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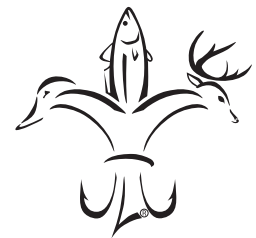
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Catfish are among the most-popular freshwater species in Mississippi rivers and lakes. This issue features tips for all three of the major sub-species. Photo by Terry Madewell.



PUBLISHER: Tony Taylor
EDITOR: Dan Kibler
MANAGING EDITOR: Alicia LaFont
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR: Bobby Cleveland
 bobbyc7754@yahoo.com, 601.506.0739
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR: Jeff Caldwell
ASSISTANT PRODUCTION MANAGER:
 Desiree P. Lewis
ART DIRECTOR: Kevin Orgeron
GRAPHIC DESIGNERS:
 Jeff Cashio, Alissa Zeringue
CONTROLLER: Juanita Guidry
SALES DIRECTOR: Jay Forrest
 225.278.0258/jayf@lasmag.com
ADVERTISING SALES:
 Mark Hiltz (National Sales), Mark Boyd, Asa
 Faulkner, Peter Church, Burton Angelle, John Cain
 and Bret Holten
CONTRIBUTORS:
 David A. Brown, Chris Bush, Bobby Cleveland,
 Brian Cope, Jerry Dilsaver, Paul Elias, David
 Hawkins, Bill Garbo, Phillip Gentry, Michael
 O. Giles, Dan Kibler, Sammy Romano, Hal
 Schramm and Don Shoopman
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR:
 Ricky Naquin 985.859.7744/rickyn@lasmag.com

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES:
 Contact Jay Forrest
 email: jayf@lasmag.com/225.278.0258

**SUBSCRIPTIONS OR
 SUBSCRIPTION ISSUES,
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 Monday thru Friday, 6 am to 11 pm
 Saturday & Sunday, 8 am - 5 pm CST

MISSISSIPPI SPORTSMAN is published monthly by Louisiana Publishing, Inc., Allen J. Lottinger, President, 14236 Highway 90, P.O. Box 1199, Boutte, LA 70039. Periodicals postage paid at Boutte, La., and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Mississippi Sportsman, P.O. Box 433294, Palm Coast, FL 32143. All rights reserved. Reproduction of contents is strictly prohibited without permission of Mississippi Sportsman. **EDITORIAL:** Mississippi Sportsman uses free-lance writers throughout the state. Call (985) 758-7217 for information on submitting articles and photos. Mississippi Sportsman is not responsible for the loss of queries, manuscripts or other materials.

P.O. Box 1199, Boutte, LA 70039-1199
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Volume 22 | No 5

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Outdoor **UPDATE** with **Bobby Cleveland**



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

CAN MAY RETURN US TO NORMAL? **COVID-19 RUINED APRIL FOR OUTDOORSMEN. WE NEED IMMEDIATE RELIEF**

Have you ever had somebody — perhaps your mom and/or dad when you were a misbehaving little brat — threaten you with “If you don’t settle down, I’m going to knock you into next month?”

Ever wish they’d come back and follow through with that threat?

Like, say, in April.

Mississippi sportsmen and sportswomen, especially those that like to chase spawning crappie, shallow bass and bedding bream, wouldn’t have minded a fast-forward to May, or maybe even to the spring of 2021. “I wouldn’t mind that all,” said Tommy Jacobs of Jackson, an avid crappie angler on Barnett Reservoir. “When they announced they were closing the state-managed lakes all over Mississippi, including Barnett, man, my heart was broken. The crappie were just getting cranked up and then, poof, we couldn’t go get them.”

On April 1, as the coronavirus disease COVID-19 was rapidly spreading in the state, Mississippi’s first-year governor, Tate Reeves took the bold step of closing the state’s beaches on the Gulf Coast and all lakes managed by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks — as well as Barnett Reservoir. He also shuttered state-maintained boat ramps on some rivers and other lakes. The order was effective at 5 p.m. on Friday, April 3.

The order was set to remain in place until 6 a.m. on April 20, four days after this issue of *Mississippi Sportsman* went to the printer. There was no guarantee the order would not be extended.

Under Reeves’ order, the only public lakes open to fishing have been the five U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood-control reservoirs: Arkabutla, Sardis, Enid, Grenada and Okitibbee, and the Tenn-Tom Waterway. Those bodies are under federal jurisdiction. Private lakes and some rivers and streams were open to fishing if people had legal access.

That meant that at a time when Mississippians were becoming stir crazy with few outs, they couldn’t fish unless they got an invite to a private honey hole.

Let’s hope that as May arrives, we will have reduced the upward curve of iCOVID-19, and we can return to the water. Just in case we can, this issue of *Mississippi Sportsman* offers tips to making the most of your trips.

Since we missed the peak of the crappie spawn, Phillip Gentry shares tips on catching post-spawn fish, especially by trolling crankbaits in deeper water.

David Hawkins looks into the myriad topwater lure choices for bass fishermen, who can still find enough fish shallow to entice the exciting and loud surface strikes of an aggressive largemouth. Hawkins then turns his attention to spring catfish, and how to catch channels, blues and flatheads — the main ingredients of many a fish fry.

With turkey season ending May 1, hunters will be reduced to hunting hogs. That means less restrictions, like 24-hour shooting, seven days a week. Andy Douglas looks into using digital night vision, thermal optics that give hunters an edge in lighting up the dark.

Stay safe and stay healthy. ■



Landon Hayes Keith, 9, limited out on turkeys in Hinds County this spring, taking his third and last bird on April 11.

REEVES' BOATING BAN BOTHERS BOATERS, ANGERS ANGLERS

Gov. Tate Reeves' shelter-in-place order, effective April 3, was designed to reduce the spread of COVID-19 as state health officials warned that Mississippi's infection peak was coming.

By including a ban on boating and fishing on state-managed lakes, it caught thousands of boaters, fishermen and even lake managers by surprise.irate anglers were quick to ask "WHY?" and at first blamed other entities. Calls jammed lines at the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks and the Pearl River Valley Water Supply District offices with questions.

"Why are ya'll banning fishing? Are y'all crazy?"

It took the MDWFP and the PRVWSD — the latter manages Barnett Reservoir — hours to understand the order, despite it clearly including this part of Section F, line ii: "All places of amusement and recreation, whether indoors or outdoors, including but not limited to amusement parks and rides, museums, playgrounds, children's party and play facilities, all parks including all beaches, lakes and reservoirs (but not including walking trails), movie theaters, bowling alleys, and social clubs shall be closed to the public."

There was no wiggle room. The agencies closed their parks and lakes, wildlife management areas and offices.

Reeves said he doesn't blame people for wanting and needing a break from the pressures of dealing with school and business closures, "and go fishing; I wish I could go, too. And if you have access to a pond or a stream, and fish by yourselves, and keep 6 feet apart, then by all means, fish."

That didn't sit well with the majority of fishermen, who depend on public waters.

FAVORING THE WELL-TO-DO?

"They can fish on private lakes, like rich folks on these big fancy subdivision lakes, but we can't," one poster wrote on a website related to fishing on Barnett Reservoir.

And, it didn't help that golf, a sport that puts people in closer contact with others, was allowed.

"You're telling me I can play golf, but I can't fish; that's kind of stupid isn't it?" said Billy Perkins of Pearl. "I understand that this disease is bad, and I certainly don't need to get infected with it at my age, but how would I be in more danger sitting in my 20-foot boat, 15 feet away from my partner, on a 33,000-acre lake without another soul within 50 or 100 yards, than I would be playing golf?"

His language was a lot more kind than most who objected.

"He's just become a one-term governor; I hope he knows that," said one poster on a Facebook page dedicated to bass fishing on Barnett.

"Let's just all show up and storm the ramps and go fish; it's not like they can arrest us all and give us citations," said another on a crappie-fishing site.

"Both my sons are out of school due to this and are getting pretty tired of being shuttered in the house, and I can't take them fishing, which is their and my favorite way to spend time together," posted one father.

Paul Brown of Brandon talked more about the loss of a food source, which would reach beyond his home.

RESERVOIR CROWDS SPOOKED GOVERNOR

So why the closure of state waters?

Crowded boats, loaded sandbars and overflowing parking lots at boat launches on Barnett Reservoir the last weekend of March led to Gov. Tate Reeves' decision. Reeves said he and other state officials were disturbed after flying over the central Mississippi area, including the busy Barnett Reservoir.

With schools suspended and many businesses closed by municipal order, people were looking for outdoor recreation.

The weather was warm, the sun bright and crappie were spawning. Every major ramp on the 33,000-acre lake was filled.

At the time, no statewide shelter-in-place order had been issued, but Reeves had been urging Mississippians to follow recommendations from the Center for Disease Control, mainly to keep 6 feet of distance between people and no gatherings of 10 or more people. When he saw they weren't complying, he took steps to see that they would. ■



Crowds on reservoirs around Mississippi the final weekend of March drove Gov. Tate Reeves to close lakes to combat the COVID-19 coronavirus.

"April is the month when I put enough crappie in the freezer for my family, my extended family and a lot of friends in the church," Brown said. "He's taking food out of the mouths of a lot of people, which means we'll be forced to go the grocery stores, where we'll be in direct contact with a lot of people. We're not just talking about lost recreation, but food; there's families that count of fish this time of year."

FISHING PRESSURE RELIEVED?

Some fishermen looked for a silver lining, and a few found them. One was Eddie Borne of Clinton, who chases bass on Barnett as often as he can.

"Don't get me wrong; I'd love to be fishing," Borne said. "But you know how much pressure this lake gets on a normal spring day, crappie and bass. It would have been worse in April, with most people not working and kids from K-school to college home with nothing to do."

"One thing that I was worried about was how hard this lake and its fish would have been hit in April. My gosh, there'd have been more fishing pressure than ever, and I don't know if the lake could survive it. I'm all about fishing, but I'm thinking more about the long-term impacts that could have happened. I don't know how long it would take the fishery to recover." ■

MAY OFFERS MORE BUSHYTAILS

To hear him talk about hunting, you'd think Jimmy Ray Barnes was just another one of Mississippi's hundreds of thousands of rabid deer hunters — except he doesn't really care about hunting big game.

"Nope, with me, it's all about small game; always has been and always will be, I reckon," said Barnes, a squirrel-hunter from Pascagoula. "I have always thought that hunting squirrel one-on-one is the true mark of a man's or woman's hunting and woodsman skills. I have hunted with treeing hounds, but honestly, I prefer just taking a single-shot .410 shotgun or a single-shot .22 rifle and going stalking in the hardwoods."

That's exactly what he plans to be doing as often as possible during Mississippi's 2020 spring squirrel season which is open May 15-June 1. The bag limit is four per day per hunter, half the regular season limit.

"That's okay; killing four is good enough if you love it as much as I do," Barnes said. "To be honest, it isn't that difficult hunting them, either, because all you have to do is find a budding food source, and they're limited that time of year. You find something like a few fruiting mulberry trees, and you can get a limit every day."

"I went 10 days last year and killed 40 squirrels and on weekdays I was back in time to work at 9 a.m. with four clean, ready to eat."

Barnes likes squirrels every way they can be cooked but is partial to having them for breakfast. A widower, he gets his way.

"If I have a tender one, of course I fry it," he said. "If I have an older, bigger one, I'll put in the crockpot overnight in a gravy sauce to eat over biscuits. On Sundays, I usually have a crockpot full of squirrel and gravy to take to the morning men's church group. Shoot, I got nearly a hundred in my freezer from the winter season now. What I get in May, they're a bonus." ■



Mississippi's spring season offers squirrel hunters young and old several weeks of fun in the woods.

MDWFP ARRESTS FOUR

NEARLY 300 VIOLATIONS FILED, ALMOST 100 TURKEYS ALLEGEDLY POACHED

Just as turkey hunters began the 2020 season in mid-March, four Mississippians were arrested and charged with more than 280 wildlife violations including killing nearly 100 turkeys in 2019.

An 11-month investigation by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks resulted in 14 subjects charged with violations. Four were charged and arrested:

- Kenneth Ray Britt of Wesson, charged with 142 wildlife violations;
- Tony Grant Smith of Wesson, charged with 68 violations;
- Allen Shelton Morgan of Brookhaven, charged with 28 violations;
- Breanna Jeanine McKay of Wesson, charged with 5 violations.

According to the MDWFP, this group is believed to be responsible for poaching nearly 100 turkeys and trespassing on 15 properties in

Claiborne, Copiah, Franklin, Jefferson, and Lincoln counties.

MDWFP officials said it was discovered during the investigation that the illegal activities were not limited to Mississippi. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is also conducting an investigation of the illegal hunts in other states.

"This is the most blatant disregard for Mississippi's conservation laws I have seen in my 33 years of service with this agency," said Col. Steve Adcock, who heads the MDWFP's enforcement wing. "The primary mission of the MDWFP Law Enforcement Bureau is to detect and hold accountable those persons who jeopardize our rich hunting heritage by committing lawless acts such as these." ■

NO LEGISLATURE; BILLS ON HOLD

Mississippi's 2020 legislative session, scheduled for 125 days, was suspended March 18 amid concerns over the spread of Covid-19 coronavirus, and its original plan to reconvene on April 1 was delayed when the governor issued a statewide shelter-in-place order.

In mid-April, there was no date set for reconvening, only a plan to do so as soon as it is deemed safe. The interruption came with 12 bills involving hunting and fishing still in play. Among them are these six that carry major impact for Mississippi sportsmen:

- 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 state hunting season scheduled to close by statute on a Friday through sunset on the next 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.

Deadlines for action on these and other bills will be reset at the time the legislature reconvenes. ■

CWD UPDATE: TOTAL MISSISSIPPI CASES AT 54

According to the latest statistics reported by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Mississippi's number of chronic wasting disease in white-tailed deer has reached 54: 27 confirmed cases and 27 cases rated as "suspect positive" that are awaiting confirmation.

Of those 54, 35 cases were from deer tested in 2020, all in the North Mississippi CWD Management Zone. Of those, 26 came from Benton County and nine from Marshall County.

