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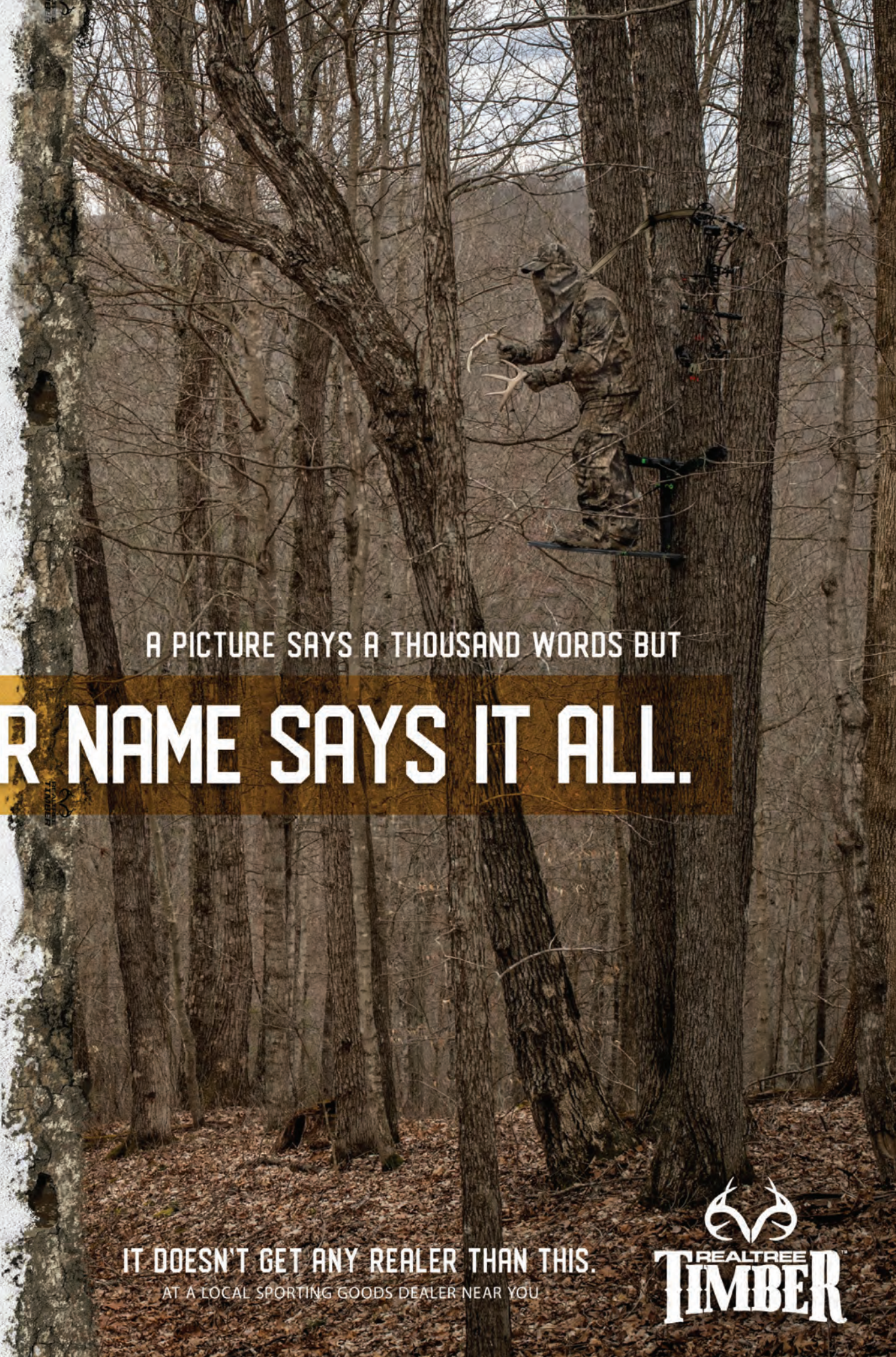


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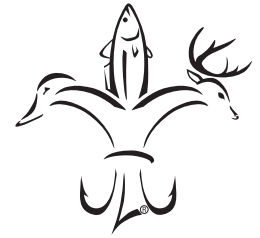
19

DUCKS IN A ROW —
FOR DEER?



39

COOL WEATHER,
HOT ACTION



Mississippi
SPORTSMAN

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Tracking dog Smoke helped Derek Eaves of Louisville find this 10-point, 142-inch Noxubee County buck, which was arrowed on Oct. 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.

NOVEMBER: VOTE, THEN ELECT WHETHER TO HUNT OR FISH

November's toughest election in Mississippi may have nothing to do with politics, although there is a major vote on Nov. 3 that most certainly could impact the future direction of our country.

Mississippi sportsmen have so many choices for outdoor pursuits that electing what to do on any given day is not always easy.

First, there's deciding whether to fish or to hunt.

Fishing is always outstanding in November, providing the weather plays nice. There are redfish, sheepshead, flounder and trout in the coastal waters, and no long run is needed to reach them. The freshwater fishing is great for bass and catfish, good for crappie and even fair for bream.

And hunting, wow! The opportunities are plentiful, beginning with deer, small game and even ducks by the end of the month.

To say Mississippi sportsmen have a lot for which to be thankful is an understatement for the ages. This may be our best month, and producing an "outdoor" course for Thanksgiving dinner is certainly available.

As always, every month it is published, *Mississippi Sportsman* is here to set the table. We've got features, expert opinions and lots

more to help you make choices and be successful in your pursuits. For example:

- John Phillips speaks with an expert who takes his kayak into the cooling water of the coastal estuaries to spank the reds and specks.
- Phillip Gentry talks to crappie experts who follow the falling waters of flood-control reservoirs — Grenada, Enid, Sardis and Arkabutla — to find and catch slabs.
- Mike Giles addresses the need for deer hunters to get their ducks in a row for the gun season. The first week is the most productive time to take a big buck outside the peak of the rut, but if a hunter overlooks some of the preliminary preparation, he or she might miss the opportunity.
- Sammy Romano takes us past that first week when bucks hit a time of transition from the onset of hunting pressure through to the rut. The lull is real but can be beat with the expert tips Romano shares.

It's November and a great time to be a Mississippi sportsman. But it's also time to be an American. Vote on Nov. 3, and then go outdoors. ■

Kate Fortner was 8 years old on Nov. 15, 2019, when she took her biggest buck ever in south Mississippi.

DON'T FORGET MANDATORY CWD CHECK-IN DAYS

Hunters in some areas of Mississippi will be required on specific dates to submit by 10 p.m. samples of deer taken on those days for testing for chronic wasting disease (CWD).

Three weekends have been chosen that are normally peak harvesting periods in their respective areas. The object is providing the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks a bigger sampling base in its effort to combat CWD, a deadly disease that impacts cervids like white-tailed deer.

The mandatory check-in dates and areas are:

• **Nov. 21-22:** All areas in any county or portion thereof in both the North and Issaquena CWD Management Zones;

• **Jan. 2-3:** In all portions of Adams, Amite, Franklin, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lincoln, Pike, Walthall and Wilkinson counties in southwest Mississippi.

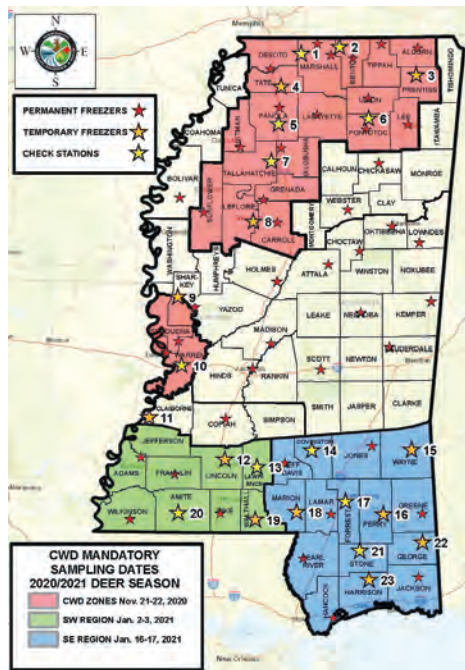
• **Jan. 16-17:** In all portions of Covington, Forrest, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson Davis, Jones, Lamar, Marion, Pearl River, Perry, Stone and Wayne counties in south Mississippi.

Hunters should preserve the head with at least six inches of neck

attached. Antlers and skull plate may be removed without affecting the lymph nodes used for testing. If antlers are not removed, they cannot be returned to the hunter.

Since 2018, when CWD was first found in Mississippi in a mature buck in Issaquena County, the agency has taken many proactive measures to locate and contain the disease, including the establishment of two CWD Management Zones. One is the Issaquena Zone, in the South Delta, and the other is the North Mississippi Zone, where all but two of Mississippi's 56 confirmed cases have been verified.

The MDWFP will accept any deer head from any area for CWD testing at any time during the season. For more information on sampling, whether mandatory or voluntary, including check-in stations, visit mdwfp.com/cwd. ■



MDWFP

CWD PRECAUTIONS FOR HANDLING DEER

The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks is urging hunters to learn and practice proper CWD precautions when handling deer after harvest, especially in CWD Management Zones.

"Actually, these precautions are really common-sense handling practices that all hunters should use anywhere," said Billy Jenkins of Jackson, an avid hunter and former butcher at a deer-processing plant. "I worked at a big processor for five years, and you wouldn't believe how sorry some of the meat had been handled before it was brought to us."

"We had to toss some, but there were a lot of others that were edible that I wouldn't have eaten and wouldn't have touched if I wasn't being paid. It's one of the reasons I quit. It was that bad."

The MDWFP said hunters should do the following at the very least:

- Inspect body condition of each deer at the time of harvest. Do not consume any part of animals exhibiting disease, especially the clinical symptoms of CWD that includes extreme weight loss, excessive salivation, and/or erratic behavior.
- Wear rubber or latex gloves when handling deer carcasses.
- When field dressing an animal, leave internal organs and inedible parts at the site of harvest.
- Avoid sawing through bone, spinal cord, brain, lymph nodes or spleen.
- Store all portions of the animal to be transported in a container such as a cooler, bin or bag that will not leak bodily fluids into the environment.
- Do not process a deer that appears to be diseased.
- Process all deer individually, package separately and label uniquely.
- Debone meat from deer and remove all fat, connective tissue and lymph nodes.
- Avoid eating or handling the eyes, brain, spinal cord, spleen and lymph nodes.
- Limit the amount of bodily fluids going to an area, such as a floor drain that cannot be properly sanitized after use.
- Clean processing equipment between each deer.
- Thoroughly sanitize all equipment with a 50/50 solution of bleach and water. Soak tools for one hour in the bleach solution and then rinse thoroughly with hot water.
- Deer parts should never be rendered for use in feed for other animals or used as compost.
- Deer remains should be left at harvest site, but remains of animals processed elsewhere should be double-bagged and sent to an approved, lined landfill or buried at least 8 feet or deeper. ■

YOUTH TRIPLETAIL TOPS NEW MARKS

The Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources certified four new state saltwater fishing records at its September meeting in Biloxi, including a youth entry, one regular entry and two spearfish kills that capped off a very active summer of superlatives.

"Many new fish records have been set this summer, and our agency enjoys seeing the various species being caught in our waters," said Joe Spraggins, executive director for the Department of Marine Resources. "Congratulations to all our state-record holders for a job well done."

Charlie Russell, 9, of Pascagoula, was the big winner, not only catching a 19-pound, 8-ounce tripletail caught on conventional tackle for a youth record, but also walking off with some of the finest-eating fish flesh that the Gulf of Mexico produces.

Donald Bosarge II of Gautier established a new conventional tackle record with a 5.12-ounce silver perch.

The two spearfishing records belong to Chad Patti of Milton, Fla., for a 6-pound, 15.84-ounce ocean triggerfish, and Heath Powell of Vanclave for a 1-pound, 15.04-ounce red lionfish.

Powell deserves a bit of gratitude from all Mississippi coastal fishermen for removing the lionfish, an invasive species that is spreading throughout the Gulf. It is an unwanted visitor, that has dangerous spines but can produce a very good meal. ■

Charlie Russell's 19½-pound tripletail is the new youth state record for the unusual but tasty species



DEER SEASONS CHANGE THROUGHOUT NOVEMBER

November begins with the final weeks of the archery-only deer season in all Mississippi zones, but that will change quickly and often as the month continues.

- On Nov. 7, the statewide youth season opens on private lands and authorized state and federal lands. Hunters ages 15 and under can begin hunting with a weapon of choice for any-sex deer. State bag limits, seasonal and daily, apply.

- On Nov. 9, on private lands only in all zones except the Southeast, hunters of all ages can use primitive weapons to take antlerless deer. No bucks will be allowed, and there is no "weapon of choice" allowance for hunters aged 16 and older.

- On Nov. 21, the first statewide gun season opens, and running deer with dogs is allowed. This season continues through the end of the month, ending on Dec. 1.

"I know that between my two sons with rifles and me with a .35 Whelan, we'll have plenty of meat and sausage put up in



Youth deer hunters will get a jump on their adult counterparts when Mississippi's statewide youth season opens on Nov. 7. Here's Aden Vanney with his first Mississippi buck.

mid-November," said Riley Barnes of Vicksburg. "We always try to get three does done by the opening of the regular gun season so we can then be selective on big bucks. Of course, if one of the kids get a shot at a buck during their season, they have the go-ahead to put it down.

"I took a doe I killed with a crossbow in early October to have completely put into sausage so we can start the season right at camp, with smoked venison links for breakfast and for hot dogs at lunch at the fire pit."

Barnes said that at least two sets of backstraps are on the menu for Thanksgiving dinner.

"I told the boys they best get busy," he said. "If they want to have both fried nuggets and grilled steaks, they better have a couple of does on the ground early. It's a tradition here, and they need to carry the weight." ■

BARNETT DRAWDOWN PLANS SET

The Pearl River Valley Water Supply District, the state agency that oversees and operates 33,000-acre Ross Barnett Reservoir near Jackson, has changed its operating plan for winter and will begin lowering the lake to 296.0 feet above sea level on Dec. 1.

Since 2012, the operation plan has called for the lake to be maintained at 297.5 year-round. Before 2012, the lake was always lowered to 296 in late fall through spring.

"The staff suggested this change to the Board of Directors, who then approved it at the September meeting," said John Sigman, PRVWSD's general manager. "We feel it is the right move from both a flood-control and weed-management standpoints.

"We learned last spring the importance of having a lower level when we had a flood event in February. Because our level was low to help us combat the giant salvinia (invasive vegetation) in the Pelahatchie Bay area, when we were hit hard with rain and experienced the second highest inflow into the lake, we were able to mitigate flooding downstream, saving thousands of homes in Jackson and other areas from getting water. Some houses, unfortunately, did get water, but many, many more would have."

In February, the lake level before the heavy rain event that fell throughout the Pearl River basin north of Barnett was 296, at the recommendation of the Giant Salvinia Task Force, which includes representatives of other agencies. PRVWSD was able to reduce the level of the lake to create storage space and then use that

space to store water and delay the flood impact once the lake's capacity was filled.

