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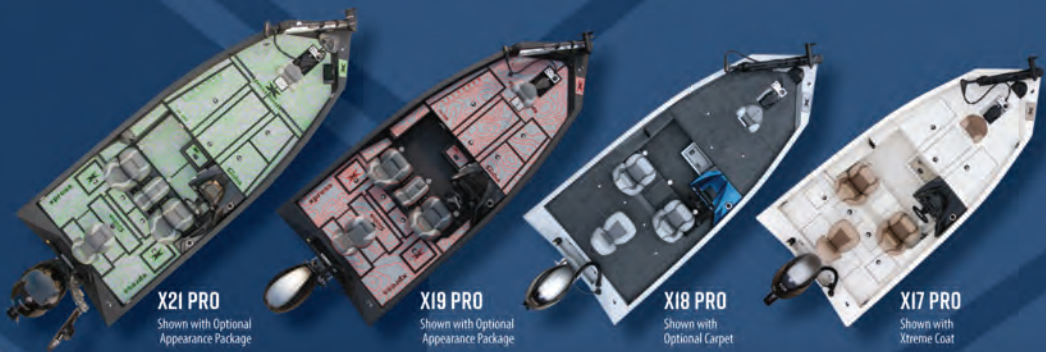


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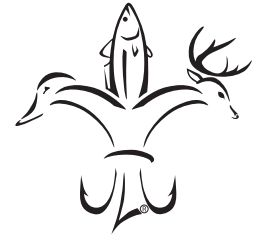
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TRICK A TOM

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PADDLING UP SLABS



Mississippi SPORTSMAN

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Big crappie are still on the menu for many Mississippi fishermen, and using kayaks and canoes to chase them is a great idea, if you know some paddling tricks. Photo by Brian Cope.

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# Outdoor UPDATE

with  
**Bobby Cleveland**



Dan Kibler



**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](mailto:bobbyc7754@yahoo.com).

Dan Kibler

## DOGWOODS, CRAPPIE ARE IN VOGUE APRIL IN MISSISSIPPI BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN OUR STATE'S OUTDOORS

**A**pril brings us dogwood blooms, which, if old adages are to be believed, means crappie are spawning. Popular guide Roger Gant of Corinth always believed the two coincided, and if ever there was an expert on the subject, trust us, Gant would be it. He is the man that Bill Dance called the greatest fishing guide in the world.

"People always ask me, 'When do crappie spawn?'" Gant said one April morning after pulling in a rather fat, egg-laden sow crappie from Bay Springs Lake on the Tenn-Tom Waterway. "I

always tell them that if they see those white dogwoods blooming in the woods, then it's happening — they're spawning."

Of course, the two spring phenomena are unrelated scientifically, only coincidentally. Yet blooming dogwoods and spawning crappie are two treasures that make April so sublime in Mississippi.

Nowhere else in the world can match the Magnolia State when it comes to crappie fishing. Hands down, it is the place to be when the male crappie turn black, make beds and the females move in to lay eggs. Whether you're after

A stringer of big crappie just screams "Mississippi" to knowledgeable fishermen across the Southeast.

quantity or quality — or a mix of both — Mississippi is the king of crappie.

Every list of top crappie hot spots in the country will be heavy with Mississippi waters. Grenada Lake and its 3-pounders will top

every single one, and it will likely be joined in the top five by Lake Washington and Sardis Lake. You will probably find Enid Lake, Arkabutla Lake and Barnett Reservoir somewhere on the roster, and even the Tenn-Tom Waterway is included on many.

Here's a secret, but only if you live outside Mississippi — we already know it. There are many more lakes here that are just as good, if not better.

Those "hot spot lists" are often compiled by outdoor writers who live outside the state's borders, and those journalists represent national publications or websites that demand a broad spectrum of locations around the country to boost either ad sales or readership.

That's why Eagle Lake or Lake Whittington or Tunica Cutoff or Okatibbee Lake or Lake Mary or Lake Lincoln or several others in Mississippi are not mentioned, yet will be full of boats yanking out crappie after crappie every April.

While Mississippi may rank last or near the bottom in a lot of societal issues, it takes a backseat to nobody when it comes to crappie. And, remember, the dogwoods will bloom here in April.

Rabbit Rogers, a Barnett Reservoir crappie specialist who gets the same question that Gant did about spawning timing, said we can count on it at tax time.

"What I tell everybody is that if there is one day that, year-in and year-out, I'd bet on to hit the peak of the spawn, it would be April 15," Rogers said. "You can count on it. April 15 may not be the peak day, but it will be so close that you can bank on it."

April brings Mississippi sportsmen myriad outdoor opportunities, like the peak of the spring turkey season, bass fishing and the start of great speckled trout fishing on the Gulf Coast.

This issue of *Mississippi Sportsman* sets the table with timely features. Phillip Gentry offers tips on finding crappie from a kayak, while David Hawkins has expert tips about bassing by the numbers. Turkey hunters should pay attention to features by Hawkins, Mike Giles, Andy Douglas and Kinny Haddix, which provide expert tips on everything from calling, locating and timing.

Let's go! ■



Dan Kibler

# I-55 CORRIDOR IS CRAPPIE CENTRAL FOR MISSISSIPPI'S TOP RESERVOIRS

## NORTH TO SOUTH, STANDOUT FISHING IS TO BE EXPECTED

**R**emember when America's interstate highways were known as "Super Slabs," in reference to the long, thin, seemingly endless ribbons of concrete that linked our states.

One of those roadways truly lived up to that nickname.

I-55, which connects New Orleans and Chicago, is the boss of super slabs — at least the part that runs through Mississippi. You see, adjacent to its path through the Magnolia State are some of the world's best crappie-fishing lakes.

FYI, big crappie also go by the nickname "slabs" for the prized slabs of flaky, white-meat fillets they feature.

Most of the attention goes to the I-55 stretch between Jackson and Barnett Reservoir north to Sardis and Sardis Lake. In between are the two most-notable lakes, Grenada, the consensus No. 1 crappie lake in the world, and Enid Lake, where the world record white crappie of 5 pounds, 3 ounces was caught in 1955 and has never been bettered.

There's also Arkabutla Lake at Coldwater at the very north end, which is always included in any discussion of top crappie lakes in the country, probably because it has been featured often on Bill Dance's TV shows.

## SOUTHERN SPOILERS

But did you know that two other lakes at the south end that could definitely be added to the I-55 Super Slab corridor.

They may not be nearly as famous, but Lake Lincoln near Wesson and Calling Panther Lake at Crystal Springs are rapidly earning reputations for their crappie production.

Lake Lincoln, also the name of the state park where it's located, is known for quantity. Here's all you need to know — when federal officials wanted crappie to stock at the U.S. Forest Service's Lake Okhissa at Bude, they came from Lincoln.

They were captured there by electroshocking boats and transferred 40 miles by livewell trucks to Okhissa and released more than a decade ago. In the time since, those Lincoln transfers have produced a blooming fishery.

"Okhissa may have been designed as a bass-fishing destination lake, but its natural topography is absolutely perfect for crappie," said Bill Runnels, a perch-jerking regular from Brookhaven. "There's so much deep water there, with a lot of deep structure, and that it is ideal. They have done well.

"But when I heard they were taking them out of Lake Lincoln, that bothered me back then, because it was so good for crappie I hated for them to take the fish out. Turns out, it didn't make a dent in the fishing. There were so many in the lake that I actually think it was a blessing for Lincoln to take the few hundred or so they took. In the last 10 years, the average size of Lincoln crappie I'm catching is bigger, a lot bigger, than what I used to catch."



I-55 between New Orleans and Chicago cuts through some of the best crappie lakes in Mississippi — and the nation.

Dan Kibler

Runnels trolls most of the year at Lincoln, but not in April.

"No way. I'm headed to the banks, and I'm jigging for spawners," he said. "The males move up in late March and start turning black. The females usually move up about the first week of April and stay good through the last week of the month. I've caught plenty on straight, vertical jigging under a slip cork in 18 inches to 2 feet of water, and that's great if you like to feel the thump of a bite.

"But I've started throwing little spinnerbaits like a Road Runner on ultralight spinning gear, and that's fun. It may not produce the numbers that jigging will but, man-oh-man, is it fun. I love it. You need to be ready for something bigger, too, because last year I caught a 10-pound largemouth doing that, and a lot of smaller bass, too."

## CALLING PANTHER SLABS

Calling Panther, a jewel of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks' state lake system, is similar in its topography: lots of deep cover that fosters a strong crappie population.

"I catch more at Lincoln, but I've caught much bigger ones at Calling Panther," Runnels said. "My biggest is 3.25 and I've had at least 10 more 3 pounds or better. I don't do so good there during the spawn, because I just haven't found the hot spawning spots yet. I do better there in February and March when the big females are starting to move up but are still hanging in 8 to 10 feet of water. They are full of eggs and thick as slabs get."

Runnels said he would like to zero in on the spawning areas at Calling Panther but is torn between his choices.

"I know I can go to Lincoln and catch them, that's a given," he said. "It's hard to leave them biting to go searching. Heck, I'd even like to go find where they spawn at Okhissa, too, but there just aren't enough days." ■

# RAINY FEBRUARY GIVES BARNETT A MUCH-NEEDED ROYAL FLUSH

**M**ississippi's most-popular fishing destination was dealt a winning hand in February, although it came at a grave cost to residents in low-lying areas of Jackson and other communities downstream on the Pearl River.

The rain event that led to flooding of houses and entire neighborhoods in Mississippi's Capitol City in mid- to late February had a silver lining. It gave the 33,000-acre Barnett Reservoir a royal flush.

"It flushed out all that vegetation that had choked out thousands of acres of backwater on the upper river area of the reservoir," said Gene Bishop, a local bass fisherman. "I have been able to get into some of the historically best backwater areas of the lake, places I haven't seen in 15 to 20 years. I mean miles and miles of water now open to fishing, once the fish rediscover that habitat."

The rainfall created the biggest of three high-water events since the start of the year. This one, which began around Feb. 10, created the second-highest river flow of record into Barnett Reservoir — 90,000 cubic feet per second.

It was enough that it flushed away about 20 years of vegetation growth that had wiped out some of the lake's traditional bass and crappie hot spots.

"I don't know how long it will take the fish to rediscover and start using those areas again, but I'm betting it won't take long," said Jimmy Carruth, a tournament regular. "A lot of the areas that are now open are historically some of the prime spawning areas upriver. It can only help improve the fishing on The Rez."

Crappie fishermen were already reporting male crappie moving up for the prespawn into some of the areas.

"This is going to change a lot of fishing for crappie guys like me," said Willie Long of Brandon. "When my daddy first taught me how to catch spawning crappie in the reservoir in the 70s and

## PELAHATCHIE BAY BOATING BACK IN APRIL

Barnett Reservoir officials say boating between the main lake at the Popular Pelahatchie Bay area will resume in April after new barriers are installed at the bridge over Pelahatchie Creek on Northshore Causeway.

The new barrier will be designed to block giant salvinia — the invasive plant that was found in the Bay and led to the bridge closure for the last 18 months — but will allow boats to move to and from the lake and bay.

Still operating under the emergency order involving the salvinia, officials said most of the bay's north shoreline will remain closed to boating and fishing, and that no tournament fishing will be allowed in the Bay until further notice. ■

80s, he took me upriver to backwater holes like Twin Sisters and Brown's Lake and Brown's Old River. After he died in 1998, and I got back from serving my country (U.S. Army), I couldn't believe what had happened with all the vegetation. That hyacinth had basically taken all those old places away. I didn't recognize it.

"I heard that all of that had changed, and I went and looked. Sure enough, all my dad's old fishing holes are open again. I didn't even recognize it, but my memory started returning the more I idled back up in there. I can't wait to go in April and see if I can catch 'em in some of those spots Dad and I shared." ■

---

## DEER-HARVEST REPORTING DIES IN LEGISLATURE

**M**ississippi will not have a mandatory deer harvest reporting system, or tagging, for the 2020-21 hunting season. Such a move would require legislative action, and the one bill that would have created a system — House Bill 1539 — failed to gain committee approval.

Most every significant wildlife or fishery bill met the same demise.

Of the 11 bills originating in the House Committee on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, and of the 17 in the Senate committee of the same name, all but 12 were dead at the time of this article deadline.

• Both the House (HB 450) and Senate (SB 2722) passed bills that would require that all deer harvested within high fences be

tested for chronic wasting disease (CWD).

• SB 2723 would extend any hunting season scheduled to close by statute on a Friday through sunset on the following Sunday.

• SB 2717 would allow operation of electrical bicycles on state Wildlife Management Areas.

• HB 1309 would allow the use of air bows during certain open hunting seasons for hunters exempt from hunting license requirement by reason of disability.

• HB 1577 would allow schools to offer hunter safety education as part of the curriculum. ■

# THE BEST TURKEY HUNTING IS AHEAD

BIG GOBBLERS WILL BE THERE FOR THE TAKING, EXPERTS SAY

**T**hree weeks of turkey hunting are behind Mississippi hunters by the time April 1 arrives, but the bulk of the season remains, including what many call the best part.

"I don't even start until the first week of April," said Ryan Jacobson of Madison. "I know that the 2019 Harvest Report System that was mandatory for the first time showed that half of the birds killed last year were killed in March. What it doesn't show is how old those birds were. My guess is that the vast majority of those birds killed early were 2-year-olds, plus some jakes killed by kids.

"Mature trophy birds are a lot easier to kill in April, after they have serviced most of the hens in their flocks. Don't get me wrong; killing older birds is never easy, but it's dang near impossible to kill them while they are henned up. You let them get past that stage, and it's a lot easier to get their attention, and if you can't get their attention you aren't going to call one in. You might can ambush one, but you can't call them away from the real hens."

Jimmy Rankin of Vicksburg takes it a step further.

"I prefer April because we can get a lot of the yahoos out of the way," Rankin said. "By that, I mean the casual or average hunter who usually settles for a young bird or gets frustrated by the lack



Big, lonesome gobblers are ready to answer hunters' calls as Mississippi's turkey season reaches the halfway point.

NWTF

thereof and goes home. And then there's those hunters who start chasing spawning crappie in April and quit.

"It's a lot easier and more productive to hunt when the woods have less hunters, and I'm not just talking about public land, either. Even at clubs like mine — we have about 40 members, and about half of them turkey hunt. But of the 20 or so who do turkey hunt, I bet you only five or six of us hunt all the way through the season. I learn about the old birds by listening to the reports of the other hunters who get frustrated by those contrary toms."

Mississippi's season ends May 1. ■



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Big, prespawn trout are a common target around Mississippi's Cat Island throughout April.

# APRIL IS PEAK FOR CAT ISLAND SPECKLED TROUT

**B**eing retired, Columbia native Tommy Sutton can fish the Gulf of Mexico any time the weather allows, and he has the whole coastline to chase trout and reds.

But in April, his plan is simple.

"If there's even the slightest chance I can get my boat out to Cat Island, that's where you will find me in April," said Sutton, who now calls the coast home. "The past two years, we've really worn out the speckled trout on Cat Island in April.

"And, brother, I mean big trout. Gator trout."

A redfish man at heart, Sutton is now devoted to specks.

"I still love prowling the shallows for the reds and battling them on light gear, but the last two years and Cat Island have made a trout man out of me," he said. "That whole deal about how I find and catch the trout on the south side of Cat is so much fun. The prespawn trout we catch there in April are so big. We just drift along casting until we find them, or until they tip their hand by blasting on baitfish, and then we pole down and get after them.

"Once that school is worn down by attrition, we simply raise the anchor pole and drift again until we hit them again. By lunch, we're generally toting all we care to clean and can leave them biting so we know where to start the next day."

By fishing the Gulf side of the island, Sutton has protection against the prevailing seasonal wind patterns.

"Most of the big wind in April comes out of the north, so we can fish more days than you'd expect," he said. "The only winds that kill us are south — and extremely heavy east and west winds. Anything else, like a decent east or west or north, they can actually help us by helping us drift. The less we have to use the trolling motor, the better. A wind push just allows us to cover more water while casting."

Sutton carries a mix of soft plastic on jigheads, plus shrimp when available.

"I know a lot of guys like cocahoes (minnows), because the catfish will leave them alone," he said, "But I like shrimp under a popping cork. I prefer throwing plastics — any color as long as it's green or black with red metal flakes — but fish can be finicky. But even a finicky fish will eat a shrimp."

Most of Mississippi's coastal fishermen are expecting another banner spring for trout, thanks to Mother Nature. The past two years have seen extended openings of the Bonnett Carre Spillway, which diverts freshwater from a swollen Mississippi River through Lake Pontchartrain into Lake Bourne and eventually into

the west end of the Mississippi Sound.

As the freshwater flows, it pushes fish that are intolerant of low salinity levels east. In this case, they get pushed into Mississippi waters.

"One of the first places they arrive is Cat Island," said guide Sonny Schindler of Shore Thing Charters in Bay St. Louis. "Louisiana's curse has been our blessing the last couple of years. It has really turned our trout fishing around over here." ■



Brian Cope

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# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



**Parker Sanderson**

Parker Sanderson, 7, harvested this fine 6-point on Jan. 16, 2020, at 135 yards in Neshoba County. The buck weighed 165 pounds and scored 102%.