No other counties have reported positive tests this year. Only six counties have recorded positive tests since the first case was reported in 2018 in Issaquena County, in what is now called the South Delta CWD Management Zone. In 2019, a second deer tested positive in Issaquena County. More deer were found in the North Mississippi in 2019 forcing the North Zone to be created. Benton and Marshall counties had seven each, while Panola, Pontotoc and Tallahatchie County had one each.

More than 8,079 deer have been tested since July 1, 1999. ■



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Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



Graham Gilmore

Graham Gilmore, 12, of Brandon with the buck he killed Jan. 3 in Redwood. The 7-point had a 16-inch inside spread and 22-inch main beams.



Maycee Kay Breckley

Six-year-old Maycee Kay Breckley shows off her first 180-pound 8-point. She is hooked on deer hunting now!



Jessica Meredith

Jessica Meredith was hunting on private land in Jackson on Dec. 22, 2019, when she took this beautiful buck.



David Sanders

Fishing with his grandpa on his grandpa's 80th birthday, David Sanders, 8, of Tupelo caught this 6-pounder from a private lake in Chickasaw County.

GOT PICS? We want 'em

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Mike McElroy III (far right) was on the rod when the crew of the *Hook and Bull* (from left, Mike McElroy II, Ryeley Jacobs and Luke Myers) landed a 236.6-pound yellowfin tuna out of Pass Christian that appears to be a state-record.



John Michael Gory

HUGE TUNA IS RECORD

MISSISSIPPI ANGLERS DECK 236.6-POUND YELLOWFIN, STATE'S BIGGEST

Four Mississippi fishermen spent March 30 fishing for yellowfin tuna on one of the world's highest-rated hot spots, in the Gulf of Mexico about 80 miles south of Pass Christian.

They got only one yellowfin bite, but boy, was it a big one.

The 236.6-pound tuna, officially caught by Mike "Mikey" McElroy III of Hattiesburg after a fight of more than 5 hours, will soon be certified as the state record. It bests the previous mark by 31 pounds.

"Mikey was on the rod the whole time," said Ryeley Jacobs of Ocean Springs. "We hooked up the big fish at 2 o'clock, and we boated it at 7:15 p.m. His dad Mike was running his 29-foot Double V boat, the *Hook and Bull*. Luke Myers and I were on the gaffs."

Tuna fishing on the popular area of the Gulf known as the "Lumps" is not easy from a Mississippi port. They were fishing the East Lumps, in about 260 feet of water, a three-hour run due south.

"We got out there early and caught our bait: some blackfin tuna and bonito," Jacobs said. "There were like 25 or 30 boats out there, mostly from Venice, and other than the blackfin, it was slow for everybody. Nobody was getting any action, and after lunch most started leaving to go chase other fish like wahoo."

About 1:15 or 1:30, the Mississippi boat marked a big fish on the electronics but couldn't entice a strike.

"We were chunking (chumming) blackfin and bonitos and drifting, and it was so long between marking the fish and the strike; we're pretty sure it was not the same fish," Jacobs said. "Then, right at 2 p.m., we hooked up. We never marked the fish that hit

the chunk of blackfin. A boat close to us hooked up at almost the same instant, but they wound up breaking their rod and losing their fish."

It was an epic battle, long in time and distance. McElroy was using a Shimano 30W, with braid backing on the spool, with about an 150-yards top-shot leader of 80-pound mono with a 10-foot section of 80-pound fluorocarbon leader.

"There was, I think, three times that Mikey got well into the braid backing," Jacobs said. "Then he'd get it back. Then the fish would go again and take it back into the backing. We followed that fish 5 miles from where we hooked up until it finally came up and made two big circles around the boat."

"On the second, Mikey got him close enough for me to get a gaff into the fish. Then, Luke got another one, and Capt. Mike got the third one in him. Then, we just pulled him over the side."

Satisfied and extremely tired, the crew fired up and headed home. They arrived at Pass Christian a little after 10 p.m.

The next day, the crew gathered and met a biologist from the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources at Gollott's Seafood in Biloxi, where the fish was officially measured and weighed. The fish was 68 inches long and 51 inches in girth.

McElroy's tuna will require a certifying vote by the MDMR Commission, which was expected to take place at the panel's next meeting. ■



PUT CATFISH ON YOUR *wish list*

MISSISSIPPI WATERS ARE FULL OF CHANNELS, BLUES AND FLATHEADS. HERE'S HOW TO START THE PROCESS OF ASSEMBLING THE MAIN INGREDIENT IN A FISH FRY.

■ By David Hawkins

Catfish may not be the most sought-after fish species in Mississippi; that distinction is likely shared by bass and crappie. Bream and catfish get pretty high billing, however, with a faithful camp of followers dedicated to each.

When it comes to the end result — fillets on the table so to speak — catfish more often get the nod. Face it, there just aren't any bream houses around where customers can get all the fried filets, cole slaw, hushpuppies and fried dill pickles they care to eat, all washed down with giant glasses of sweet iced tea,

Mississippi is No. 1 in catfish production in the United States, with 36,100 acres of catfish ponds producing 55% of the channel catfish consumed by our nation and exported. But anglers who wish to have a catfish dinner by their own hands need look no further than Mississippi's creeks,

streams, rivers and lakes for the perfect, organic, fish-based meal. In addition to the channel catfish, local waters are host to blue cats and the highly prized flathead. There are other varieties of catfish, such as yellow bullhead and mad-toms, but they are not target species.

The three prime species can be found together in river-based impoundments such as Ross Barnett Reservoir, the Tenn-Tom Waterway and oxbow lakes like Chotard or Eagle. Before the advent of catfish farming, the Mississippi River and commercial fishermen accounted for the bulk of processed catfish sold to restaurants. But here's the deal: outside the river systems, there are few places where all catfish live and spawn. Let's look at the fish individually and where, when and how to target them.

CHANNEL CATFISH >

CHANNEL CATFISH

Channel cats are the cheetahs of the aquatic world. Long, lean and fast, they are smaller when mature than blues and flatheads. These are the only catfish Mississippi stocks or replenishes in state-managed lakes. Aside from the initial stocking when a lake is impounded or renovated, the only replenishment may come when a fishing rodeo is held in an area; after the event, the harvestable-sized fish remaining are released into a lake. Natural spawning does occur, but some of the biggest predators of channel cat hatchlings are largemouth bass. It goes without saying that a great bass lake will not be renowned for catfish — and visa versa.

All catfish could be considered to be a living, swimming tongue. Their unique whiskers, aka barbels, as well as specialized skin cells constantly sample the water for food sources. Channels aren't finicky about their diet, eating minnows, crawfish, and live bream with equal vigor. Cut shad, earth worms and juiced-up hot dogs also work. According to Keith Sutton, author of two award-winning books on catfishing, a catfish's sense of smell is nothing short of phenomenal.

"Catfish have two olfactory pits; each pit has two nostrils. Water is inhaled through one nostril and exhaled through the other," Sutton said. "The number of folds inside the olfactory gland does the actual smelling. Catfish have 140 folds, while bass have only eight to 13. A catfish may detect a food source with a ratio of 1 part to 10 billion parts of water."

While several different fishing methods can produce a catfish dinner, anglers need to match the style they enjoy to the lake they choose. For example, FFFDs (free-floating fishing devices) are popular with anglers, but they are not allowed on state lakes or state-park lakes. The same goes for trot lines and yo-yos. These lakes are best fished with a rod and reel, but don't think these little lakes are devoid of prizes, Lake Tom Bailey, just east of Meridian, produced

the state-record channel catfish. The 51-pound, 12-ounce record has stood since 1997.

Catfish have a tough mouth and can straighten light hooks such as those used for crappie or bream. A 3/0 to 5/0 offset hook is a good choice when combined with a 20-pound braid. Monofilament is okay, but catfish have raspy teeth that can fray plain line. Given their habit of swallowing bait, some anglers keep a supply of leaders and hooks on hand, a practice that works well with any style of fishing. Hooks and line may be increased in size if the target is the biggest channel in the lake.

BLUE CATFISH

Blues are the lions of the water. They travel in schools and congregate around their favorite food source: shad. They are a river/reservoir fish and require big water to survive. Young blues are especially fond of crawfish but will respond well to cut bait, minnows, goldfish and most smelly offerings, but shad may be their favorite.

"In the spring, if an angler locates a large school of shad — also known as a shad ball — blue cats will be underneath them, looking for stragglers or picking them off as they swim on the outside of the ball," said Jerry Brown, fisheries biologist for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. "This is a winter pattern that extends until spawning season for the catfish."

Blue cats are, for the most part, cavity nesters, which makes them especially popular with the hand-grabbing crowd. These brave anglers offer themselves as bait by feeling inside natural cavities or man-made boxes to grab fish with their hands. Blues weighing 40 to 60 pounds or more are caught in this manner. Hand-grabbing, aka noodling, is allowed in some lakes from May 1 to July 15. The state-record blue weighed 95 pounds and was caught in the Mississippi River near Natchez.





Terry Madewell

THE BAIT *buffet*

Shad are popular catfish baits and are often caught in cast nets in tailraces below dams. To limit the possible spread of the invasive Asian carp, all shad or other trash fish must be killed or allowed to die before being transported above the dam to be used as bait. Gamefish caught by this method must be released immediately.

Sunfish, including bream, may be used as catfish bait, but the statewide creel limit of 100 fish is in force.

Baits for catfish are numerous; tackle shops sell prepared baits like blood-based chunks and natural baits such as worms and minnows. Chicken tenders, deer heart/liver, and crappie heads likewise will catch catfish. Searching the internet will uncover dozens of possibilities. ■

Shad are a very popular catfish bait, especially for blues, in either cut or live. **OPPOSITE:** Channel catfish are available to the largest number of anglers across Mississippi, in part because they're stocked in numerous lakes.

"Each year, there are good harvests of large catfish in Ross Barnett Reservoir," said Tom Holman of MDWFP's Fisheries Division, "and each year, we field a few calls about the need for a limited creel on older, mature, breeding-aged fish. But over time, there has been no appreciable decrease in the catfish population. The agency monitors the waters through electrofishing and sees no reason to curtail the harvest at this time."

Perhaps the most-popular method of fishing for blues is FFFDs — jugs in most folks' vernacular. It's quite simple; start with a jug, be it a 2-liter drink bottle or a foam swimming pool noodle. Attach a length of stout line with a weight and a hook, bait it with things catfish fancy and sit back and wait. Some anglers have found that alligators have made the connection between a dancing jug and a catfish. If this happens, pick up and move to another part of the lake.

Trot lines are a tried-and-true method of filling the boat with blue cats. Secure one end of the main line to a tree, log, limb or other secure object. Extend the line parallel to the bank if fishing in a river. Stretching a trotline across a deep bend in the river is always fruitful. Since catfish tend to swallow the bait, keep several drops ready to replace the ones taken out of action by fish. Using circle hooks may also help as they catch the fish in the jaw,

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FLATHEAD CATFISH

Know by many monikers, flatheads are the leopards of the river. Solitary, strong, powerful and highly prized for their delicious flesh, these brutes can be caught in the same waters where other catfish roam, just not as readily nor on the same baits. Flatheads, aka tabby cats, appaloosas or mottled cats, prefer live bait. They are especially fond of bream — or sunfish in general. Large shiners and goldfish will also earn a bite for fisherman.

Flatheads are also cavity nesters, so hand grabbers frequently encounter them in submerged environs. Once spawning has ended, however, the elusive flathead becomes more nocturnal, feeding primarily at night. That's the reason so many hook-and-line fisherman wait until sundown to get started. Flatheads are not as active in cooler weather as channels and blues, but they are plenty active in summer months.

In rivers such as the Big Black, Pearl, Tallahatchie and Pascagoula, they are fond of log-jams, where they lay in wait for a passing meal.

Like all catfish, flatheads possess all the sensory organs required to find food in turbid or stained water. Catfish are blessed with thousands of electroreceptive pores on their heads and bodies that sense the nearby presence of living organisms. That means a catfish doesn't have to see, smell or taste food in order to find it.

Remember when you were chided as a child for making noise when fishing and were admonished that you were scaring the fish? Well, there is truth to that. While catfish don't have ears as such, they are very aware of noises around them. Non-natural noises such as banging objects in a boat will switch on a catfish's defenses. It has also been proven that they can feel footsteps on the bank or on a pier.

The Mississippi record for a flathead catfish is 77.7 pounds; it was taken from the Mississippi River near Tunica. It is commonly believed that bigger fish are swimming today, and that this record will be broken. Ross Barnett Reservoir has surrendered several heavier than 50 pounds in the past decade.

So there you have it; catfish are a complex fish that are fairly easy to catch. Baits are easily acquired and simple to use. Equipment doesn't have to be fancy, just strong. So grab the tackle and get some bait and enjoy a summer evening in Mississippi filling the cooler with fresh catfish filets. ■



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



The author shows off a couple of blue catfish caught on jugs fishing Ross Barnett Reservoir.