After opening the gates to relieve pressure on the dam, Sigman said the agency worked with other groups, including national weather agencies and river forecast centers, to walk-down the reduction and lessen the flood impact.

"After seeing that, we felt it was wise to lower the lake, but only during the three winter months," Sigman said. "It will be not only helpful in handling high-water events but also with our vegetation-control efforts. The task force was preparing to ask us to lower the water this winter when we took the request to the Board of Directors."

Veteran Barnett fishermen are experienced with dealing with the lower levels, having dealt with the issue for three decades after the 1983 flood.

"I'm kind of happy about it, because the lower levels back then I think were partly responsible for an improved bass fishery," said Bill Blocker of Brandon. "I was a bass fisherman back then, and we saw the fish come back over that period. It also made for more catches, at least for me, because there was less water to fish.

"Now I only crappie fish, and I'm unsure if it will impact crappie as much as it did the bass. Crappie stay deeper during that period, so it will unlikely to affect them as much. Won't matter that much to me, because I've never been able to catch them good that time of year. Heck, maybe it will help." ■

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NOVEMBER'S 5 FISHING HOTSPOTS

Mississippi has a history of mild weather in November, with a few cold days mixed in with normal fall temperatures — and even a few summer days. Seriously, it can be freezing one day, sweltering the next.

“That’s why it is important to have options, and one of them is that when it’s hot enough to break a sweat, I’d rather be in a boat chasing fish than in a deer stand swatting skeeters,” said Troy Thomas of Hattiesburg. “I can’t tell you how many times I’ve changed plans away from hunting and to fishing just because of the weather forecast.”

With that in mind, here’s a list of five November fishing hot spots in Mississippi to try.

- **Coastal river bridges.** The bridges, primarily the US 90 bridges at Bay St. Louis/Pass Christian and Biloxi/Ocean Springs, are perfect fish-holding structures for fish that are transitioning from summer to winter patterns. Redfish, sheepshead and puppy drum (black drum) all find the pilings perfect ambush points. Dead shrimp fished on the bottom at the bases of the pilings will produce.

“Two great things about it are that it only requires a short boat run, and that it really produces action,” said guide Kenny Shiyou of Shore Thing Fishing Charters in Bay St. Louis. “I love to take kids, because the action is hot, and because you never know what you’re going to reel in.”

- **Trout under the birds.** Another November “sure thing” on the Gulf Coast is looking for birds diving to eat baitfish. Where the birds are feeding from above, schools of speckled trout will be feeding from below. This can happen anywhere in the Mississippi Sound, from the barrier islands to the beaches and well up into the bays created by coastal rivers.

“The bigger the birds, the bigger the fish, and that’s important with the minimum-size limit (15 inches) on specks,” said Harold Ladner of Pass Christian. “You will catch a lot of undersized specks under terns and other smaller birds, but pelicans and big gulls will usually be hitting bigger baitfish, and bigger fish will be, too.”

Carry a long-casting spinning outfit baited with tandem jigs — long casts are necessary instead of getting too close to the baitfish to prevent spooking them.

- **Grenada Lake crappie.** Big surprise, eh? This is where you go to catch big crappie, and November, during the drawdown, is a perfect time to catch them. Check Phillip Gentry’s feature in this

Look for speckled trout schooling under baitfish where birds are diving. It can happen almost anywhere along Mississippi’s Gulf Coast.



Photo courtesy Cal Cossich

edition for tips on finding these fish, which will be transitioning with the falling water.

- **Lake Ferguson bass.** This Mississippi River oxbow lake at Greenville — city front downtown is the best access — has long been famous for its fall bass action. Try to avoid rising river levels, but otherwise, take a deep-diving crankbait and Carolina rigs and get after the deep structure like old barges and dock structures. Don’t forget to look for schooling bass, too, exploding on shad migrating into the lake from the river.

- **Trace State Park Lake bass.** This lake reopened to fishing late this past summer and has been producing monumental catches of bass ever since. It was on our hotspots list for October, too, and probably will be again in future months. According to Larry Pugh, fisheries director for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, an avid angler and a big fan of the lake, Trace State Park is going to be good for numbers for a while, with a lot of 3- to 5-pound fish available that have to be released. The current slot of 16 to 22 inches requires all fish in between must be immediately released. ■



Josh Waters' 142-inch main-frame 8-pointer showed up right on time, at 6 p.m. on Oct. 1.

BENTON MAN HAPPY ABOUT OPENING DAY B'DAY BUCK

By Dan Kibler

Josh Waters hasn't killed a nice buck on his birthday, Oct. 1, for several years, "four or five," he admitted. That made this year's 140-inch birthday present all the more sweet.

Waters, 36, from Benton, zapped a big main-frame 8-pointer with his bow on opening day of Mississippi's archery season. He killed the buck in his home county, Yazoo.

"That deer, we saw him last year a couple of times, had a couple of pics of him," said Waters, an agent with Hopper Properties. "He showed up one night in mid-August, then we didn't see him for a while, but I knew he lived somewhere around here.

"Then he showed back up the Sunday and Monday before the season opened. The first time was about 6 p.m., then the next night 6:10, then 6:15. I knew if the wind was good, and if he kept showing up, he was gonna die. Oct. 1 was my birthday, and I hadn't killed one on my

birthday for four or five years."

The buck was coming into a food plot of vetch that Waters had planted close to what he thought was the buck's bedding areas. He set up a pop-up ground blind a little ways back in the woods, off the plot, and he was there the afternoon the season opened.

"I probably got there at 4:15, 4:30, and the deer started coming out at 5," Waters said. "A buck he'd been with for a couple of days came at 5:45, but he wasn't with him. I figured something had happened to him.

"Then, he showed up at 6."

RIGHT ON TIME

Waters said the buck stayed within 25 yards of his blind for quite a while, and he did his best to get a shot.

"I had drawn on him four times before I shot him," he said. "Every time I'd draw, he'd turn away, maybe quarter away too

hard. Finally, he turned just right, and I smoked him."

Waters' Mathews No Cam bow, shooting a Carbon Express Maxima Red arrow tipped with a Rage Trypan broadhead, was dead on target. The buck stumbled off about 40 yards after the through-and-through shot, and Waters got to watch him crash to the ground.

A quick tape-measure job judged the buck at 140 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. The tall, heavy rack was 16 inches wide on the inside, with 25-inch main beams, 9-inch G3s and 8-inch G2s on each beam. The buck had one tiny sticker point on the right beam and weighed 190 pounds.

"From last year, he'd put on a touch more mass, but he didn't add that much," Waters said. "You look at him head-on, and you'd think he wasn't 14 inches wide, but he's right at 16." ■

GREAT BUCK REDEEMS HUNTER AFTER MISTAKE

FIREMAN OVERCOMES EARLIER MISS TO DROP KEMPER COUNTY TROPHY

By Bobby Cleveland

On Oct. 3, when Bill Chunn found his 174 $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch, Kemper County buck on the ground, he stood over the old 12-pointer, not so much thinking about this once-in-a-lifetime trophy as feeling a huge burden lifted from his soul.

"I was proud to kill the deer, but more than anything else, there was a feeling of redemption," said Chunn, 41, a firefighter from Philadelphia. "I hadn't slept much Friday or Saturday, and it bothered me all day on Saturday and even Sunday at church."

Chunn was living in a funk because on Oct. 1, the opening day of archery season, he had whiffed on the very same buck, missing a 10-yard shot as it stood right beneath his tree stand.

"Even Sunday afternoon, in that same stand, when I'd look down at the ground below my feet, I kept thinking, 'Man, he was just right there, and I blew it,'" Chunn said. "I could have thrown an arrow at him; he was that close."

The extreme vertical angle had caused him to misjudge the shot.

"He surprised me with where he came out behind me and got under me, and I guess I just overthought how I needed to aim at that angle — shot right under him," Chunn said.

That night, Chunn tossed, turned and even got out of bed to sit on the steps outside his home. The next day, he hunted on another piece of property, but his mind was elsewhere.

"I got up on Sunday and hunted early, before church, and while I was in church, I finally decided to go back to the same stand," he said.

There was a demon inside that had to be exorcised.

A REGULAR VISITOR

So, Sunday afternoon, Chunn and his hunting partner, another fireman returned to the Kemper County property, about 100 acres to which they had obtained hunting rights just this year.

"I went in there and decided I'd put up a camera and a feeder and see what was in this area," he said. "I started getting pictures of this big-rack buck. I went back and pulled the feeder out and thought it might bring the buck up to the front of the property. We went into this one field we knew deer were going and found there was nowhere, no trees to hang a stand. So, we went to the corner of the field and cleared out this one area, about 100 feet by 80 feet, right next to the trees. I put out some Genco feed in a trough,

and there was an acorn tree right behind where I put the stand."

In the weeks before the season, deer, including the trophy buck, found the area and started visiting — regularly.

"We had cam pics of him coming in about the same direction every day," Chunn said. "That's where I was Friday on opening day, but I guess he had another plan that day, because he walked right out from behind me and just appeared right under me. I was surprised. My top pin is set at 25 yards, and he was closer than that. I thought I needed to aim low and I did, and I shot right under him."

Startled, the buck jumped and ran but stopped quickly, giving the hunter a second shot.

"I was too shook up," Chunn said. "I didn't even try."

SUNDAY FUNDAY

Fast forward to Sunday afternoon, almost exactly 48 hours later.

"I finally decided to go back to that stand and try to end my suffering," he said. "This time, about an hour before sunset, I saw a 7-point and two does walking into the pocket right on the trail the bigger buck had always used. They were walking right toward me, and I couldn't move. They



Bill Chunn's 12-point 174-inch trophy from Kemper County was in full velvet when killed on Oct. 3.

were about 50 or 60 yards out, and they spotted me. They turned and backed up the trail a few yards and then turned back to look at me.

"The wind was right, and I knew they couldn't smell me, but they were sure putting their noses up trying. They stomped and kept bobbing their heads trying to make me move, but I didn't. I was frozen."

That's when the big buck first appeared.

"Suddenly, he showed up and was walking down the same trail right toward me, but that meant he would have to pass the other deer, and I thought I was in trouble," Chunn said. "It was obvious those deer knew something wasn't on the up and up, and I didn't think he'd pass them."

"But, that's exactly what he did. He just went right around them and came into the opening about 25 yards away and started eating. I couldn't shoot because the other deer were looking at me, but after the big deer had started feeding around, and a few minutes passed, they decided to come on in."

Once they entered the field, they could no longer see him through branches low on the tree, and Chunn could safely pull the string on his old bow, which he'd bought online before the season, and line up the 26-yard, broadside shot.

He let it fly.

TRACKING THE BUCK DOWN

Chunn's shot, again a little low and maybe a little too far forward, leaving the hunter feeling even more perplexed.

"I wasn't confident about the shot," he said. "As forward as it was, I was afraid I'd hit the bone in the upper leg, because as he ran off, I could see about 14 inches of arrow sticking out. I waited a long, very long, 15 or 20 minutes, before getting down. I found half the arrow, the part I'd seen, on the trail about 25 yards down the trail. I walked back to the truck and called my partner to bring lights."

"An hour later, after sunset, we started looking. I was really worried until about 25 yards further down the trail, there was blood on both sides, a lot of blood. We found him 100 yards from the field. He hadn't gone far."

A wave of redemption hit the hunter.

"I could breathe again," Chunn said.

A TRUE TROPHY

Scored by Atkins Taxidermy in Union for a Big Buck Bounty contest, the buck's rack was in full velvet, measuring 17 inches wide inside. It's a tall, symmetrical 5x5 with two stickers. The main beams were 24 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches and 23 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. The G2s were its best features at 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ and 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches.

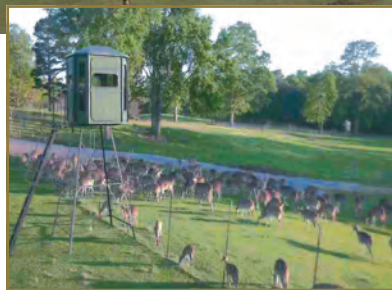
"It's 50 inches bigger than any thing I've ever killed," Chunn said. "I've always hunted but am just getting into archery. I borrowed a bow from my brother 5 years ago and went to Missouri and killed a decent 11-point. I remember I had to buy camo and borrow a broadhead. All I'd ever done was gun hunt from a shooting house."

"This year, I bought an old BowTech bow online for \$120, and it only has about a 50-pound pull. To be honest, I almost left it hanging in the tree where I shot, but when I went back to pull the camera to move it to another area, I did grab the bow." ■

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COLLEGE STUDENT ARROWS BIZARRE WHITETAIL

STRANGE BUCK HAS DROP TINES, DROP BEAMS, COMBINATION OF BOTH

By Bobby Cleveland

Trent Pace of Aberdeen saw a peculiar-looking deer last season that got his attention. At the time, it wasn't a "shooter" buck, which earned the animal a pass on private land in Monroe County.

This year, the buck got no such courtesy. "I've been watching the deer for a while, and last year it was smaller and had an odd rack, like it was long spikes with drop tines off the bases," said Pace, 22, a student at Mississippi State University.

And, if a spike with drop tines isn't odd enough...

"This year, it just blew up into something crazy," Pace said.

The buck, which he killed on Sunday, Oct. 4, is certainly a weird one.

It has 10 scoreable points, and not a single one is normal — or are they?

There are at least three drop tines, and one of those has what could be another drop-tine sticker. There are no true brow tines, but then again, there are two giant G2s that could be the brow tines. And the bases, well, they have to be seen to be believed. After leaving the head, the two main beams go up and out and they also go down and out. One corkscrews.

It's either a main-frame 4-pointer or a main-frame 8-pointer.

"I don't even know how to start scoring

it; it's that crazy," Pace said. "I did score it myself and came up with 119, which seems kind of low. But it could be a lot more, or it could be a lot less. I'm going have to get an expert to look at it.

"Seriously, I can't even determine the main beams. The huge drop tines could simply be the main beams or part of the main beams. It's just weird."

MAKING HISTORY

Oddly enough, the buck came from property that has never produced a single non-typical buck in known history.

"No sir, not one," Pace said, and he should know. He has been slinging arrows since he was 4 years old and bowhunting since he was 6 or 7.

The hunt for this particular buck started in late August, when Pace put up his trail cameras to begin assessing this season's crop of bucks.

"I put them up and left them alone the first week before I went back and got the photos," he said. "He was all over them, daytime and nighttime. In that area, I had three cameras, and he was on all of them. He was making a loop, passing each camera every few days, but I was able to identify one area where he was living. I had images of him there every single day."

Pace chose that area, which was a big

Trent Pace, a Mississippi State student, tagged this unique buck on Oct. 4 in Monroe County.



oak flat with acorns dropping, to begin his hunt, only to have to audible out of that plan.