**Max Stevenson**

Seven-year-old Max Stevenson took his first deer, this 201-pound, 10-pointer with a 17½-inch inside spread, on Jan. 4, 2020.



**Nathan Sullivan**

Nathan Sullivan, 15, harvested this nice 9-point with a 19-inch spread in Homochitto National Forest with his 6.5 Creedmoor.



**R.J. Alsip**

R.J. Alsip, 7, killed his first buck while hunting with his dad, James, on their farm in Prentiss County.

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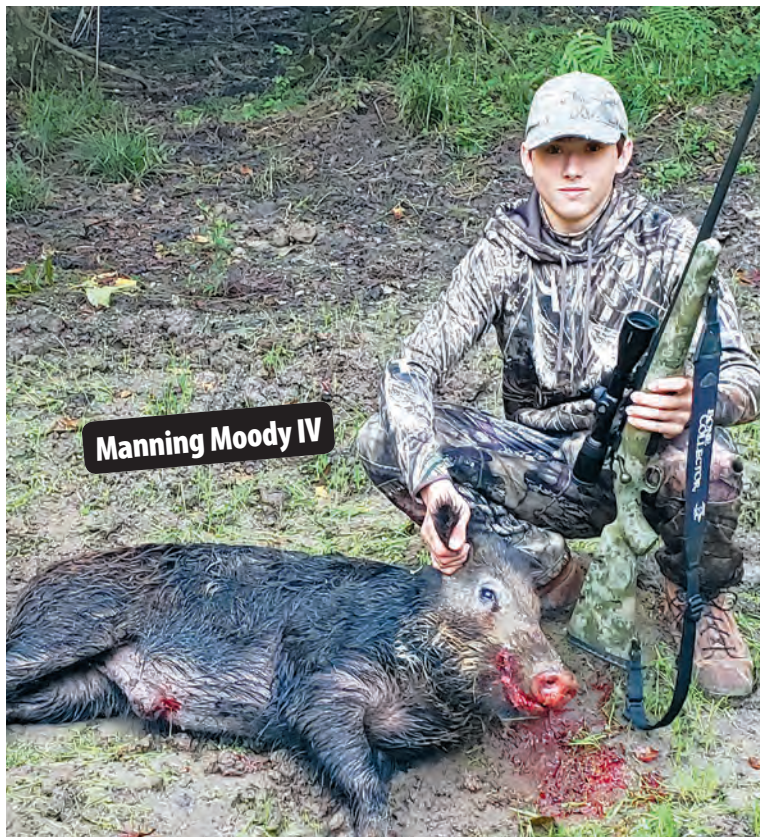
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**Evan Rocha**

On Jan. 4, 2020, Evan Rocha, 8, shot this 8-pointer at the J & B Hunting Club in Columbia while hunting with his dad, Guillermo Rocha, and his two brothers. Evan is Type 1 diabetic but lets nothing get in his way, especially when it comes to hunting.



**Manning Moody IV**

Manning Moody IV of Wiggins with his first hog of the 2018-19 season. It was taken in Leakesville.

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# 3-POUND THUMPERS

FATHER-DAUGHTER PAIRING SETS ALL-TIME WEIGHT RECORD FOR MAGNOLIA CRAPPIE CLUB IN GRENADA LAKE EVENT

By Kinny Haddox



These two Grenada Lake slabs caught by Terry and Terra Stewart, weighed 3.83 and 3.45 pounds.

**T**he fact that Terry Stewart of Clinton works at Elite Optical might catch your eye at first. But if he keeps catching monster slab crappie like he did on March 7, people are going to start wondering if he's come up with some magic crappie-fishing glasses or something.

"No, no, that's not it," he said, laughing. "I wish I could. That would be nice. We just got lucky and got on a bunch of those big fish."

Fishing with his daughter, Terra, those big fish were seven crappie that weighed a total of 21.7 pounds, with four fish weighing more than three pounds, in the Magnolia Crappie Club's spring tournament

on Grenada Lake. The Stewart's creel was topped with a 3.83-pound thumper to win first-place overall, big fish and set a club record. Sixty-three teams competed, and other teams weighed in some slabs, too, including 3.56-, 3.44-, 3.34-, 3.17- and 3.08-pound whoppers.

"It was tough, really tough fishing," Stewart said. "I know that weight doesn't sound like it, but we only caught two fish on Friday in practice and we had two fish halfway through the morning Saturday. I was thinking about going and putting my boat on the trailer when we decided to try one more spot.

"Right now, the water is 20-foot high, and the fish are scattered everywhere.

We've never caught fish in that last spot with high water like that, but when we lowered down the LiveScope, it was only a few minutes until we saw the big one. But they are super scattered. It's one here and one there."

## FOCUS ON BIG FISH

Stewart said without the LiveScope, he and his daughter would have never caught those fish, but it still wasn't easy. They had to fish very slowly over a 5-acre area to catch enough to get to their limit. The wind was blowing, and the boat traffic had the fish skittish.

Stewart, who fished straight ProBUILT and Crappie G jigs, said they could have caught more fish had they been fishing for regular-sized crappie, but when you target big fish, the number of fish you catch drops.

"We were fortunate to find that many big ones," he said. "I know there were some excellent fishermen who were trying other techniques that didn't catch a fish. With the water up, they are just so scattered."

Stewart said that, in the next week or so, more fish are going to move in to spawn, but many of those areas are inaccessible to all the but the smallest boats, back in the brush and flooded trees. Some anglers are riding ATVs back in the woods and wading out and beginning to catch fish in the shallows. Most of those fish are males.

## SPAWN'S COMING

With the water temperature around 51 degrees, a few warm days will move it up



Terry and Terra Stewart stand by the scales showing their Magnolia Crappie Club record setting weight.



5 or 6 degrees, and the big females will move shallow. It's just going to get better. "The thing is, they don't all move in shallow at the same time, so we'll see people catching them staging in deeper water and up in the shallows for several more weeks. It just depends on the weather and water temp," he said.

His advice for fishermen is to just be patient and keep looking for crappie. A LiveScope it is a huge advantage, but you can locate them on other electronics as well. Without good electronics, you can still get lucky and catch some, but it sure makes it harder.

The Magnolia Crappie Club is the largest and oldest state crappie fishing club in the country. It holds 10 qualifying tournaments and has held a state-championship event every year since 1991. ■

Terry and Terra Stewart's "lucky seven" crappie limit from Grenada Lake weighed better than 21 pounds.

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# NC PRO IS CLASSIC CHAMP

**H**ank Cherry became the third North Carolina angler to win the Bassmaster Classic when he led from start to finish on Alabama's Guntersville Lake the first weekend in March.

Cherry, from Lincolton, N.C., won \$307,500 for a three-day catch of 15 bass that weighed 65 pounds, 5 ounces. He took the lead with an opening day catch of 29 pounds, 3 ounces, added 16-10 the second day and closed out the tournament with a 19½-pound limit. He relied on just a few lures: a Z-Man Jack Hammer Chatterbait, a Megabass jerkbait and a Picasso jig.

Cherry, 46, is the first Classic winner from North Carolina since David Fritts of Lexington won in 1993. Hank Parker of Denver won Classics in 1979 and 1989.

Todd Auten of Lake Wylie, S.C., made it a one-two finish from the Carolinas, taking second and \$54,500 with a three-day total of 58-10. He weighed in limits at 20-0, 18-0 and 20-10 and caught the biggest fish in the tournament, a 7-pound, 9-ounce bass.

Stetson Blaylock of Benton, Ark., finished third with 58-1, earning \$40,000. Minnesota angler Seth Felder finished fourth place with 54-0 and won \$30,000. Michael Frazier of Newnan, Ga., was



Bassmaster Photo

North Carolina bass pro Hank Cherry won the 2020 Bassmaster Classic on Alabama's Lake Guntersville.

fifth with 54-0, winning \$25,000.

John Crews Jr. of Salem, Va., owner of Missile Baits, took sixth with 53-13 and carried home \$22,500.

Rounding out the top 10 were:

- Brandon Lester of Fayetteville, Tenn., with 53-9, worth \$21,500;
- Lee Livesay of Lonview, Tex., with 52-12, good for \$21,000
- Brandon Card of Knoxville, Tenn., with 50-4, worth \$20,500;
- Matt Herren of Asheville, Ala., with 49-5, worth \$20,000.. ■

— Brian Cope

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# HUGE BASS WIND UP TIED FOR LAKE'S RECORD

CAUGHT 45 MINUTES APART,  
TWO FISH NOW TOP LAKE LAMAR  
BRUCE RECORDS *By Dan Kibler*

**A** 13½-pound bass is a rarity, anywhere, but one Mississippi lake produced two of them recently, the same day, 45 minutes apart. And the exact same size — to the hundredth of a pound.

Scott Lewis of Tupelo caught a 13.54-pound bass at Lake Lamar Bruce near Saltillo the afternoon of Feb. 23. While the huge fish was still in his livewell, recovering before being released, Channing Davis of Nettleton caught a 13.54-pound bass within 15 minutes of launching at the 300-acre lake, which is one of the real jewels in the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks' State Lakes Program.

"What was crazy was that we had been there only about 15 minutes, and it was our first time fishing Lake Lamar Bruce," said Davis, 28. "They drained it a while ago and stocked it with Florida (strain) bass. I usually go to Pickwick, but me and my buddy decided to go try it."

Davis said he and fishing buddy Max Moore of Fulton put in at 2:45 p.m. and idled over to a point.

"He saw fish and bait on the side-scan, and he said 'There they are,' and he threw a crankbait and caught a 6-pounder on his first cast," Davis said. "Then, we both threw out again. I threw a shaky head, and I pulled it into some brush, and she pulled it straight down, and I set the hook. When it came up and tried to jump, we saw its mouth and eyes and panicked."

But after a few seconds, Davis had the bass in his boat and they spent a minute or two just admiring it.

"There was a guy on the lake we knew, and my buddy called him and asked what the lake record was. He said it was 13.54, that a guy had just set it 45 minutes before," Davis said. "We got out on the lake at 2:45 and we were weighing it at 3:08. It was 13.54, exactly. Two fish, the exact same size, caught within an hour."

Later, Davis got a photo of the fish that Lewis had caught on a crankbait and knew they hadn't somehow caught the same fish.

"His had two sores on the side, and mine didn't, so we knew they were different fish," he said. "We found out later he actually had his fish in livewell when I caught mine. He had brought it back out to release it, and held it for a while."



Scott Lewis of Tupelo (above) caught this 13.54-pound bass from Lake Lamar Bruce early on the afternoon of Feb. 23. It was the lake record for about 45 minutes before another fish weighing exactly 13.54 pounds was caught by Channing Davis of Nettleton. The two fish now share the lake record.

After getting the fish weighed, Davis and Murphy went back to the point and proceeded to load the boat — literally.

"My buddy caught two more over 9," Davis said. "Our best five weighed 46.25. We had the 13, two more over 9, another 8 and a 7. We caught 10 or 12 fish and had nothing under 6 pounds. It was just this one little place stacked with big fish.

"It was a long point with brush all over it, and there was one little, bare, clean spot, and the fish were all over the clean spot. She was about 15 or 16 feet deep."

Davis caught his fish on a green pumpkin Yum Dinger with a chartreuse tail, on a heavy action, 7-foot-6 Hammer rod and a Daiwa reel. He said it was a rainy, overcast day with the surface water temperature around 48 or 49 degrees.

Lake Lamar Bruce covers 300 acres in Lee County. The lake is part of the MDWFP's State Lakes Program. It was closed in 2010 to repair a faulty water-control device and re-opened in 2015 after what was a complete makeover, with fish attracting cover, wooden and earthen piers, channels and boat ramps. It was restocked with Florida largemouth bass, bluegill, shellcrackers, Magnolia crappie and channel catfish. ■



■ By Phillip Gentry

**HIGH-WATER CONDITIONS  
IN THE SPRING MAY MAKE  
WADING FOR CRAPPIE DIFFICULT.  
KAYAK ANGLING IS A GREAT  
ALTERNATIVE TO GET TO  
THOSE FISH.**

# PADDLING UP SLABS

**EVEN WITH A VERITABLE JUNGLE OF IRON WEEDS, SMALL BRUSH AND OTHER SHORELINE STRUCTURE TO HIDE, THERE STILL ARE SOME AREAS ON ALL OF MISSISSIPPI'S FLOOD-CONTROL AND OXBOW SYSTEMS THAT GO VIRTUALLY UNTOUCHED BY BOTH POWERBOAT AND WADING CRAPPIE FISHERMEN.**

**IT'S THESE AREAS THAT GIVE KAYAK ANGLERS AN EDGE OVER OTHERS.**

Once the waters rise in the backwaters of Grenada, Sardis, Enid and Arkabutla — and numerous other bodies of water in the Magnolia State — these areas grant access to old sloughs and ditches that are scattered along the headwaters. Boaters need at least a couple of feet of water above the rim of an old slough to successfully get in. Most of these areas are too far back through dense undergrowth to allow access from the shoreline.

These sloughs are the bread and butter of kayaking crappie fishermen with their shallow-draft paddlecraft and simplicity to launch.

Another kayak-ready situation is a shallow shoal or submerged island. These areas are covered by enough water to hold crappie, yet surrounded by water that's too deep to cross in waders.

Bubba Weeks of Grenada figured out long ago that a kayak was the best way to get to these areas

"Using a kayak, it's a lot easier to cross a ditch or creek channel than wading" he said. "I can also get my kayak up the smallest stream and into a swampy area that big boats can't reach."

Just about every kayak manufacturer has caught on to the fact that these small boats make great fishing craft, and they offer amenities to fit the needs of fishermen. Weeks' boat is a simple, 10-foot, cockpit-style boat that he sits inside of.

"I can put this boat in anywhere on this lake" Weeks said. "I strap it on the rear rack of my 4-wheeler and use a number of old logging roads to get down to wherever the water has come up to — the same way the guys who wade do."

As far as range, Weeks said that with just moderate paddling, he can outrun a trolling motor without a whole lot of effort. That puts his fishing range at a mile or better in any direction from his put-in.

"I usually fish the old Highway 8 area on the south side of the Yalobusha at Grenada" he said. "There's also an old slough we call the Pecan Orchard on the north side of the river about halfway between the Graysport and Choctaw ramps. Both of these are great kayak spots, because boats can't get in there, and they're too deep for waders."

Tackle for kayaking is comparable to that used by fishermen who wade. Weeks uses a 10-foot jig pole paired with a simple, spool reel





Some great access to sloughs and swamps can be gained by a kayak, reaching areas boats and waders can't reach. **BELOW:** Your rod-holder setup will depend on how the boat is propelled. When using a paddle boat, leave enough room for the paddle stroke.



that's used to store line. He favors 1/16- to 1/8-ounce jigs, and his go-to color for the dinghy water is anything with orange in it.

A few other crappie-specific pieces of gear for your kayak include a good sonar unit with topographic map. Channel edges and drop-offs are hot areas this month, going from 7 to 4 feet as the month progresses. Graphing spawning crappie is an unlikely prospect, but look for them during the prespawn migration to be high in the water column and around baitfish.

A landing net with an extended handle is a good idea. A long-handled crabbing net makes a good, cheap way to land a flopping fish at the end of a long pole with limited mobility to maneuver.

Coincidentally, the rise in popularity of fishing kayaks has given rise to both single- and multiple-pole crappie fishing tactics used in a highly portable, plastic kayak. Ronnie McKee, aka "Stump Hunter" to his online friends on one of Mississippi's most popular crappie fishing websites, [crappie.com](http://crappie.com), is one angler who has successfully merged the two concepts.



Kayaks can be equipped with the same electronics used on powerboats, giving the paddling angler real-time information on water depth and conditions.

**M**ultiple-rod tactics for crappie fishing break down into two schools of thought. While both are referred to by some as spider-rigging, owing to the water-bug appearance presented by a slender boat with multiple, spindly legs sticking out of each side, most crappie anglers refer to spider-rigging as a slow, vertical trolling tactic in which baits are pushed forward rather than trolled behind. This tactic is sometimes referred to as tight-lining. The other school of thought when using multiple rods is actually more like trolling, where rods are staggered to the sides and rear of the boat and trailed or trolled behind as the craft moves forward.

McKee reasoned that tight-lining would be more amendable by paddle and set about rigging his Wilderness Systems Ride 115 with two rod holders per side to accommodate 8- and 10-foot, lightweight crappie rods. In the middle of his setup is a self-contained sonar unit that, like any other spider-rigging boat, is the heart of the tactic.

“The appropriate speed for tight-lining is only about .5 to .7 miles per hour,” McKee said. “That’s easy enough with just a paddle; keep one eye on the GPS, ease the boat along over the edge of a creek channel or flat, and watch for a rod tip to go down.”

For faster trolling, McKee uses a separate boat, a Perception kayak he’s outfitted with a small trolling motor. A similar rod holder set up lets him troll at the steady 1.0 to 1.5 mph required to keep the trailing jigs swimming properly.

“With long-lining, you have to keep moving. When you catch a fish, retie a line, or do anything but paddle, you lose momentum,



and the baits go to the bottom and hang up. The trolling motor was a necessity to make it work,” he said.