CATFISH REGULATION *particulars*

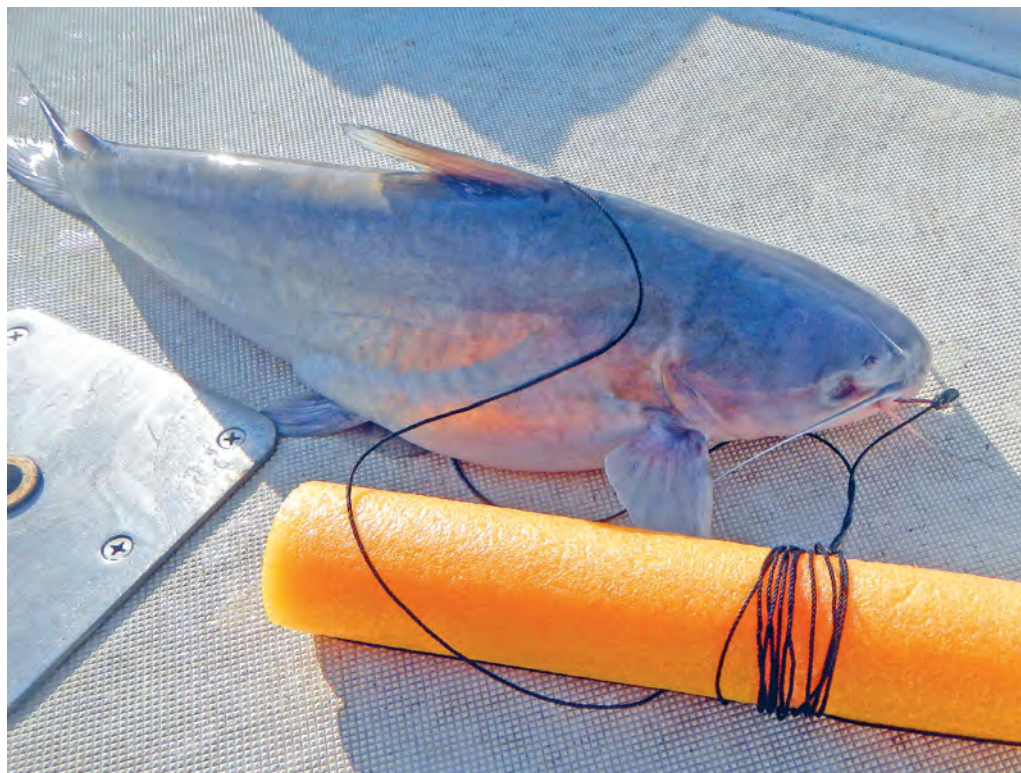
Each person having a valid fishing license may use no more than 100 hooks per person.

State lakes and state park lakes in Mississippi do not have a length restriction on catfish. However there is a creel limit of 10 fish per angler per day.

FFFDs may have two hooks per device, but there is a limit of 25 devices per licensed angler.

Nesting boxes used by hand grabbers are considered as fish attractors; thus, anyone may fish them.

Complete rules for freshwater fishing in Mississippi can be found in the Mississippi Outdoor Digest or online at www.mdwfp.com. ■



David Hawkins

Anglers in Mississippi are limited to 25 Free-Floating Fishing Devices (FFFD).

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TOPWATER LURES BRING OUT THE BEST IN BASS FISHERMEN AND THE LOUDEST IN STRIKES FROM BIG FISH. HERE'S HOW TO DECIDE WHICH OF THE DOZENS ON THE MARKET TO USE, WHEN AND WHY.

■ By David Hawkins

WIND UP ON TOP

CHUCKLE, SPUTTER, PLOP, PLOP, SPLOOSH!

FEW JOYS ARE GREATER FOR A BASS FISHERMAN THAN A DRAMATIC SURFACE STRIKE.

It is an anticipated event that continues to extract surprise and happiness each time it happens. Each time a bass reacts to a topwater offering, it's like a soothing ointment applied to a troubled soul. Once, while discussing topwater strikes, legendary angler and outdoor writer Homer Circle said, "It's impossible to be angry at someone when you're catching fish."

The selection of topwater bass lures has never been greater. Some are marketed to catch fish, while others are marketed to catch anglers. A few have stood the test of time, and just as many have been left to languish in the bottom of the old tackle box.

"I would be very hard pressed to choose a favorite surface lure," said angler Charles Golden of Taylorsville. "I suppose it goes without saying that my favorite is the one I have tied on that is getting bitten with regularity.


"I grew up in the 50s and 60s when the Hula Popper, Jitterbug, and Devil's Horse were pretty much all we

had for noisy surface plugs — and they worked fine then and work fine now. I can remember getting a Lucky 13 for my birthday, and that big red/white plug caught a lot of farm pond bass. Farm ponds were about we had to fish.

"I fell in love with the Zara Spook when I was in college and learned to walk-the-dog," Golden said. "These days, there are dozens of baits that emulate the Spook with equal success. Heddon, who first marketed the lure, has made improvements over the years, but the jerky motion continues to make the spook one of my favorites. So I guess I could say if I could have just one surface plug, it would be the Zara Spook."

Alan Clemons, a veteran outdoor communicator from Alabama, chooses different favorite topwater baits based on the temperature.





Grass is a popular hiding place for bass. Many topwater baits are weedless for just this reason. **OPPOSITE:** Debbie Hanson, an avid angler and host of a talk show on ESPN Radio, displays the fruit of her labors.

“Throwing a topwater bait for bass is one of my favorite things to do, almost year-round,” he said. “If the water temperature (is) 50 degrees or higher, I’ll tie on a ½-ounce white buzzbait and throw it in the back of creeks or coves. With a slow retrieve, to try to mimic a lethargic shad; it sometimes gets some good bites from big fish, especially in early spring.

“As spring turns into summer and during prespawn and post-spawn, and especially with any vegetation such as primrose, milfoil, hydrilla or other grass, I’ll usually have a ½- or 1-ounce SPRO Bronz-eye Frog tied on. The midnight walker (color) mimics a bluegill, and the nasty shad is if they’re hitting shad.

“My favorite thing to throw, however, is the Whopper Plopper in the 130 (medium) size,” he said. “The large profile and rotating tail — along with the “plop, plop, plop” — are pretty awesome when you get the retrieve that the bass want dialed in. Sometimes it’s slow and others, pretty fast. The good thing about the Plopper is it keeps working even on a burning retrieve. If you stop, the bait floats and sits nose up. Sometimes that draws strikes, too. Like with any topwater, it’s a game of cat-and-mouse to figure out what works best to make the bass strike”

If the wind is blowing hard enough that he can’t see the bait well, Clemons switches to a big spinnerbait or some other tactic. And on a dead-calm day with no wind, he’ll throw the Plopper with an agonizingly slow retrieve. If that doesn’t work, he might switch to something more subtle, like a Devil’s Horse or Pop-R for less noise and motion.

Hoot Gibson of Philadelphia gets a lot of credit for the development and promotion of the plastic frog, sometimes called the Hoot Gibson Frog. It was Gibson who started the Scum Frog craze, and for good reason: they catch bass.

“I like to fish Neshoba County Lake,” Gibson said. “Naturally, it’s close to home, so it’s convenient, but it also offers a lot of cover in the form of aquatic vegetation. As spring turns to summer, bass will feed in more open water, but heat and sun will push them under the weeds. Anglers will find patches of open water among the cover, maybe as small as your hand, but bass will track a frog across the surface and anticipate it coming to one of those openings. That’s when you need to be ready.”

Gibson said a slow retrieve is generally best when fishing a frog. Teasing the fish is one way he describes his presentation.

“I think it says a lot that so many companies are making frog-like lures,” Gibson said. “There is plenty business to go around and people (fishermen) know they work. No matter the type of cover, frogs can get it done.”

At some point, a genius decided to equip a surface plug with little propellers that fussed noisily as the plug was retrieved, and a whole new generation of baits was spawned. Not only was the Devil’s Horse a product of this effort, but also the Torpedo and Spin-Ditty. The Devil’s Horse is a favorite of David Rainer, a former Mississippi resident now living and writing about the outdoors in Alabama.

The Devil’s Horse can be retrieved in short, staccato blasts with intermittent pauses, or at any speed the angler chooses for a constant sputter. It may take some experimentation to get the speed the bass favor. According to experts, it’s best if the lure is in some motion throughout the retrieve. It’s believed this more emulates the action of a live offering.

Floaters such as the old reliable Rapala can be fished from a dead stop to a slight dive before the lure is allowed to resurface. A few twitches followed by a pause while the concentric circles disappear can trigger a strike. This injured-minnow technique works well, and bass will often slam the lure when it goes from rest to motion.

You can't discuss topwater plugs without a mention of the master of darkness, the Jitterbug. While they come in many colors, the black model is hands down the best nighttime surface bass plug ever made. Fish it parallel to the bank or just outside weeds and floating vegetation with a non-stop retrieve. It makes a racket bass find difficult to resist. Start fishing it about sundown and continue it into the night.

The Whopper Plopper, made by River2Sea, was originally designed as a pike and muskie bait. Some angler decided to try it for largemouth bass and enjoyed instant success. The noise is much like the Jitterbug, and it reportedly performs well on spotted bass in tailrace waters of Barnett Reservoir and the Low Head Dam. Spots favor swifter water wherever it is found.

Not last or least in topwater offerings are the poppers. Leading this pack is the Hula Popper, which has been around longer than many readers of this article. The plump, little body with the skirts of many colors makes a loud plop when jerked. The skirt then wiggles, and the lure turns a little one way or the other until the angler takes up the slack in the line and makes it pop the water again. It may as well be saying "Here bass, here bass."

These lures give way to others such as the Pop-R. This nifty little bait comes with some impressive miniskirt colors, including a red thread or two that mimics an injured minnow. An erratic retrieve is the ticket to using the Pop-R to its potential. It may well be the best topwater bait on schooling bass. ■



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



These two nice smallmouth bass were taken from weed beds in Pickwick Lake. Even smallies like topwater action.

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CORONAVIRUS SHOULD HAVE LITTLE IMPACT ON FISHING

COVID-19 is running amuck in our lives as we know them. The adjustment to this Biblical-like plaque has been a fluid progression not unlike a tsunami.

With so many negative things being said and done, there is one activity that remains steadfast; fishing. Bass tournaments will be cancelled because the weigh-in crowds would exceed the mandated 10 or fewer people, but boat ramps are open. If you're lucky, you have a private lake or pond someplace where you can fish. A mess of bass filets will go a long way in filling larders, both yours and for someone needy.

Respect social distancing and make your stops at bait shops and service stations as safe as possible. When pumping fuel, wear nitrile gloves or use a single-use disposable paper towel. Continue to wash your hands rigorously and avoid sneezing or coughing into the air. Cover you cough with a tissue or at least the inside of your elbow.

This may be a good time to mention the importance of spray-on bait scents. The hand sanitizers in daily use almost everywhere are easily transferred to bait surfaces. These alcohol-based sanitizers do not encourage a fish to hold the bait. Bass have many taste buds and can quickly distinguish between possible food and danger.



David Hawkins

You can practice "social distancing" very easily from the banks of a pond or lake with a topwater bait tied on and hungry bass waiting for it.

Sunshine includes UV rays that act as a natural disinfectant but are not a cure for the virus or its spread. So sunshine is better than a closed environment that is not sanitized.

There are no plans as of this time to close lakes and rivers to fishing, but some buildings, cafes, bait shops and gatherings will be impacted. ■

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GETTIN' FRESH

Hal Schramm

The reward for patiently fishing a brush pile.

BASS AND BRUSH

STUDY ON MISSOURI'S TABLE ROCK OFFERS GUIDANCE FOR PLACING AND FISHING BRUSH

Bass like woody structure. It provides cover and attracts forage fish. A lot of bass fishing in Mississippi and throughout the Southeast takes place in reservoirs. Woody structure, abundant in these reservoirs after impoundment, is lost over time due to decomposition and sedimentation as these systems age.

Some fisheries agencies have started programs to add woody structure, and many anglers also install brush piles to create "secret" honey holes — which aren't secret for long. A Missouri study provided insight for effective placement of woody structure. Their results also provide hints for fishing brush piles.

THE STUDY

Table Rock Lake is a 60-year-old, 43,000-acre impoundment of the White River in southwestern Missouri. The lake is steep-sided, has numerous boat docks and abundant rocky structure but

lacks aquatic vegetation. Woody structure is sparse.

From 2007 to 2013, fisheries biologists with the Missouri Department of Conservation installed 2,000 woody habitat structures (bundles of trees) in Table Rock Lake with the specific intent of increasing angler catch rate. After installation, 1½- to 7½-pound largemouth bass were tracked by radio telemetry for 12 months to evaluate their use of the structures and identify habitat characteristics of the best-used structures.

THE RESULTS

Bass were most frequently located near or under docks, but they were also frequently located around wood. The tracked bass used the added structure as much as they used natural, complex woody structure and twice as much as they used natural, simple woody structure. Simple woody structure is a single tree trunk with little branching. Complex

woody structure is wood with branching and a lot of cavities in the brush. The added woody structure was complex woody structure.

Habitat choices were analyzed separately for day and night periods. The bass' location around boat docks was the same day and night. Bass used the installed woody structure more at night than during the day, but they used the natural, complex woody structure more during the day than at night.

The bass were closer to shore and in shallower water at night. The average depth bass were found was about 18 feet during the day and 10 feet at night.



Hal Schramm is an avid angler and veteran fisheries biologist.

A down-scan screenshot from a Garmin sonar unit showing two brush piles and a group of shad to the left. The bright white marks near the tall trees and in the brush pile are probably bass.

IMPLICATIONS

The most-important finding was that added complex woody structure attracts bass. Whether placed by a fisheries or water management agency or by an angler, complex woody structure attracts bass. Don't waste your time with single logs.

But also important is where the woody structures are placed. Brush piles placed shallower than 18 feet and within 150 feet from shore will be most used.

The study was well done, but extending the results to other lakes requires recognizing a couple of limitations. First, Table Rock lacks vegetation. The value of complex woody structure in lakes with vegetation is not known. Also, the depth and distance-offshore preferences of bass are likely to change in a lake with vegetation.

Second, Table Rock is a steep-sided lake. I would expect average depth of bass to be shallower and the distance offshore possibly greater in a lake with gradually sloping shorelines.

And last, the limited number of detections of the radio-tagged fish precluded analysis of seasonal differences in habitat use. An evaluation of complex woody structure use by largemouth bass in a Texas reservoir found greater use of the structures in summer and fall.