"It's close to our neighbors, who have an easement to get through that area," he said. "They were disking the field just north of it, and I decided to go home and let the area rest and go back another day. I was walking home when I decided to go to another area to the southwest and get in a stand where I could watch a few deer and not just be sitting around the house.

"This was one of the places I'd gotten pictures of him, but not in that core area where I knew he was living. I had a few photos of him there, but not many. It was a fluke, and I was surprised he was there."

THE PERFECT SPOT

The area had one great feature that made it productive.

"It's a pinch point in a funnel between a cow pasture and a cutover, and there was a small clearing," he said. "I had cut a few shooting lanes there before the season that would give a shot at one passing through."

After getting in the stand at 4:30, Pace noticed the wind was right, coming out of the southeast. It eliminated anything coming out of the field to his northwest.

"The only thing I'd seen was two skunks,

and I was watching them in a drainage ditch when I heard what sounded like a loud cough behind me, over my left shoulder," Pace said. "It kind of made me jump; I was startled. I eased my head around and saw the brown body, about 30 yards behind me, over my left shoulder. As he started to move, I saw antlers and I started trying to identify which buck he was. I have pics of about five or six racked bucks, plus some smaller ones, like spikes. Once I got a glimpse of his rack, recognized it immediately and started prepping for the shot.

"He was walking dead south, coming down my left side, broadside but angling away to the left. I grabbed my bow off the hook. I was still sitting down."

Though the buck was angling away, Pace stayed patient and knew good things would come.

"I wasn't worried, because the trail he'd always used turns right, and I knew he'd take it," he said.

A DIFFICULT SHOT

But there was a problem that at the time, Pace didn't consider.

"This was not a stand I planned to be hunting much, so I had not done any brushing on it," he said. "It was wide open, and I was exposed, and when I turned to get the shot, he spotted me. He froze and stood there a half-minute, at least, bobbing his head up and down trying to make me out. Then, he turned and started walking back. I was still sitting and had to contort to

make the shot. He walked through one of my openings, and I shot, hitting him high.

"I spined him, and he went straight down. It was on line but just high. I had to put another arrow in him to finish him off quickly so he wouldn't suffer."

The recovery was simple, and the results, well, as you can see, they were extremely bizarre. ■





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PATIENT LOUISVILLE BOWHUNTER REWARDED WITH BIG NOXUBEE WHITETAIL

By Dan Kibler

The third time was the charm. Derek Eaves of Louisville drew his Elite Kure bow twice, trying to get a shot at a big buck the afternoon of Oct. 5 in Noxubee County. He was waiting for the 142-inch 10-pointer to take one last, fatal step into the open, but both times, the buck stayed put, and he had to let the bow down.

The third time he drew back, however, the buck had moved into a perfect spot, and at 25 yards, Eaves, a director for the Mississippi Bowhunters Association, finally made a killing shot.

So Junior is dead and Blade is next on Eaves' hit list.

Those were two bucks that Eaves nicknamed after having them in plenty of trail-camera photos leading up to the Oct. 1 opening of Mississippi's archery season. The afternoon of Sunday, Oct. 4, he drew on Blade, a buck he said is at least 5½ years old and even bigger than Junior. But it was after 7 p.m., dark enough that he didn't feel like he could see well enough through his bow's peep sight to make a killing shot.

THE NEXT DAY

So Eaves, 45, was back the next

afternoon, in the same Millennium lock-on stand, 15 feet up in a pine tree, overlooking a place he had been spinning out supplemental feed for months.

"Part of the place I hunt is in a pine plantation, maybe 15 to 20 years old, and behind it is a hardwood draw. I've got another stand down there for when the acorns begin to fall," Eaves said. "In the trail-cam photos, Blade was coming out from the right, and I had the perfect wind, but one deer started blowing from behind me at 5:30. Then, a second one started blowing at 6. The wind was kind of swirling around, and I figured, 'I've had two deer blow at me, I might as well get down.'"

"But I heard something behind me on the ridge — I heard something take a step about every 5 minutes, and I figured it was Blade, waiting for it to get dark before he came in. Then, I heard something jump a ditch, so I stood up and put my hand on my bow, and it was a spike buck that came walking in. He got 'em all in trouble. Then, I heard a little more movement, walking, and a small 10-pointer came in. But five steps behind him was Junior. They never knew I was around. He walked up broadside, but his head got on the other side of a tree. I drew then, and I held it for

a minute waiting for him to move, but my arm started shaking, and my heart was pounding, so I had to let it down.

THE WAITING GAME

"I sat down for three or four minutes, and he walked in perfect, and I drew and held for 20 or 25 seconds, but he turned back, and I had to let it down again. Then, another came up, and he did a snort-wheeze. I'd never heard it before. I thought it was Blade. When he did it, all the deer jumped and ran about 15 feet. Then I could hear him and another buck start rattling and pushing. I asked myself, 'If Junior gives me a shot, do I take it, or do I wait and see if it's Blade doing the fighting?' But then, I could see them, and it was a 6-(pointer) and an 8-(pointer).

"Junior took a step to the right, behind a tree, then he turned to the left, and I drew. He was 25 yards, and I put the pin on his front shoulder, and it stroked him. My hands were shaking; my legs were shaking."

Eaves figured he had a good hit, and he waited about 15 minutes before getting down. He quickly found his arrow, but instead of being covered in blood, it was covered in green and yellow matter, the contents of the buck's stomach.



ON THE COVER

Derek Eaves took this 142-inch, 10-point buck in Noxubee County. He had help from Smoke, a noted tracking dog.

LOCATING THE BUCK

"I backed out and texted a buddy, Bart Chancellor, who runs Smoke, one of the best tracking dogs in Mississippi," he said. "I backed out and went back to the truck, went home, and came back at 10:30. The dog found him in five minutes, 120 yards away.

"We went about 25 yards from where I shot him, and we stopped, and the dog went on in, and then the dog's collar pinged, and it pinged again, and kept pinging; he had stopped 95 yards in front of us. Bart said, 'Let's go get your deer.'"

Eaves' shot was not as bad as the junk on the shaft of the Carbon Express Maxima Red SD would have indicated. Eaves' shot took the buck through the lungs, but the arrow, tipped with a Slick Trick broadhead, ranged back and down through the stomach on the way out.

"I don't know if he moved at the last second, or if he was quartering a little more than I thought he was, but it went through his lungs and then his stomach," Eaves said.

The buck, now in the hands of taxidermist Tommy Armstrong of Kosciusko, was measured and earned a green-gross score of 142 inches. It had main beams measuring 21½ and 23 inches long, a 16-inch inside spread and multiple long tines, the longest measuring 9½ inches.

Eaves said he isn't about to take a pass on trying to slap a tag on Blade, and "I had a couple of other hit-list bucks at another spot," he said. "I want my girlfriend (Lacey Jones Vowell) to kill one, too." ■

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Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



Katie Malone

This 176-pound alligator gar, which measured 7-foot-8 long and 35½ inches in girth, was caught by Katie Malone on Sept 6, 2020, in Claiborne County.



Colton Raines

Colton Raines killed his first deer, a 6-point, in Bolton on Dec. 7, 2019, when he was 7 years old.



Jagger Juneau

Jagger Juneau was fishing with his sister, Jade, when he caught his first few fish, bream and catfish, on the bayous of the Mississippi Coast.



Garrett Cook

Garrett Cook poses with his prized turkey. It had a 10-inch beard.



Easton Wood

Easton Wood in Mantachie on Aug. 23, 2020.

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■ By Mike Giles

DUCKS IN A ROW — FOR DEER?

THE FIRST WEEK OF MISSISSIPPI'S GUN SEASON WILL BE THE BEST TIME, OUTSIDE OF THE RUT, TO TAKE A BIG BUCK. MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ALL THE PRELIMINARIES TAKEN CARE OF BEFORE LEGAL SHOOTING LIGHT ARRIVES.

Scanning the swamp bottom, I watched a creek crossing, hoping to catch a glimpse of a buck heading back to his bedding ground. Suddenly, a deer burst into view from the hollow to my left, just across the creek. I could see antlers reaching high as the buck headed for the creek crossing. As he disappeared behind a tree, I raised my rifle and aimed at an opening on the creek bend.

As the buck stopped on the edge of the creek bank I squeezed the trigger. "Tic-boom!" The .270 belched fire and roared, piercing the still morning air. The buck collapsed into the creekbed below. I waited breathlessly for a few minutes and finally realized that he wasn't coming out. I got down from my stand and quickly made the 75 yards to the creek, finding a beautiful 9-point buck near the water's edge. He'd collapsed instantly from the single, well-placed shot, and I'd fulfilled an opening day quest. But it wasn't the buck or stand I'd had in mind for the previous six weeks.

Opening day of the 2019 gun season for deer had dawned with the sky opening and rain pouring down on my camp house. I took one look from the kitchen window, saw the rain and went back in and drank a cup of coffee. As night turned to dawn, the rain quit, and I walked out onto the porch ready to head to my honey hole. I was hit square in the face with a brisk, westerly wind, and my intended opening day stand choice was history. As bad as I wanted to hunt the creekbottom funnel, I knew the wind was blowing from the wrong direction, and I would never have a chance at taking a buck from that stand that day.

I'd quickly gathered my gear and headed a few miles up the road to another stand site to hunt in a similar creekbottom funnel. It overlooked a thick creekbottom from the east side, in perfect position downwind of the deer trail and creek crossing. Thick pine timber lined either side of the narrow funnel.

I'd actually found both deer trails and creek crossings while scouting during squirrel season about six weeks before opening day and had not disturbed either area since that time.

Opening week affords hunters an opportunity to hunt bucks before hunting pressure makes them become nocturnal. If you can locate one before the season, there's a good chance you can pattern him before he knows you're there.

SCOUTING FOR OPENING WEEK ➤

SCOUTING FOR OPENING WEEK

Consistently harvesting bucks, trophy bucks, means a hunter has put in a lot of time scouting and learning the land, terrain and food sources in the area. Hunting bucks from opening week through the end of the season is all about scouting. To be successful that first week, you must put in the time in the months leading up to opening day.

From early October through November, deer are easily patterned; they can be found near any available food sources: freshly dropping acorns or food plots, for example. If you're able to locate their bedding areas and know where they're feeding, you can intercept them going to and from.

During squirrel season last October, I found one of the hottest areas I'd ever found in the Bogue Flower Hills near Meridian. Carrying my .22 rifle, hunting for squirrels and buck sign, I was headed to a large, green field when I got to a creek and found deer tracks all over a sandbar.

The creek flowed through a large pine plantation that was too thick to penetrate without leaving human scent everywhere and spooking the deer. Seeing the tracks I decided to hunt from the creekbed; the farther I walked, the more tracks I saw, so I decided not to shoot any squirrels but spend my time scouting.

As I neared the end of the property, I found three heavily used deer trails merging at the creek and going up the

opposite bank. It was the most deer sign I'd ever seen in the area, so I retraced my steps and left, returning a few days later to set up my climber in a nearby tree. I didn't return until Thanksgiving morning when the wind was blowing from the proper direction.

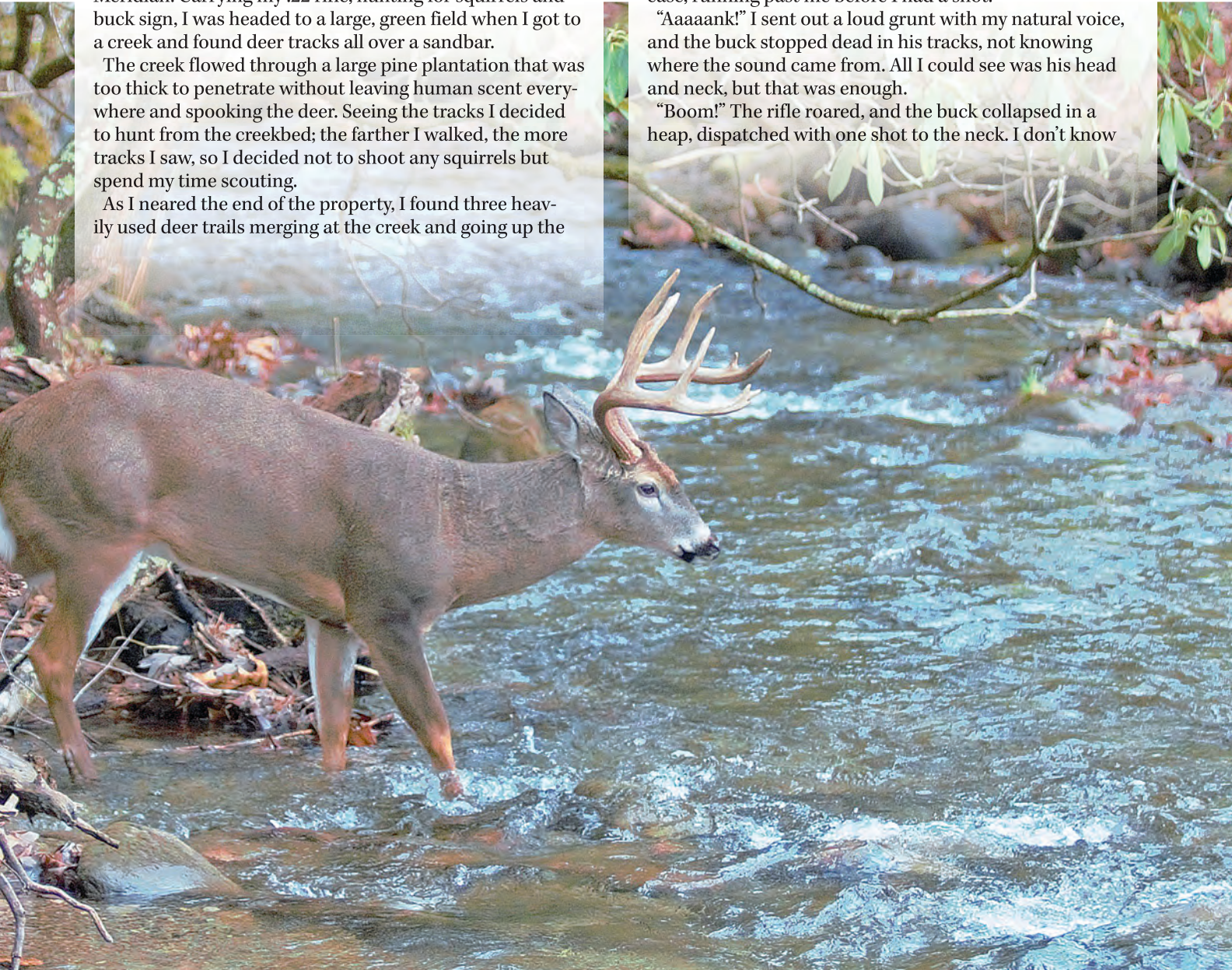
THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

After a brisk, 30-minute hike, I climbed the tree quickly, locked my stand down and scanned the woods intently, looking for any sign of a deer. I'd only been in the tree about 5 minutes when I spotted a buck running wide open through the thicket toward me, angling slightly to my left. The buck's rack was tall and thick, chocolate brown and rose up high above his ears. He'd evidently fed all night and was slipping back to his bedding ground.