Oddly enough, even during the spawn, when crappie tend to be spread out and holding tight to shoreline cover, McKee prefers either multiple-rod approach.

“The males will go shallow and guard the nests,” he said. “A few kayak guys will downsize to ultralight tackle and cast to the banks like they are bass fishing. I prefer to troll the edge of a creek channel where it opens up into a shallow flat. That’s where the bigger females will stage while the males are on the nest, and those females will be bigger fish.” ■



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

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# SMALL BOATS, BIG OPTIONS

Though kayaks are rapidly becoming popular as fishing vessels, all of them are not designed for fishing, so keep these features in mind as you search for a crappie kayak:

• **Stability.** This is No. 1. You want a kayak that's wide enough so you can concentrate on fishing and not on falling out.

• **Style.** Kayaks come in two basic styles: sit-on-top and cockpit-style. The biggest difference is how they handle rough water. Sit-on-tops typically have self-bailing holes that allow water that comes into the boat to drain out. Cockpit-style boats allow the angler to sit lower in the water for more stability but must be pumped out or tipped over to drain out any water. Cockpit boats also offer a measure of protection from the elements in their hull design.

• **Space and Storage.** Look for enough space to allow you to sit comfortably in the boat and still have enough area to store essential gear.

Anglers can choose their kayaks based on their physical needs and personal preferences.

• **Speed.** Most fishing yaks aren't designed for speed. Generally, the longer the boat, the sleeker the design, which allows you to cut through the water faster with less paddling effort. The drawback is, the longer the boat, the less maneuverable it is

• **Portability.** Give some consideration to how you'll get your small boat to the water. Some boats tuck nicely into the bed of a pickup truck, while others may require a roof-mounted rack or other support. Weight becomes a factor when having to transport the boat from the vehicle to the water or when carrying the boat around any obstacles that the angler encounters.

• **Price.** Just like anything else, you can pay a little or a lot, but you generally get what you pay for. Fortunately, a good angling kayak can be had from a number of manufacturers for less than \$1,000. ■



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## THE ART OF DECEPTION IS EVERYWHERE AS TURKEY HUNTERS TAKE TO MISSISSIPPI'S WOODS TRYING TO FOOL A BIG GOBBLER.

By Andy Douglas

# TRICK A TOM

**M**ississippi turkey hunters must be on top of their games to consistently tag a tom each season. But well hidden and still as a stone statue, shouldn't they be able to coax a gobbler within shotgun range? Maybe not.

When a turkey comes to a call, he sees everything and hears every little noise. Of all senses, turkeys are masters of sight and sound. Even when it appears everything is going right, a wary Mississippi tom seems to have that sixth sense that helps him elude the most seasoned sportsmen and women.

Hunters should remember past encounters with gobblers and build an ever-learning knowledge of their quarry, always adding to their bag of tricks when it comes to for luring them into range. Here are a few things to consider and remember that may help bring in that big tom that's just out of reach.

**DECEIVING A TOM'S KEEN EYES >**



## DECEIVING A TOM'S KEEN EYES

- **Total concealment is the name of this game.**

Veteran turkey hunters know that unless you're inside some type of blind, completely hidden, everything should be camouflaged. This means long-sleeve top, pants, headwear, mask and gloves. Most will have some type of vest in the latest camo pattern.

More is always better. Many hunters take it to heart and wear camouflaged boots. New shotguns are available sporting your camo of choice and older guns can be hydro-dipped, taped or painted in camo. Pay attention to all the details and little things. That should give you the edge.

Go for the natural look that matches your surroundings. Early in the season, Mississippi's spring woods look different than they do later on as new growth appears and matures.

"As the season progresses, and especially when things start to green up, my favorite camouflage is Mossy Oak's Obsession," says Shane McCullough, a veteran Copiah County hunter "In my opinion, it can't be beat."

A good option to consider when buying new camo is leafy-wear clothing. A lightweight, leafy top and hat can help break up a hunter's silhouette and will move naturally when the wind is blowing.

- **Back up to a big tree and be still.** Pick a tree that's wider than your shoulders, if possible. Bigger is better. When a tom is coming straight to you, it will be harder for him to spot you because he won't be able to detect your outline.

Be as still as you can. Try to put your sight bead on a tom when you first spot him, long before he gets into range. Keep it on him as he comes in. The only movement a hunter should make is keeping his sights fixed on the tom. If you must swing your gun to get on him, go slow — like cold molasses. A gobbler or any other turkeys with him are



Learning to use multiple types of callers have helped the author consistently lure in mature toms each year.

sure to spot any sudden movements.

- **Blinds are better for hiding.** Building a blind is an option and doesn't cost anything but your time. A good idea is to construct several natural blinds on your hunting grounds, close to strut zones or fly-down areas.

Factory-made blinds are good, too. These can be placed with the same strategy as natural blinds and are great for staying out of the weather when conditions are less than favorable. You'll



The use of decoys has helped Copiah County turkey hunter Shane McCullough see many early mornings of success.

be totally concealed in these. Some are easily moved, and low-profile blinds are being manufactured that take less than a minute to set up and are easy to carry, like the Alps Outdoors NWTf Deception ground blind.

Deer blinds or box stands are another option for ambushing unsuspecting gobblers. They're already there, and the turkeys are used to them. They think nothing of traveling by a deer blind. Use whatever is on your turkey hunting grounds to your advantage.

**• Seeing is believing — give him something to look at.** Sometimes, what a gobbler can see is just as important as what a hunter doesn't want him to see. A decoy or two, or maybe even a spread, may be the option to draw him in for a shot. Many times, if a wise old tom doesn't see a hen, he won't really believe one is there.

Set your decoys in open areas under the cover of darkness, before it gets light enough for a turkey to see. If it's later in the day when you want to set them, do it before you make a call; lonely gobblers will occasionally come in quickly.

Strut zones, fly-down areas, straight sections in logging roads, fields and food plots are ideal places to set up decoys. If your effective shooting range is 40 yards, put decoys 20 yards away. Don't place them at the outer limits of what you're capable of shooting; you need to be able to shoot beyond decoys in case a tom decides to stay on the far side.

## DOUBLE-DOWN WITH A PARTNER ON A DOUBLE-CROSSING TOM

When a crafty old tom is answering your calls but won't come within range, acting like a retreating hen may be just the trick.

This setup requires a hunting partner; you have to decide which one gets the shot. The shooter should hide and stay still and silent. The other hunter will be the retreating hen.

The objective in this game is for the retreating hen to move slowly away, calling

occasionally, while keeping the shooter between him and the gobbler. This will fool the gobbler into thinking that a hen is moving away from him, and he will move in that direction and come within range of the hidden shooter. This is one of the ultimate challenges in turkey territory to lure in the baron of the woods in this manner. Sometimes, it pays off big-time. ■

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• Home & 37 Acres . . . . \$300,000	• Lodge & 255 Acres . . . \$765,000	• 255 Acres . . . . . \$3,243/Ac.	<b>YALOBUSHA</b>
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**FOOLING GOBBLERS' EARS**



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## FOOLING GOBBLERS' EARS

It takes trickery to lure a tom into gun range. Staying hidden and getting past turkeys' keen eyesight is important, but just as important is being able to beat their great sense of hearing. It will take making some noise and not making some noise to tag your tom.

All turkeys, especially pressured toms, depend on their sight and hearing to keep from becoming a predator's lunch or the main course of your next meal. If you make a noise, whether it's stepping on and cracking a stick or yelping on a box call, gobblers can pinpoint your exact location. You're in their domain.

The right call to make depends on the situation you're in at that moment. It can't be taught, but rather, it comes with experience. Hunters should give a gobbler whatever he likes to hear. If he answers, he likes it; give him more. When he's answering every call but won't



**Big gobblers may concentrate on impressing hens during the spring, but they rarely, rarely drop their guard.**



**Make sure your camouflage is total and you stay as still as possible, even while calling, so a turkey won't detect you.**

commit to come in, stop calling for a few minutes and see if he moves closer. The silent treatment has tricked many mature toms to come close enough for a shot.

McCullough offers a little wisdom on calling: "When I have a gobbler that's just out of range or seems to hang up, I give him soft subtle calls on a slate. I won't do any loud calling whatsoever."

Practice your calling skills. Master the cluck and purr along with light yelps. These are basic and a must for a hunter's skill-set. Move on to cutting, fly-down cackles and excited yelps.

Become proficient with two different types of calls. A hunter who is able to call with a mouth yelper and a box call at the same time has a good chance of luring in a hard-to-get tom.

Keep a low profile and stay as quiet as possible. At times, it's just as important as being able to let-it-rip on a call. Don't alert a gobbler to your presence until you're ready to call him in. This is key in getting past his sharp hearing.

Park at a distance from where you plan to hunt and make a longer walk. Gobblers can hear vehicles and ATVs at great distances when it's crisp and quiet. Watch where you step to avoid breaking limbs. Take the path of least resistance when slipping towards a tom — briars clinging to pants and ripping loose can be heard from a distance. Old logging roads or well-worn trails used by deer hunters are ideal for maneuvering around in the turkey woods.

**GETTING PAST THE SIXTH SENSE >**

# DOUBLE UP WITH A PAIR OF DECOYS

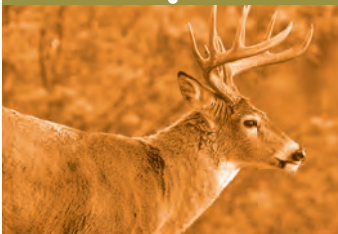
The right decoy setup can make the difference between walking out empty handed or high-stepping out shouldering a heavy tom.

While a full-fan strutter with a single hen decoy will work on some occasions, at other times, it will in scare off a tom. A full-fan strutter looks like a mature tom and will bring in the area's big boy, ready to fight. But if the gobbler you're after is a 2- or 3-year-old, and he knows a more-dominant gobbler is around, he may vacate the situation. A better choice is a half-strut or quarter-strut jake decoy along with a hen.

"I will put out an Avian X quarter-strut jake, then, I will back a lay-down hen up to him and see what happens," veteran hunter Shane McCullough said. "Any longbeard worth his salt won't stand for a jake attempting to breed a hen in his sight. The submissive hen set out in front of the jake decoy will trigger that fighter instinct in a mature tom." ■



A single, hen decoy may do the trick, but sometimes, using several decoys in your setup, at least one of them a jake, may be the undoing of a big tom.



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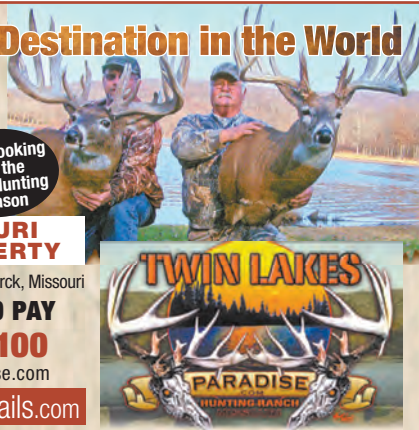
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## GETTING PAST THE SIXTH SENSE

Why does the gobbler get into gun range and go behind the big oak tree, and then the next time you see him, he's walking off at a hundred yards? Why did he walk to the right instead of the left? Why wouldn't he cross the fence? Why did he stop at a small ditch that a toad could hop across? While there may be no logical answer, a crafty gobbler seems to have what many hunters refer to as a sixth sense.

The best way to explain it is that this vain bird knows that he's the king of his domain. He knows what the order of nature is, that the hen should come to him, and he shouldn't have to humbly walk to her.

He is proud and shrewd in this order and knows what should take place. Any little resistance in his path can hold him back or divert his route and cause him not to come to your calling.

That's why hunters need to do everything they can to blend in with what's natural. Anything that causes the situation to "not seem right" can hang up your gobbler.

Do everything possible to add to your arsenal of tricks and skills. Don't become complacent or overconfident — turkeys have a way of humbling the best. A wily gobbler's senses are mind-boggling at times. It's been said that an old tom can hear you think and see you change your mind. Hunters who hone their skills and learn the finer arts of deception are the ones who consistently carry gobblers out of the woods year after year. ■



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

A man wearing a camouflage jacket and a baseball cap is smiling while holding a large, dead turkey. The turkey's tail feathers are fanned out, showing a mix of brown, tan, and black patterns. The man is standing in a wooded area with lush green foliage in the background. The ground is covered with dry leaves and twigs.

**IT'S GREAT TO DO BATTLE WITH GOBBLERS ON THE ROOST, BUT FINDING ONE LATER IN THE DAY MAY BE YOUR BEST CHANCE TO PUNCH THAT TAG.**

■ By David Hawkins

# TOMS LATER IN THE DAY

## THE MORNING MUSIC OF BREAKING DAWN IN THE TURKEY WOODS IS AN

# OVERTURE FOR A HUNTER'S SOUL.

Filtering out the extraneous noise is sometimes difficult but can be accomplished with a little practice. Songbirds carry the melody all the way to the thunderous finale as a male eastern wild turkey makes his presence known to all with a hearty gobble. It is what turkey hunters live for. The opus continues every morning as long as season is open and there are ears in the woods to listen.

Contrary to what many hunters believe, in the normal state of things, hens are attracted to gobblers. Starting in March, hens are encouraged by a longer photoperiod to ready themselves for breeding; gobblers are announcing their presence and letting the hens know where they will be waiting. The hens will yelp and purr to get the old boys' attention so they will get first breeding rights. This explains why so many hunters get frustrated when gobblers "hen up" right off the roost. Don't be one of them. Your calling is just as good; your stealth isn't. Hens just cover the

ground going to the gobbler more quickly.

Where hens are not roosted close to a gobbler, or multiple gobblers are in an area, a hunter has a better chance of getting an early morning bird. I'll bet I'm not the only turkey hunter who has been fooled by birds in the pre-dawn light. But be not despaired; the middle of the day is prime hunting time, especially as the season passes into April. There is no rule that says a gobbler has to be shot in the early morning. Early afternoon is a fine time.

When the gobbling stops, watch for hens, as well as gobblers, to move to feeding areas. Insects are becoming plentiful, and hens are putting on all the extra weight they can for the 28-day nesting set. Flocks will feed and breed for the entire time hens are laying. One breeding session can fertilize an entire clutch of eggs, but breeding can continue up until setting on the nest begins.

Once laying begins, a hen will lay one egg per day until her clutch of 10 to 12 eggs are in the nest. At that point, she will start setting in earnest. She may have set for short periods before, but once she sets for good, she will only leave the nest once a day to feed. During this time, she and her nest are at their greatest threat from predators such as foxes, bobcats, coyotes and dogs. Raccoons, skunks, possums and snakes are fierce egg predators. According to biologist Adam T. Rohnke, 55 percent of nests that are started fail to produce any poults.

While hens are nesting, gobblers will play. At some point in April, more hens will be nesting than breeding. This is when gobblers go on afternoon walks that will end in their demise at the hands of a savvy hunter.



Get a tom fired up after lunch, and you have a much better chance of him visiting your Thanksgiving table.

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**G**uessing the actual day and hour that hens will commit to nesting is like predicting the last frost of spring. One thing is certain: hunters have to be in touch with the flocks they are hunting. Seeing a dozen hens feeding in a hay meadow or a pasture in mid-afternoon one day, and seeing half that number a few days later is a dead giveaway. But such observations require boots on the ground, and success is for hunters who practice due diligence.

Flooding may set back nesting dates. Periods of extended cold weather may delay the establishment of a nest. If a hen is not nesting in April, there is a problem; she may be late-maturing, or her first nest was destroyed and she is starting over. Many Mississippi hunters agree that April 15, the day your income taxes are due, is when the most hens will be setting on the next or already hatching eggs.

Mornings in the woods seem to be the time to hunt turkeys, but afternoons are just as productive, if not more so. Gobblers are still in breeding mode and exhibit aggression. These two traits allow hunters to use decoys to the best advantage.

“A decoy set can be used at any time with some success possible,” said hunter Joshua Hawkins of Pearl. “History has taught me that gobblers like to roost close to, but not with, hens. So to decoy a gobbler as he comes off the roost is an iffy proposition. But I believe they will circle around and try to find that hen later in the morning.”

Later in the day, Hawkins looks for birds feeding in nearby

pastures. He sets up the decoys 25 to 30 yards into the field. His setup is typically two hens and a jake. After blinding in, he will wait 20 to 30 minutes before calling. The goal is not to get a distant gobbler to sound off, although they often do. The goal is to attract them to the set. I use purrs and light yelps, as if my little group is having a conversation. If a dominate gobbler hears and sees the decoy setup, the game is on. If the approaching bird hangs up, switching to more aggressive calling will often bring him on in on a string.

Hunter Richard Latham of Forest has several turkey grand slams — eastern, Merriam, Rio Grande and Osceola — to his credit. He saves his annual vacation so he can spend the most time chasing turkeys.

“Knowing the flock’s habits is vital; the birds will follow a pretty set pattern unless something major changes it,” Latham said. “Gobbler groups will remain loosely together and respond well to calling and decoys.. In April, 10 a.m. is not too early to start a mid-day hunt.”

Adding confidence decoys has proven to offer advantages for hunters working field-shy birds with hen and jake decoys. Decoys of crows or great blue herons will give a gobbler the feeling that all is right in the world in this field. He is then far more willing to close the distance to the hen decoy and challenge her faux suitor for breeding rights.