Despite a few limitations in extending the Table Rock research to other lakes, the study provides good guidelines for the efficient placement of woody structure in reservoirs lacking natural cover. The same information can be used by anglers to direct their fishing effort to those brush piles that are most likely to concentrate bass. ■

LUNKER LINES ➤

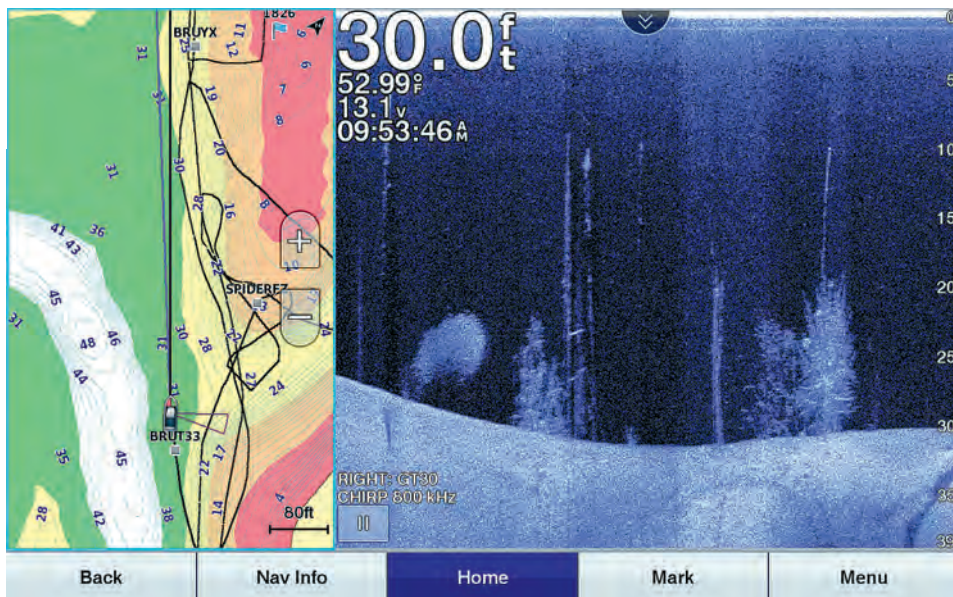




Photo courtesy Todd Driscoll



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LUNKER LINES

Paul Elias

Paul Elias fishes a Super Frog over the tops of the lily pads late in the day.



BOGUE HOMA BASS AND BREAM BEDS

GREAT TECHNIQUES FOR CATCHING BASS THIS MONTH AROUND BREAM SPAWNING AREAS

Greedy bass and timid bluegills can spell success for Bogue Homa bassers this month. You won't catch numbers there in May, but you might catch a 7- or 8-pounder. I've found two techniques that cause big bass to bite in May, and both of them are related to catching bedding bream.

I'm an old-school bream fisherman; I can smell a bream bed. I'm often asked what a bluegill bed smells like. Many fishermen answer this question by saying, "A very ripe watermelon." But to me, a bluegill bed smells fishy. I tell folks the smell is unique, and you'll know once you smell it.

I'll stay downwind of the shallow water flats at Bogue Homa, and I drive my boat very slowly, due to the large number of stumps. I'm like a bird dog hunting quail, trying to identify the smell of bluegill beds. Although I can see some of the beds, most of them I can't.

SKIP A WORM

Once I locate a bream beds, I wacky rig a 4½-inch, junebud-colored Mann's Spring-R worm, using a No. 1 weedless wacky worm hook on 15-pound bass braid. I'll tie this to a 4- to 5-foot leader of 10-pound White Peacock fluorocarbon. I'll fish it on spinning tackle. The secret to success is my staying far away from the bluegill bed, but still be close enough to skip that small worm across the water's surface and cause it to fall in the bream bed or on its edge.

Most people fishing worms wacky style either will be using a regular, 6-inch plastic worm or some type of fat, cigar shaped, Fluke-style worm. But the Spring-R worm is small and skinny. Most often, bluegill beds will be in the same vicinity as the cypress trees at Bogue Homa. Bass will often use the shade of the cypress trees as ambush points, while keeping their eyes on the bluegill beds.

Once they spot smaller fish or any type of critter swimming across or falling into the bluegill beds, the bass will shift into high gear. They'll swim hard to reach the bait before the bluegills eat it. When the bass sucks in the Spring-R worm, you only may see a tick on your line.

To have the force to skip the worm into the bluegill beds, I use a medium-heavy FX Custom spinning outfit. Once the worm falls into the bluegill bed, the race is on between the bass and the bluegill. The bass believes that if it can beat the bluegill to that itty, bitty worm, it will have breakfast or lunch, and the bluegill will have to do without.



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.

BET ON A SWIM JIG

I like a green pumpkin swim jig with a green pumpkin craw trailer; I'll dye the pincers chartreuse. I'll fish the swim jig on 30-pound bass braid on a 7-foot-4, medium-heavy FX Custom rod and an 8.3:1 Bruin reel. Many fishermen will shake their rod tips or jerk them and let the swim jig fall, but I don't. I prefer to swim the jig on a steady retrieve through the bluegill beds. I'm counting on the pincers of the crawfish trailer to get the bass's attention and make it bite. I'll also skip the swim jig to the shade of the cypress trees. Most often, bluegills won't chase the swim jig like they will the Spring-R worm, but the bass will eat up the swim jig.



The bass usually won't be far away from the bluegill beds this month.

SCHOOLING BASS

In May at Bogue Homa, you'll be fishing for post-spawn bass. Often, early in the morning as well as throughout the day, you may spot bass schooling on the surface, chasing shad. I'll always have a walking type bait like a Zara Spook or a Spook Jr., tied on a rod on my casting deck within easy reach. On another rod, I'll also have a Mann's Super Frog tied on that I'll fish around the edges of the lily pads and across the flats where the bluegills spawn. With a walking bait and a frog, I try to cover as much water as possible.

As the sun comes up, I'll concentrate on fishing the Super Frog over the tops of the lily pads. Bogue Homa has lily pads growing out to about 5 feet of water. I'll concentrate later in the day on the large, thick lily pads surrounded by sparsely scattered pads.

All three of these techniques can be deadly on Bogue Homa in May. ■

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SPECIES SPOTLIGHT >

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope

This largemouth bass weighed just shy of 8 pounds and bit an artificial, soft-plastic lizard on the outer edge of standing vegetation.



Photos by Brian Cope

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: LARGEMOUTH BASS

PERHAPS THE NATION'S NO. 1 GAMEFISH, THEY'RE AVAILABLE ALMOST EVERYWHERE

Largemouth bass, *Micropterus salmoides*, are one of the most-important gamefish in the United States. Aside from numerous professional fishing tournament trails, as well as smaller semi-pro and amateur trails, countless Americans spend a great deal of time and money trying to catch these fish.

One reason they are so sought-after is their existence in such a wide variety of water types. Bass live in slow-moving streams, calm pools of large rivers, natural lakes and man-made lakes and ponds. They can tolerate brackish water, various levels of water quality and a wide range of water temperatures.

Largemouth bass, one of several black bass that live throughout the South, are members of the sunfish family. Unlike most sunfish, black bass have elongated bodies. They can be distinguished from their cousins, smallmouth bass and spotted bass, by their longer jaws, which

extend past the rear corner of the eye when the fish's mouth is closed.

These fish have one long dorsal fin which is so deeply notched that it looks like two different sections. Largemouth bass usually appear dark green to olive on the upper part of their body, while the lower part and belly are usually white or a very light green. In some bodies of water, however, these fish can look very dark green, almost solid black.

Largemouth bass have a lateral line that runs almost the entire length of its body. They almost always have a visible series of dark blotches on each side. These blotches merge with the lateral line. That lateral line provides a great deal of information to these fish as it picks up vibrations and movement.

GEOGRAPHIC KIN

Two different strains of largemouth bass live throughout the South. The northern strain, despite its geographi-

cally deceptive name, is native to the southern states across the country. The Florida strain, native only to Florida, has been introduced throughout the South. The Florida strain grows bigger and more quickly, but they are less aggressive than the northern strain.

BASS BUFFET LINES

Largemouth bass eat just about anything. As fry, they eat zooplankton and insects. Pretty soon, they begin eating bigger insects, then fish larvae. Once big enough, they begin eating other fish. As adults, other fish make up the majority of their diet. But largemouth will also eat worms, insects, birds, mice, and snakes.



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.

In brackish water, they often eat shrimp and small crabs. They are very opportunistic feeders. This is one reason for the huge amount of lure types available for catching largemouth bass.

These fish begin spawning when water temperatures range between 65° and 75° F. Throughout the South, this can occur as early as February, but typical spawning months are March through June.

Males construct saucer-shaped nests in water ranging from 2 to 10 feet deep. Females deposit between 5,000 to 150,000 eggs over the nest, then, the males fertilize the eggs. Eggs hatch in three or four days. Adult male bass guard the fry for several weeks. When independent enough, the young bass disperse.

TARGET STRUCTURE

Largemouth bass prefer to stick close to structure or cover of some type. Sunken trees, docks, concrete walls, deep holes, and any type of sunken debris are prime spots for bass to hang out. In farm ponds with no structure, they usually seek out the deepest holes

or stay close to the banks. They are skilled predators and are often the dominant gamefish in whatever body of water they live.

Nicknames for largemouth bass include green trout, bucketmouth, lunker, hog, and cypress trout.

The Louisiana state record largemouth bass came from Caney Lake in February 1994. Greg Wiggins caught the fish, which weighed 15.97 pounds.

Anthony Denny of Washington, Miss., caught the Mississippi state-record largemouth, an 18.15-pound fish.

Denny's prize catch occurred in Natchez State Park Lake in December 1992.

The world record largemouth bass is a tie, according to the International Game Fish Association (IGFA). George Perry's 22.4-pound bass from Montgomery Lake, Ga., stood as the record for decades after being caught in 1932. In 2009, Manabu Kurita caught a 22.5-pound bass in Lake Biwa, Japan. According to the IGFA, a fish must weigh at least two ounces more than the previous world record to become the new record. Otherwise, it is considered a tie. Therefore, the IGFA lists Kurita and Perry as tied for the world-record largemouth bass. ■



Largemouth bass are one of the most highly-sought after gamefish in the United States.

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LIGHT UP THE DARK

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DIGITAL NIGHT VISION, THERMAL OPTICS GIVE HUNTERS A BIG EDGE WHEN IT'S TIME TO ADD HUNTING BY MOONLIGHT TO YOUR REPERTOIRE. HE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW.

■ By Andy Douglas

Hunting at night is quickly catching on across the nation, and Magnolia State sportsmen and women aren't being left by the wayside. Whether it's stalking hogs, calling coyotes, still-hunting raccoons or getting after any other legal nuisance animal, opportunities abound for Mississippi hunters, and it's just plain fun.

If you're not familiar with digital night vision or thermal-imaging optics, it can be a little overwhelming trying to figure out what a hunter needs to get started chasing legal animals at night. It can also be expensive to get started. Here's a little info to familiarize hunters with specs and prices so they can get into the night game.

DIGITAL NIGHT VISION >

DIGITAL NIGHT VISION

DNV is electronic optics that convert what you're looking at into an electronic signal and places it on a small screen for viewing. It uses available light combined with illuminators (an infrared light) to illuminate the viewed area or objects. Some better-quality DNV scopes can see game on a moonlit night without the use of the illuminator, but identification is much better utilizing the infrared light.

There are scopes, binoculars, and monoculars on the market that utilize the latest DNV technologies. These are only hundreds of dollars, unlike the thousand-plus needed to purchase the Gen 2 or Gen 3 military tube-style night vision, and DNV is generally cheaper than Gen 1 devices.

DNV scopes and other optics will not be damaged if used in the daytime or looking at a lighted area. In fact, most DNV scopes have a daytime mode and a nighttime mode—you're not limited to night hunting only.

THERMAL OPTICS

TOs are electronic optics that detect heat and place heat images on a small screen inside the optical device for viewing. There are quality scopes, binoculars and monoculars available in many varieties from which hunters may choose.

Everything has a thermal image, whether hot, cold or in between, and thermal optics capture the heat signature of all objects for viewing. Thermal optics do not need any source of light and can be used in total darkness.

TOs are the most popular and sought-after scopes for chasing critters at night. Like their sister optics, DNV, they aren't limited to nighttime only. Using and hunting with them in daytime or lighted conditions will not damage the optics.

UNDERSTAND HOW IT WORKS

Understanding how it works is key to making a purchase and getting quality optics that suits your needs. Both DNV and TOs are built and similar to digital camera operations. It's all about resolution and magnification combined to get a quality image. Hunters need to know the ranges at which their potential optics can detect the quarry and from what range it can positively identify the quarry.

Detection range and ID range depend on the resolution of the core (sensor) working with its native magnification. For instance, a scope with a 640x480 core and a 2X magnification will have a better image than that of the same manufacturer's scope with a 320x240 core with a 2X magnification. The better resolution optic will also cost more.

"When a customer calls in trying to figure out what they need for their type of hunting, budget is one of the top concerns. Base magnification is right there with budget though," said Jason Robertson, owner of Outdoor Legacy Gear, a night vision and thermal optics dealer. "Some sound advice for a first-time buyer is to purchase a scope with the lowest magnification you can get away with; this will give you a wider field of view."

This is typically around 2X for hog hunters and 3X to 4X for coyote hunters.

MANUFACTURERS, PRICES >

A digital night vision scope mounted to your rifle will quickly get you chasing critters at night. This ATN X-Sight II HD 3-14x is mounted on a Marlin Rem 35.



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MANUFACTURERS, PRICES

“Who makes what?” and “What’s the price?” are questions often asked, especially by someone making a first-time purchase. The market is not overrun with companies producing DNV and TOs for hunting and they are in high demand.

These are considered the companies who are leading the pack in producing quality TOs:

- **Trijicon**, regarded by many to be the top of the line in thermals, has fantastic image quality and the most-expensive prices. Trinicon is best known for its Reap-IR and IR-Hunter thermal scopes, and it also makes thermal monoculars. Low-end entry price on Trijicon thermal scopes starts at \$6,000 and averages around \$7,000.

- **N-Vision Optics** is another top-drawer thermal company producing superb image quality. It is right at the top with



A fox slips in at 50 yards and is easily identified using the ATN X-Sight HD digital night vision scope.

A BUDGET FRIENDLY SETUP

If you haven't gotten into the night game and want to try it out without taking out a loan, here's an idea for a scope and a spotter on the entry level.