The buck never broke stride and cleared the creek with ease, running past me before I had a shot.

"Aaaaank!" I sent out a loud grunt with my natural voice, and the buck stopped dead in his tracks, not knowing where the sound came from. All I could see was his head and neck, but that was enough.

"Boom!" The rifle roared, and the buck collapsed in a heap, dispatched with one shot to the neck. I don't know



how many times the buck had made that same trek, but the thicket was littered with his scrapes and rubs.

The 210-pound, 12-point buck was a trophy indeed and the best I'd ever killed in the area; it made for a fine Thanksgiving gift, indeed. Thankfully, I'd spent some time scouting before the season and found the buck, then stayed out of the woods until the wind was right.

FOOD PLOTS, GAME CAMERAS ➤

.....
Creek crossings often serve as funnels that direct deer movement, especially to areas where it's easier for deer to get across and out of the creek. **RIGHT:** Mike Giles harvested this 12-point buck while hunting in Lauderdale County on Thanksgiving Day 2019.

A man is riding a Kubota ZD diesel-powered zero-turn mower in a yard. The mower is orange and black. The background shows a fence and trees.

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FOOD PLOTS, GAME CAMERAS

My brother, Joe Giles of Collinsville, spent a lot of time preparing for deer season by plowing, planting and fertilizing several food plots in different locations. Though it was abnormally hot, he put in the time and put up stands in preparation for the cold weather that was sure to come.

After laying his crops by, he put out game cameras near the food plots to see if he had any prospects.

“I got a nice buck on my game camera around mid-October,” Giles said, “but most of the pictures came at night, which is typical of older bucks. A couple weeks ago, he appeared in daylight hours, well before dark.”

That was all the encouragement Giles needed; he knew the buck would leave when the rut kicked in, and he’d probably never see it again.

“I got some pictures of the buck walking near my stand late one afternoon before dark, a week before the season opened,” Giles said. “I knew right then I had to spend some time in that stand to try and get him.”

Rain on opening morning kept Giles from hunting, but he was in the woods that afternoon.

“I got in the stand around 3 p.m. and prepared for a long afternoon,” he said. “I was prepared to spend a few days hunting that particular stand, so I settled in.”

Things went slowly until a doe and a couple of small deer came in and started darting around the food plot. Then, the

doe ran out of the plot and came right back, with a buck hot on her trail. Giles passed on that buck, knowing a bigger one was in the area.

It was a good decision.

“I heard something in the woods, and the big buck I’d captured on a game camera came out and started walking toward me,” Giles said. “He was well within shooting range, but I kept waiting for a better shot. He finally turned broadside, quartering away, and I was afraid he’d bolt and leave, so I took a fine bead and pulled the trigger.”

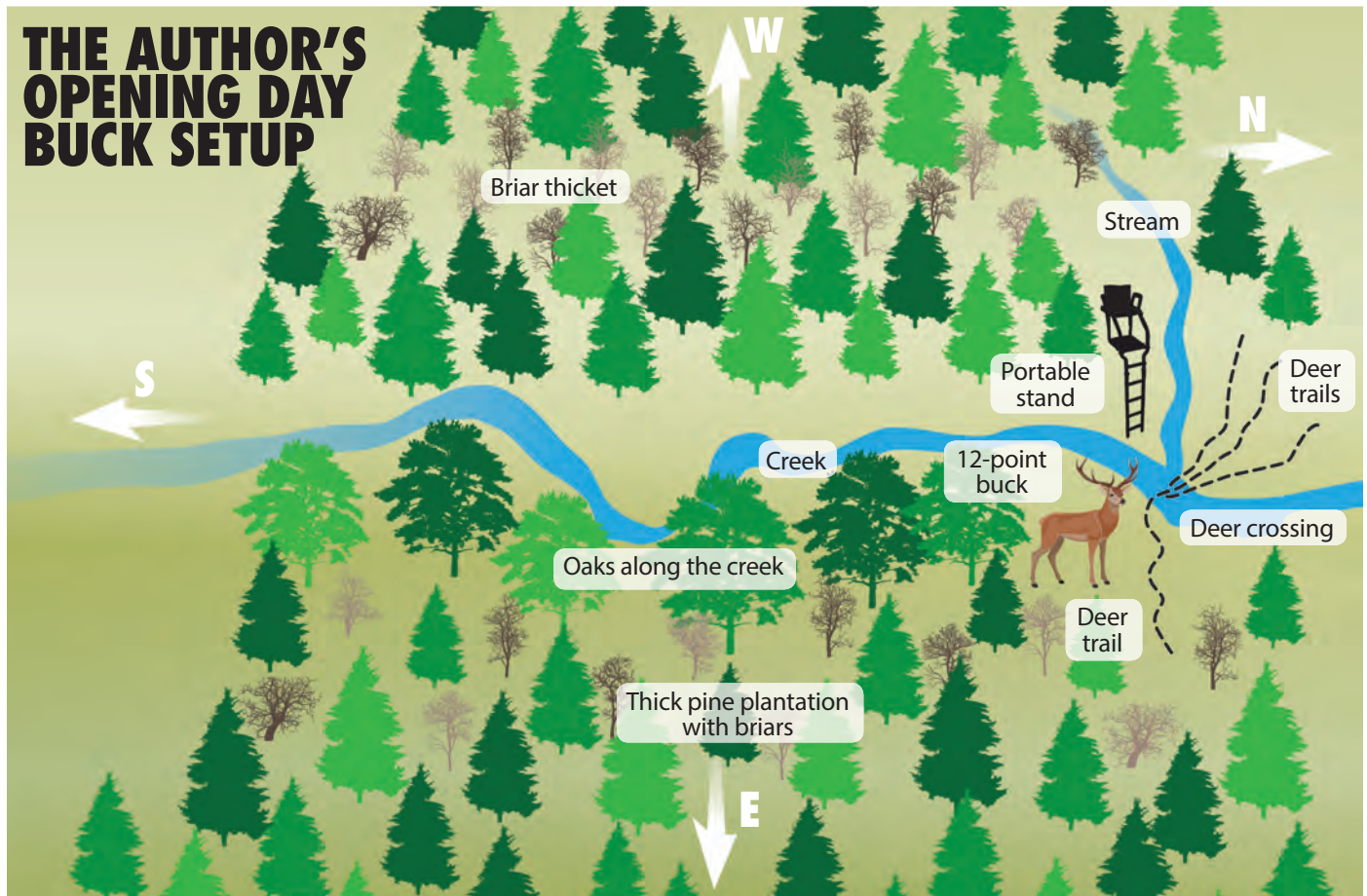
The buck was dead on its feet and only went a few yards before collapsing with a bullet in his engine room. It sported a tall, 8-point rack measuring nearly 20 inches wide and was the best buck he’d ever killed.

“I can’t remember when I’ve killed a buck on opening day. It’s been a while, but it was very satisfying, for sure,” he said.

Thanksgiving came early for the excited hunter, and he counted his blessings with the harvest of a good buck that provided succulent venison for the supper table. However, it would never have happened without a lot of planning, scouting and preseason work which led to locating the buck. ■



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



SCOUTING AND HUNTING TIPS FOR OPENING WEEK

- Scout early in the fall and hang stands as needed.
- Utilize game cameras, but stay out of the area as much as possible. Use cameras that send the photos to your cell phone or computer if available.
- Scout from a distance if possible.
- Stay out of a buck's bedding area or core zone.
- Cut trails to your stand, if legal in your area, so you can reach your stand without spooking deer or leaving a scent trail.
- Only hunt the stand when the wind is right. No matter what gizmos companies come up with, nothing is a sure thing except hunting downwind.
- Place your stand as far away from the buck's trail crossings as you can and still be able to take a killing shot.
- Hunt the edges, transitions from one kind of habitat to another, such as cutover, pine plantations, stream management zones, funnels or pinch points in the terrain.
- Sight your rifle in well in advance of deer season and know what your gun and you are capable of when shooting at a deer. ■



.....
If you identify a buck's bedding area, don't bother him in there.

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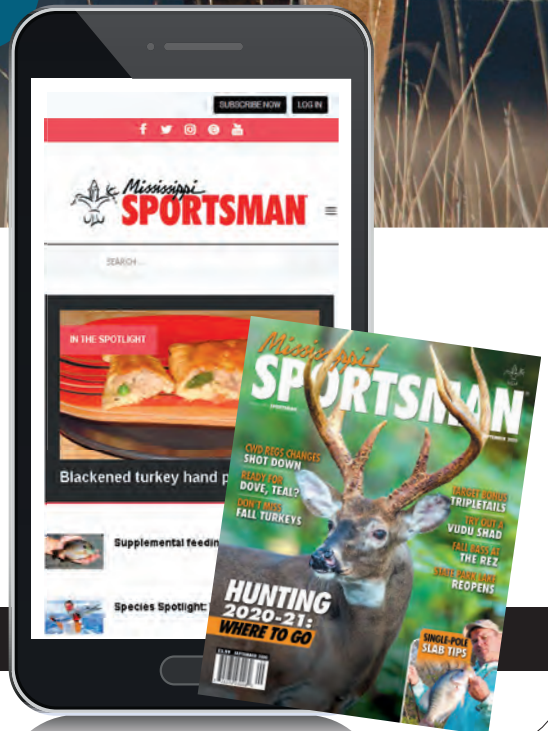
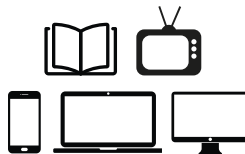
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BETWEEN THE EARLY SEASON AND THE ONSET OF THE RUT, DEER BECOME HARDER TO PREDICT, ESPECIALLY BIG BUCKS. HERE ARE SOME TIPS FROM AN EXPERT HUNTER ON AVOIDING THE 'NOVEMBER LULL.'

UNDERSTAND, OVERCOME, THE 'TRANSITION'

■ By Sammy Romano

Hunting white-tailed deer, especially trophy bucks, is never easy. That being said, perhaps the most-difficult time to hunt them is during the transition between the early season and the onset of the rut. In the Midwest, it's often referred to as the "October lull," but across much of Louisiana and Mississippi, this transition period is in November.

In order to formulate a successful hunting strategy during this difficult time, it helps to understand what's going on in a white-tail's world. The shortening of days has caused bucks to shed their velvet and disperse from their bachelor groups of summer and early fall. These changes are naturally accompanied by a shift in home range for many bucks, as well as a change to more nocturnal movement.

Hunting pressure in many areas has also begun to affect deer, further changing their routines and making it even more difficult to predict their movements. They are still focused largely

on food sources, as they feed heavily to bulk up for the upcoming rut and winter, but these food sources are changing rapidly because acorns are falling.

Although this makes it difficult to pattern deer, by no means is it impossible. You just have to adapt your tactics. One hunter who understands is Slade Priest of Centreville, Miss., a veteran host of outdoors television shows and a licensed realtor who sells plenty of hunting properties for Realtree United Country Southern States Realty.

Priest has learned what it takes to be successful during this frustrating period of deer season. Although he exclusively bow-hunts, his tactics can be applied to gun hunting as well.

He said he does things differently when hunting public land, where baiting is not allowed, and private land, where deer can be fed supplementally.

PUBLIC-LAND CONCERNS >

PUBLIC-LAND CONCERNS

For the public-land hunter, Priest said nothing replaces what he calls “butt time” — time spent in a stand in the woods. When hunting public land, many factors are beyond a hunter’s control, especially hunting pressure. This makes it much more difficult to pattern deer and predict when they will move. The public-land hunter needs to spend every possible moment in the woods to increase the chance of being there when a buck is on his feet during daylight hours.

With so many people on public lands, a hunter can bump a buck from his bed at any time, causing him to wander past your stand and offer a shot opportunity. Priest also stressed the need to take care of smaller details, including scent control — scent-free soaps and odor killers — both before and during the hunt — and playing the wind.

“Do the little things right,” he said. “Consistently successful hunters do the little things right, and the best hunters are obsessive about this even to the point of being control freaks.”

Hunters not hunting over bait, especially on public land, should rely on information they can gather and past history, if they have any. With deer focused heavily on mast, particularly acorns, food sources change rapidly during November.

“Red oak acorns are often gone by now, and the deer have shifted their focus to white oak and water oak acorns,” he said, noting that nothing replaces “boots on the ground” when it comes to finding the oak tree favored by deer that day. If you are fortunate enough to be hunting a piece of land where you have past experience, you can use it to shorten the learning curve by knowing which mast trees often produce and which are usually favored by local deer. Nothing beats finding a “hot tree” with lots of fresh droppings and the leaves “powdered underneath it.”

Priest said to maintain scent-control discipline and minimize noise while scouting to avoid spooking deer and changing their patterns. He also advised to “hunt from the outside in” meaning to hunt from the edge of an oak flat first — observing which trees the deer favor — only then moving your stand in for the kill.

“This way you avoid tipping your hand and spooking deer unnecessarily,” he said.

PRIVATE-LAND TACTICS DIFFER >



The appearance of white oak acorns on the ground under productive trees can change deer behavior almost overnight. **BELOW:** Don't ignore food sources like food plots or agricultural fields that haven't been harvested





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PRIVATE-LAND TACTICS DIFFER

According to Priest, the private-land hunter should do just the opposite, minimizing his or her time on stand and limiting it to the time when they feel they have the best opportunity to be successful, especially if hunting over bait or a food plot.

"Hunt smart, not hard," he said. "I always say it only takes one day to kill him or one day to spook him. Limit your stand sits to times when you feel the buck you are hunting will be on his feet feeding. Other than that, you are just educating him and making him nearly impossible to kill.

"The passing of a big, November cold front is a prime time to hunt, because the rapidly rising barometer and the cooler temperatures often get bucks on their feet during shooting hours. You might only get one opportunity at a mature buck, and if you spook him, it's over until the rut. The best time to kill a big buck is the first sit in a stand. If you just have to get in the woods any other time, hunt somewhere else for a doe; don't cost yourself a future chance at a trophy by forcing the issue.

"Almost everyone is using scouting cameras and hunting apps these days; use them to your advantage. You can bet if you

see me headed to the woods with a bow in my hand during November in southwest Mississippi or Louisiana, that I have a big buck on camera during daylight hours or I have a huge hunch that he will move."

LIMIT HUNTING PRESSURE

Regardless of where and how you hunt, Priest stressed the need to minimize hunting pressure in order to be successful on big bucks.

"It all goes back to the offseason preparations you have made," he said. "You can't show up the week before the season and start cutting shooting lanes and not expect the deer to notice and change their patterns accordingly. Deer are creatures of habit, and there are only a few things that these habits revolve around: food, water, weather, and hunting pressure. Hunting pressure is one thing that can often be controlled."



Sammy Romano is a lifelong hunter who has worked in the archery industry for more than 25 years. His expertise includes compounds and crossbows. He can be reached at samboka31@aol.com.

