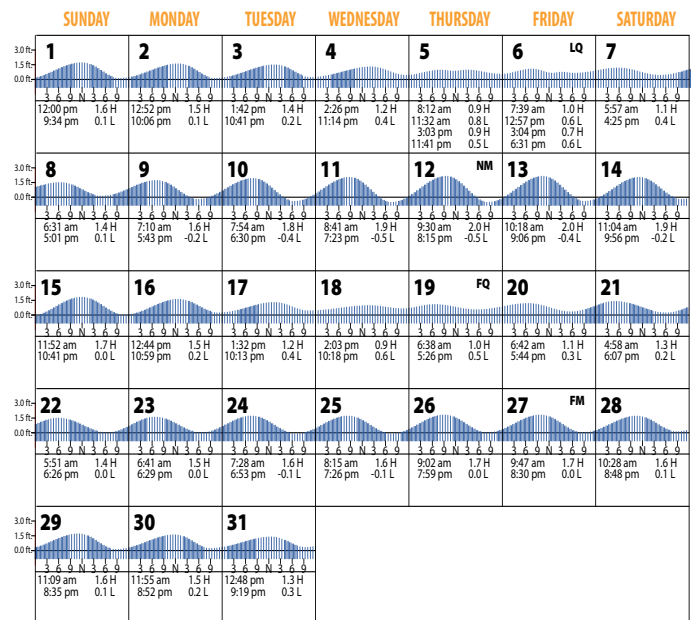
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