The Sightmark Wraith is priced slightly less than \$500; the ATN X-Sight II HD 3-14x is about \$100 more. Sometimes these can be found cheaper from time to time or even purchased used.

Think about an AGM ASP-Micro TM160 monocular as a spotter, for slightly less than \$500. You will have a Thermal spotting device that can detect game at 300 yards or more, along with a DNV scope on your weapon that will give you a positive identification of the quarry. You could be night hunting very effectively for around \$1,000. Of course, if you have more spare change in your budget, you can upgrade on the scope or spotter; the sky is the limit. ■

This entry level thermal optic is an ATN THOR LT 3-6. It is mounted to a Remington 700 with quick detach mounts. This allows the scope to be taken off and used as a spotting device and remounted and still be dead-on accurate.

Andy Douglas



Trijicon on quality and price. It is best known for the N-Vision Halo, which starts at around \$6,000. It also manufactures a couple of different thermal binoculars.

- **Pulsar** is very popular with night hunters and is a company that produces excellent thermal products. It has a lot of different scopes, monoculars and binoculars to choose from at different price levels. Lower-priced, entry-level scopes like their Pulsar Core line start around \$1,900. Pulsar is best known for its Trail and Thermion models. The Trails have been discontinued except for the Trail LRF which starts near \$4,300; the Thermions start at \$2,800 and range to \$5,000, depending on resolution and options. Pulsar is coming out with new optics and improvements to existing models in late spring or early summer in 2020.

- **ATN** is another popular company that produces a lot of good products at some of the best prices on the market. ATN is well known for its THOR 4 thermal scopes, which start around \$1,800 with a 384x288 core and a 1.25 native magnification. It produces many models, and the prices go up with more resolution and magnification. ATN produces several models of thermal monoculars and binoculars, along with some budget-friendly, entry-level scopes starting at close to \$1,200 in the THOR LT models (160x120 resolution core). ATN is coming out with many interesting new products at really low prices, adding to their line-up late spring or early summer.

- **AGM** is another company, relatively new, with its founders and owners having deep roots in the night-vision and thermal-optics industry. AGM brings to the table more than 40 years of experience combined, coming from several other seasoned



Using the 'white-hot' color pallet, this 200-pound hog is in trouble at 80 yards. Nothing can escape undetected even in total darkness using thermal optics.



night-vision and thermal companies. AGM offers thermal scopes, binoculars and monoculars. Entry level scopes are the Python line, with the TS35-384 priced around \$3,145, and the Secutor line, with the TS25-384 priced around \$2,725. What's interesting about AGM is it's producing some quality monoculars for spotting and detection at a reasonable price; the ASP line TM-25 comes in around \$1,800. It is also producing a budget-friendly ASP-Micro TMI60 at an affordable price of slightly less than \$500, and though the core is 160x120, reports indicate it provides great detection and identification.

DNV CHOICES

Three companies seem to be leading the industry in producing DNV scopes. They're very good quality and will all get the job done.

• **Sightmark** makes the Wraith HD 4-32x50 DNV scope, priced near \$500, and it is coming out with the Wraith 4k late this spring. Sightmark also produces the Photon line, with an entry level price close to \$550. The Wraiths and Photons come in different magnifications and can be used night or daytime. Sightmark also sells a DNV monocular.


• **ATN** is known for producing the X-Sight line of DNV scopes. The X-Sight II HD 3-14 is priced at \$599 and is available with more magnification. The X-Sight 4K series starts at \$699 and goes up from there with magnification, options and price. ATN also produces some night-vision binoculars, with the BinoX 4K selling for \$899. All these by ATN can be used day or night.

• **Pulsar** produces the Digisight Ultra, priced at around \$1,300, and the Digex N450 4-16 at around \$1,200. Pulsar also makes a DNV monocular called the Forward FN455. All these can be used day or night and are top quality products that won't disappoint.

WHAT DO YOU NEED? ➤

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WHAT DO YOU NEED?

Figuring it all out and educating yourself is vital for hunters, especially first-time buyers of DNV and TOs. Luckily, there is a wealth of information out there to help with learning and thoroughly understating what it's all about.

One of the best places to learn about all things night vision and thermal is *The Late Night Vision Show*. It's a weekly podcast found on iTunes, Google Podcasts and Spotify. It's also on YouTube for easy viewing. Two of the industry's leaders are hosts on this show, which already has more than 100 episodes that provide hunters and night-vision enthusiasts a wealth of information on feral hog hunting, along with product news and reviews.

"Talk to a dealer," Robertson said. "Talk to someone who not only specializes in selling thermal and night vision products, but who uses them as well."

Buyers of night vision and thermal optics should scrape and dig for information as much as possible. Before making a purchase and spending hard-earned money, educate yourself to get more bang for your buck and a quality scope or spotter with which you will be totally happy.

Always check state and local laws when it comes to nuisance animal hunting and hunting at night. ■



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.

CHOOSING AN OPTIONAL DIGITAL NIGHT VISION ILLUMINATOR

Most DNV scopes come with a factory provided IR illuminator producing infrared light that works with the DNV optic to see targeted animals. These usually mount to the DNV via a small rail attachment.

Factory provided IRs work well and are sufficient, but hunters can take it to the next level and buy alternate and more powerful IR illuminators. Factory IRs are generally in the 850nm (nanometer) range. More-powerful wattage outputs 850nm lights can be purchased. A small, red glow can be seen when looking directly at the 850 nm IR light. This is usually fine and doesn't spook game.

Some hunters choose something a little more discrete: IRs in the 940nm range. Lights 940nm and above are invisible to the naked eye and emit very low LED glow. The advantage of IRs in the 850 range are that they provides more illumination than the 940 ranges. The advantage of the 940 is that it's not going to be detected by game at close ranges. Some companies making very good IR lights are Wicked Hunting Lights, Sniper Hog Lights, and Predator Tactics Coyote Reaper. ■



Andy Douglas

Most quality digital night vision scopes come with some type of infrared illuminator that mounts to the side of the scope, such as the ATN X-Sight HD shown here with its factory provided 850 nm IR light.

■ By Phillip Gentry

AFTER THE SPAWN, WHEN MISSISSIPPI'S SLAB CRAPPIE MOVE OUT TO DEEP WATER, TROLLING CRANKBAITS MIGHT BE THE BEST WAY TO TRICK THEM INTO BITING.

CRANKIN' CRAPPIE CONCEPTS

IN THE SPRING, CRAPPIE FISHERMEN ACROSS MISSISSIPPI CAN'T WAIT FOR THOSE SLABS TO BEGIN THEIR PUSH SHALLOW. WHEN IT'S CRAPPIE SEASON, EVERYONE CAN CATCH CRAPPIE,
BUT IT'S A DIFFERENT STORY AS SOON AS THE SPAWN IS OVER.

Rather than flounder around, looking for fish lingering in the shallows and hoping for a late wave of spawners, guide Torch Tindle of Cleveland gets his crankbait poles out and starts cranking for post-spawn crappie.

"When these fish come off the spawn, they start moving out to deeper water," said Tindle. "During the spawn, crappie don't do a lot of eating, so they are hungry. That's what you want when you're trying to catch them on crankbaits."

Tindle (662-515-0175) guides on several lakes across Mississippi, including Ross Barnett and Washington, but he concentrates on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lakes:

Grenada, Sardis, Enid and Arkabutla. The make up of these four lakes have a similarity that make them ideal for catching crappie on crankbaits.

"None of the Corps lakes have much in the way of structure in the main lake," he said. "The first of May, I start right outside the tree line in the upper parts of the lake and will work my way west as the summer progresses."

Tindle said anglers can expect to find crappie suspended at depths of 9 to 15 feet. He said they generally go just deep enough to block out most of the sunlight with muddy water.

Tindle's setup for trolling crankbaits from the stern of his boat



Whether pulling them from the rear of the boat or pushing them off the front, crankbaits account for large numbers of Mississippi crappie after the spawn.

is pretty standard. He has rod holders set up in the corners and pulls crankbaits with B'n'M trolling rods, graduated from 10 to 18 feet long. All of his rods are paired with line-counter reels, and he spools each reel with 40-pound Power Pro braid.

"All the fish see is the crankbait coming at them," Tindle said. "I don't worry about them being line-shy. The 40-pound Power Pro is the same diameter as 10-pound mono, so when you're using the Precision Trolling App to calculate speed and the amount of line out with the crankbait you're using, it all works out for 10-pound test line."

Tindle prefers a high-visibility yellow braid for trolling crankbaits so he can see how the lines and crankbaits are tracking.

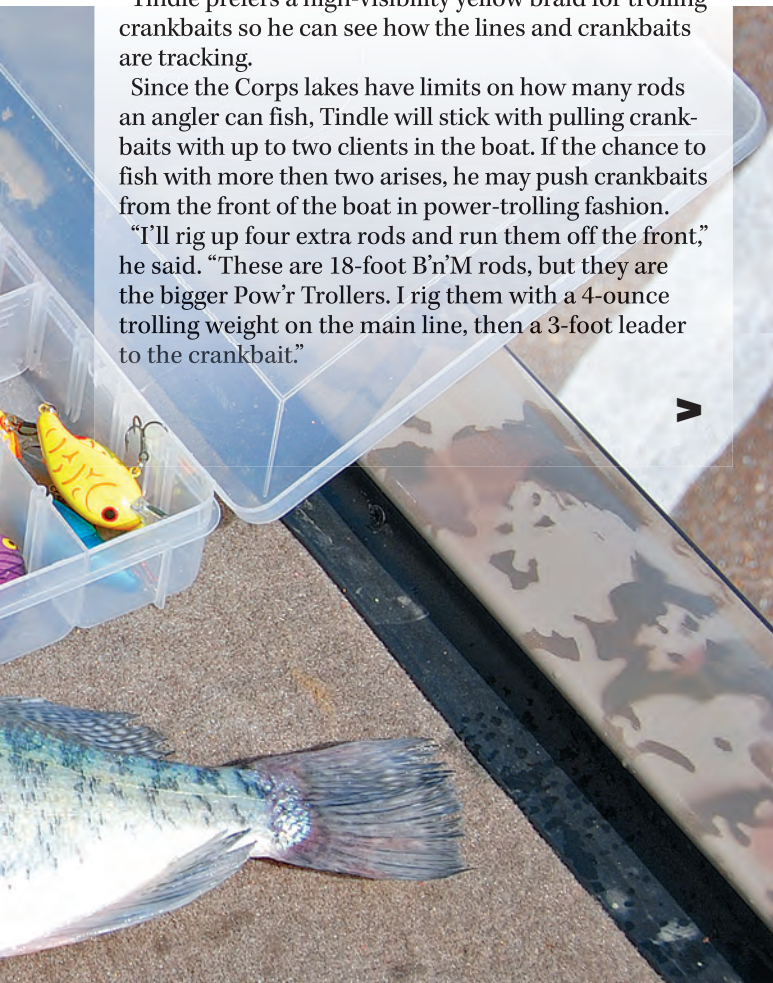
Since the Corps lakes have limits on how many rods an angler can fish, Tindle will stick with pulling crankbaits with up to two clients in the boat. If the chance to fish with more than two arises, he may push crankbaits from the front of the boat in power-trolling fashion.

"I'll rig up four extra rods and run them off the front," he said. "These are 18-foot B'n'M rods, but they are the bigger Pow'r Trollers. I rig them with a 4-ounce trolling weight on the main line, then a 3-foot leader to the crankbait."



B'n'M Poles designed the Pro Staff Trolling rod to stand up to the abuse of trolling heavy weights or pulling crank baits at high speeds.

Phillip Gentry



Phillip Gentry

THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB

You've probably heard the adage that warns "Never take a knife to a gunfight."

But that winds up being the case many times over when crappie anglers hit the water. Crappie are generally considered a light to ultralight species, so anglers who chase crappie make sure they take their crappie poles with them when they go fishing.

With the sophistication of various crappie techniques, just grabbing your "crappie poles" may no longer fit the bill, especially when you're pulling a boatload of crankbaits or power trolling.

Consider your average bass fisherman. During a day of fishing, he may use one rod for cranking, one rod for worming and another rod for flipping brush. Different tactics require different rods. Creating the right tool for the job is what has landed West Point-based B'n'M Poles (www.bnmpoles.com) at the top of the panfish rod industry.

"Some of my pro staff guys came to me one day and said, 'We need a rod that will have enough backbone to troll a 5-ounce sinker or pull 4-inch crankbaits at 2 miles per hour and still have the sensitivity to land crappie,'" said Jack Wells, B'n'M's president.

"I didn't ask why, because these guys catch crappie all over the country, but I knew we had a job on our hands. To design this type of rod, we enlisted 10 of our top pro fishermen to create the best graphite trolling rod available. The Pro Staff Trolling Rod is the result of this research. This rod has a great blend of strength and tip action for even the most aggressive trolling enthusiasts."

These rods, made of 100% graphite, comes in lengths from 8 to 16 feet, in 2- and 3-piece configurations for easy storage. ■

A lot of debate about how to propel the boat has ensued over the years. Some anglers prefer to troll with a plate over the big motor, while others use only a beefy trolling motor. Tindle breaks from tradition here by using a small outboard as a kicker.

"I have a 2½ HP Mercury outboard I use as a kicker on the back," he said. "That lets me run between 1.6 and 2.0 mph for fishing crankbaits. I set the motor and lock it facing straight ahead, but I've also got my remote-control trolling motor out up front. I run just enough power on it to steer the front of the boat."

Tindle has been a fan of Bandit crankbaits for years but recently switched to Delta's Custom Crappie Cranks from a



Phillip Gentry

Crappie tend to suspend in the 9- to 15-foot depth range through the spring and summer on Mississippi's U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lakes.

manufacturer in Pearl. Tindle said they are the best he's ever seen at catching crappie.

"You can buy them in any color combination, and they run true right out of the box," he said. "A lot of guys know about using bright colors — bright pinks, bubble gum, and for Sardis, the gold color — but my hands-down favorite is a color they call black hornet. It's black with a green underbelly."