Hunting from a box blind gives deer hunters a little better concealment, both visually and as far as covering your scent, and it can be much more comfortable than a tree stand.

BOX 'EM UP

Priest has lately become a huge fan of bowhunting from box blinds.

“These boxes really help to minimize your exposure and therefore, the hunting pressure that you apply,” he said. “I don’t think you can ever be 100% scent-free, but if you follow a scent-free routine, use an ozone generator and hunt from a box blind, paying attention to the wind and only opening one window, you can get close. If you can access and exit the stand without spooking deer, every day is like opening day all over again.”

Priest regularly hunts a 2-acre food plot from a box blind. “I have the box blind positioned where I can easily access the stand without spooking any deer,” he said. “The nearby feeder goes off at 4 p.m., bringing deer close to the stand, but by dark, they have usually fed to the other end of this large food plot. That way, I can exit the stand undetected.”

“(Also), we have a lot of wild hogs in the area I hunt, and I have a hog sound app on my cell phone. Deer often avoid hogs, and by playing hog noises, I can usually get them to leave. Then, I climb down and make noise like a sounder (group) of hogs rooting around. This eases the deer off without panicking them.”

Priest also said a “drive-by” — having someone drive past or up to the field — is huge and is much better than climbing down in front of deer at a food source.

Although November can be a trying time when it comes to white-tailed deer hunting in much of the south, it is possible to have success. Attention to small details, patience, prior knowledge, and hard work all are keys to a successful outcome this month.

Slade Priest, who works at Realtree United Country Southern States Realty, can be reached at 601-888-0094, 601-250-0017 or at Hunting Land Man on Facebook. ■

STICKS & STRINGS >



Slade Priest believes hunters with private land should limit their time on stand to days when they feel their chances of taking a buck are best.

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STICKS AND STRINGS

Sammy Romano

THE DEADLY BLACK WIDOW

MISSOURI COMPANY'S TRADITIONAL BOWS ARE AMONG ARCHERY MARKET'S BEST MODELS

After nearly 30 years in the archery industry, I've had the pleasure of shooting thousands of bows of nearly every make and model: compounds, crossbows and even traditional bows. So it's rare these days that I am surprised by how well a particular bow shoots.

A few months ago, a buddy, Billy, called to tell me that after shooting a mutual friend's Black Widow recurve bow, he immediately drove 12 hours to the factory in Missouri to buy one. He excitedly told me how he was able to shoot every bow on the wall at the factory and bought the one he shot best: a takedown recurve bow on which he spent more than \$1,000.

Billy lives about three hours away, so when he drove down to purchase a Garmin sight for his Mathews bow, I asked him to bring the recurve so I could try it out. When I released the first arrow, I was blown away. The arrow shot into the 12-ring of the target from a distance of 20 yards, and my next two arrows did the same. There was absolutely no hand shock, and the bow was silent. The arrow flight was perfect, and the bow would even shoot a bare arrow shaft perfectly straight.

Over the years, I had heard about Black Widow custom bows, but I had never seen one in person. These folks have quietly been building traditional bows of unbelievable quality since 1957. Let me say they are the finest traditional bows I've ever shot.

COMPANY HISTORY

I recently spoke with Roger Fulton, one of the owners of Black Widow, about the history of his company and what makes its bows different from other custom bows. Black Widow opened in 1957 as Wilson Brothers Bows; Ken Beck bought the company and changed the name to



The Black Widow PCHII takedown recurve is a work of art.



Will Beard shows off a great buck taken with his Black Widow Custom bow.

Black Widow Custom Bows.

The current owners — Fulton, Toby Esseek and John Clayman — bought the company in 2005; they continue to produce what I consider the finest recurves and longbows on the market. Although they have a few bows in stock from time to time, the vast majority are custom-built to order. They offer several models of recurves and longbows to fit the wants and needs of any hunter.

Many different woods are available, including exotics such as Honduras Rosewood, Tiger Myrtle and Bocote. Custom options such as laser-engraved bamboo overlays, spliced veneers and snakeskin overlays are available. Several grips are available, depending on your shooting style.

I asked Fulton what makes their bows feel and shoot so differently from other traditional bows. The model I shot and subsequently ordered for myself was the PCHII 58-inch takedown recurve. He pointed out that, unlike with other takedown bows, whose limbs screw into the front of the handle, Black Widow attaches the limbs to the back of the handle.

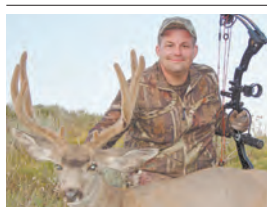
HANDLE-BACK ATTACHED LIMBS

This offers several advantages when it comes to accuracy and shootability. First, it places the grip forward of the limbs, leading to less grip torque, less string angle and higher brace heights. Although this makes the bow much more difficult to build, the advantages it offers the shooter are well worth the effort. Second, Black Widow offers four different limb lengths. This allows them to optimize the limb length to the shooter's draw length, making for a much better shooting experience. The longer limb and shorter handle design of Black Widows leads to less stacking, less finger pinch and a smoother draw and shot.

LIMBS MATCH DRAW WEIGHTS

Black Widow bow limbs are built different from most manufacturers in that they are laminated specifically to closely match the desired draw weight of the bow. Black Widow has kept meticulous records since 2003 of laminations for all four limb lengths it offers. This allows the company to build their limbs so that they require less sanding and material removal to reach the desired specifications, leading to more-consistent, better-shooting limbs. They also pay huge attention to detail, down to the way they seal their bows. The frosted finish prevents glare and looks great, while protecting the wood underneath. Black Widow also offers a complete selection of arrows, accessories, and traditional broadheads. ■

For more information, contact Black Widow Custom Bows, 1201 Eagle Crest, Nixa, MO 65714, 417-725-3113.



Sammy Romano is a lifelong hunter who has worked in the archery industry for more than 25 years. His expertise includes compounds and crossbows. He can be reached at samboka31@aol.com.

HUNTING SEASONS

SPECIES	SEASON DATES	BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT
Doves	Sept. 5-Oct. 18 (n), Sept. 5-20 (s)	15	45
	Oct. 24-Nov. 21 (n), Oct. 10-Nov. 8 (s)		
	Dec. 23-Jan. 8 (n), Dec. 19-Jan. 31 (s)		
Quail	Nov. 26-March 6	8	
Rabbit	Oct. 17-Feb. 28	8	
Squirrel (fall)	Oct. 1-Feb. 28	8	
Squirrel (spr)	May 15-June 1	4	
Raccoon	July 1-Sept. 30	1 raccoon per party	
Rac/Opp/Bobcat	Oct. 1-Oct. 31 (food/sport)	5/day, 8/party	
	Nov. 1-Feb. 28 (food/sport/pelt)	No limit	
Rails			
King & Clapper	Sept. 1-Oct. 4, Nov. 26-Dec. 31	15	45
Sora & Virginia,	Sept. 1-Oct. 4, Nov. 26-Dec. 31	25	75
Gallinules	Sept. 1-Oct. 4, Nov. 26-Dec. 31	15	45
Snipe	Nov. 14 - Feb. 28	8	24
Crow	Nov. 7 - Feb. 28	No limit	No limit
Woodcock	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31	3	9
Wild Turkey			
Fall season	Oct. 15-Nov. 15 (permit, selected counties)	2 per season (may be either sex)	
Spring season	March 15-May 1	1/day, 3/season, longbeards only	
Youth season	March 8-14	1/day, 3/season, bearded birds only	

WATERFOWL SEASONS

SPECIES	DATES	BAG LIMIT
Duck	Teal only: Sept. 12-27	6
	Nov. 27-29, Dec. 4-6	6
	Dec. 9-Jan. 31	
Geese (Canada, blue, Ross, white-fronted, brant)	Sept. 1-30	5
	Nov. 13-29, Dec. 4-6,	Canada 3, Brant 1
	Dec. 9-Jan. 31	Snow/blue/Ross 20 White-fronted 3
Light Geese conservation	Oct. 1-Nov. 12, Feb. 1-5, Feb. 8-March 31	No limit

DEER SEASON

ZONE	ARCHERY	PRIM WEAPON	GUNS
Northeast	Oct. 1-Nov. 20	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 21-Dec. 1 (dogs)
	Nov. 9-20 (antlerless primitive weapon)		Dec. 16-23 (no dogs)
	Jan. 21-31 (archery/primitive weapon)		Dec. 24-Jan. 20(dogs) Nov. 7-20 (youth)
East Central	Oct. 1-Nov. 20	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 21-Dec. 1 (dogs)
	Nov. 9-20 (antlerless primitive weapon)		Dec. 16-23 (no dogs)
	Jan. 21-31 (archery-primitive weapon)		Dec. 24-Jan. 20(dogs) Nov. 7-20 (youth)
Southwest	Oct. 1-Nov. 20	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 21-Dec. 1 (dogs)
	Nov. 9-20 (antlerless primitive weapon)		Dec. 16-23 (no dogs)
	Jan. 21-31 (archery-primitive weapon)		Dec. 24-Jan.20(dogs) Nov. 7-Jan. 20 (youth)
Southeast	Oct. 15-Nov. 20	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 21-Dec. 1 (dogs)
	Jan. 21-31 (either-sex arch-primitive)		Dec. 16-23 (no dogs)
	Feb. 1-15 (archery-primitive bucks only)		Dec. 24-Jan. 20(dogs) Nov. 21-Feb. 15 (yth)
Delta/South Delta	Oct. 1-Nov. 20	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 21-Jan. 1 (dogs)
	Nov. 9-20 (antlerless primitive weapon)		Dec. 16-23 (no dogs)
	Jan. 21-31 (archery primitive weapon)		Dec. 24-Jan. 22(dogs) Nov. 7-Jan. 20 (youth)

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Despite what has been one of the wettest years in recent history, U.S. Army Corps of Engineer lakes, which include all of Mississippi's I-55 lakes — Grenada, Sardis, Enid and Arkabutla — operate on a water-level rule curve. This means that regardless of inflows, there will be more water released from these impoundments until that particular lake's winter pool level is reached.

It's not just federal lakes that manage to a water-level rule curve, as most lakes have to be licensed through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, so drawdowns are common across the board. For crappie fishermen, that means sooner or later, they'll be fishing in low-water conditions and changing water conditions.

John Harrison, who guides crappie fishermen on Grenada, not only understands these changes, but looks forward to fishing these flood-control reservoirs at each extreme: in the spring when crappie go as far back into the woods as the water will allow them, and during late fall and winter, when the plug is pulled and plenty of the water drains out.

➤

■ By Phillip Gentry

WHEN THE WATER STARTS TO DISAPPEAR OUT OF MISSISSIPPI'S FLOOD-CONTROL LAKES, THE CRAPPIE DON'T HAVE MANY PLACES TO SPEND THE COLDER MONTHS. HERE'S HOW TO FIND THEM, GET TO THEM AND CATCH THEM.

THE LOWDOWN ON DRAWDOWN CRAPPIE FISHING



Phillip Gentry

ACCORDING TO HARRISON, GETTING TO THE FISH DURING THE DRAWDOWN IS MOST OF THE BATTLE.

Before he targets the fish, he has to figure out how to get to the water. The drawdown leaves many boat ramps high and dry. Even when he finds a place where he can get a boat in the water, he may not be able to navigate from Point A to Point B.

“I wear a good pair of chest waders, and I’m obviously fishing out of a smaller boat than I normally use during the spring, summer and fall,” said Harrison (662-983-5999). “When that water starts dropping, it pulls the crappie out of the flat areas and draws everything into the lower areas — typically creek channels, ditches and finally, the main-lake basin out in front of the dam. But along the way, a lot of fish will get trapped in a deep hole or ditch. Those are the crappie I want to get to.”

Crappie tend to follow one of two extremes during the winter drawdown, and there’s both rhyme and reason to these movements.

“A lot of fish will go straight out in front of the dam,” Harrison said, “but here’s what you need to understand about crappie this time of year; they’re hungry, and they know they need to stock up before it gets real cold. At the same time, shad are attracted to moving water; that water that’s coming down the creeks. During the early part of the winter, crappie will gorge themselves on shad, and they’ll either follow the bait upcurrent, or they’ll stick with them in deeper pools and eddies of the river and get caught when the water goes down.”



While management officials do their best to maintain water levels on a predictable curve, Mother Nature always has her way. **INSET:** A single jig, like this 1/10-ounce football jig paired with a solid body in bright colors, is a great winter bait.



Phillip Gentry



CONTROLLING FLOOD-CONTROL LAKES

Derek Redwine is a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers engineering technician who works at the dam on Grenada Lake. He said that about this time every year, he starts getting calls from crappie anglers wanting to know what the water level is going to be in the spring. That's when he gets to explain the ups and downs of the Hydraulic Rule Curve.

"There is no secret," Redwine said. "We have a daily target rate that we try to maintain depending on the time of year. The curve not only applies to the lake here at Grenada, but to all of the flood-control lakes. They each have their own water levels that we try to achieve going from the summer pool in May to the conservation pool in February."

As an example, the desired mean sea level (msl) for Grenada during the winter is 193 feet above sea level. That is what's considered the conservation pool, which allows the Corps enough storage space to collect the typical winter and spring rain run-off. Beginning on the first of February, the lake is allowed to collect run-off at a measured pace until the summer pool — 215 feet — is reached. The Rule Curve targets the first of May to reach this water level

"There's a big difference in the surface area of this lake between conservation pool and summer pool," said Redwine. "At conservation pool, we have 9,810 surface acres of water. At summer pool, we have 35,820 acres. That means there's a whole lot more water up on the banks at summer pool than during the winter, and that's what all the fuss from the crappie anglers is about: how high will the water be in the spring, so we'll know if it's a good time to get out there and wade for them."

Redwine said the Corps only has so much control over the water levels in the lake.

"We are at the mercy of droughts and floods," he said. "All of these Corps lakes are 100% flood control. We aren't hydroelectric facilities, so we don't have power-generation schedules to contend with like some of the other Corps lakes around the country. But if we're maintaining our rule curve, and we suddenly get 5 inches of rain across the area, that's out of our control." ■

Philip Gentry

“ There is no secret. We have a daily target rate that we try to maintain depending on the time of year. **”**

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In order to get to crappie trapped along a river channel, Harrison will motor as far as he can in his 15-foot War Eagle johnboat, then he may have to get out and pull the boat through shallow water that can't be navigated. In other areas, he may use a small pirogue or kayak to launch upstream and paddle the shallower-draft boat downstream, fishing as he goes. At other times, he may skip the boat altogether and use an ATV to drive across the mud flats to get to deeper holes.

Once he gets to the fish, the fishing is similar to catching crappie in a barrel. While he may troll for crappie with multiple rods when the water is up, during the drawdown he comes armed with only one or two poles.

"I'm vertical jigging, I use an 11-foot B'n'M BBUL with the bottom reel seat," said Harrison. "I use 6-pound line and attach a 1/16-ounce jighead with a Sassy Shad body. The fishing area is reduced, so I want to make sure I put that jig in every place that might hold a crappie."