An afternoon setup should allow for a full field of view, since birds could come from any direction.





Whether you shoot typical lead loads or space-age tungsten alloys, make sure you test your gun and load on a target to make sure the pattern is effective.

## IS HIGH-DOLLAR SHOT REALLY THAT MUCH

# BETTER THAN LEAD?

There is no doubt that tungsten-alloy shot makes for a denser pattern. The smaller pellets of the alloy material, being 56% more dense than lead, deliver a lethal punch. Without question, it is a god-send for those hunters with recoil-sensitive shoulders.

Younger hunters and hunters with small frames will find it little problem to shoot. More hunters are giving up conventional, big-bore turkey guns for 20-gauge guns or even the diminutive .410.

Mossberg has recently introduced a .410 bore turkey gun based on their super popular and dependable M500. It was designed from the ground up as a turkey gun, designed to use the new generation of super-dense alloy shotshells. In a nutshell, the turkey hunter gets a lot of bang for the buck. ■

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**A** hen decoy will do the trick, two will do it better. Using a jake decoy will make a more-dominant bird aggressive. Such a setup worked well for me a few seasons ago in Jasper County. Gobblers were roosting in an island of taller trees in a cutover. They flew down to one of two ATV trails. My hunting partner took the hen decoy, and I had a jake. We set up some distance apart, but I could clearly hear his calling.

I called more softly and soon noticed a turkey approaching, paralleling the ATV trail. As it got closer, I remembered the words my daddy beat into my head: once a bird commits to your calling, put you call down and wait. The turkey proved to be a hen. She approached my set and purred a little, than squatted for the jake. She was patient, but her desire to get on with business got the best of her. She circled the decoy again and once again squatted, waiting for the jake to take her invitation.

It was all I could do to keep my composure. She yelped out of frustration, and to our surprise, a gobbler seemed to appear from out of nowhere.

The intruder attacked my jake decoy with impressive vigor. The hen walked a little distance away to observe the fracas. The interloper didn't have the rope beard I wanted, so he bred the hen and lived to see another day. That incident sold me on the value of decoys.

## GIVE THE OLD GIRL A MAKEOVER

Many older, foam-body turkey decoys are still on the market. They lack the portability of the folding and collapsible models, but they are not yet ready for the scrap heap.

Acrylic paints found at hobby shops and big-box stores that sell for

under a buck a bottle are the ticket. A few minutes with a brush are all it takes to touch up the head and neck. A spray from a can of high-gloss clear coat will return the decoy to its original luster. ■



Decoys should be set 15 to 20 yards in front of the hunter and facing in the direction from which toms are expected to approach.





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Decoys run the gambit in cost and complexity; one was marketed that actually operated on a track and unfolded and folded so the impression was given that a gobbler as strutting for hens. That's a lot of gear to set up and take down. More and more decoys are being made of collapsible material, so several can be easily stored in a hunting pack or turkey vest. ■



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



**THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX  
WHEN IT COMES TO TOUGH  
GOBBLERS, AFTER YOU  
MASTER DIFFERENT  
CALLS AND LEARN  
THE LAY OF YOUR  
TURKEY HUNTING  
LANDSCAPE.**

By Mike Giles

# **CALL CHAMP'S TURKEY TIPS**

## On one, early morning hunt, Mark Prudhomme located a tough, old gobbler roosted a short distance away.

He sent out a few soft, seductive yelps, and the tom belted out a thunderous gobble in response. Minutes later, he flew down in Prudhomme's direction and was coming in on a string. It was the perfect setup, and he was ready to tag another bird.

Then, the bird screeched to a halt about 75 yards away, strutting and drumming, searching the woods with a keen eye for his would-be suitor. Alas, she could not be seen, and old tom was not moving an inch closer.

"That bird would come to me every time I called to him, but he would hang up about 75 yards away and strut and gobble," said Prudhomme, a 17-time national calling champion from Georgetown, S.C. "It didn't matter where I was or what I did, he'd just stay in one spot and strut and gobble back at everything I did."

On a couple of occasions, it seemed the gobbler was teasing Prudhomme and toying with him, coming within shotgun range but never offering a shot because he was in a thicket. The more Prudhomme hunted him, the harder it got, until the master turkey hunter finally had enough.

"I knew that I had to do something or I'd never kill that bird," Prudhomme said. "He wouldn't come past that magic distance, staying just out of shotgun range every time I got on him."

One morning, everything went according to plan, with the same scenario presenting itself.

"I called to him one morning, and he gobbled right back at me," Prudhomme said. "As soon as he answered, I ran toward him, stopped 75 yards from my original calling spot, sat down and shut up. A few minutes later, the gobbler strutted right up to me and stopped right in dead killing range."

"Ka-Boom!"

Prudhomme's shotgun roared, and the gobbler met his destiny after whipping the champion caller many times. That's the appeal of turkeys for many hunters like

Prudhomme, battling bad birds and finding a way to entice them into gun range. Sometimes, you have to resort to a little trickery to get up on them or think outside of the box.

The bad bird was a trophy indeed; it sported a 12-inch beard to go with 1½-inch spurs and 21 pounds of pure, bad-to-the-bone turkey.

"Every turkey is different, and you never know what will entice them until you actually get into battle with them," Prudhomme said.

No matter what the circumstance, always know where you are and practice safe hunting habits first.

### ROOST HUNTING

"My favorite time to hunt them is early morning off of the roost," Prudhomme said. "The setup is very important, and you really need to know the geography of the land to be successful. I do call to the birds when they're on the roost, but I just do a soft tree call to let him know that I'm a hen and I'm there when he's ready."

If multiple birds are gobbling, then it's an opportunity for Prudhomme to use their competitiveness to his advantage.

"A lot of times, I'll try to get them fired up, and I'll call a little more to get them competing against each other," he said. "They don't want any competition, and if they think



there's another gobbler there, they'll come running to get rid of their competitor."

"It's real important to know the situation at the moment and whether he has hens or not. If he does, you need to know the direction the hens like to go each morning, as that old gobbler will follow them if they're roosted nearby. If he's by himself, then things are different, but you always want to be in a spot that the turkeys want to go."

While that may sound easy if you know the lay of the land and the bird's habits, it's sometimes easier said than done, but you need every advantage you can get when locking horns with a wise, old bird.

### MID-MORNING HUNTING >

Mark Prudhomme took this gobbler with an old 20-gauge double-barrel, a Winchester 23. **BACKGROUND:** Spring mating rituals include dueling dances and eventually fighting to establish a pecking order.



## MID-MORNING HUNTING

"Mid-morning can be really productive," Prudhomme said. "If you're not successful off the roost, then sit tight if one leaves you, because a younger gobbler or 2-year or older bird may come in silent. It always pays to be quiet and patient."

During mid-morning, the hens will go to nest or leave the gobblers, and the gobblers find themselves alone. That's when their natural instincts leave them vulnerable.

"If you can get one to gobble around 10 a.m., there's a good chance you're going to kill him," he said. "Once I know where that gobbler is, I won't call to him any more than I have to or need to. All you can do is mess him up by calling to much. If he goes quiet, then I may do a little soft call, but that's about it. I've had them come in quiet and never gobble again."

## AFTERNOON HUNTING

"I've killed a lot of birds during the afternoon, around 3 to 4, too," Prudhomme said. "I'll move around some and try to spot one in a field or feeding, but it doesn't hurt to set up in an area where you know they're at and blind call. I'll try to get a little excited in the afternoon, because if you get to cutting and aggressive yelping, you might get him excited and fired up."

If they get fired up, then they're usually history when facing The Champ.

## WEAPON OF CHOICE: TRUMPET

Prudhomme won six Grand National Team Titles with a friend and later competed in the Champion of Champions competition, where one of the required calls is a trumpet. His partner kept after him to learn to run a trumpet, so that's just what he did.

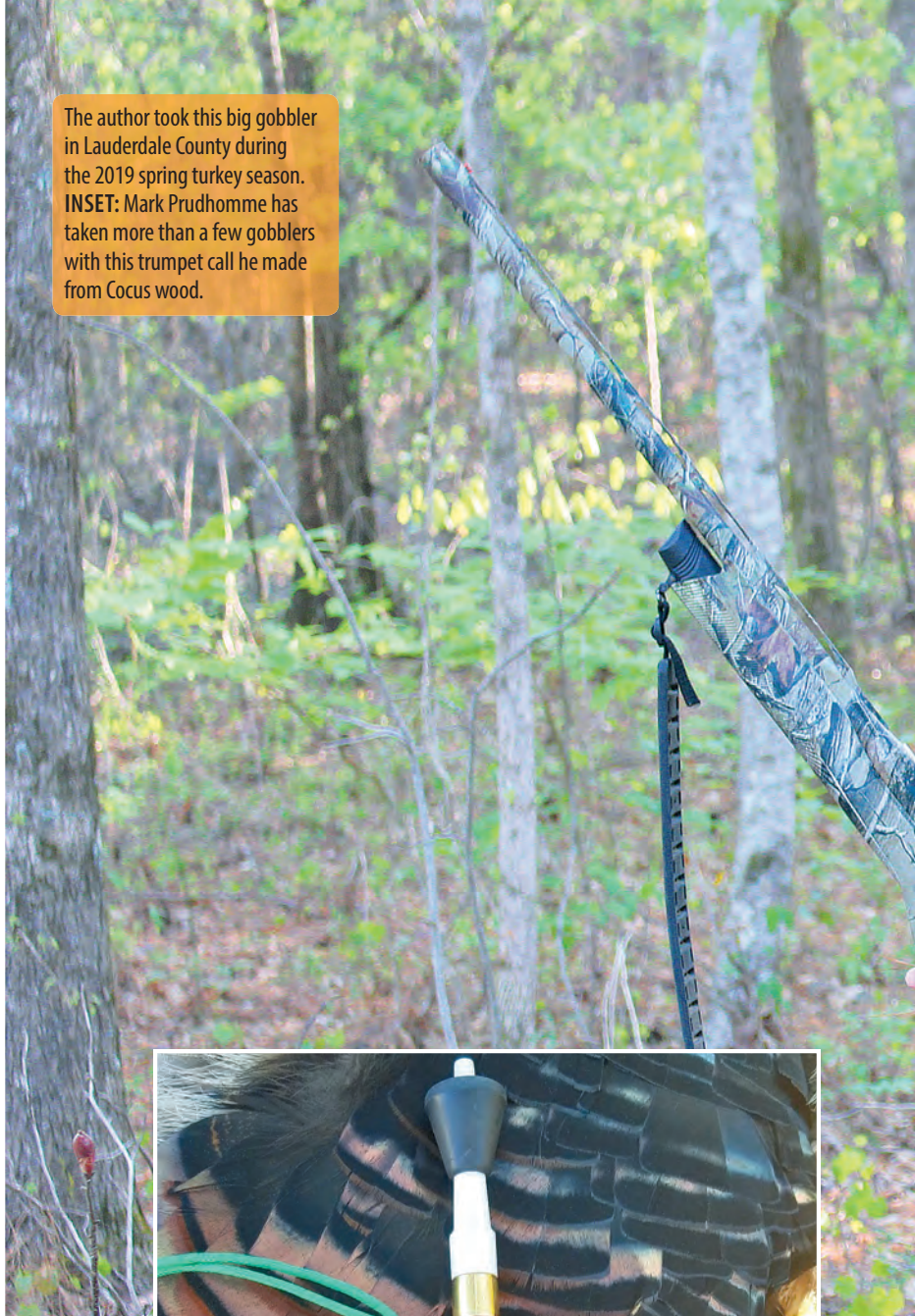
"I started hunting a lot more with the trumpet after I'd learned how to call with it, and the turkeys were reacting to it differently," Prudhomme said. "I had less hang-ups, and the turkeys would come straight to me. It was amazing to me. They might not sound good up close, but a good trumpet really sounds good in the woods from 100 yards away."

## MASTER CRAFTSMAN

"When I won several Grand National Titles, I had to use them, so I practiced and worked on them until I could call pretty good," he said. "I started with a wing bone and won my first Champion of Champions with it, but I decided to start building my own trumpets so I could get the sound I wanted."

"I bought a lathe, and it took several years to get them like I wanted, but I won my fifth Champion of Champions title with my own trumpet," he said. "I prefer the Zack Farmer-style because his sounds more like a real turkey than anything I'd

The author took this big gobbler in Lauderdale County during the 2019 spring turkey season. INSET: Mark Prudhomme has taken more than a few gobblers with this trumpet call he made from Cocus wood.





heard before.

“You should be able to get that raspy, high-pitched sounds from your trumpet, so I’d recommend that you buy a quality trumpet and learn to play it. It might take a while to master it, but after you do, there’s no limit to what you might be able to do with it.”

When Prudhomme encounters a wise, old bird that will respond to a single hen but won’t come in, he’ll imitate several turkeys with his trumpet.

“I’ll mimic a high-pitched hen and a raspy hen,” he said. “Sometimes, I’ll do a fly-down hen and then call like one is in the tree and one on the ground while sending the sound in different directions. If I really need to spice it up for more reality, I’ll include a jake gobbler in the mix, all calling back and forth to each other.”

There are not too many toms than can resist a “flock” of sweet love notes sent out by this expert caller and call-making craftsman, but he knows how to speak their language and when to do it.

## BEGINNERS

“Start with a good trumpet and learn to use it before going to another style,” Prudhomme said. “Beginners should ask veteran hunters who makes a good trumpet call and find out who a lot of them like and get one.”

“I’ll sit down and get set up before I make a turkey sound,” Prudhomme said. “A lot of times, I’ve set up beside a tree and called two or three times, and had a hen fly out of the tree beside me and drop down right in front of me. If I’d moved up a little further, I’d have spooked the birds, and my day would be over before it began.

“Beginners should avoid spooking birds at all costs because they’ll be educating the birds and the hunt will be over soon, so be patient and don’t move a lot.” ■



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



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**FISHERMEN CAN INCREASE THEIR CHANCES OF SUCCESSFUL TRIPS BY PAYING ATTENTION TO CERTAIN NUMBERS, LIKE WATER TEMPERATURE, AIR PRESSURE AND PHOTOPERIOD. ■** By David Hawkins

# BASS

## BY THE NUMBERS

**O**ur lives are governed by numbers. Speed limits, alcohol and ethanol content, sticker prices and the cost of a plate lunch; there's no escaping the use of numbers. Human brains have evolved to process numbers as easily as words in everyday communication.

There is no avoiding it, especially for the angler. Numbers are just a part of life, but knowing how the numbers relate to bass fishing in April could make the difference in landing a lunker or having a zero day.

Understanding how fish react to atmospheric conditions and changes is a start to using numbers in your favor. April is what many anglers term as a transitional month, meaning from the beginning to end there may be wide variations in air and water temperature — not like July and August, which typically start and end hot. Crappie fishermen have learned to use this transition to locate schools of slabs in prespawn, spawn and post-spawn modes. Bass anglers can apply the same precepts and get bitten on a regular basis.

**HOW COOL'S THE POOL? >**

## HOW COOL'S THE POOL?

Water temperature is a fluid number — no pun intended. Air and terra firma heat faster than water, but once warmed, water is slower to cool. Studies show fish prefer warmer water over cool, as long as there is enough dissolved oxygen to support a comfortable life. In April, water is starting to develop a thermocline, layers where cooler water is deeper and warmer water is closer to the surface. Fish, whose bodies adopt the same temperature as the surrounding water, will adjust to the thermocline they find most comfortable.

A surface water temperature of 60° F is a point when shad become more active; it follows that bass will be emerging from the winter doldrums, feeding on schools of shad. It would stand to reason that a shad-colored bait will be a fitting choice to tie on and fish, but shad aren't the only critters on the menu during the spring warm-up. Frogs, salamanders, aquatic worms and crawfish are there as well.

“Most of our lakes are between 60 and 70 degrees in April,” said Jerry Brown, a fisheries biologist for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. “Bass start getting more active when water temperatures are above 50 to 55

degrees. Shallow water warms first; that's where you can expect to find bass, since it's also spawning season.”

Late-passing cold fronts can knock the bite back, but as temperatures recover pretty quickly this time of year, so does the bite. Warmer water prompts all life to become more active; bream will start to bed, crappie will spawn, crawfish and frogs become more abundant and bass don't have to go far to find a meal.

## THE PRESSURE IS ON

Barometric pressure has long been a short-term tool for predicting fish feeding patterns. So what numbers are the best for bass fishing? Many anglers agree that falling pressure, such as before a frontal passage, is the best time to fish; days with high pressure (30.50 or above), often called bluebird days, are slow and require a slow lure presentation and searching near cover. Days with pressure changes, either rising or falling slowly, are good times to try new baits and just see what works. Cell phones have a feature that shows weather conditions, forecasts and current barometric pressure. Some will include moon phases as well as air temperature.



The proper method for measuring a bass is with the mouth closed and the tail lobes pressed together. This bass just misses being 14 inches.



All black bass, including large-mouth (top), spotted, and small-mouth (bottom) count in creel limits in Mississippi.

## PHOTOPERIOD

Sunlight reflects off water in early spring because the sun has yet to reach its zenith, but fish eyes are sensitive to light, so the time of day and available shade come into play for the savvy angler.