Tindle said the key to catching crappie is dialing in on the right depth of presentation. Other than using the Precision Trolling App on his phone, he will start off varying the amount of line out on the line-counter reels from around 100 feet on the longest rod to 60 feet on the shortest on each side of the boat.

"From there, you just have to dial in on the fish," he said. "They seem to just roam these flats, and they move closer and closer towards the dam as the summer progresses. Some days, they might be up in the water at 9 feet and others down around 15 feet, no matter how deep the water is under them."

"I guess that's the challenge," said Tindle. "You just got to get out there and dial in on them." ■



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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Anglers who want all the information from the book *Precision Trolling*, can now have it in a smartphone app.

TROLLER'S 'BIBLE'

AVAILABLE AS SMARTPHONE APP

The information contained in the publication *Precision Trolling* is a troller's dream come true. Dubbed the "Troller's Bible" by anglers who use this information to target fish at specific depths, Precision Trolling is just what the name implies: a method that allows anglers to accurately predict the running depths of their favorite lures and diving devices.

By manipulating lead-length, anglers can easily "aim" their favorite fishing lures at specific depths and accurately target fish they are seeing on their sonar while avoiding costly snagged lures. Even better, once a productive lead length is determined, it's easy to duplicate that lure and lead-length combination with other lines, putting more lures in the strike zone.

The Precision Trolling Data App (www.precisiontrollingdata.com) goes a step further. Once an angler has determined that a particular lure and lead length are effective at catching fish, it's easy to search for other lures in the list of Precision Trolling App that achieve similar depths. Once a productive depth is determined, it's a logical step to try different lures at the same depth to determine which fish react best to.

The app allows anglers to access a wealth of trolling data. The familiar "Dive Curves" made popular in the Precision Trolling book are incorporated into easy to use "pickers" or "wheels". The data wheels let you adjust the "feet down" to determine the "feet back." This is particularly useful if you want to target fish you are seeing on your sonar unit at a certain depth. The data wheel also allows anglers to adjust the "feet back" to determine the "feet down" that the lure will dive — a fast and effective way of zeroing in on a depth with any of the lures or diving devices included in the Precision Trolling App. ■



Courtesy Precision Trolling Data

VERSATILITY REIMAGINED

Metanium

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a Shimano Metanium fishing reel. The reel is black and silver, with a prominent handle and a spool. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with green foliage.

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SHIMANO METANIUM REELS

Shimano has redesigned its low-profile Metanium baitcasting reel series and hit the market with six new reels, right- and left-hand models in three different retrieve speeds: 150 and 151 with 6.2:1, 150HG and 151HG with 7.1:1 and 150XG and 151XG with 8.1:1.

The Metanium reels feature Shimano's CoreSolid Body frame of light-weight magnesium, a brass drive gear and narrow MGL III spool for added casting distance.

All six Metanium reels have 10 S-ARB (shielded anti-rust) ball bearings in

strategic locations, and a one-way roller bearing for no-handle back play.

Additional features include Shimano's Micro-Module Gears and SVS Infinity brake system.

The line capacity ranges from 110 yards of 12-pound mono or fluorocarbon to 135 yards of 35-pound braid.

MSRP: \$419.99

For more info, visit: www.fish.shimano.com.



PLANO'S EDGE MASTER TERMINAL BOX

The era of portable, plastic tackle boxes that could be added or removed from tackle bags has revolutionized the way fishermen store their crankbaits and worms and jigs.

But until Plano introduced its Edge Master Terminal Box, none of those plastic tackle boxes was made specifically for terminal tackle: for hooks and weights, snaps and swivels.

The Edge Master Terminal Box has 16 removable interior boxes,

four of which are further divided and three of which are made from high-density rubber for bullet-style weights.

The individual boxes have molded-in, finger slots for easy removal, and they come with the rust-preventing technology and watertight seals the Edge line introduced last year, plus watertight sealing.

This box comes in the 3700 size, which fits into current tackle storage systems.

MSRP: \$49.99

For more info, visit: www.planomolding.com.



GAMAKATSU FINESSE JIGHEADS

With finesse fishing becoming a significant part of a bass angler's arsenal, light jigheads and weights and small worms are taking up a bigger percentage of tackle boxes everywhere.

Techniques like the Ned Rig and Neko Rig have sent anglers scrambling for their spinning tackle and light line, and now, Gamakatsu has jigheads on the market they'd love to see those anglers tying on.

Gamakatsu recently debuted three new jigheads: Finesse, Finesse Offset and Bottom Kicker Offset, in packs of four.

The Finesse jighead has a spring keeper to hold the bait securely against the flat side of the head. It features a No. 1 hook and is available in 1/16-, 3/32- and 1/8-ounce sizes.

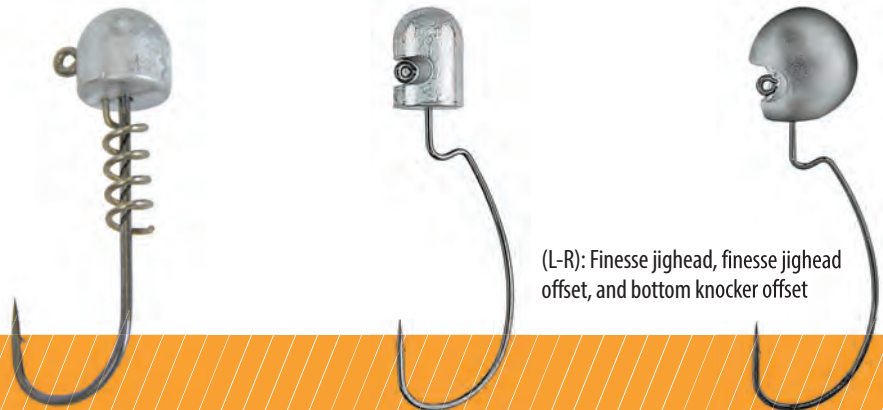
The Finesse Offset jighead has an offset eye countersunk into the jighead and a Z-shaped bend that helps with Texas-rigging soft plastics. It features a 1/0 hook and is available in 1/16-, 3/32-, 3/16- and 1/8-ounce sizes.

The Bottom Kicker Offset is a

deep-water version of a finesse jighead with a hybrid football/round style head and recessed eye. It comes in 3/8-, 1/2-, 5/8- and 3/4- ounce sizes with a 1/0 hook.

MSRP: \$5.98 to \$6.66.

For more info, visit: www.Gamakatsu.com.

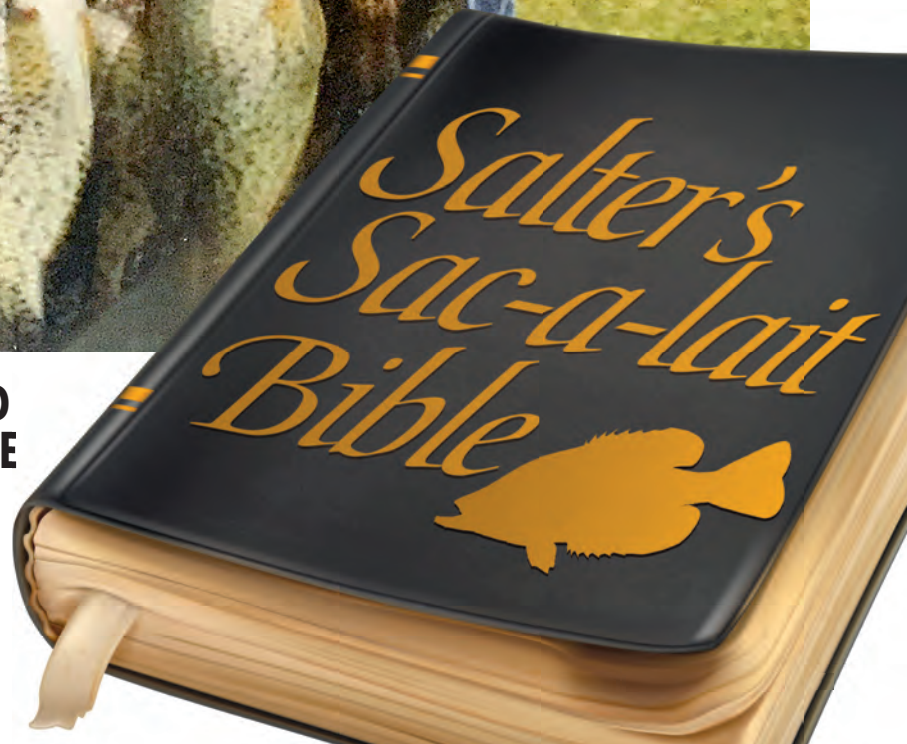


(L-R): Finesse jighead, finesse jighead offset, and bottom kicker offset



JIGGIN' POLE'S INVENTOR HAD PLENTY TO SAY ABOUT CRAPPIE FISHING, AND HIS SON IS KEEPING THE RELIGION ALIVE.

■ By Kinny Haddox



Trying to summarize all the crappie fishing knowledge

Blaine Salter spends countless days teaching anglers to fish for sac-a-lait and promoting his company's jigging poles.

that J.B. "Blaine" Salter Jr. accumulated over the years from his father, the late J.B. Salter, and from time on the lake is like trying to summarize the entire Encyclopedia Britannica — Remember those? — in two paragraphs or less.

Salter is driving forward the legacy of his father, who passed away four years ago, and their company, Salter's Jiggin' Pole, the same way they built the business and some of the best panfishing poles around in a modest shop in Erwinville, La. Salter's two main products continue to be the Classic Fiberglass Jiggin' Pole and the Elite Series Jiggin' Pole.

The poles are still built so when they are held, the guides are on the side of the pole to keep it from contacting the line to maximize the feel for bites. They are also built with counterweight on the end of the rod to keep them perfectly balanced and easy to hold during a long day's fishing.

"It's an all-out war out there now," said Salter, 44. "Years ago, there weren't that many sac-a-lait — or crappie — fishermen. Now everybody's out there (crappie) fishing. It's tremendous. The sport has grown 26% each year the past four years, and it isn't through yet. I combine what I have learned crappie fishing with teaching others how to be successful. That's what I do. In fact, between running the business and teaching every chance I get, I do less fishing than ever."

Even if he never wets another hook, which isn't about to happen, Salter spends all the time he can teaching crappie fishing at tackle shows, store seminars and even as a guest instructor at Crappie University. All the while, he ensures Salter Jiggin' Pole produces the same, dependable fishing poles that his father began more than 40 years ago when he invented the Salter's Jiggin' Pole in 1981.

What's the most important factor that influence sac-a-lait and bream and your ability to catch them? Salter has a handwritten answer to that question on a worn, old piece of ruled tablet paper.

"Out of a thousand handwritten letters Dad wrote, there were 12 things he felt influenced fishing patterns, Salter said. "Whether you are a beginner or an advanced fishermen, pay attention to these, and you'll catch more fish."



V



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It would take a book to share all that information, but Salter breaks down the most important three items on that list in more detail. They apply no matter where you fish.

“Know your area’s food source,” he said. “If there is no food, there are no (crappie) there. Most of our home area is as follows: minnows or shad are No. 1, followed by grass shrimp for grassy lakes, and tadpoles or crawfish. Your bait should mimic these at all cost. Use the chart to determine colors. They react to contrast; Bobby Garland tadpole style baits are great. Cajun Lures’ Slim Jimmy has great tail action for jigging vertically and grey ghost hair jigs like Crappie G mimic a shiner’s flash.”

Next in importance are water clarity and oxygen levels, Salter said. Do not fish black, clear water. This indicates lack of oxygen. You want water with that beautiful green tint that is rich in oxygen, perfect for jigging so you can get up close.

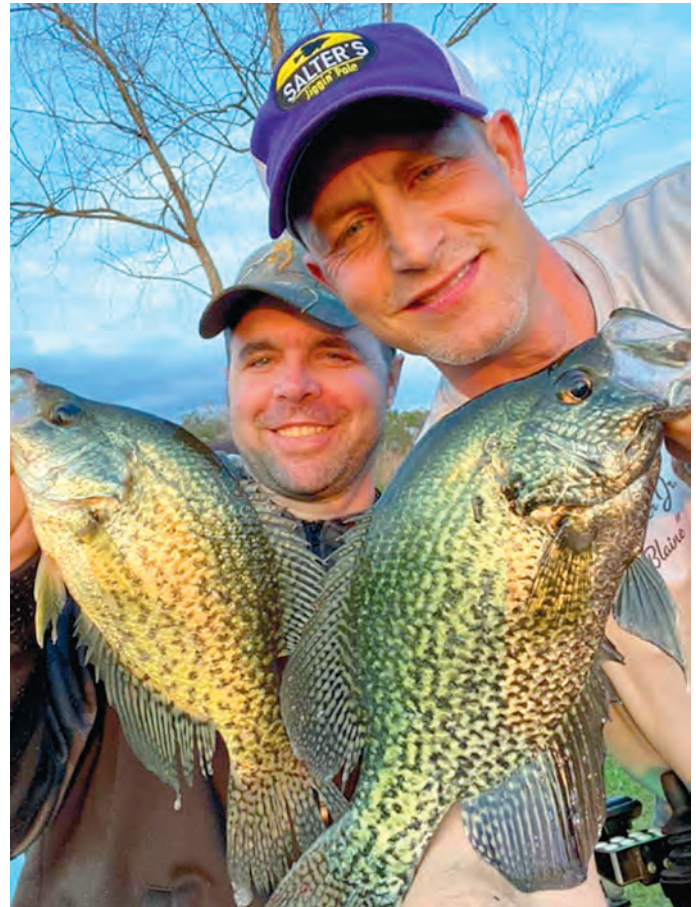
“Shade patterns is high on the list,” he says. “If you catch a feeding pattern twice a day, then great. You can catch them easily. The skill comes at other times. Shade is your best friend. They hide in the shade and are invisible and ambush their pray. Suspend your bait under a cork or work your jig in a swimming pattern. That’s crucial. This really shouldn’t even be called jigging because it’s really swimming. Swim that bait in a 6-inch pattern with a little wiggle at the stop. And I mean stop. Still. Give that fish a chance to get it and he will.”