Harrison said most of the structure will be out of the water, but that a lot of the old stumps that line the channel will be imbedded in the river bank. The roots and base of the stumps will be in the water where the current has exposed them, and that's where the crappie will be. Any other kind of wooden structure will also hold fish, and it's possible to catch three or

four fish on each piece, then move on to the next one.

"I have been so far up the river that I couldn't fish a shallow spot from the boat," he said. "In those cases, I also want to make sure I bring along a good casting rod that I can use to cast a jig under a cork and work the other side of the pool that I can't get to."

Jason Golden, owner of Lakeway Sporting Goods in Grenada, is another big fan of fishing low water in winter.

"You know, there's a part of Grenada Lake over on the Scuna River side that all the anglers who come here to fish in the spring never see," said Golden. "It's the great winter crappie fishing we have during the winter drawdown. It's still Grenada Lake, including all the big, white crappie we catch during the spring, but it's like fishing an entirely different body of water."

Golden has just one favorite tactic and one favorite bait.

"A lot of guys troll here during the spring, but when the water is down, it's time to get out the 10- and 11-foot jig poles

Old river and creek channels that are submerged during the remainder of the year become waterways for winter crappie.



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.

Phillip Gentry





Guide John Harrison said part of the journey when fishing in the winter is figuring out which boat ramps will still provide access to the lake.



Courtesy John Harrison

and work a single jig around any structure you find on the edge of the river,” he said.

A 1/10-ounce football head jig poured on a No. 2 hook is Golden’s bait of choice.

“I love the football head. It positions the hook where it always catches the fish in the roof of the mouth, and the shape of the head makes it fall slower, and it slides over cover better,” said Golden, who uses his football jigheads with a variety of soft-plastic bodies, his favorite being a re-bait he makes from a black-and-white Sassy Shad body.

“The Sassy Shad body is too tall for the jighead, so I like to take a razor blade and shave the black stripe off the top of the bait,” he said. “Then, I’ll take the remaining body and dip it in a chartreuse dye. It makes a great bait and catches a ton of these big, white crappie in Grenada no matter what time of year you fish it.” ■

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The folks at Daiwa have brought out a new line of spinning reels with the budget-conscious fisherman in mind.

Daiwa's Laguna LT series features six reels in sizes from the tiny 1000 series, which weighs 7.8 ounces and is made for 2- to 4-pound mono and 6- to 8-pound braid, to the 5000C, which weighs 10.2 ounces and is made to carry 14- to 20-pound mono or 15- to 20-pound braid. You're set for anything in freshwater from bream and crappie to striped bass and in saltwater from trout to redfish.

The LT stands for "light" and "tough" with

a carbon frame, ABS aluminum spool and machined aluminum handle. All models come with 3+1 ball bearings and Daiwa's DIGIGEAR system featuring machined, digitally cut gears that are polished to increase smoothness and gear meshing.

MSRP: \$39.99-\$49.99

For more info, visit: www.daiwa.com/us/



PLANO WEEKEND SERIES SOFTSIDER

If you're not wedded to targeting one species year-round, you'll love the freedom offered by Plano's new Weekend Series Softsider soft tackle bags.

The Softsiders are available in three sizes and enable fishermen to swap plastic StowAway boxes in and out to match the trip you're taking this weekend, whether you're targeting bream, crappie, bass, speckled trout, redfish or even bigger.

The 3500, 3600 and 3700 sizes come with two StowAway boxes and room for more. The zipperless top panel allows

for quick access to the interior of the bag, with buckles used for fastening the top cover. A front pocket is accessed with a water-resistant front zipper for the protection of essential items. Mesh side pockets allow you to store smaller items that are essential to your fishing adventures, and a D-ring and multiple MOLLE attachment points are included for extra storage.

MSRP: \$21.99

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

FRABILL AQUALIFE BAIT STATION

No matter how much live bait you carry to the water, Frabill has a way to keep it alive and lively.

Frabill's AquaLife Bait Station and Dual Output Aerators will meet the needs of almost every angler.

The Bait Station features an insulated, 6-gallon bait bucket with an insert for an aeration stone, plus a built-in aerator that operates for up to 72 hours on two D-cell batteries. The micro-bubbler diffuser keeps bait from freezing during the winter and helps minnows survive during the summer's heat.


The 100-gallon and 50-gallon dual-output aerators are for anglers who carry their bait in coolers or livewells. The 100-gallon model has two aeration stones and a special diffuser that can filter up to 100 gallons of water. It can be

plugged into a generator or standard outlet. The 50-gallon model can filter up to 50 gallons of water and is perfect to turn any cooler into a livewell. It connects to any 12-volt power source.

MSRP: \$99.99 (Bait Station), \$59.99-\$69.99 (aerators).

For more info, visit: www.frabill.com/bait-station-bucket





MISSISSIPPI KAYAK ANGLER
BLISTERS BAYOU REDS, SPECKS
WHEN THE WATER COOLS. HERE'S
HOW HE HANDLES THINGS.

COOL WEATHER, HOT ACTION

■ By John E. Phillips

John Deshauteurs of Vancleave has always fished Mississippi's Gulf Coast. He learned from older saltwater anglers that fishing for speckled trout and redfish was much like fishing for bass. The fish held on structure out of the current and hit baitfish moving past ambush points. He'd take a couple of jigheads, soft-plastic grubs and shad-type baits, bouncing them off the bottom, and catch speckled trout and reds any time of the year by changing bait colors.

Then, he remembers, "Several years ago, a couple of buddies and I took some kayaks and a canoe to fish Waynesboro's Maynor Creek. I fell in love with kayak fishing."

At first, Deshauteurs used a molded, welded kayak, but today he fishes out of a Jackson kayak. He's very efficient at pinpointing and catching specks, reds, sheepshead, flounder and black drum, and his kayak has some of the same sophisticated fishing equipment of many bass boats.

USING DEPTH FINDERS >

USING DEPTH FINDERS

Depth finders with a down-scan, a side-scan and mapping capabilities has made a dramatic change in the way kayakers fish. They can see bottom breaks, holes, ditches, structure, baitfish, specks and reds before they fish.

DeShauteurs fishes topwater lures for speckled trout and redfish year-round.

“During the winter, the Gulf Coast may have a warm front come through; the baitfish (will move shallow), specks and reds will move shallow and attack topwater lures,” he said. “Also, between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. in the winter, the sun heats the water. The baitfish will move up into the shallows to feed, and when the specks and reds follow, I’ll fish my topwater lures.

“In November at 4 a.m., the (temperature) may be 30 to 40 degrees, but 65 degrees by 11 a.m. Therefore, the fish will move up and down the water column throughout the day.”

When specks and reds are shallow, Deshauteurs primarily fishes a Saltwater Skitter Walk on 15-pound monofilament. He uses a slow, walk-the-dog type retrieve.

“I twitch my rod tip, so the bait will glide from left to right, and I’ll let the bait glide until it stops,” he said. “Then, I repeat the process, since winter specks and reds aren’t as aggressive as summer ones.”

Deshauteurs’ kayak doesn’t make nearly as much noise as boats with outboard motors, so he can sneak up on fish before casting. He moves undetected near a hole, catches fish, leaves

and slips into the next hole. To hold position and prevent spooking fish, he uses a Power Pole instead of a heavy anchor. Many times he’ll find a half-acre hole in a bayou, fish all the way around it and catch a limit of specks and reds.

“I’ll fish several bayous in Jackson County I’ve fished my entire life to find the holes with the least amount of fishing pressure in November,” Deshauteurs said. “I already have GPS waypoints on my depth finder marking the holes and the underwater structure holding specks and reds. However, I’ll search for oyster banks, dead trees, car bodies and any other structure on the edges of or in the bayou’s holes. I’m looking for 10- to 18-foot holes, and I like to fish with artificial lures. I rarely, if ever, fish with live bait.”

GRAVELINE BAYOU

“In November and December, I’ll fish Graveline Bayou near Gautier, a bayou not fed by creeks coming in from the north,” he said. “When there’s north winds, they’ll usually blow some water out of the bayous (that aren’t) creek fed. You can locate the deeper ditches and holes that have fish congregating in them. So getting that winter bite is much easier because the specks and reds have to be in those holes during the cold.”

Deshauteurs fishes for specks and reds with bass lures and always has his electronics running. He said trout, reds and black drum will concentrate on the bottom and behind



rocks and other structure, once the water pushes out of the bayous, to wait for the baitfish and eat them. That's when he fishes crankbaits and soft plastics on jigheads.

If he spots heavy, dark marks behind a rock on his depth finder, he realizes those probably are redfish or black drum. Lighter, spread-out marks generally are speckled trout, white trout and/or croakers.

"I typically fish Monday through Thursday," Deshauteurs said. "On weekends, 30 to 40 boats may be trolling for specks and reds with many lines in the water, creating numbers of waves — although my kayak is very stable. I personally like to fish when most anglers are at work."

Deshauteurs pays close attention to social media. If he sees a post talking about specks and reds biting in Graveline Bayou, he won't fish there. But if no one's talking about Graveline Bayou, he knows he can catch a limit of three reds, often keeping the one fish longer than 30 inches that's allowed.

"If no one's fishing holes there, and I can locate specks, I also can catch a limit of 15 trout" he said. "I may have to hit two or three holes to get that limit of trout, but during the week, I generally always can get a limit of specks and reds at Graveline."

BAYOUS CUMBEST, CASSOTTE ➤

A soft-plastic swimbait fished on a jighead is a great offering to tempt bayou redfish.

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@	37" TL*	1/day, 3/vessel
Cobia	36" 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@	5/day aggregate
Mutton snapper	18" TL@	10/day
Queen/blackfin/silk/winchman snapper	none@	5/day aggregate
Vermillion/lane snapper	10"/8" TL@	20/day aggregate
Gray triggerfish	15" FL@	1/day
Golden/blueline/anchor/blackline tilefish	none@	20/day
King mackerel	24" FL@	2/day
Spanish mackerel	12" FL@	15/day
Yellowfin tuna	27" CFL@	3/day
Bigeeye 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.

BAYOUS CUMBEST, CASSOTTE

A public launch site is available at another of Deshauteurs' favorite fishing spots, Bayou Cumbest near Moss Point on Mississippi's eastern Gulf Coast. But for years, Deshauteurs has launched from private property because it's closer to the places he fishes and reduces the time he spends paddling.

"Bayou Casotte in Pascagoula, is deeper than my other two favorite bayous and receives plenty of fishing pressure," he said. "I'm looking for big, underwater rocks in that bayou with my depth finder. The bigger the rock, the more fish it usually will hold. I have to watch my line because the rocks will chafe it. I've learned the more rocks I fish, the more trout I'll catch."



John Deshauteurs has a small, light-weight kayak that enables him to sneak up on speckled trout and redfish in bayous.

"Although this industrial canal also has shallow and deep oyster reefs, I'll catch more fish off the rocks that break the current and provide places for fish to hide and ambush the bait traveling with the current. Fishermen for years have brought these rocks out and dropped them, along with old cars, trees and other structure to provide places to fish."

Deshauteurs' three favorite bayous all have structure that he's pinpointed. He fishes the downcurrent sides by casting upcurrent and letting the bait slide back or bounce along the bottom past the structure. Making a silent approach with his kayak, using the latest marine electronics and having the ability to hold in a spot with a Power Pole has made Deshauteurs an effective angler for bayou specks, reds, flounder, black drum and sheepshead. ■



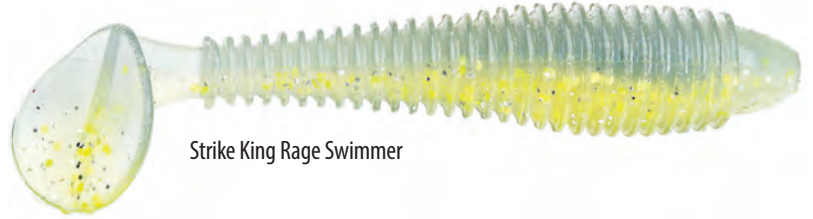
Avoiding areas and times when fishing pressure is heavy leads John Deshauteurs to speckled trout that are more likely to be feeding.



TACKLE ELECTRONICS FOR THE BAYOU



Rapala Saltwater Skitter Walk 11



Strike King Rage Swimmer

John Deshauteurs chooses to fish artificial lures instead of live bait, including crankbaits and soft plastics like Strike King's Rage Swimmer.

On bright, sunny days, he uses more natural patterns: mullet, menhaden or white shrimp. On dark, cloudy days, he likes garlic and shrimp scents or adds on a Pro-Cure strip. He fishes topwater lures in shallow water like a Rapala Saltwater Skitter Walk 11 in bone/red head.

Deshauteurs uses either 8- or 10-pound Seaguar Tatsu fluorocarbon line on a Fenwick Elite Tech baitcasting rod with an Abu Garcia Revo SX reel in either the 5.4:1 or 7:5 gear ratio. He fishes a 1/8-ounce or a 3/16-ounce jighead.

He has a Power Pole on the stern of his kayak to hold him on his fishing spot. His boat also contains a milk crate with four rods attached, batteries to run his electronics, a seat and a rod storage locker.

"Anytime I'm fishing a bayou, my electronics are running," Deshauteurs said. "I'm currently using the Raymarine Element 9

fish finder and will have my map on half of the screen and on the other side either my down-imaging searching for deep holes or the side-imaging feature looking for shallow areas. If I find rocks in a deep hole, I'll mark that spot as a waypoint on the mapping feature (GPS) of my depth finder. I'll mark these holes in the spring and summer when the bayous are at full pool. Then when I return in the winter, I'll know exactly where to fish." ■



For more than 45 years, John E. Phillips has been a fulltime outdoor writer who travels throughout the South, gathering information on hunting and fishing and other outdoor pursuits.

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GETTIN' FRESH

Hal Schramm

Smallmouth bass growth rate may increase with global warming if a forage supply can be maintained.



CLIMATE, RESERVOIRS AND AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

HOW CLIMATE-CHANGE PREDICTIONS CAN AFFECT COMPLEX ECOSYSTEMS

Scientists agree that climate change is the defining issue of this generation. Predicted effects on society and the economy are huge, but it also will have manifold and potentially drastic effects on natural resources that anglers enjoy.

Reservoirs provide the bulk of inland fishing opportunities in Mississippi. A scientific paper by three of the United States' foremost authorities on reservoir fisheries — Dr. Steve Miranda of the U.S. Geological Survey's Mississippi Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Giancarlo Coppola, fisheries researcher at Mississippi State University, and Jeff Boxrucker, coordinator of the National Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership — assessed the impacts of predicted climate changes on reservoirs and the fisheries they support. I have extracted from that comprehensive analysis those effects that, in my opinion, are germane to Mississippi reservoirs.