“Photoperiod (the amount of daylight in a 24-hour period) is very important,” Brown said. “It gives us bass fishermen more time on the water. Seriously, longer days provide more time for the sun to increase the water temperature. I’ve heard anglers say it is the photoperiod that triggers the spawn, while others think it is the temperature. It’s likely both play a role.”

This is a good place to mention tables and charts that forecast good days of fishing. Rick Taylor’s ASTRO Tables are in each issue of *Mississippi Sportsman*. Best fishing days are determined by moon phase. Some people swear by these tables, while others are doubters. Check the tables against your trips and decide for yourself.

## WATER CLARITY >

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SHIMANO

This Columbus Lake bass couldn't resist a green frog worked in the grass. **BELOW:** A few hard crankbaits an angler may have in their bass catching arsenal. Note the coloration includes those found in shad, bream and crawfish.

## WATER CLARITY

Professionals use a device known as a secchi wheel to determine water clarity. The device is a disc, either 8 or 12 inches across and painted black and white. The weighted device is lowered in the water and the visible depth in feet is then noted. Brown considers any number greater than 4 feet as being clear water. In place of a specific device, a bright, flashy lure cranked up to the tip of a bass rod and held under water is a suitable substitute. In some state lakes, 4 feet or more of visibility is not unheard of, while rivers and impoundments are typically much less clear.

Not to worry; bass use their eyes to see bait/prey, but they also use their lateral line to triangulate prey in water that is less than clear.

"Water clarity definitely plays a role when choosing lure colors," Brown said. "A good rule of thumb is to use natural colors in clearer water because bass can see the lure well. Popular colors are watermelon, and shad, bream- and crawfish-imitating colors (brown, green and silver)."

Line used in clearer water is also important. Professional anglers use either fluorocarbon or braid with a fluorocarbon leader. No matter the choice, invisibility under the surface will add authenticity to the bait's color. The more realistic the presentation, the more likely bass are to bite.

Where water lilies or other vegetation live in clear water, don't overlook the lowly plastic frog. Allowing the frog, lizard or other soft creature bait to rest on a pad while using the rod to generate vibrations is deadly. It is a technique that requires patience but is rewarded with success. Remember, bass see and feel the lure's movement, so when the lure finally slides off the pad or grass, a bass is ready to attack.

Bass like to get a big meal for the least amount of expendable energy; this is a long recognized fact. A 5-pound bass will have



to cast and retrieve but can be well worth the effort.

Topwater offerings are best early and late, before the sun gets too bright and forces bass deep or into cover. A Rapala fished as an injured minnow has been deadly for decades. Twitch the bait to create ripples as an injured baitfish might, or choose a slow-sinking model to mimic a shad swimming erratically. Use the rod to bring the bait toward the surface then pause it as it slowly sinks. Be prepared for a solid strike.

"Both dark- and bright-colored lures are typically selected when the water is murky or turbid," Brown said. "Dark colors show up well in turbid water and bright colored lures can catch their attention. Black and blue has long been a popular choice, and junebug is very popular. In my experience, green pumpkin seems to be a good color in any condition."

Bass fishing numbers don't stop here, however. Anglers need to understand and abide by creel and slot limits. These numbers are in place to protect spawning-age fish from overharvest. It is up to the individual angler to know the numbers as they vary from lake to lake. For example, Lake Calling Panther in Copiah County has a 10-fish limit with a restriction that only one fish longer the 20 inches can be kept daily.

At Neshoba County Lake, a 16- to 20-inch slot limit is in place; all bass in that slot must be released. On Ross Barnett, anglers operate with a 7-fish daily limit, and they may only keep bass longer than 14 inches. Largemouth, spotted and smallmouth bass are all equal in a creel limit. Complete up-to-date creel and slot limit information for most public waters in Mississippi may be found at the MDWFP website [www.mdwfp.com](http://www.mdwfp.com).



no problem swallowing a large shad, but shad don't streak through the water in straight lines unless a big fish is pursuing them. For this reason, an umbrella rig is still a good choice for anglers wanting to target fish where shad are being hunted by packs of predators. These rigs create the illusion of a small school of shad traveling in unison. Such rigs require some prac-

## MORE NUMBERS

Shopping for baits also requires an new vernacular. The decimal point has moved into fishing circles. Simple plastic baits are packaged as 4.5 or 3.5 instead of weight and inches. Don't be surprised to hear bass pros describing baits by saying "I did well locating fish with a 4-point-5 (4.5) Senko."

Even rods and reels are feeling the change, with gear ratios creeping into the name. One of Abu Garcia's new baitcasting reels is called a "5.1." What happened to a guy having a Zebco 33 and a Lucky 13?

No matter the numbers, there is a lake near you that's full of bass. State lakes, state park lakes, pools on the Tenn-Tom or simply the rivers and creeks that crisscross Mississippi offer a bass bite for everyone. But one thing is for sure: A dry hook catches zero fish. ■



David Hawkins is a freelance writer living in Forest, Miss. He can be reached at [hawkins2209@att.net](mailto:hawkins2209@att.net).

## TIE UP ALL THOSE LOOSE ENDS

The cost of lures has gotten outrageous, with some trendy models reaching \$20 or more. That's not such a bad deal if they catch fish consistently, but in many cases, expensive lures just fly off the line when cast because a knot wasn't properly tied or the line had become frayed due to use.

There is no set-in-stone rule of thumb for re-tying a knot, either to a lure or joining a leader. Most anglers re-tie at the beginning of each trip. Some use a drop of super-glue to ensure their knots are strong.

As far as line, that's a whole article unto itself. After a break-off or being snagged, remove a foot or two of line to make sure there's no stretch or fray remaining. Find a knot you can tie quickly and practice it. You'll be glad you did. ■

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## GETTIN' FRESH

Hal Schramm



Research confirms that feeding pelleted feed will improve bluegill growth rate.

# SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDING IN FARM PONDS WORKS

USING HIGH-TECH SCIENCE TO TEST OLD-SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

**F**arm ponds provide abundant recreational fishing opportunities, and a simple fish community of largemouth bass and bluegill — or bluegill and redear sunfish — is a proven recipe for producing satisfying fishing in thousands of ponds.

Both bass and sunfish are desirable sportfish, the sunfish provide necessary forage for piscivorous bass, and bass control the numbers of the prolific sunfish. Many pond owners provide pelleted feed to improve the growth and reproduction of sunfish that may, in turn, improve the better growth rates of bass. Stocking threadfin shad is also recommended by pond managers if trophy bass is a management goal.

Benefits of supplemental feeding can be evaluated by measuring sunfish and bass growth, but many factors can affect growth. Diet studies are needed to assess the effects of supplemental feeding.

Diets of fish historically have been assessed by examining stomach contents. What is in the stomach is clear evidence of what the fish ate in the few

hours before sampling but does not, without repeated sampling, describe the diet over longer time frames like a season or a year. Stable food isotopes are incorporated in fish tissue. Thus, stable isotope ratios, particularly carbon and nitrogen, in fish tissues provides insights about food resources consumed.

A study by Auburn University fisheries researchers evaluated the effects of supplemental feeding with pelleted feed and threadfin shad by measuring changes in bass and bluegill growth rate and also measuring stable isotope ratios to track the flow of energy through the simple ecosystems.

## POND STUDY

Ten ¼-acre ponds were drained and dried to ensure no unwanted fish were present, then filled and stocked with young bluegill and largemouth bass in the spring. Two ponds received one of five feeding rates ranging from zero to 4 pounds of pelleted food per acre daily. Fish were harvested at end of summer.

Bluegill body weights and ovary weights

were positively related to feeding rates. Nitrogen isotope ratios suggested bluegill were feeding on the pellets. Bass body weight and stable isotope ratios were not related to the feeding rate.

## ESTABLISHED PONDS

Thirty fertilized bass-bluegill ponds, 2 to 58 acres, were assessed. Ten ponds were not fed (control ponds), 10 ponds received pelleted feed (fed ponds), and 10 ponds received pelleted feed and were stocked with threadfin shad (fed-shad ponds).

Bluegill growth rates, indexed by length at age 2, and relative weight, a measure of body condition or plumpness, did not differ among feeding treatments. Bluegill nitrogen isotope ratios did not differ



Hal Schramm is an avid angler and veteran fisheries biologist.

among feeding treatments and were not related to growth rate. Bluegill carbon isotope ratios were similar to the carbon isotope ratios of the pelleted feed.

Largemouth bass growth rate, indexed by length at age 2, was greater in the fed-shad ponds than in the control ponds but not different from the fed ponds. Nitrogen isotope ratios did not differ among feeding treatments and were not related to growth rate. Carbon isotope ratios in the fed and fed-shad ponds differed from the control ponds but were not related to growth rate. Carbon isotope ratios were similar to pelleted feed but different from threadfin shad.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The correlation of bluegill body weight with feeding rate in the research ponds suggests feeding increases bluegill growth, and the nitrogen isotopes confirm that the energy for growth was coming from the pelleted feed. But similar results were not obtained in the fed, established ponds. This was likely a result of low feeding rates. Average feeding rate in the established ponds was only 0.9 pounds per acre per day. If you are investing time and money feeding bluegills, feed enough to make it work.

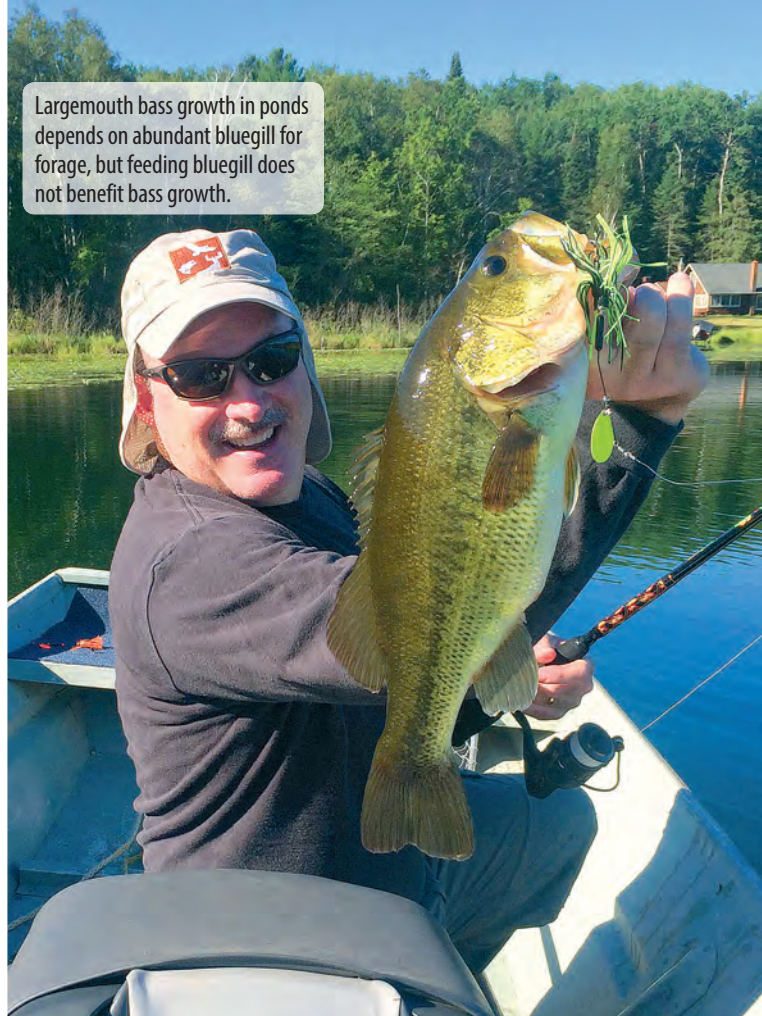
How much feed is enough? Consistently high growth in the research ponds was achieved at 4 pounds of feed per acre per day. Although the growth of bluegills in the research ponds was positively related to feeding rate, wide variation in growth at lower feeding rates in this study precludes estimating a minimum feeding rate that benefits bluegill growth lower than 4 pounds per acre per day.

Dr. Wes Neal, fisheries extension specialist at Mississippi State University, offers some simple guidance for feeding bluegills: use a floating feed, and feed as much as sunfish can eat in 5 to 10 minutes. A floating feeding ring keeps the feed where the fish can get it and where you can monitor consumption. And now is the time to start feeding.

Bass growth in the established ponds was related to the presence of threadfin shad. Bass growth was not related to feeding pellets in either the research or established ponds, yet carbon isotope measurement indicated that bluegills that fed on pelleted feed were, in turn, eaten by the bass. The study authors interpreted these results as bluegill are the predominant forage of bass in these ponds, but threadfin shad provide additional energy to boost bass growth. If this is the case, pond owners interested in good bass fishing should maintain a robust bluegill forage base and view threadfin shad as a supplement to that forage base. ■

**LUNKER LINES >**

Largemouth bass growth in ponds depends on abundant bluegill for forage, but feeding bluegill does not benefit bass growth.

An advertisement for Okuma Epixor fishing gear. The background is dark with a white, torn-paper-like border. The word "EPIXOR" is written in large, white, stylized letters at the top. Below it, the text "INSPIRED BY TECHNOLOGY" is written in white. A fishing reel is shown in the center, with the word "EPIXOR" on its side. To the right, a fishing rod is visible, with the word "okuma" written vertically on its handle. At the bottom left, the Okuma logo and "INSPIRED FISHING" are displayed, along with the website "www.okumafishingusa.com". At the bottom right, the model numbers "EPXT-30" and "EPI-C-701MH" are listed.

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EPXT-30 EPI-C-701MH

## LUNKER LINES

Paul Elias

The author really likes the Baby 1-Minus lure when the grass is only about a foot or less under the water, since this crankbait stays shallow, and its treble hooks will tick the grass and trigger a strike from a smallmouth.



# PICKWICK LAKE FOR APRIL BASSING

I will choose Pickwick Lake for April bass fishing, since I'll catch a variety of bass there, including largemouths, smallmouths and spots. You'll probably take the most spotted bass, then largemouths and next smallmouths. The good news is that current always helps your bass fishing, and in April at Pickwick, current almost always will be moving through the lake. April is when the Tennessee Valley Authority starts raising the lake to its summer pool level, and the large amount of rain Pickwick receives in April also results in moving current.

## LIPLESS CRANKBAITS

At the beginning of April, I'll still be fishing a prespawn pattern, looking for

secondary bars with grass starting to grow on them. I'll fish a lipless crankbait with a rattle, a very productive bait that covers a lot of water and gets the attention of numbers of bass. I particularly enjoy fishing the sandbars and mussel bars between Second Creek and the Natchez Trace Bridge in 3 to 5 feet of water that drops off into deeper water.

I'll pinpoint these bars with my Garmin electronics, using its SideScan feature. Most of the grass on these secondary bars will grow up to about a foot off the bottom, and I want my lipless crankbait to run with its hooks barely ticking the grass. I'll also search for ditches in these bars that contain grass. Bass want to pull up on those shallow bars to prepare for the spawn as April arrives, but they still

want to have deep water — the ditches — close by. Then, if a cold front hits in April, which often happens, the bass can back off the bars and drop down in the ditches close to the ends of the bars.

I'll have two lipless crankbaits in red or chrome with a blue back rigged up on my casting deck on 7-foot-6 FX Custom cranking rods. I'll cast a ½-ounce lipless bait to the shallow grass on the tops of the flats, using 20-pound bass braid on



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.

a 7.5:1 Bruin Elias Legend Series reel. I'll fish the 3/4-ounce lipless crankbait in the ditches, using a 8.1:1 Bruin reel. The lighter crankbait will tick the grass on top of the secondary bars, and the bigger crankbait will tick the grass in the deeper ditches. What determines the speed of the reel I use is how fast I can crank the lure and still tick the grass.

## LATER IN APRIL

The other lure I'll cast is a Carolina-rigged plastic lizard in redbug color on a 7-foot-4 FX Heavy Plus rod with a moderate tip, 50-pound bass braid on a 7.5:1 Bruin Spinning Reel, with a 3-foot leader of 23-pound test White Peacock fluorocarbon. I'll fish with a 1-ounce weight up the line ahead of the leader. As the grass grows taller on the bars, the bass will move toward the spawning flats.

Once the bass are on the spawning flats, I'll start casting a crawfish-colored Mann's C-4 and a Baby 1-Minus crankbait on the same rod, reel and line I've used for the lipless crankbaits. I'll run these crankbaits somewhat faster than the lipless crankbaits to tick the tops of the grass growing closest to the surface.

When the bass move into spawning mode toward the middle and the end of April, I'll fish a green pumpkin SpringR Worm, rigged wacky style, on a 7-foot-4 FX Custom spinning rod and 15-pound bass braid on a spinning reel with a 10-pound fluorocarbon leader. I'll be pitching and casting that SpringR Worm into the holes in the grass and up under the bushes and trees that are in the water, close to the shoreline.