Another tip Salter picked up as absolute truth from his father was to fish between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. The elder Salter fished four to five hours at least three times a week the 10 years before he passed on. He swore by the 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. time frame. He also created a color chart that is included with Salter products and that Salter hands out at his teaching appearances.

“That chart has withstood the test of time and if you follow it, you’ll catch fish,” he said. ■



Kinny Haddox has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 45 years. He publishes a daily website, lakedarboonnelife.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.



Blaine Salter, right, and a friend show the results of following a good crappie fishing plan. BELOW: J.B. Salter’s color chart helps anglers choose their panfishing weapons.

<p>General Rule: Black/Chartreuse Sparkle is best for black clear water. Light colors are best for clear water. In milky, muddy, or deep clear water, because of decreased visibility, darker colors are necessary for fish to see the jig.</p>			
<p>COLORS FOR DIFFERENT KINDS OF WATER</p>			
<p>BLACK CLEAR WATER</p>	<p>CLEAR WATER</p>	<p>MILKY WATER</p>	<p>MUDDY WATER</p>
<p>BLACK/CHARTREUSE SPARKLE BLACK</p>	<p>LIGHT PINK/WHITE RED/CHARTREUSE SPARKLE YELLOW/CHARTREUSE BROWN/ORANGE (Crawfish Color) CHARTREUSE HOT PINK/WHITE CLEAR SPARKLE</p>	<p>LIGHT PINK/WHITE RED/CHARTREUSE SPARKLE BLACK/CHARTREUSE SPARKLE BLUE/WHITE BROWN/ORANGE (Crawfish Color) HOT PINK/WHITE GREEN/WHITE BURNT ORANGE/WHITE ORANGE/WHITE BLACK/YELLOW RED/CLEAR SPARKLE</p>	<p>BLACK/CHARTREUSE SPARKLE BLUE/WHITE BLACK/WHITE BLACK BLACK/BLUE SPARKLE BLUE PURPLE/RED (Crawfish Color) BLACK/YELLOW BLACK/FIRETAIL PURPLE/CLEAR SPARKLE</p>
<p>COPYRIGHT J. B. SALTER 1987 Rev. 3/15/87</p>			

HOT TIP:

Don't ever fish naked

Blaine Salter is adamant about doing things right when crappie fishing. One thing he swears by is to never fish naked — bare. No, he's not talking about the fishermen.

He's talking about the hook on your lure. Never leave it bare.

"You can't catch fish if you are hung up and if you are throwing the bait where you need to catch fish most of the time, you will get hung up unless you use a weed guard," he says. "It's the most vital part of every bait we use. Period. No, make that exclamation point."

He designed the Salter's Weed Guard, made of clear soft plastic polymer. It will make every jig in your box weedless, Blaine said. It's made and distributed by Zachary Dubois of Cajun Lures in Kaplan, La.

"When hooked up right, it will allow you to put that jig right through tree roots, Christmas trees, grass beds... anything," Blaine said. "It has a small hole in one end that you take your hook and go through that hole. Pull it up to the back of the jig head. If you are adding a plastic trailer, put it on and get it straight, then stick the other end of our weed guard right into the point of the hook. It also works on hair jigs. It's weedless, but the bite and hookset will pull the point right through the plastic and stick the fish."

There's an instruction video on YouTube that features Blaine showing you exactly how to use one.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=RkyUcfSqVbE

**J.B. SALTER'S
DEADLY DOZEN >**

A Salter's Weed Guard (right) can make any panfish lure weedless by covering the point while still allowing it to penetrate a fish's mouth.



TOPWATER TERRORS



BRONZEYE FROG

SIZE: 60mm - 1/2oz, 65mm - 5/8oz

ACTION: WALKING

HOOKS: GAMAKATSU EWG DOUBLE

BRONZEYE POPPER

SIZE: 50mm - 1/4oz, 60mm - 1/2oz

ACTION: POPPING & SOUND

HOOKS: GAMAKATSU EWG DOUBLE

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⑫ Things that influence the location of saca-lait and bream family

- ① Water Level (Depth)
- ② water clarity
- ③ shade
- ④ Water current & mixing clear & muddy water & Tide & Runouts
- ⑤ underwater structures

- ⑥ Food source
- ⑦ Dark or Bright sunlight times of the day.
- ⑧ Spawning activity
- ⑨ Water Temperature
- ⑩ High & Low atmospheric pressure
- ⑪ High acid or pollution content
- ⑫ Low oxygen content.

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J.B. Salter's **DEADLY DOZEN**

What influences the crappie and bream bites?

These are the 12 things that influence the location of crappie and bream, as copied exactly off a hand-written list from J.B. Salter. He swore by these as the most important factors in catching panfish and he used them religiously in his own fishing and teaching others.

1. Water level (depth)
2. Water clarity
3. Shade
4. Water current and mixing clear and muddy water and tide and runouts
5. Underwater structure
6. Food source
7. Dark or bright sunlight - times of the day
8. Spawning activity
9. Water temperature
10. High and low atmospheric pressure
11. High acid or pollution content
12. Low oxygen content ■



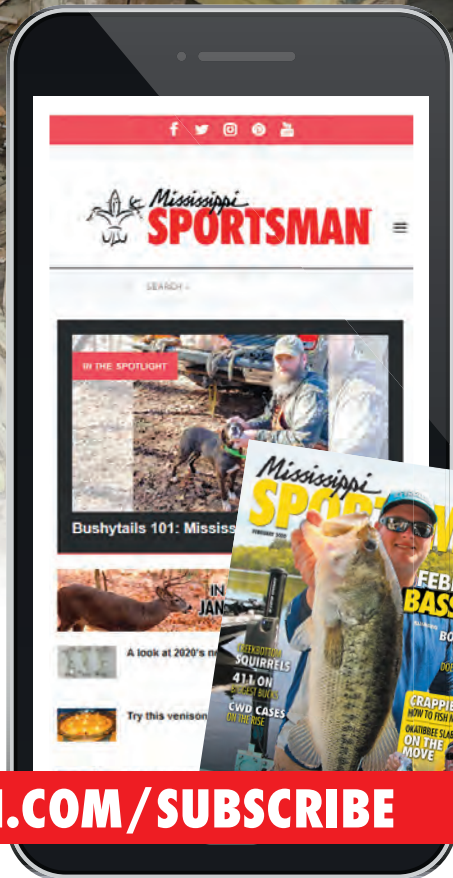
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LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

The Matrix XShad is Chad Champagne's latest offering.



MATRIX XSHAD

Photos courtesy Chas Champagne

These are X-citing times at Dockside Bait & Tackle in Slidell, La., home of Matrix Shad, Vortex Shad, Matrix MEGA, Matrix Rip Shad, etc.

As X-cited as founder and owner Chas Champagne was about the recent release of the new Matrix XShad, consumers — the anglers who count on the artificial lures to put fish in the boat — are even more amped up.

“The public is anticipating this more than anything we’ve ever come out with. I can kind of judge how busy something is going to be,” Champagne said, noting the high volume of calls and inquiries from store owners is a tell-tale gauge.

The Matrix XShad, two years in the planning and making, was scheduled to be on the shelves last in April and scheduled to be available to subscribers of the Matrix Bait Box in March.

What’s the X-citement about, X-actly? Matrix XShads are intricately hand-painted, Champagne said proudly, and feature an added bonus.

NOT NEW, UPGRADED

However, the veteran angler and artificial lure manufacturer emphasized, it isn’t a new line of soft plastics, per se.

“It is the exact mold of the ever-so popular Matrix Shad. The only difference is, we put a belly slit in this so it’ll give anglers the opportunity to rig it weedless or on an open-faced jighead,” he said.

“They’re hand-painted, each one. Instead of having purple/gold or black/chartreuse — colors in the fishing world the past 40 years — like a double-laminate, we’re going after a natural image, like we peeled the skin off a fish” and put it on each soft plastic, he said.

“It’s about as accurate as you can get when you paint and draw something.”

Redfish, flounder, other saltwater fish and even bass have been fooled by the Matrix XShad.

Champagne shipped frozen minnows overseas to the designers, who came up with the ultra-natural paint jobs for pogeys, mullets and glass minnows, right down to the gill plates painted red, the distinguishing dot on the pogeys and the silver line right down the belly of the glass minnows.

“That one’s really sharp,” he said.

The painstaking details are added to the soft-plastic body, already known for its flexibility and durability. The hand-painted finish was put to the test last April when Champagne and others tested the Matrix XShad, along with the Matrix MEGA and the Matrix Rip Shad, in Florida. Why Florida? If an artificial lure can entice speckled trout and other species to bite in the heavily pressured, clear waters of the Florida coast, it can trigger bites anywhere, Champagne has reasoned during his years as an artificial lure manufacturer.

The Matrix XShad has been in the works a long time.

“Man, I’ve been dealing with this



Don Shoopman fishes for freshwater and saltwater species mostly in and around the Atchafalaya Basin and Vermillion 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.

thing two years to get it right," he said.

Pulling it all together has been a feat. The packaging is made in one place, the packaging's special "clams" are made somewhere else and the soft-plastic lure itself is made somewhere else, then they're assembled in Slidell.

DURABLE PAINT JOB

The Matrix XShad's paint job holds up "pretty well," he said, adding that it should last the lifetime of the bait, which is a shade longer than 3 inches. The body is the same as the Matrix Shad; it's common to catch at least seven or eight speckled trout on one of those.

"I'd say it will catch five or six fish before you might see scratches and scrapes. I was impressed," Champagne said.

There is a catch. Each bag of five baits is fairly pricey (\$6.99) for the saltwater fishing market — not so much so in the bass-fishing market — but Champagne wants to make anglers aware that it costs approximately five times as much for him to make one Matrix XShad as it does to make a Matrix Shad.

"I'm going to get the price down," Champagne vowed.

This new bait lure is at the upper end of the soft-plastic echelon, he emphasized, noting the Matrix Shads are "well-priced" and have proven effective in inshore waters from Texas to Florida and beyond.

"Both will catch you fish, but one of them is a little bit fancier," he said. "If one of the anglers wants to have the newest thing, one with bells and whistles, this is it."

Tie the newest product on and use it to target big speckled trout, which are a little more wily, and/or during trying fishing conditions, he said.

"I wouldn't use these lures like under birds. I'd save these for when it's a hard day on the water," he suggested. ■

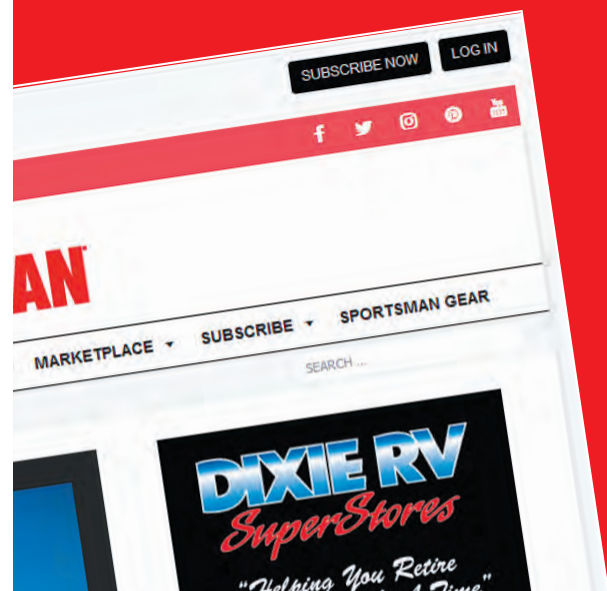
For more information about the Matrix XShad and other Matrix products, call 985-707-9049 or visit www.matrixshad.com.



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WITH THIS SIMPLE RECIPE

Jerry Dilsaver

Our world began changing in late February and was pretty much upside down by the middle of March. We hadn't gotten to a shelter-in-place order when it was time to get this recipe together, but the grocery stores had been plundered, and the selection was nothing like we are used to as we prepared to prepare the fruits of spring turkey season.

In many ways, sportsmen are the originators of social distancing. No one wants a bunch of people close by when they're hunting or fishing, and that's good, because late April and May are prime time for hunting and fishing in

Mississippi. Authorities are telling us there are no plans to shut down our outdoors pursuits, and that makes May the perfect time to share a recipe for that turkey you fooled with your great calling and woodsmanship.

In staying with the times, an appropriate recipe would be simple enough that most, if not all, of the ingredients could be found in the fridge, pantry or freezer — making a trip to the store unnecessary. Most folks will find this a good time to use that can or frozen pack of mixed vegetables. The ingredient most will have to shop for is the bread, and if someone has their own pie crust recipe,

it should work fine.

Hunters certainly may prepare this recipe with a turkey from this year, but should keep in mind it works well with a breast or some wings and legs they found under something in the freezer.

The plan is to return to a fishing recipe next month, probably something from the Gulf Coast. Hopefully, the quarantines created by the coronavirus will be eased by then, and we'll have something to be prepared with the catch of the day. If that isn't the case, we'll feature something you might have in the freezer and continue from there. In the meantime, stay safe, stay well and enjoy! ■

BLACKENED TURKEY HAND PIES

The simplicity of this recipe has made it one of my favorites over many years. It probably also helps that it tastes good. This is the simplest version I can bring it to, and this was done to make it as simple as possible. Hopefully you will not need anything from the store while staying at home during the corona virus pandemic.

The turkey for this can be almost any part, as long as it can be removed from the bone. I began making this as a way to use parts of the breast, plus legs and wings. Just about everyone has a bag of turkey pieces that fits this description, and they are the last to be used, so dig that bag out of the freezer and get ready to turn it in to something good.

The blackened seasoning is added after the turkey is cut into roughly bite-sized pieces. I use Chef Paul Prudhomme's Blackened Redfish Magic blend, like I do on most fish. This is one of those things you can't take away if you use too much, so be careful. I don't want it as thick as when actually blackening something, but I am using it as a salt/pepper/spice seasoning.