TEMPERATURE

Three decades ago "global warming"

began to make headlines and get the attention of fisheries scientists. Increases in temperature are, indeed, the driving force of climate changes, but forecast temperature changes alone probably will have little effect on Mississippi's reservoir fisheries. The forecast increases in summer temperature in the Southeastern U.S. will be relatively small — although be ready for enduring more 95 degree-plus days on the water. However, lengthening of the growing season — earlier warming and later cooling — may affect fisheries. On the positive side, growth rates of sportfish may increase. Unknown, however, will be whether the production of forage will be able to meet the increased food demands of sportfish or will the forage be depleted.

A longer growing season may help aquatic plants grow. Most are beneficial to fisheries in moderate amounts, but a longer growing season is conducive to the growth of non-native nuisances like hydrilla, Eurasian watermilfoil, giant salvinia and water hyacinth that thrive under warm conditions.

Although maximum water temperatures may change little, winter water temperatures are predicted to warm. Mississippi's waters will experience fewer shad die-offs, but the new, thermal conditions are conducive to establishment of invasive fishes native to tropical waters.

STRATIFICATION

Many of Mississippi's reservoirs thermally stratify in the summer. The warm, well-oxygenated upper-water layer (the epilimnion) does not mix with the cooler lower-water layer (the hypolimnion) when a lake is stratified. Organisms living in the deeper water, and decomposition of organic matter settling into that water, deplete the oxygen, and the habitat becomes uninhabitable to all organ-



Hal Schramm is an avid angler and veteran fisheries biologist.

isms except bacteria, fungi and a very few aquatic insect larvae. The production of macroinvertebrates — animals like insect larvae and crayfish — that are vital foods for fishes will decline. Earlier warming and later cooling mean a longer period of stratification and a longer period when a substantial portion of the reservoir is not available to fish and their food organisms.

Plants — algae, phytoplankton and macrophytes — are primary producers, the foundation of the food web that ends in fish. Nutrients necessary for primary production are trapped in deeper water when a lake is stratified. Prolonged stratification means a longer time of when nutrients are unavailable to plants.

RAINFALL

Rainfall predictions for the Southeast have substantial uncertainty, partly because the region lies between an increasingly dry Southwest and an increasingly wet northern region and partly because of the effects of hurricanes.

Reservoirs are impounded rivers and have large watersheds. As such, conditions in reservoirs are strongly influenced by activities on the watershed. Mississippi's soils are generally fertile but also highly erodible. While annual precipitation may increase little, the pattern of more intense precipitation events separated by periods of drought will result in more soil washing into reservoirs, increasing sedimentation and turbidity. Sediment inputs will be further increased when heavy rains occur in the winter when vegetative cover is light and agricultural lands lack soil-stabilizing crops.

Sediment inputs will reduce reservoir lifespan, reduce production of aquatic organisms that are energy pathways to fish, and degrade fish habitat. Turbidity will suppress the growth of aquatic plants. High sediment inputs, coupled with irregular

flood-drought cycles, are conducive to sediment deposition that not only fills bays and backwaters but blocks connection to them, a problem plaguing Tenn-Tom Waterway fisheries.

Southeastern reservoirs will largely be spared the drastic dewatering predicted to occur in southwestern reservoirs, but high flows could reduce water residence time — how long it takes to replace the volume of water in a reservoir. The relationship of fish recruitment to reservoir flows remains elusive, but the production of plankton peaks at mid-range residence times in riverine reservoirs.


TO BE OR NOT TO BE

While some debate the predictions of global climate change, change is occurring. Glaciers are melting. Hurricane season begins earlier, and storms are more numerous. Precipitation is more erratic but also more dramatic. Some fisheries managers prefer a precautionary approach and are preparing for change.

Miranda, Coppola, and Boxrucker identify ways to sustain productive, desirable fisheries in the uncertain climate future:

- Prevent the introduction of invasive, non-native species;
- Achieve watershed management actions that minimize or ideally, eliminate, sediment and nutrient inputs;
- Maintain, restore and, where necessary, enhance habitat conditions and key habitat types to benefit native fishes and other aquatic plants and animals.

Climate-change predictions vary, and the ecological processes that produce the fish anglers enjoy are complex. What the effects of a changing climate on reservoir fisheries will be and when they will occur is uncertain. What is certain is that habitat loss and changes to fish assemblages cannot be reversed. ■



Fisheries experts warn of adverse affects to reservoir fisheries resulting from predicted climate changes.

LUNKER LINES

Paul Elias

Out of 20 bass you'll catch on a November day at Sardis, half will weigh 3 pounds or more, and you even may catch a 6- or 7-pounder.

COVER SARDIS'S SHALLOW WATER IN NOVEMBER

WOODEN COVER HOLDS PLENTY OF BASS

Sardis Lake, near the town of the same name about 50 miles from Memphis, once was an awesome bass lake. Then, it went downhill. However, this 98,520-acre lake is making a comeback, and some good-sized bass are being caught.

November is a great month to fish Sardis, since the lake will be drawn down, and most of the bass, especially early in the month, will be holding in very shallow water, often 1 to 2 feet deep. I'll be fishing primarily three lures: a buzzbait, Mann's Baby 1-Minus and the C4 crankbait, and sometimes a fourth, a jerkbait.

EARLY NOVEMBER

Before severe cold fronts hit, I'll fish a buzzbait, because it's a shallow-running, big bass-catching lure that covers lots of water. Sardis is a main-lake type reservoir with only a few creeks and sloughs. Clear Creek, the largest creek, isn't that

big when the water's down.

• **Buzzbait.** I'll fish all the small creeks and pockets that empty into the main lake. I'm searching for wood cover and will cast around every stump and lay-down. In November, the shad will pull up into the creeks and pockets, and that wood cover provides productive ambush points for the bass.

Some rock cover is around the marinas and the dam; however, the main cover will be wood. If I locate stumps under the surface, I'll swim the buzzbait right over the tops of them. If the stump's above the water, I'll swim the buzzbait on either side of it.

To fish wood successfully in November, make several casts to the same target. Feeding bass usually will attack the buzzbait the first time it moves past a stump. If they're not feeding, you can aggravate them into biting by making several casts to the same stump.

I'll be fishing a 3/8-ounce buzzbait, but instead of a skirt being behind the blade, I'll use either a Zoom black or white frog on the hook. I want to retrieve this buzzbait slowly, so the blades make a gurgling sound on the surface. In front of the black frog, I'll have a black blade, and in front of the white frog, I'll use a gold blade.

• **Baby 1-Minus.** I'll have one tied on another rod and make casts to the same cover as the buzzbait. I'll tie this lure onto a 7-foot-1, medium-action FX Custom Rod with a Bruin ELS 8.1:1 reel and 20-pound White Peacock fluorocarbon. I'll reel this lure over the tops and



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.



Mann's Baby 1-Minus



November bass will be holding on wood in 2 or 3 feet of water as November arrives.

the sides of stumps.

Laydowns are also productive ambush points where bass will concentrate this month. Often, the laydowns only will have a small portion of the tree's trunk and perhaps a few limbs above the water. I'll retrieve that Baby 1-Minus along the tree's trunk and let it bounce off any small limbs still above water. I'll work these laydowns thoroughly, making seven or eight casts to each. As I approach a laydown, my first cast will be to the deep side, bringing the Baby 1-Minus across the laydown. Once I get closer to the tree, I'll start casting toward the bank and swim it out from the bank to the deep side of the tree. I'll crash the Baby 1-Minus into any limbs above the water on the deeper side of the laydown.

COLD FRONT FISHING TIPS

In colder weather, bass will move out of the shallows into somewhat deeper water. I'll concentrate my fishing with a Mann's C4 square-bill crankbait in ghost minnow color more on the main-lake wood and the riprap around the dam and boat ramps. I'll fish it on a 7-foot-1, medium-action FX Custom Rod and 7.3:1 Bruin ELS reel spooled with 23-pound fluorocarbon. I'll bump the C4 off the stumps and limbs of laydowns, just as I did the Baby 1-Minus. The difference is, I'm fishing this crankbait in deeper water, 3 to 5 feet. I also like a blue back, pearl sides, shad-colored C-4 that runs 3 to 4 feet deep and has a wide bill, enabling it to kick off of wood. You also may want to fish a jerkbait in those situations.

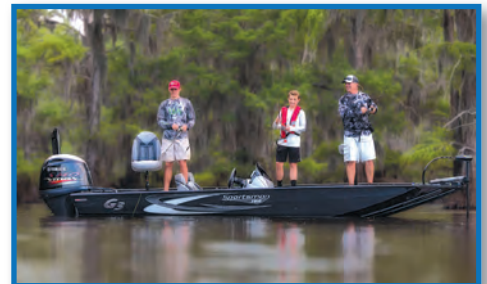
The real secret to catching November bass at Sardis with these four lures is to cover as much water as possible in the shallow creeks and bays during a day of fishing. You can

hope to catch 20 bass per day, and in November, half of those 20 bass may weigh 3, pounds with maybe one between 6 and 7 pounds. ■

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YAMAHA

LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

The Mischief Minnow combines the action of a standard topwater bait with the flash of a blade.



THE MISCHIEF MINNOW

IS THIS THE ULTIMATE BAIT FOR ANGLERS WHO JUST WANT TO CAST AND REEL?

It's been a while since a revolutionary topwater bait — one that makes a difference for bass pros and recreational anglers alike — has been introduced to the fishing world.

Freedom Tackle has stepped to the front with a product that has drawn much attention: the Mischief Minnow.

The Mischief Minnow's difference-maker is a blade called a "Kilter Blade," attached to the belly between two treble hooks. The blade isn't symmetric and doesn't spin like a regular blade. The color matches the lure body most of the time but can be a different hue.

When retrieved, it has unique thrashing action combined with a clacking sound, wake vibration and blade flash, what the manufacturers call a true triple-threat.

The body is made with ABS (acrylonitrile butadiene styrene), which is known for its strong resistance to corrosive

chemicals and/or physical impacts.

"The Mischief Minnow brings innovation to topwater by combining all the advantages of sound, wake and blade flash in a pencil bait design," wrote Mike Tamburro of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, president of Freedom Tackle. "Two years of design and product testing has given us feedback from the biggest critics we have: the fish. They don't just eat it, they want to destroy it and that's the kind of mischief we want to create when topwater fishing."

Freedom Tackle products are among six brands under the umbrella of American Baitworks Co., based in D'Iberville, Miss., which features fishing lures and products including Freedom Tackle, NetBait, Halo Fishing, Snag Proof, Scum Frog and STH Bait.

The Mischief Minnow hit the market in late summer. Tamburro, who started the

business, is one of the proud designers.

Jeremy Lawyer, a bass pro from Sircoxie, Mo., who fishes a Mischief Minnow, also helped with the design.

"We put our heads together. It wasn't easy to say, 'There it is,'" Lawyer said.

Lawyer fished regional tournaments for 15 years, winning the All-American in 2016, earning an FLW Cup berth and qualifying for the FLW Pro Tour, which he has fished for the past five years.

Experienced anglers and those with much less experience should be able to catch fish on the new artificial lure, Lawyer and Tamburro said.

Tamburro said the idea was, "Let's cre-



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

ate a bait where all the angler has to do is cast and reel. We wanted a bait that would trigger fish on its own.”

Lawyer said, “We tried to make it easy for the angler who’s maybe not real seasoned.

“It’s kind of like two or three different baits rolled into one. It’s just got a lot of unique action all rolled into one. It’s just something the fish haven’t seen,” he said. “It’s just really a fun bait to throw. It’s going to catch all kinds of different species.”

Lawyer started throwing the Mischief Minnow’s early versions about 1½ years ago. In one bass tournament in Wisconsin, Lawyer lost both of the Mischief Minnow prototypes he had to big, ravenous, toothy northern pike.

“Of course, I didn’t have a wire leader,” he said. After all, he was targeting bass.

Tamburro and Lawyer agreed the hardware is top-of-the-line, front to back.

“I said, ‘Whatever you do, let’s put good hooks on them,’” Lawyer said.

Tamburro listened. The new topwater lure has black nickel Gamakatsu short-shank trebles that Lawyer described as “sticky sharp” right out of the box.

The Mischief Minnow is available in 15 colors. Lawyer has two favorites.

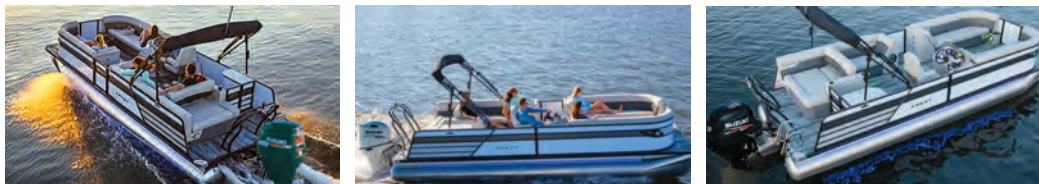
“You know, bone is a pro’s favorite color,” he said, “and just clear shad with a silver blade.” ■

For more information on the Mischief Minnow and other Freedom Bait Corp. products, go to <https://americanbait-works.com/> or call (844) 466-5738.



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COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver



Grouper and shrimp stuffed into pasta bowls with vegetables and cheese make an interesting meal featuring one of our favorite bottomfish. **INSET:** The finished product will make for a great November meal.

Jerry Dilsaver

GROUPEP PASTA BOWLS

A NEW WAY TO ENJOY A FINE FISH

While we have made it to November, 2020 isn't through yet, and things haven't returned to normal. We are on the tail end of hurricane season, but don't let your guard down, especially when planning a hunting or fishing trip.

The one constant in all the weirdness is that much of the fall weather has been excellent. The weather gives sportsmen access to many opportunities this month. This recipe features grouper that came from deeper water 30 to 50 miles offshore.

Grouper is one of the mildest-flavored fish off the Gulf coast. They look a bit rough and tumble, but once the skin is removed and the fillets exposed, it is pretty meat, and anyone who likes fish should like it. That even goes for those folks who say they don't like fish but eat flounder. Yes, it's that mild.

The best way to get fresh grouper is to catch it yourself, but

they're not as easy to catch as one would think. For larger, robust fish, they can clean a hook surprisingly subtly — a lot like the wily sheepshead. On other days, they hit like runaway freight trains. But it's worth the time and effort to get positioned just right and drop baits to hungry grouper. Heading home with a cooler full of fillets is a good thing, a really good thing, and something that is well worth the time and effort.

With shallow-water grouper season closing for several months on New Year's Day, the Thanksgiving holidays would be a great time to head offshore for grouper, plus whatever else is biting. You can keep enough out for one good meal to escape the post-Thanksgiving leftover turkey blahs and put the rest in the freezer for meals until the season opens again.

This has been an unusual and stressful year, but I still hope you can find many reasons to be thankful this Thanksgiving. ■

GROUPEP PASTA BOWLS

I like fish, and grouper is a favorite, but I wanted to find a different way to prepare it. I've eaten it grilled, baked, blackened, fried and more, but I wondered what could be different and still preserve the mild, but rich, taste. One idea was in a stew or something using a tomato base, but I feared the base would overpower the grouper's flavor.