## BASS AND NO GRASS

I enjoy fishing pea-gravel points and banks, too, since that's where smallmouths like to bed. I love to cast a 3/8-ounce chartreuse/white Classic spinnerbait in these areas on a 7-foot-3 FX Custom medium-heavy rod with the same 7.5:1 Bruin spinning reel spooled with 20-pound fluorocarbon. I'll also fish a crawfish-colored C-4 crankbait and a watermelon red SpringR Worm where I find numbers of these pea-gravel



You'll probably catch more spotted bass than largemouths or smallmouths on Pickwick Lake this month.

points in the same sections of Pickwick where the secondary bars and the grass are between Second Creek and the Natchez Trace Bridge. I'll be fishing the main lake and its pockets too. I usually put in my boat at Natchez Trace and plan on a fun day of fishing any day I'm on the water in April at Pickwick. ■

## LURE REVIEW >

# MAKE SOME NOISE



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 SNAP: G FINESSE TOURNAMENT SNAP SIZE M  
 HOOKS: GAMAKATSU ROUND BEND TREBLE (#4)



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## LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman



## FILL YOUR QUIVER

MISSILE BAITS' NEW SOFT-PLASTIC BAIT IS A WINNER FOR USE WITH NEKO, TOKYO RIGS.

Photos courtesy John Crews

**A**t the 2019 Bassmaster Classic, John Crews, owner and president of Missile Baits, unveiled a soft plastic that has been an unqualified success. The Ned Bomb took the finesse fishing game to another level.

At last month's Bassmaster Classic on Alabama's Lake Guntersville, Crews and his staff from Salem, Va., introduced another new soft plastic, this one designed specifically to be fished on a Neko Rig or Tokyo Rig; the latter can be punched effectively and also triggers bites when pitched around cypress trees and cypress knees across the South.

Crews, the 41-year-old bass pro and founder of Missile Baits, was excited

about launching the Quiver, which will be available in 4½- and 6½-inch models. The new bait was born out of necessity, according to Crews, who fishes on the Bassmaster Elite Series circuit and finished sixth in this year's Classic.

"About halfway through the year last year, I went through like three tournaments in a row where I caught all my fish on a Neko Rig," said Crews, who started using a Neko rig in 2016. "I was using other brands. It dawned on me I wanted a thicker-bodied worm so the hook stays in it and a little thin tail to give it action. I wanted a head with a flat spot on it to be able to insert the weight."

He got right on that task.

"I drew it up in the fall, probably

September," he said.

Crews knew what dimensions he wanted and relayed them to the professional who has crafted the molds for 10 previous Missile Baits products.

"I nailed it right off the bat," he said. "I basically took the head of the Ned Bomb and used it on both Quivers because I knew the size and shape of the head I wanted."

The result pleased him.



**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.

"I didn't know what to expect when I did the Ned Bomb. I thought it'd be pretty good, and we sold a ton of them. I think this bait has got the same potential," he said, noting it should catch "a ton of bass" mainly using two techniques.

"They (Quivers) look amazing underwater. It's an ideal bait for the Neko Rig and the Tokyo Rig.

Crews and some anglers in the office have been catching bass on the Quiver for a while, he said, noting one of them caught five bass on one of the soft plastics and still has it tied on, proof of its durability.

As for using a Tokyo-rigged Quiver around cypress trees, which are common bass habitat in Louisiana and across the South, Crews suggested using two 1/8-ounce worm weights that will clack together and "to just pitch it around cypress knees and hold on."

Quivers will be available in 10 colors with many options, he said, adding there will be single colors, core colors, laminated and triple laminated. ■

*For more information about the Quiver and other Missile Baits products, go to [missilebaits.com](http://missilebaits.com) or call 855-466-5738.*



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**SALTWATER**

**STATE COASTAL WATERS REGULATIONS (0 - 3 miles)**

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

@ For openings and closings of federally regulated fish and updated size limits, visit [gulfcouncil.org](http://gulfcouncil.org).

**FRESHWATER**

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

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

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

% For lake-specific regs, see MDWFP's Regulations Digest or [www.mdwfp.com/](http://www.mdwfp.com/)

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

\* Possession of certain species of sharks is prohibited.

**HUNTING SEASONS**

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

**WATERFOWL SEASONS**

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

**DEER SEASON**

<b>ZONE</b>	<b>ARCHERY</b>	<b>PRIM WEAPON</b>	<b>GUNS</b>
<b>Northeast</b>	Oct. 1-Nov. 22 Nov. 11-22 (antlerless primitive weapon) Jan. 17-31 (archery/primitive weapon)	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 23-Dec. 1 (dogs) Dec. 16-23 (no dogs) Dec. 24-Jan. 22(dogs) Nov. 9-22 (youth)
<b>East Central</b>	Oct. 1-Nov. 22 Nov. 11-22 (antlerless primitive weapon) Jan. 17-31 (archery-primitive weapon)	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 23-Dec. 1 (dogs) Dec. 16-23 (no dogs) Dec. 24-Jan. 22(dogs) Nov. 9-22 (youth)
<b>Southwest</b>	Oct. 1-Nov. 22 Nov. 11-22 (antlerless primitive weapon) Jan. 17-31 (archery-primitive weapon)	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 23-Dec. 1 (dogs) Dec. 16-23 (no dogs) Dec. 24-Jan.16(dogs) Nov. 9-Jan. 22 (youth)
<b>Southeast</b>	Oct. 15-Nov. 22 Jan. 23-31 (either-sex arch-primitive) Feb. 1-15 (archery-primitive bucks only)	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 23-Dec. 1 (dogs) Dec. 16-23 (no dogs) Dec. 24-Jan. 16(dogs) Nov. 3-Feb. 15(youth)
<b>Delta*</b>	Oct. 1-Nov. 22 Nov. 11-22 (antlerless primitive weapon) for details on special Oct. 15-Jan. 5 South Delta Season)	Dec. 2-15 Jan. 22-31 (archery primitive weapon)	Nov. 23-Jan. 1 (dogs) Dec. 16-23 (no dogs) Dec. 24-Jan. 22(dogs) Nov. 9-22 (youth)

■ By Kinny Haddox

**CALLING IS WAY DOWN THE LIST OF TALENTS THAT TURKEY HUNTERS HAVE TO MASTER. ACCORDING TO ONE TURKEY HUNTING LEGEND, SCOUTING AND LISTENING ARE FAR MORE IMPORTANT.**

WHICH CAME **FIRST,**  
THE **GOBBLE**  
OR THE **CLUCK?**



## Turkey hunting boils down to getting the basics covered and getting things in the correct order. So when it comes to successfully chasing and calling wild “thunder chickens,” which came first — **the gobble or the cluck?**

Dan DeWitt of Dry Prong, La., a veteran turkey hunter and professional outfitter and a member of the Louisiana Outdoor Legends Hall of Fame, said the answer is easy. It's neither.

“What comes first is scouting,” DeWitt said. “To be a successful turkey hunter, you have to learn how to go out and find the turkey sign, from tracks, feathers, turkey droppings to scratchings. Then you can find where they are living,” he said.

Now, how about those calls. No, not yet.

“The second thing you have to do is listen,” he said.

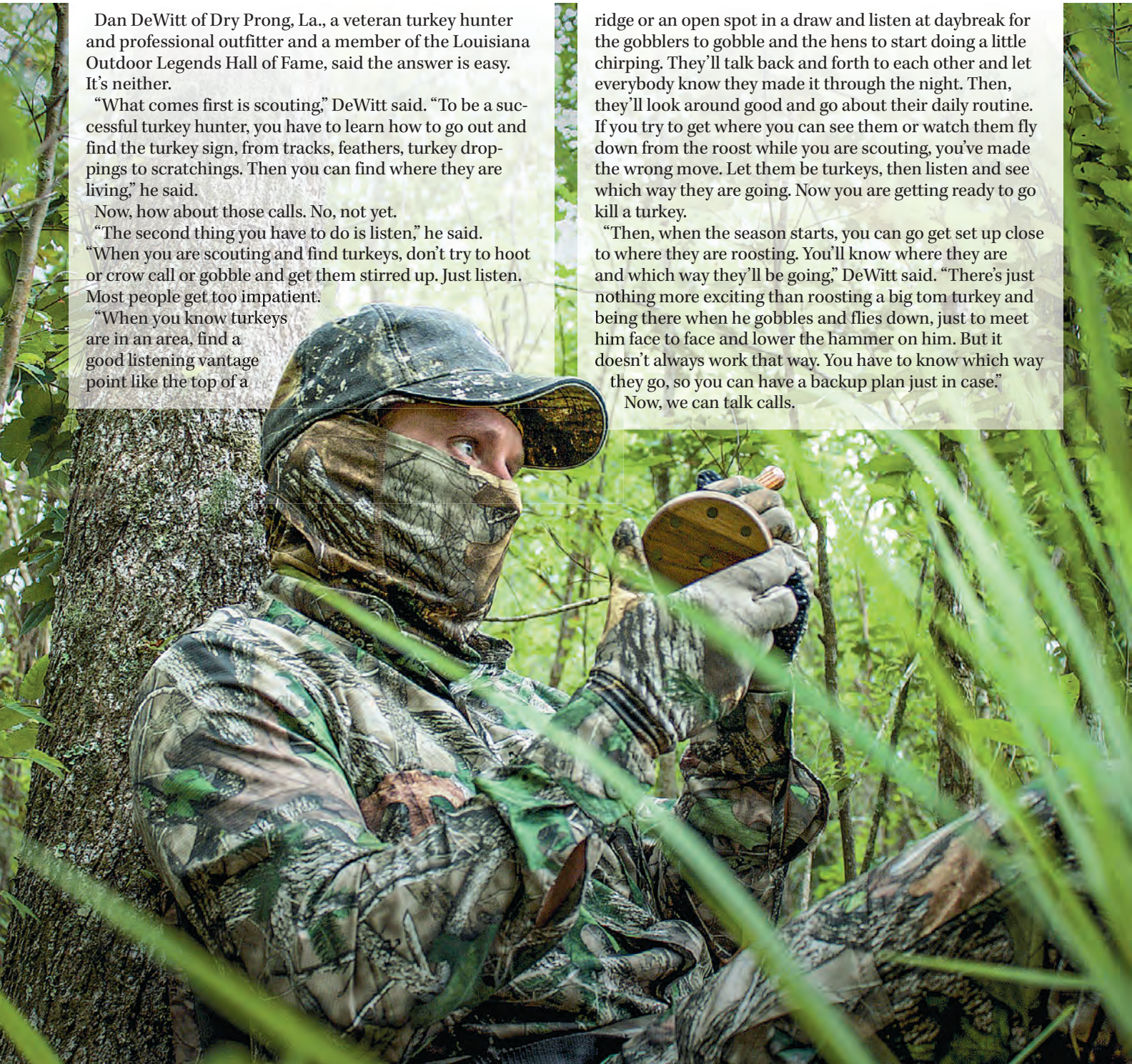
“When you are scouting and find turkeys, don't try to hoot or crow call or gobble and get them stirred up. Just listen. Most people get too impatient.

“When you know turkeys are in an area, find a good listening vantage point like the top of a

ridge or an open spot in a draw and listen at daybreak for the gobblers to gobble and the hens to start doing a little chirping. They'll talk back and forth to each other and let everybody know they made it through the night. Then, they'll look around good and go about their daily routine. If you try to get where you can see them or watch them fly down from the roost while you are scouting, you've made the wrong move. Let them be turkeys, then listen and see which way they are going. Now you are getting ready to go kill a turkey.

“Then, when the season starts, you can go get set up close to where they are roosting. You'll know where they are and which way they'll be going,” DeWitt said. “There's just nothing more exciting than roosting a big tom turkey and being there when he gobbles and flies down, just to meet him face to face and lower the hammer on him. But it doesn't always work that way. You have to know which way they go, so you can have a backup plan just in case.”

Now, we can talk calls.



## 2020 MISSISSIPPI TURKEY SEASON

**Statewide:** March 14-May 1.

**Bag limits:** One (1) adult gobbler or 1 gobbler with a 6-inch or longer beard per day, 3 per Spring season. Hunters 15 years of age and younger may harvest 1 gobbler of choice (any age) per day, 3 per spring season.



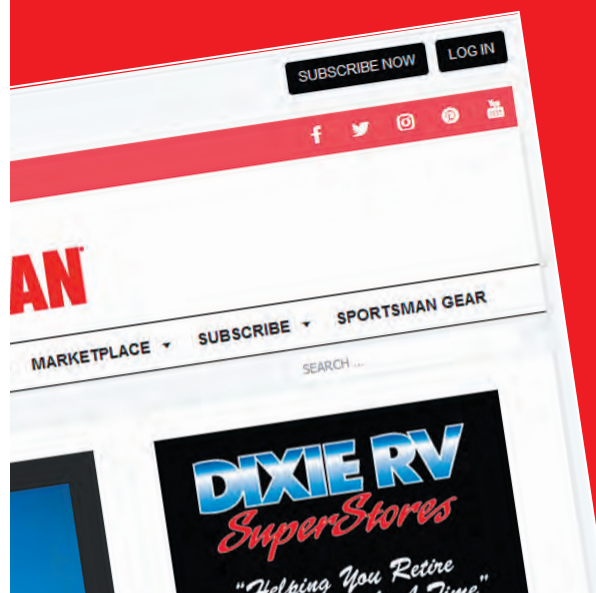
A big gobbler strutting on a sunny, April morning is one of the most-impressive sights in the outdoors. **OPPOSITE:** Being able to call is important, but it's not nearly as important as knowing the woods you're hunting and where turkeys like to walk.

“When you have a gobbler close in the morning and you (call) and he answers, just shut up. He knows where you are, and unless he heads the other way and you know it, just wait,” he said. “One mistake people make is calling too much. Another thing is, when you are hunting a 4- or 5-year-old, mature turkey, remember this: if you are calling, and he cuts you off, he has you in his plans. It may not be immediate, but sometime that day, he’s coming right back to where he heard you. You can bank on it. It may be a few minutes. It may be a few hours. But if you want that big turkey, just be patient. I’ve had that happen time and time again. Heck, if it’s a long time, just take a nap. When he gets back close, he’ll wake you up with a gobble you won’t forget. These are smart birds. Real smart birds.”

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**WHICH CAME FIRST,  
THE GOBBLE OR THE CLUCK?**

**D**eWitt said it doesn't matter if you use a mouth call, slate, box, scratch box, wingbone or any kind of call, the most-effective call you can use is a properly timed, three-part yelp call.

"Those old hens, if you listen to them, they are going to go 'yelp, yelp, yelp' with three ... yelps. Learn that sequence and the cadence. It's important," he said. "When you have that down, you have the old bearded ones in trouble. That is real to a gobbler — as real as it gets."

DeWitt should know. He's killed more than 200 wild turkeys, in 30 different states, and he has guided other hunters that have killed substantially more than that over his career. He



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No matter what kind of call you prefer, a simple, three-note yelp is the most important call to learn. Decoys can also be a help.

is also the only turkey hunter who has killed a double grand slam twice in the same season. He has turned more to archery hunting in recent years, but his tips work for gun or archery hunters.

Of all his turkey wisdom, this may be the most important. "Before you can be a great turkey hunter, you've got to become a good turkey hunter," he said. "Before you can become a good hunter, you have to be a bad turkey hunter. And to be a bad turkey hunter, you've got to start. Too many people are impatient and want to be an expert overnight. It doesn't work that way." ■



**Kinny Haddox** has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 45 years. He publishes a daily website, [lakedarbornnelife.com](http://lakedarbornnelife.com) and is a member of the Louisiana Chapter of the Outdoor Legends Hall of Fame. He and his wife, DiAnne, live in West Monroe.

Dan DeWitt loves to find a gobbler's strutting zone because he can set up close by and expect a visit.



# MEET BIG GOBBLERS IN THEIR 'STRUT ZONE'

Every dominate gobbler has a special place Dan DeWitt calls the "strut zone". It's not a place regular hunters go, and it isn't something he usually talks about.

"My absolute favorite thing to do in spring turkey hunting is, once you hear them fly down, then listen for what they do and find their strut zone," DeWitt said. "The big, old gobblers may not ever roost in the same tree, but about 9 or 10 o'clock in the morning, he's going to make his way to that special place where he struts his stuff and puts on a show for all the hens that are following him. When you are scouting, find that place, and when you hunt, go set up there before he gets there. It's the best place to kill a big mature bird."

DeWitt said once you've found a gobbler's strutting area, you can verify the exact spot at other times of day by finding feathers, strut marks where he's been dragging his wings or where he's really been tearing up the ground. When Dewitt has that spot pinpointed, he doesn't worry about hunting the roost or calling to the bird, he just visits the strut zone and sets up in a good spot. It can be a pretty long way from the roost, too, he said.

Normally, when he and the turkey are in the strut zone, he

doesn't even have to call, but if he does, he uses what he calls a spit and drum call. The turkey makes a spitting and drumming sound when he's in the zone. DeWitt said if you have to make that call to get him close, be ready.

"That is his spot, and he's the dominant turkey there," he said. "He's already run off the other turkeys. That's his house. If you gobble at him, he's going to be mad and come right at you. Make sure you are ready." ■

**GRUNTS & GOBBLES ➤**

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## GRUNTS & GOBBLES

David Moreland

It's not difficult to manage your hunting land for better wild turkey habitat, which results in more smiles.

# MAXIMIZE YOUR TURKEY HABITAT

EARLY SPRING, BEFORE THEY NEST, IS A GOOD TIME TO GET HABITAT IN SHAPE FOR TURKEYS

Photo courtesy Kendall Reed

**T**he habitat of the wild turkey changes with the seasons. In the fall and winter, birds move into hardwood drains searching out the hard mast that is generally available.