This light blackening is best done in a cast-iron pan, which distributes the heat well; I use a deep pan so I don't have to be as careful stirring. The little bit of olive oil helps prevent scorching the butter. As this is not an actual blackening, it is done over medium to medium-high heat and does not make the cloud of smoke that accompanies most blackened preparations.

I shake a little more of the blackened seasoning on the vegetables while warming them. A bit of butter helps the seasoning bind to the vegetables and helps keeps them from scorching. My personal preference is to add a little fresh ground pepper after adding the soup and reintroducing the turkey, but I caution that it

reacts with the blackened seasoning and can get spicy quickly. If you are preparing this for folks with mild palates, this might be best left out; let them add it to their personal tastes once its on their plate. I find there is enough salt in the blackened seasoning and don't add any, but everyone's tastes may be different.

There is a little difference in the tubes of crescent rolls and dough. This works fine with the store brands, but the name-brand doughs seem to be a little flakier. Making this using crescent rolls seems to make it more of a fun dish, where the pies can be picked up and eaten much like regular bread. Using crescent dough sheets allows for making larger pies that hold more of the turkey/vegetable/soup filling and serve as the featured entrée for a more formal meal. I prepared it both ways for this as that was what I had for crescent dough.

I like this recipe, as it is easy, versatile and tasty. In addition, it works well using pieces of turkey that aren't perfect. There are only a few minutes of prep, and odds are you might have everything needed already in the fridge, freezer and pantry. That makes it especially nice for these trying times. ■

INGREDIENTS:

8 to 12 ounces of boneless turkey
1 bag frozen mixed vegetables (You may substitute 1 drained can of mixed vegetables)
1 can cream of chicken soup
2 cans refrigerated crescent dough sheets or crescent rolls
½ stick of butter
1 tbsp olive oil
Blackened seasoning
Salt and pepper to taste
Parchment paper to line shallow baking pan.



Jerry Dilsaver

PREPARATION:

Chop the turkey into bite-size pieces. Season the turkey (to taste) with blackened seasoning. Heat a quarter of a stick butter and a tablespoon of olive oil in deep frying pan.

Sear the turkey pieces in the frying pan and remove. Add a little butter and sauté the vegetables in the frying pan. Add the cream of chicken soup and stir well while warming. An option is to add a little fresh, ground black pepper at this point. Stir the turkey pieces into the soup and vegetables.

Line the baking pan with a sheet of parchment paper. Open the crescent dough sheets or rolls. With sheets, cut the sheet in half and place both pieces on the parchment paper. With rolls, place half the triangles on the parchment paper.

Place a dollop of the turkey/vegetable/soup mixture on the dough. A third of a cup is approximately correct for the sheets and an eighth of a cup is about right for the rolls. Fold over the sheet or add a second triangle to cover the turkey/

vegetable/soup mixture and seal the edges. You can seal the edges by pinching or pressing with the tines of a fork.

Bake at the heat and time specified on the dough package. This one was 12 to 15 minutes at 350 degrees. Watch closely near the end and let the dough turn a golden brown, but be careful not to scorch it. Lift each pie with a spatula and serve immediately.

A lettuce wedge or green salad is a nice start to this meal, and chocolate pudding makes an excellent dessert. ■



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

APEX PREDATOR

Joshua Chauvin

The author connects various brands of climber pieces together with his bungee cords.



BALL BUNGEE TRICKS

One of the items I use most in the field happens to be one of the cheapest and simplest devices out there: the ball bungee. These stretchy, little cords have countless applications, and I own dozens of them in various sizes. They simply fold over, making a circle to attach things without the need for metal hooks or tying knots.

No one I knew had even heard of, much less used these awesome devices when I first learned about them after buying an X-stand tree climber that came with two small ball bungees. After years of constantly struggling to put tree stand pieces together tightly to avoid making noise, these bungees got the job done within seconds, with 100% silence. There was no need for noisy, heavier ratchet straps or larger typical rubber bungees

with metal hooks that clang against the metal stands.

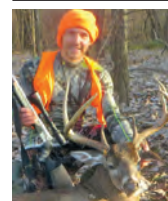
Since I use several different types of climbers, I mix and match many of the different brands together, securing them with only two or three ball bungees. I typically use the 4- and 6-inch bungees for tree climbers; I'll use longer versions for holding sets of climbing sticks together.

ARROW HOLDERS

The best application I've discovered for ball bungees is as arrow holders. Over the years, I have lost many arrows while hunting the thickest areas on public lands. I remember losing half a quiver of arrows that were strapped to my backpack on a single hunt. A lot more than three dozen of my arrows are out there somewhere in the woods. Sadly, each arrow tipped with an expensive broad-



The author wraps bungee cords around his quiver to avoid losing arrows.



Joshua Chauvin is a health-focused ultramarathon runner who goes on solo manual-powered public land adventures focusing on hunting big game and large fish by using challenging methods and weapons. He enjoys self-filming and sharing the tactics and details from his expeditions to help others learn from his unique techniques.

head and turkey feathers typically costs upwards of \$25 to \$30.

Since attaching a single ball bungee over the rubber slot where the arrows tuck in, I have not lost an arrow. After long, tough hikes, I often find my arrows dislodged from the quiver's rubber grooves — which tend to loosen over time — but that expensive arrow that would have fallen out is held against the quiver by the ball bungee.

ATTACHMENTS

On the few deer hunts each season when I don't use my traditional bows, I enjoy using my vintage, single-shot Contender primitive pistol. I used to keep my holster attached to my belt. Once, however, after standing to aim at a deer behind me, I didn't connect the holster strap before sitting down. When I went to sit down after not being able to get a good shot, the pistol fell to the ground. Not knowing if my micro red dot got bumped off from such a long fall, I had to climb down and end the hunt.

Now, I keep the holster attached to the side bar of my climber with a 4-inch ball bungee. This makes for a quick and quiet pistol pull from the holster that stays fully upright when a deer approaches. Sometimes, I also connect my hunting bag to the climber with a ball bungee.

MOVING GAME

Some of the longer ball bungees, 9- and 12-inch models, work well for carting out animals. This year, I carted out two deer and used the longer ball bungees around the deer's neck and smaller ones on the legs to keep the animals fastened to a cart for each of the 2-mile hauls. The deer never came off, even when going over numerous logs and branches.

When packing out pig, deer or elk quarters on my frame backpack, the larger bungees work like a charm. However, my bull elk horns and the cape I hauled out needed some rope to help with the large profile of the head. Ball bungees connected the horns to the frame, which worked well for that grueling, 123-pound load.

Ball bungees come in handy when I go backpack hunting as tie-ups for my tent pieces, tarps, sleeping bags, air pads, etc. At night, I hang my tent lamp in the top center with one.

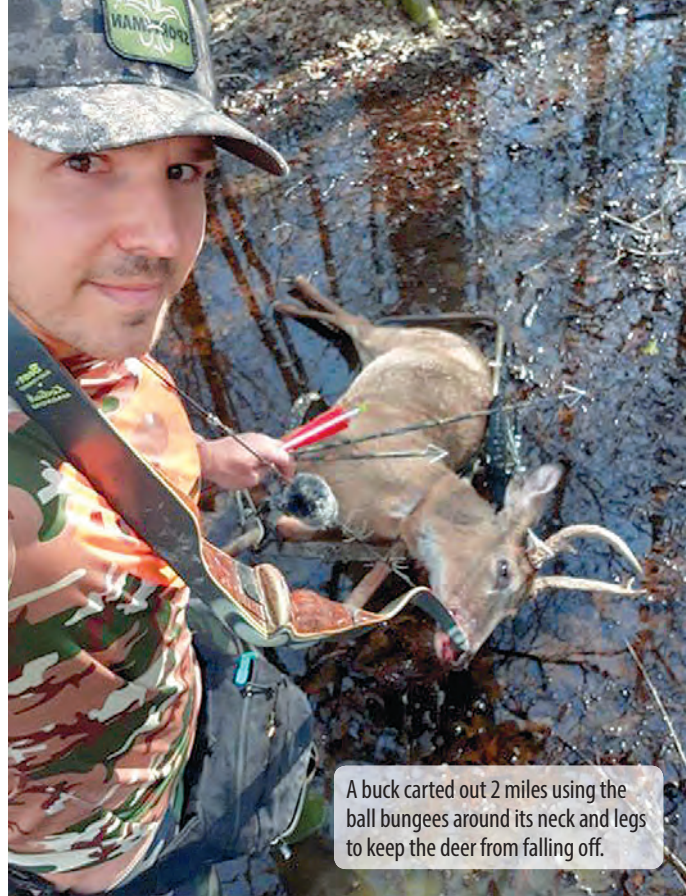
FISHING APPS?

For fishing, I use ball bungees for strapping rods, nets and paddles down. Sometimes I hook up an ice chest or shrimp basket to a rail, which keeps it from sliding in the waves. Usually the smaller, 4-inch models work best.

Larger-sized ball bungees can be made into smaller ones in a jiffy by tying one or two overhand knots in the center to shorten them. I've had no issues with any of them breaking during several years of use.

I purchase them on Amazon at really low prices. The best deal is to buy a set of ball bungees that includes sizes from 4 to 12 inches. I suggest buying the ones marketed as heavy duty; they have a thicker cord for a stronger elastic ability.

I highly recommend keeping a few ball bungees in your hunting bag or boat. It's amazing how sometimes the simplest things can make such big differences during hunting and fishing adventures. ■



A buck carted out 2 miles using the ball bungees around its neck and legs to keep the deer from falling off.



The author ties an overhand knot or two to shorten the bungee cords, if needed.

HUNTING SEASONS

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

WATERFOWL SEASONS

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

DEER SEASON

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

(See www.mdwfp.com for details on special Oct. 15-Jan. 5 South Delta Season)

SALTWATER

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

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

FRESHWATER

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

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

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

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

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

* Possession of certain species of sharks is prohibited.



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

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

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

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

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

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2020 MAY					LUNAR PERIODS					
BEST DAYS					TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED					
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	VALUE	MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
Fri 1					58	1:30 pm	7:01 pm - 10:11 pm	2:53 am	6:26 am - 9:48 am	☀
Sat 2					51	2:39 pm	8:03 pm - 10:55 pm	3:34 am	7:26 am - 10:36 am	☀
Sun 3					49	3:48 pm	9:06 pm - 11:38 pm	4:11 am	8:28 am - 11:20 am	☀
Mon 4					57	4:59 pm	10:08 pm - 12:20 am	4:46 am	9:31 am - 12:03 pm	☀
Tue 5					67	6:10 pm	11:13 pm - Midnight	5:20 am	10:33 am - 12:45 pm	☀ Perigee
Wed 6					74	7:23 pm	Midnight - 1:01 am	5:56 am	11:38 am - 1:26 pm	☀
Thu 7					75	8:35 pm	12:18 am - 1:46 am	6:34 am	12:43 pm - 2:11 pm	☀ FULL
Fri 8					62	9:47 pm	1:23 am - 2:35 am	7:16 am	1:48 pm - 3:00 pm	☀
Sat 9					50	10:54 pm	2:26 am - 3:28 am	8:03 am	2:51 pm - 3:53 pm	☀
Sun 10					37	11:56 pm	3:30 am - 4:22 am	8:55 am	3:55 pm - 4:47 pm	☀
Mon 11					31		4:28 am - 5:20 am	9:52 am	4:53 pm - 5:45 pm	☀ LOW
Tue 12					31	12:49 am	5:21 am - 6:17 am	10:51 am	5:46 pm - 6:42 pm	☀
Wed 13					36	1:35 am	6:10 am - 7:12 am	11:51 am	6:35 pm - 7:37 pm	☀
Thu 14					46	2:14 am	6:54 am - 8:06 am	12:51 pm	7:19 pm - 8:31 pm	☀ HALF
Fri 15					37	2:48 am	7:32 am - 8:58 am	1:48 pm	7:57 pm - 9:23 pm	☀
Sat 16					35	3:18 am	8:07 am - 9:49 am	2:44 pm	8:32 pm - 10:14 pm	☀
Sun 17					36	3:46 am	8:40 am - 10:38 am	3:39 pm	9:05 pm - 11:03 pm	☀
Mon 18					38	4:12 am	9:12 am - 11:28 am	4:34 pm	9:37 pm - 11:53 pm	☀ Apogee
Tue 19					50	4:39 am	9:44 am - 12:16 pm	5:29 pm	10:09 pm - 12:41 am	☀
Wed 20					62	5:06 am	10:19 am - 1:05 pm	6:25 pm	10:44 pm - 1:30 am	☀
Thu 21					76	5:36 am	10:55 am - 1:57 pm	7:23 pm	11:20 pm - 2:22 am	☀
Fri 22					87	6:09 am	11:34 am - 2:50 pm	8:22 pm	11:59 pm - Midnight	☀ NEW
Sat 23					77	6:46 am	12:18 pm - 3:44 pm	9:21 pm	Midnight - 3:15 am	☀
Sun 24					70	7:29 am	1:07 pm - 4:39 pm	10:20 pm	12:43 am - 4:09 am	☀
Mon 25					61	8:19 am	1:59 pm - 5:35 pm	11:16 pm	1:32 am - 5:04 am	☀ HIGH
Tue 26					57	9:15 am	2:56 pm - 6:28 pm		2:24 am - 6:00 am	☀
Wed 27					57	10:16 am	3:55 pm - 7:21 pm	12:07 am	3:21 am - 6:53 am	☀
Thu 28					61	11:21 am	4:55 pm - 8:07 pm	12:53 am	4:20 am - 7:46 am	☀
Fri 29					69	12:28 pm	5:54 pm - 8:54 pm	1:34 am	5:20 am - 8:32 am	☀ HALF
Sat 30					57	1:35 pm	6:55 pm - 9:35 pm	2:11 am	6:19 am - 9:19 am	☀
Sun 31					50	2:43 pm	7:56 pm - 10:14 pm	2:46 am	7:20 am - 10:00 am	☀

25 50 75
AVERAGE

For more, visit primetimes2.com

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