Turkeys are in winter groups, with a hen and her poults often joining up with other hens and poults. Jakes may form another winter group and usually, the adult toms are together in a flock. As spring approaches, the hens begin to search out nesting sites, usually around fields and openings. Adult toms begin to split up and search for receptive hens. The jakes, young toms, will stay together to avoid getting whipped by a mature gobbler.

As hens begin to nest, and when the eggs hatch, brood habitat that provides the small birds with areas to feed is critical. Insects are the primary food item of

these small turkeys, and finding food is a must. As fall approaches, turkeys again begin to gather in their various groups, and the cycle starts again.

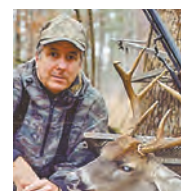
## LONG WALKS

Turkeys can travel several miles during the course of the day, and they do best in areas with large, contiguous tracts of timber. Forest fragmentation seems to work against the bird; however, in some eastern cities, one can find good turkey populations primary due to protection and supplemental feeding.

A small landowner is at a disadvantage because of this nomadic behavior. In the area where I hunt, we had a very good turkey population up until the 2016 floods. Turkeys, for some reason, have disappeared after these record rainfalls and floods, and I am at a loss to under-

stand why. The state wildlife agency doesn't know why this happened, with some biologists simply throwing out the habitat card and blaming it for the decline. This however, does not explain why a very good turkey population disappeared overnight. It was not due to declining turkey habitat. I really suspect that the decline is due to a disease issue that came about after these historic rains and floods.

While the turkey population has virtually disappeared in our neck of the woods, I will continue to manage the



**Dave Moreland** is the author of the new book *Louisiana Whitetails*, which explains how to grow big deer and where to hunt them. The book is available at [www.SportsmanGear.com](http://www.SportsmanGear.com) and at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

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habitat for turkeys with hopes that at some point they return. These photos illustrate some of the management work that I am doing to keep the habitat viable for turkeys.

### OPEN AREAS

As mentioned, turkeys need open areas for feeding; particularly, the hens need good brood habitat. This open site (above) provides good opportunity for young birds to search for insects. There is some escape cover available, because a site such as this provides high visibility for hawks.

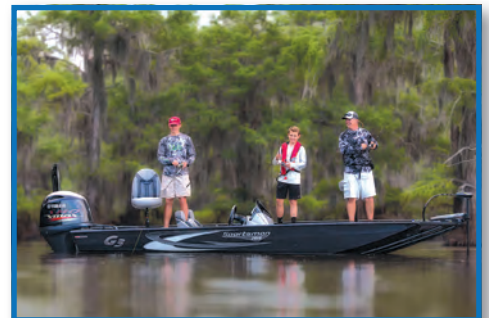
### SPRING FIELDS

As spring progresses, the winter grasses begin to seed out and provide adult turkeys with various seeds. The site (above right) is too thick for young turkeys to move around in and find insects. Poults survival would be poor if all of the available habitat was in this stage of growth. These fields provide adult turkeys with high-protein plants such as clover, which helps with egg production. A field such as this would also provide hens with nesting habitat.

### VEGETATION STRIPS ➤

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# YAMAHA

## GRUNTS & GOBBLES

continued

### VEGETATION STRIPS

I like to use a bush hog in my management work and will cut strips in areas with heavy growth to provide young turkeys with brood habitat. The red mulberry trees in the strip of trees in this photo provide birds with an excellent soft-mast fruit. Red mulberry and black cherry are two trees that can be planted for turkeys. Maintaining various heights of vegetation will also provide diversification of insects. Katydid and grasshoppers will be in the taller grass, while crickets and other insects will be under the debris piles left from the strip cutting.



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### TREE PLANTING

It is getting a little late to be planting trees and shrubs unless one has the means to water them during the summer. It is best to plant trees in late winter and allow time for the root systems to take hold and the tree become acclimated to the site. My focus on tree planting is to provide a mast source for both turkey and deer. Our habitat had no white oaks, so my focus has been on establishing white oaks and cow oaks. Sawtooth oaks are a good tree to plant for both deer and turkey. I have a video of a two turkeys standing on a sawtooth oak branch; one of them stretches out and eats an acorn.

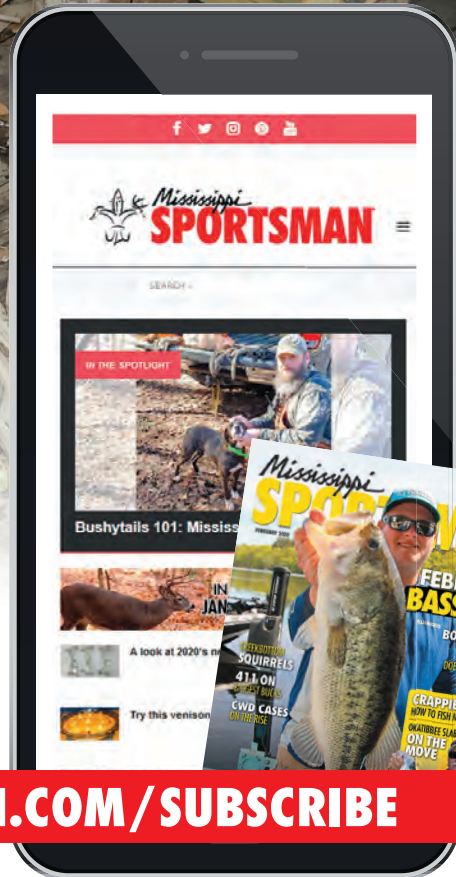
I have to believe that at some point the turkey population will recover, and once again, I will have turkeys walking around on the landscape. The more active I am in my management work, the better chance I have of this becoming a reality. ■

### SPECIES SPOTLIGHT ➤



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## SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope

Most wahoo have black-blue vertical bars the length of their bodies.



# SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: WAHOO

FAST, HARD-FIGHTING, TASTY AND POTENTIALLY HUGE. WHAT ELSE COULD AN ANGLER ANYWHERE WANT?

**W**ahoo are among the fastest fish in the ocean, are hard-fighting, and are also one of the tastiest species in the sea. For those reasons and more, they are highly sought-after by anglers throughout the world.

These fish are long and cylindrical, with toothy mouths. They have steel blue coloration along the upper portion of their bodies and are pale blue to silver below their lateral lines. Twenty-five to 30 blackish-blue vertical bars mark the length of the fish in an irregular fashion. The bars are more prominent in smaller wahoo, but they become very noticeable in even the largest wahoo when the fish is excited. Their scales are very small, and barely visible.

Wahoo have a movable upper jaw that is lined with many sharp teeth. The fish is sometimes misidentified as king mackerel or barracuda by inexperienced anglers. They are members of the *Scombridae* family, making them cousins to mackerels, tunas and bonitos. They rarely travel in large schools, but younger fish often swim in loose groups of between two to 20 fish. On rare occasions, anglers have reported seeing wahoo in schools up to 100 fish.

## TROLLING AT SPEEDS

These fish exist in the bluewater oceans throughout the world and are often caught by recreational anglers fishing in offshore and nearshore waters. Trolling is one of the top tactics for catching

them. Most experienced anglers switch between trolling at high and low speeds, depending on conditions and how the fish react on any given day.

Areas with deep, blue waters that feature sunken rocks, wrecks or livebottom are good areas to troll. No matter how deep the water is, spots with any submerged structure are good spots to look, especially in water that ranges from 70 to 74 degrees. Floating weedlines are also good areas to target. Artificial lures and fresh ballyhoo are good baits.

## GROW, THEN DIE

Wahoo grow at a rapid rate, and have a short life span. Some studies with tagged, released and re-caught wahoo have shown growth rates of as much as 22 pounds per year. Most die before 10 years of age. These fish can reach speeds of 60 mph and can chase down a variety of intended prey, which includes numerous fish and squid. Biologists believe wahoo sometimes kill fish larger than themselves, shredding them into bite-sized chunks with their razor sharp teeth.

Anglers often find a giant stomach worm (*Hirudinella ventricosa*) in the bellies of wahoo. However, the worms do not seem to have any negative impact on the fish and also do not taint any part of the fish eaten by humans.

Wahoo spawn every month of the year, and most reach sexual maturity by the end of their first years. The length of the spawning session varies widely between

different regions of the globe, but most extend for long periods of time. Females release millions of eggs into the ocean each year, and males fertilize them as they float freely in the pelagic zone.

## REAL MONSTERS

Wahoo are commonly referred to as 'Hoos by anglers across the southeastern United States. In other parts of the world, the fish are sometimes called ono, oahu and peto.

Sara Hayward caught the world-record wahoo, which weighed 184 pounds, in 2005 while fishing out of Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. A 202-pound wahoo was caught off the coast of Florida in 2016, but the fish was ineligible as a world record because three different anglers took turns reeling it in.

The Louisiana state record wahoo weighed 139.25 pounds. Angler Myron Fischer caught the big fish in the West Delta Block 153 in April 1976.

The Mississippi state record wahoo weighed 111 pounds, 3 ounces, and was caught in 1998 by Jeffery Lee of Supply, N.C. ■

## COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE ➤



**Brian Cope** of Edisto Island, S.C., is a retired Air Force combat communications technician. He has a B.A. in English Literature from the University of South Carolina and 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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*It's the science of stains made simple!*

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Most surface dirt will wash right off with boat soap and water. However, some gets ground in, especially on non-skid surfaces. That's where surfactants come in. Surfactant molecules fully surround the dirt molecules and lift them from the surface that you're cleaning. This allows them to be washed away with water. Chelating Agents are supercharged surfactants for specialized cleaning.

#### THE SOLUTION

Star brite Boat Wash will definitely remove most surface dirt. For tough grime and gunk, use a cleaner/degreaser, such as Star brite Xtreme Clean or choose a surfactant based on the surface: Non-Skid Deck Cleaner for non-skid, Vinyl Cleaner for vinyl, etc...



### ACID TECHNOLOGY

TO COMBAT

## RUST & TANNIC STAINS



#### THE STAIN

Tree leaves, hull stains, rust stains, waterline stains, hard water stains, orange stains.

#### THE SCIENCE

Tannins are naturally produced in the decomposition of plant-based matter, and their signature orange-hued stains are dyeing your hull and fiberglass. Rust stains occur on the fiberglass around metal, where water leaches color from underneath the metal and deposits it on the surface. Removing these stains requires a chemical reaction with an acid.

#### THE SOLUTION

Star brite Instant Hull Cleaner contains a modified oxalic acid that safely neutralizes tannins and rust. There's much more science behind it but trust us on this one, simply spray or wipe on and watch the stain disappear.



### BLEACHING TECHNOLOGY

TO COMBAT

## MOLD & MILDEW STAINS



#### THE STAIN

Black, brown, green, and pink mold and mildew stains.

#### THE SCIENCE

Similar to grass stains, these stains are caused by organic material, and need something stronger than a surfactant alone to remove them. The oxygen in a bleaching agent attacks and breaks up these types of stains, and removes any discoloration.

#### THE SOLUTION

While most people believe that regular chlorine bleach is the answer, it also causes a lot of problems, such as breaking down fabrics and stitching and destroying gelcoats. Instead use Star brite Mildew Stain Remover—a buffered bleach formula—that attacks the stain without harming the surface.



### ABRASION TECHNOLOGY

TO COMBAT

## SCUFF MARKS



#### THE STAIN

Black shoe marks, rub rail and bumper scuffs, marks left from dragging hoses and equipment.

#### THE SCIENCE

Scuff marks—or “transfer stains”—happen when material is transferred onto a surface and is mechanically bonded. Chemicals are rarely strong enough to remove these marks, since many times the material that has transferred is chemical-resistant (think of a rubber shoe). These abrasive marks require the same to remove them: abrasion.

#### THE SOLUTION

Star brite Ultimate Magic Sponge uses nano-sized scrubbers to grab hold and erase most marks easily. For your hull, use Premium Cleaner Wax to buff the stain away.



## COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver

# TERIYAKI WAHOO FINGERS

CUT THIS BIG, BLUEWATER BATTLE DOWN TO SIZE

You can broil or bake teriyaki wahoo fingers indoors, in your oven, but being outside on the grill makes the fish at least seem so much more tasty. **INSET:** A wahoo loin and a sharp knife are the beginning of wahoo fingers.

Jerry Dilsaver



**A**pril is a special time for sportsmen in the Southeast. Spring arrived a few weeks ago, and Daylight Savings Time has been in effect since early March. The weather is warming, and there are plenty of things to do.

Even though this has been a mild winter, there has been a lot of rain, and sportsmen have already been looking for outdoor activities and dry, warming weather. An extra hour of afternoon daylight and the increasing activity of game and fish have given them plenty to do. They are waking up after their winter rest, and sportsmen are heading to the woods and water to make their acquaintance.

April is the time for chasing turkeys, and strutting thunder chickens are booming their hen-seeking gobblers through the hollers, across open fields and through the coastal swamps. A growing number of hunters live for this month to match wits with a full-grown gobbler.

Fishing opportunities abound from the mountains to the Gulf of Mexico. Almost every body of water holds challenging fish, but there is something special about leaving a coastal marina in the pre-dawn hours heading for the deep, blue waters of the Gulf. There are several species that will make any fishermen

smile, but this month's quarry is wahoo.

It wasn't too many years ago that wahoo were considered solitary fish, and any trip that included more than one in the fish box was special. Fishermen didn't realize how many of these bluewater cousins of king mackerel were out there. However, as more fishermen chose to chase them, the tactics and techniques improved, and fishermen learned there were far more of them than they had ever imagined.

The best start to a spring dinner of wahoo fingers is to go catch them yourself, but as the catches continue to grow, a good friend might occasionally bring a few pieces by. If you catch them yourself, you'll be tired and smiling, but you should be smiling however you come up with fresh wahoo for dinner.

Wahoo aren't just one of the prized offshore catches, they taste extremely good. They are a cousin in the mackerel family but have lighter meat and a milder flavor. They will be excellent table fare as long as you don't overcook them. This recipe is as simple as I know, and it has great flavor. Cutting wahoo fillets into fingers makes it easier to use in meals and seems to also make it more attractive for those who think they don't like fish. Give this a try and see for yourself. ■

# TERIYAKI WAHOO FINGERS

The most-fun part of eating wahoo is being on the waters of the Gulf of Mexico and reeling them in. It feels like work at the time, and on a good day, your muscles will be sore, but it's a lot of fun.

It's also fun to eat them, and that's what this is about. I believe wahoo is good prepared in any way, but this is a simple way that can be easily prepared after a day of fishing or on a day when you've been busy and want to relax outdoors in the late afternoon or early evening.

Most restaurants and fish-preparation guides suggest having 4 to 6 ounces per person. I would suggest allowing at least 8 ounces of fish per person. If there are leftovers, you'll be happy to eat them later.

When fixing this dish after a day of fishing, I use a fillet from the first wahoo cleaned that afternoon. Cut the fillet into strips a little larger than your fingers and immediately put them in a Zip-Lock bag with just enough teriyaki sauce marinade to cover them. Squeeze out all the air and put the bag on ice or in the refrigerator. If doing this at home and you have a vacuum sealing machine, put the fish and teriyaki in a sealing bag and seal it with the machine. This will force the sauce to penetrate the fish better in 10 minutes than it will in a couple of hours in a Zip-Lock. Finish cleaning the boat and the other fish and cook when you're finished.

I personally don't use any salt, but I add some coarse-ground black pepper. This can be added with the sauce/marinade or just prior to cooking.

I prefer to be outdoors and cook this on the grill; however, it is also very good baked or broiled in an oven, and those who prefer fried fish will find it also tastes very good fried. If you like breader on your fish, use a very light dusting to try it and then

add more if that is better suited to your tastes. The exception is for frying, but I still prefer not to bread it heavily. Use a plain or lightly seasoned breader so it doesn't overpower the teriyaki marinade. I have not tried this in an air fryer and would love some feedback if someone prepares it that way.

Another plus for this is it serves well in a variety of ways. I typically eat it as the entree for the meal and add vegetables, bread and a drink. It also serves well as a salad topper, and my favorite of these is with Asian slaw. For more informal meals or to make it more fun for kids of all ages, the fingers make a good base for sandwiches and sliders. This is versatile and tasty and there will be more than one way you will like it. Enjoy! ■

## INGREDIENTS:

8 ounces of wahoo fillet per person

Teriyaki marinade/sauce

Salt and pepper to taste

Seafood breader (optional according to taste)

Burger or slider buns (if you choose to try it this way)

Wahoo fingers can be eaten on buns or topping a salad.

## PREPARATION:

Cut the wahoo into strips a little larger than your largest finger. Put the strips in a Zip-Lock or vacuum-sealed bag and cover with teriyaki marinade, then squeeze all the air out of the Zip-Lock or vacuum seal the vacuum-sealer bag. You may add salt and pepper before adding the marinade or just before cooking.

Allow the strips to sit on ice or in a refrigerator for at least one hour. They will season better and faster when in the vacuum sealer bag. Spray a vegetable tray with non-stick cooking spray, put it on the grill and preheat the grill to medium.

Place the wahoo pieces on the vegetable tray. Cook until lightly done on each side, being careful not to overcook. The time will vary with different grills, but it is about 4 minutes per side on my grill. Remove from grill and serve while still hot.

Once the wahoo fingers are cooked, they can be used in multiple ways. I like this as the entree for a meal, with several vegetables or a vegetable and a green salad. It is also very good as a salad topper and I like this with Asian slaw/salad. Teriyaki wahoo fingers are also excellent as the meat in fish sandwiches and sliders. I like to put some Asian slaw on the bottom of the sandwich and add the wahoo fingers on top. The bottom line is, Teriyaki wahoo fingers are tasty and versatile. You'll like them in numerous ways, too. ■



**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@captainjerry.com](mailto:Jerry.Dilsaver@captainjerry.com).



# TOP 6 SURF-FISHING

**T**here's more to catching trout in the surf than showing up and walking into the water. Here are some tips from Sammy Roman, manager of Chag's Sporting Goods, in Metairie, La., who has perfected the tactics.

## • MODIFY YOUR LURES

On topwater plugs, Romano adds an extra split ring between the ring already on the plug and the hook, a trick he learned from Bill Mellor, a retired U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service game warden.

The extra ring makes it difficult for a fish to get enough leverage to twist off the hook.

Romano and fishing buddy Nicholas "Frog" Cioffe also replace the hooks on all their plugs with Gamakatsu hooks, which are stronger and sharper than the hooks that come standard on plugs. More important for trout fishing, Gamakatsu hooks have larger gaps, which results in more hookups with fish that just slap at the lure. This is useful for all fishing, not just surf fishing.

## • THE TAG-TEAM APPROACH

Later in the day, after the sun rises, Romano and Cioffe form a tag team, with one continuing to fish a topwater lure while the other shifts to a suspending lure.

When a trout slaps at the topwater but doesn't take it, the suspending bait will be cast to the same spot, and 60 to 70% of the time, the result is a hookup.

## • FIND THE SWEET SPOT

Look for the suds produced by breaking waves, Romano said, and throw topwater lures close to the whitewater. With sinkers or suspenders, cast into the suds.

## • SCOUT, SCOUT, SCOUT

"Sandbars change every winter," Romano said. "One of my early season tasks is to walk everything walkable to see the lay of the bars. Knowing where the bars and troughs are is the key to understanding fish movement. Trout follow a feature."

## • LOOK FOR THE BEST WATER

"In the surf, I've caught fish in muddy water, and I've caught fish in clean water, but everything is easier in clean water," Romano said.

The best color is "trout green," or green water that is not too clear. Romano likes to be able to see his bait 1 to 2 feet underwater.

"Move up and down the beach to find the cleanest water," he said. "If I can't find clear water, I just fish in muddy water."



# TACTICS

## • BE CONSTANTLY ALERT

Stay on your toes. Don't just blindly and repetitively cast to the same spot. Watch for any bait movement and cast into it immediately.

Watch for feeding slicks, defined as patches of water calmed by the oils released from the bodies of prey fish being attacked by trout. But remember that the fish might be quite a ways upcurrent from the slick.

Surf fishermen have an advantage in that, with the beach as a barrier, fish are usually up or down the beach, reducing the area that to be searched.

And, being that they are physically in the water rather

than in a boat, surf fishermen are in constant touch with the direction of current flow. ■

Success in the surf can really be good when you read the beach and figure out where fish are going to be feeding.

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Andre Smith, left, and Tim Hebert with four D'Arbonne slabs they found using LiveScope and Perspective electronics.



# A NEW "PERSPECTIVE"

By Kinny Haddox

## SERIOUS CRAPPIE ANGLERS GAIN ANOTHER NEW TOOL

It's been less than a year since the Garmin LiveScope brought more excitement to crappie fishing than a livewell full of 3-pounders. And now, there's even more, a new "perspective mode" using the same technology and a simple rotation of the transducer.

In addition to the existing LiveScope forward and down modes, anglers can use the Perspective mode for overhead visibility that's perfect even in shallow water.

To understand the new tool, one only has to understand the meaning of the word "perspective" — the art of viewing objects on a two-dimensional surface to give the right impression of their height, width, depth and position in relation to each other when viewed from a particular point.

Although the new brackets are a few weeks out from being on the market, Louisiana

anglers Tim Hebert and Andre Smith from Thibodaux got a jump on its use by constructing a homemade bracket and using both LiveScope down and perspective imaging to help them to a sixth-place finish in the Crappie Masters Louisiana State Championship on Lake D'Arbonne. They landed two 7-fish limits for a total of 28.44 pounds and a big fish of 2.77 pounds.

"There's no question using the LiveScope down-imaging and the perspective mode helped us in the tournament," said Hebert, a member of the Crappie Psychic fishing team. "I can see the perspective mode also playing a big role for bass fishermen in the future."

There are two ways to rig up the new perspective mode. Anglers who already have LiveScope can just buy a hinged perspective bracket to let their transducer tilt from down-imaging to perspective (150-degree forward) imaging.

**THE POSSIBILITIES ARE WIDE OPEN.**

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You can use that without another transducer or screen; the bracket costs about \$100.

But to change between the two modes, anglers have to lift the transducer out of the water and physically reposition it by turning it sideways to enable the new Perspective mode to see a wide view of what's in front of the boat.

The more expensive way to do it is to buy a separate transducer, depth unit and bracket — which can run as high as \$4,000 or more, depending on the size of the screen. That way, anglers can see both ways — directly below and in front of the transducer and in a 150-degree semi-circle around the boat at the same time.

“That’s a little out of the average fisherman’s price range, but it’s amazing technology,” said Hebert. “You are going to need it to compete regularly in big tournaments. The biggest advantage of LiveScope and perspective is it gives you a live, real-time view of the fish. When the fish were so spooky because of all the pressure, it enabled us to see the fish far enough away to cast to them and catch them before they spooked. Once they got nervous, there was no catching them.”

Hebert also feels like the original LiveScope down mode, in combination with a separate Humminbird Mega 360, is a great way to go as well. Even though they come from different manufacturers, the LiveScope can give anglers a live view while the Mega 360 can give detailed images of structure, down to the smallest branches on sunken timber. He plans on using them together for the ultimate in crappie fishing. ■



The bow of Tim Hebert’s boat looks more like an airplane with the LiveScope down chart (upper left), perspective mode (upper right) and Humminbird Helix Sonar (bottom).

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## AMERISTEP CARE TAKER MAGNUM

With many states going to special early youth turkey hunting days or seasons, ground blinds are an option a lot of adults are choosing to help keep the young hunters out of the unwavering eyes of a boss gobbler.

Ameristep's new Care Taker Magnum blind is just the ticket. It's big enough — 59x59 inches, 66 inches high — for three adults, much less an adult and a young hunter. It comes in Mossy Oak Break-Up Country camo, with shoot-through windows and ShadowGuard coating inside so that gobbler can't

see inside.

The blind comes with brush-in loops for adding natural foliage, an easy access zippered door, ground stakes and tie-down cords, and it weighs just 14 pounds.

The shell is Durashell Plus fabric with a matte finish. The Rigger Spider Hub frame makes for easy set-up and takedown.

**MSRP: \$139.99.**

**For more info, visit: [ameristep.com](http://ameristep.com)**

## ESCORT FIELDHUNTER TURKEY SHOTGUN

Escort has added a gun specifically designed for turkey hunters to its line of pump-action shotguns. The FieldHunter Turkey is available in 12- and 20-gauge models, as well as .410, chambered for 3-inch magnum loads as well as standard 2¾-inch shells.

The FieldHunter Turkey is available in Realtree APG and Mossy Oak BottomLand patterns and comes with three interchangeable chokes. The 5-inch optics rail on top of the receiver will accommodate a variety of Weaver mounts for additional optics, and sights are green and red fiber

for low-light hunting.

All models come with an extended fore-end for faster cycling of shells. The fore-end and stock are both made from a

**MSRP: \$399.99.**

**For more info, visit: [productwebsite.com](http://productwebsite.com)**



durable synthetic polymer to withstand the elements, and both are equipped with mounted sling studs. All three models weigh less than 7 pounds.



## MILLENNIUM TURKEY SEATS

One of the biggest challenges for turkey hunters setting up on a gobbling tom is being able to sit still for long periods of time. And yes, being comfortable is a key to doing just that.

Padded seats are many hunters' solutions, but even they aren't the answer in some situations — like having that tree root right under one side of

your posterior when you sit against that big oak. A pad will give you only so much relief.

But Millennium Outdoors may have made it easier, introducing two portable seats for turkey hunters: the TU01 Field Pro and TU02 Run & Gun seats. The Field Pro is foldable, with a 17x20x21-inch aluminum frame, and a padded carry strap. It weighs just 6.4 pounds.

The Run & Gun seat has the same seat frame and strap, but no back and weighs 4.2 pounds. Both come in Mossy Oak Obsession camo.

**MSRP: TU01, \$89.99, TU02 \$69.99.**

**For more info, visit: [millenniumstands.com](http://millenniumstands.com)**



TU01 Field Pro



TU02 Run & Gun

# GRUNDEN'S GORE-TEX FOUL-WEATHER GEAR

By Chris Holmes

When getting wet is out of the question, Grundens Gore-Tex is the answer. Guaranteed.

Grundens' reputation is legendary for keeping fishermen warm, dry and safe while facing the harshest forces of nature. Teaming up with Gore-Tex, Grundens has combined functionality and durability with Gore-Tex's breathable, waterproof technology. The new line consists of the flagship Buoy X and the workhorse Downrigger (jackets and bibs), and the packable Charter jacket.

The Buoy X features an ultra-rugged outer shell with exceptional water beading and a three-layer Gore-Tex laminate. The liner is bonded and neoprene inner cuffs keep water out of the sleeves. The jacket has two zippered pockets and a kill-switch anchor. The bibs have Grundens suspenders, dual cargo and hand-warmer pockets, zip to the knee legs and a removable belt.

The Downrigger shares the same rugged and water-beading face fabric as the Buoy X and is paired with a two-layer Gore-Tex laminate. It has the comfort of a next-to-skin inner liner. A single chest pocket, hook and loop cuff closures and a hood that defeats wind and rain without flopping while running in the boat. The bibs have hand warmer pockets and lower leg zippers for easy on and off.

The Charter jacket provides grab and go packability and features Gore-Tex Paclite Plus for improved interior next-to-skin feel. There is no reason to ever be without a high quality rain jacket. The face fabric is highly resistant to abrasions and tear comfort.

Available at B&B Tackle in Belle Chasse.

**For more info, visit:**  
**grundens.com**  
**MSRP: \$269.99-\$479.99**



# BUBBA MULTI-FLEX FULL TANG INTERCHANGEABLE SET

BUBBA, which debuted the original BUBBA fillet knife in 2011, has recently brought to the market its first-ever fillet knife with interchangeable, full-tang blades: the Multi-Flex Full Tang Interchangeable Set.

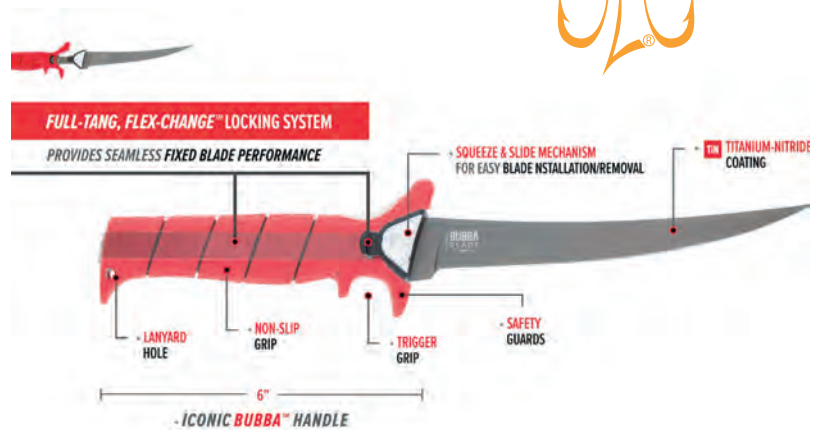
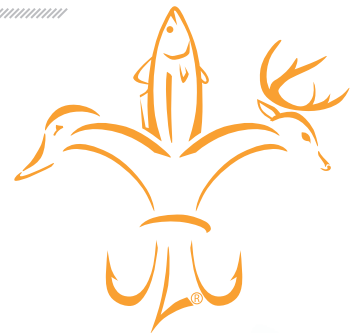
The set features four different full-tang blades — 7-inch Tapered Flex, 8-inch Ultra Flex, 9-inch Serrated Flex and 9-inch Stiff. Each blade is made of high-carbon stainless steel and coated in Titanium Nitride to prevent corrosion.

An easy-to-squeeze and slide mechanism allows you to switch between blades seamlessly. BUBBA's Flex-Change locking system keeps the blade in use safe and secure while you're taking fillets off a grouper, speckled trout or anything else that swims.

The 6-inch, BUBBA iconic red, non-slip grip handle provides a classic feel for this knife.

The set comes in a premium EVA carrying case with a puncture-resistant inner lining, removable tray for easy cleaning and magnetic insert for blade security.

**MSRP: \$125.99**  
**For more info, visit: bubblade.com**



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		POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	VALUE	TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED					
		MOON RISE		PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD		MOON SET		PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT				
Wed 1						66	12:30 pm	6:11 pm - 9:43 pm	2:29 am	5:40 am - 9:12 am	☀️	HALF
Thu 2						56	1:30 pm	7:11 pm - 10:37 pm	3:22 am	6:36 am - 10:08 am	☀️	
Fri 3						50	2:37 pm	8:12 pm - 11:28 pm	4:12 am	7:36 am - 11:02 am	☀️	
Sat 4						59	3:47 pm	9:15 pm - 12:17 am	4:57 am	8:37 am - 11:53 am	☀️	
Sun 5						67	4:59 pm	10:20 pm - 1:02 am	5:37 am	9:40 am - 12:42 pm	☀️	
Mon 6						77	6:11 pm	11:25 pm - Midnight	6:15 am	10:45 am - 1:27 pm	☀️	
Tue 7						82	7:24 pm	Midnight - 1:47 am	6:51 am	11:50 am - 2:12 pm	☀️	PERFECT
Wed 8						67	8:37 pm	12:31 am - 2:29 am	7:27 am	12:56 pm - 2:54 pm	☀️	
Thu 9						53	9:49 pm	1:35 am - 3:13 am	8:04 am	2:00 pm - 3:38 pm	☀️	
Fri 10						40	11:00 pm	2:39 am - 4:01 am	8:44 am	3:04 pm - 4:26 pm	☀️	
Sat 11						31		3:43 am - 4:49 am	9:28 am	4:08 pm - 5:14 pm	☀️	
Sun 12						29	12:08 am	4:45 am - 5:43 am	10:16 am	5:10 pm - 6:08 pm	☀️	
Mon 13						32	1:11 am	5:45 am - 6:37 am	11:09 am	6:10 pm - 7:02 pm	☀️	LOW
Tue 14						42	2:07 am	6:40 am - 7:32 am	12:05 pm	7:05 pm - 7:57 pm	☀️	HALF
Wed 15						32	2:56 am	7:29 am - 8:27 am	1:04 pm	7:54 pm - 8:52 pm	☀️	
Thu 16						27	3:38 am	8:15 am - 9:21 am	2:02 pm	8:40 pm - 9:46 pm	☀️	
Fri 17						28	4:14 am	8:55 am - 10:13 am	2:59 pm	9:20 pm - 10:38 pm	☀️	
Sat 18						29	4:46 am	9:32 am - 11:04 am	3:56 pm	9:57 pm - 11:29 pm	☀️	
Sun 19						41	5:15 am	10:06 am - 11:54 am	4:51 pm	10:31 pm - 12:19 am	☀️	
Mon 20						52	5:42 am	10:40 am - 12:42 pm	5:46 pm	11:05 pm - 1:07 am	☀️	Apogee
Tue 21						64	6:09 am	11:12 am - 1:30 pm	6:41 pm	11:37 pm - Midnight	☀️	
Wed 22						73	6:35 am	11:44 am - 2:20 pm	7:36 pm	Midnight - 1:55 am	☀️	NEW
Thu 23						66	7:03 am	12:18 pm - 3:10 pm	8:32 pm	12:09 am - 2:45 am	☀️	
Fri 24						60	7:34 am	12:55 pm - 4:01 pm	9:30 pm	12:43 am - 3:35 am	☀️	
Sat 25						53	8:08 am	1:35 pm - 4:55 pm	10:29 pm	1:20 am - 4:26 am	☀️	
Sun 26						50	8:47 am	2:20 pm - 5:50 pm	11:27 pm	2:00 am - 5:20 am	☀️	
Mon 27						52	9:32 am	3:11 pm - 6:43 pm		2:45 am - 6:15 am	☀️	
Tue 28						53	10:23 am	4:05 pm - 7:37 pm	12:24 am	3:36 am - 7:08 am	☀️	HIGH
Wed 29						58	11:21 am	5:01 pm - 8:31 pm	1:18 am	4:30 am - 8:02 am	☀️	
Thu 30						69	12:23 pm	6:01 pm - 9:23 pm	2:08 am	5:26 am - 8:56 am	☀️	HALF
						25 50 75 AVERAGE						

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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