One day, surfing the TV through the cooking channels, I saw something made with leftover chicken mixed in a tomato base and rolled up in lasagna noodles as pinwheels. I didn't like the idea of the tomato base and didn't see how pieces of fish would roll up, but I liked the idea and eventually came up with the first version of this. There have been several versions since the first attempts, and it is still being refined, but enough of my friends like it and suggested I use it here, so here it is. As is usual with my recipes, feel free to vary it as you think you would prefer. I think this is a pretty good base, but I'm still experimenting a bit.

There are several small things that influence the taste of this, and you may prefer one way or the other. The first is salt. I rarely use salt, but I use a little when boiling the noodles. I use pink Himalayan salt and believe it makes a difference. The smoked paprika and black pepper is important. I like both of them and sprinkle them on liberally. It really does change the flavor.

Also in boiling the noodles, I use a good shake or two of olive oil to help keep the noodles from sticking. This could also be done with 1/8 to 1/4 of a stick of butter. I don't taste it, but my wife said it

tastes a little richer using butter.

When sautéing the vegetables, I start with the onions; when they begin to turn opaque, I add the spinach, and once it is wilted or warmed, I add the mushrooms. Remember, you're just warming these to combine the taste and get them ready, as they will cook for 25 minutes in the oven. To make the vegetables richer, sauté them in butter instead of cooking spray.

Making the pasta cups is the hardest part, especially the first few times; experiment with how large a circle works best in your pan.

Adding the shrimp is the cherry on top. They add a nice visual and taste great. They are good unseasoned, but a little pepper and smoked paprika gives them an even better taste. Feel free to add a little salt too, if you must. ■

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound** grouper
- 1/2 pound** medium shrimp
- 1 sweet** onion
- 1 pkg** fresh sliced mushrooms
- 1 pkg** fresh or frozen spinach
- 1 pkg** lasagna noodles
- 1 bottle** creamy Alfredo sauce
- 1/2 cup** coarse, grated Parmesan or Parmesan-Romano mix cheese
- Smoked paprika**
- Salt and pepper**
- Splash** of olive oil or 1/8 to 1/4 stick of butter
- Buttery flavor** non-stick cooking spray.

PREPARATION:

Shell and devein the shrimp, leaving tails attached and return them to ice or fridge. Cut the grouper in pieces of several inches and return to ice or fridge. Slice onions and any large pieces of mushrooms. Boil eight lasagna noodles to "al dente" per their instructions. If the instructions do not include adding a little olive oil or butter to help prevent the noodles sticking, add a little of one or the other.

Spray a large frying pan — I like cast iron for this — liberally with the buttery flavored, non-stick cooking spray and sauté onions, spinach and mushrooms until the onions turn lightly opaque and the spinach has wilted. Remove the vegetables to a bowl and stir in a couple of spoons of the Alfredo sauce. Spray the bottom and sides of the bowls or pan you will cook in with the buttery flavor non-stick cooking spray.

Preheat the oven to 350°. Drain the lasagna noodles. Cover the bottom of the bowls or pan with a lasagna noodle — cut as needed. Roll the lasagna noodles into circles approximately 2 to 3 inches across and arrange them with an open end up in the bowls or pan. The size of the cooking bowls or pan will determine the size of the circle for the noodles.

Season the grouper to personal taste with salt and pepper and place a piece in each pasta circle. Spoon the sautéed vegetable mixture around the fish in each pasta circle until almost full. Cover the pasta circles with several spoons of Alfredo sauce. Sprinkle the smoked paprika and coarse-ground black pepper on the top. Bake in oven at 350° on a middle rack for 17 to 18 minutes. Check at about 12 minutes for the exposed edges of the pasta beginning to scorch. If it is trying to scorch, cover it loosely with a piece of aluminum foil.

Slide the oven tray out and cover each pasta circle liberally with the grated cheese. Place the shrimp on top of the grated cheese. Return to oven for 6 to 8 more minutes to cook the shrimp.



Jerry Dilsaver

Remove from oven and let stand for 5 minutes before serving. The small bowls are ideal individual servings of 2 to 4 circles.

Some folks eat all the pasta and some nibble at it, much like they do with taco or tortilla shell salads. This has vegetables, fish and pasta and can serve as a standalone meal. A salad or lettuce wedge is always welcome. For those who like a sweet dessert, it's hard to go wrong with Key Lime pie. ■



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.

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: SPECKLED TROUT

SPECKLED TROUT ARE AN ANGLER'S FAVORITE, WHEREVER THEY SWIM

Speckled trout, *Cynoscion nebulosus*, are inshore gamefish that are popular among recreational anglers along the Gulf Coast and the eastern seaboard. They are hearty fighters, and most anglers agree that they are very tasty.

These fish have elongated, streamlined bodies. Their lower jaws extend beyond the upper jaws. They are usually silvery gray to green and sometimes have blue and purple highlights on their backs. Their bellies are usually white. They have flat, unforked tails with black edges.

Speckled trout have two sharp teeth at the top of their mouths, which are usually yellow on the inside.

Speckled trout have long dorsal fins, which are made up of two sections. The long, rear section is soft and pliable. A deep notch separates this from the front section, which is spiny and sharp.

They are members of the *Sciaenid* family, which includes weakfish, sand seatrout, red drum and black drum. Like other members of that family, they have a lateral line that runs down the middle of their body all the way to the tail.

Speckled trout have prominent black spots along the upper section of their bodies, as well as on their dorsal and tail fins. On very rare occasions, a handful have been caught with no spots on their bodies. But all of those fish had spots on their dorsal and tail fins.



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.

A HUGE RANGE

The speckled trout's range is Cape Cod to Florida and the entire Gulf of Mexico. They live along inshore waterways and from the shallows out to 30 feet deep in the Gulf. They are a schooling species for the most part, but the very large ones travel in smaller groups. Females can live up to 10 years in the wild, but males rarely reach 5 years old.

Anglers catch these fish near sea grass and shellfish banks at a variety of depths. Live shrimp and a variety of baitfish are attractive forage for speckled trout, but anglers looking for a bigger challenge love catching them on a variety of artificial lures. Topwater "walk-the-dog" lures are popular choices. Plastic shrimp under popping corks are surefire ways of finding them, and swimbaits fished on jigheads throughout the water column are very effective.

These fish, while tough fighters on hook-and-line, are known as some of the most-delicate fish among their inshore cousins. They are prone to large fish kills during periods of extreme cold

weather and are less tolerant of fresh or even brackish water than most other members of the drum family.

Along the east coast, they are often misidentified as weakfish. Along the Gulf coast, they are sometimes mislabeled as sand trout or white trout. The best way to distinguish speckled trout from any of those species is by the spots on the dorsal and tail fins, which only speckled trout have.

Nicknames include spotted seatrout, specks, spotted weakfish, yellowmouth, winter trout and trout. They are infrequently known as truite gris in some Cajun circles. Bigger ones are often called gators or gator trout.

Louisiana's state-record speckled trout weighed 12.38 pounds. Leon Mattes caught the fish in Lake Hermitage in April 1950.

David Floyd caught Mississippi's state-record speckled trout on April 8, 2013. This fish weighed 10 pounds, 10 ounces.

The world record speck tipped the scales at 17 pounds, 7 ounces and was caught in Ft. Pierce, Fla., by Craig Carson on May 11, 1995. ■



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- 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-Moon, 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.)

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2020 NOV		BEST DAYS				LUNAR PERIODS				TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED	
POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	VALUE	MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT			
Sun 1	██	██	██	55	6:10 pm	10:57 pm - 1:57 am	7:22 am	11:22 am - 2:22 pm	☉	End DST	
Mon 2	██	██	██	49	6:44 pm	11:35 pm - 2:47 am	8:20 am	12:00 pm - 3:12 pm	☉		
Tue 3	██	██	██	42	7:24 pm	12:15 am - 3:41 am	9:17 am	12:40 pm - 4:06 pm	☉		
Wed 4	██	██	██	39	8:09 pm	1:01 am - 4:33 am	10:14 am	1:26 pm - 4:58 pm	☉		
Thu 5	██	██	██	39	9:01 pm	1:50 am - 5:26 am	11:09 am	2:15 pm - 5:51 pm	☉	HIGH	
Fri 6	██	██	██	40	9:58 pm	2:43 am - 6:19 am	12:00 pm	3:08 pm - 6:44 pm	☉		
Sat 7	██	██	██	46	11:00 pm	3:39 am - 7:11 am	12:47 pm	4:04 pm - 7:36 pm	☉		
Sun 8	██	██	██	55		4:37 am - 7:59 am	1:29 pm	5:02 pm - 8:24 pm	☉	HALF	
Mon 9	██	██	██	44	12:05 am	5:37 am - 8:43 am	2:06 pm	6:02 pm - 9:08 pm	☉		
Tue 10	██	██	██	37	1:13 am	6:36 am - 9:26 am	2:41 pm	7:01 pm - 9:51 pm	☉		
Wed 11	██	██	██	45	2:21 am	7:38 am - 10:08 am	3:14 pm	8:03 pm - 10:33 pm	☉		
Thu 12	██	██	██	52	3:31 am	8:40 am - 10:48 am	3:48 pm	9:05 pm - 11:13 pm	☉		
Fri 13	██	██	██	59	4:43 am	9:44 am - 11:30 am	4:23 pm	10:09 pm - 11:55 pm	☉		
Sat 14	██	██	██	62	5:56 am	10:49 am - 12:15 pm	5:01 pm	11:14 pm - Midnight	☉	NEW & PERIGEE	
Sun 15	██	██	██	49	7:11 am	11:57 am - 1:05 pm	5:44 pm	Midnight - 12:40 am	☉		
Mon 16	██	██	██	36	8:25 am	1:03 pm - 1:59 pm	6:33 pm	12:22 am - 1:30 am	☉		
Tue 17	██	██	██	24	9:35 am	2:09 pm - 2:57 pm	7:29 pm	1:28 am - 2:24 am	☉		
Wed 18	██	██	██	18	10:38 am	3:10 pm - 3:58 pm	8:30 pm	2:34 am - 3:22 am	☉	LOW	
Thu 19	██	██	██	17	11:32 am	4:03 pm - 4:59 pm	9:33 pm	3:35 am - 4:23 am	☉		
Fri 20	██	██	██	22	12:18 pm	4:54 pm - 5:56 pm	10:36 pm	4:28 am - 5:24 am	☉		
Sat 21	██	██	██	33	12:56 pm	5:36 pm - 6:52 pm	11:38 pm	5:19 am - 6:21 am	☉	HALF	
Sun 22	██	██	██	24	1:28 pm	6:13 pm - 7:45 pm		6:01 am - 7:17 am	☉		
Mon 23	██	██	██	21	1:57 pm	6:48 pm - 8:36 pm	12:37 am	6:38 am - 8:10 am	☉		
Tue 24	██	██	██	22	2:24 pm	7:20 pm - 9:26 pm	1:34 am	7:13 am - 9:01 am	☉		
Wed 25	██	██	██	24	2:49 pm	7:52 pm - 10:14 pm	2:29 am	7:45 am - 9:51 am	☉		
Thu 26	██	██	██	24	3:15 pm	8:23 pm - 11:03 pm	3:24 am	8:17 am - 10:39 am	☉	Apogee	
Fri 27	██	██	██	36	3:42 pm	8:57 pm - 11:53 pm	4:19 am	8:48 am - 11:28 am	☉		
Sat 28	██	██	██	48	4:12 pm	9:33 pm - 12:43 am	5:15 am	9:22 am - 12:18 pm	☉		
Sun 29	██	██	██	60	4:45 pm	10:14 pm - 1:36 am	6:13 am	9:58 am - 1:08 pm	☉		
Mon 30	██	██	██	67	5:23 pm	10:58 pm - 2:28 am	7:11 am	10:39 am - 2:01 pm	☉	FULL	

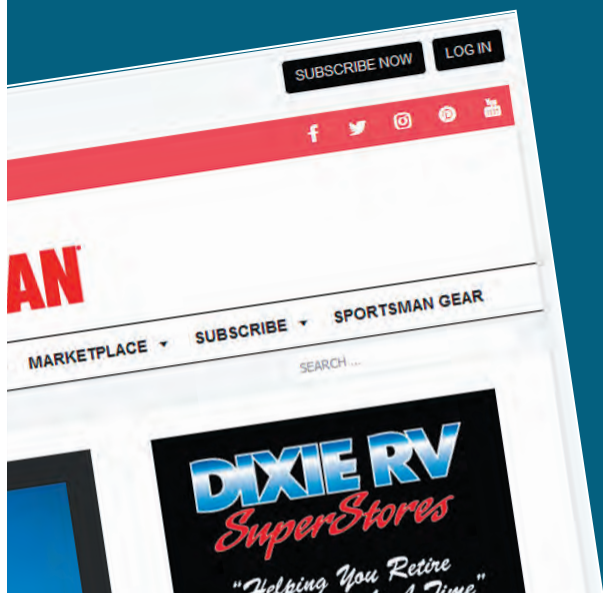
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AVERAGE

ANY LUNAR PERIOD IS ENHANCED WHEN IT OVERLAPS A KEY SOLAR PERIOD. THE BEST OF THESE OVERLAPS ARE DESIGNATED BY THE SUN SYMBOLS:
 ☉ = DAWN ☀ = HIGH NOON ☹ = DUSK
 WHILE THE LESSER MOONRISE AND -SET OVERLAPS (ABOUT 30 MIN. BEFORE AND AFTER THE LISTED TIME) ARE DESIGNATED BY BOLD BLACK TYPE.

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FIELD NOTES

Square-billed crankbaits are real bass-catchers in fall, when fish are shallow and concentrating on baitfish.



Dan Kibler

ALL SQUARE? BET ON IT!

By Dan Kibler

SQUARE-BILLS RULE IN FALL

They look a little different — not like a run-of-the-mill crankbait with a round, diving bill. The slab of plastic sticking out of their mouths can be squared off at the end or shaped like a coffin.

Strange as it might seem, the little diving plugs known as square-bills have a sacred spot in the tackle boxes of a lot of anglers, and many of those spots will be empty this time of year.

Fall, you see, is square-bill time, when any bass fisherman worth his salt has got at least one or two of the little plugs tied on the rods on his casting deck.

A top bass pro, the lures have several things going for them.

"They are really good in the fall," said Davy Hite, two-time B.A.S.S. Angler of the Year and 1999 Bassmaster Classic champ who is a co-host on Bassmaster Live. "No. 1, you can cover so much water with them, and most of them will run 5 feet deep and shallower.

"That's where a lot of the bass are in October and November."

Second, Hite said square-bills will catch suspended bass better than just about any other crankbait.

"With a normal diving bait, you're targeting fish that are on the bottom, but with a square-bill, because it runs so shallow, you're catching some fish that aren't on the bottom," he said. "You can catch a lot of suspended fish, and there are a lot of fish suspended this time of year. They'll come to the vibration of a square-bill."

Bass pros also like the way a square-bill comes through cover like wood, and how it works in stained water. That's why the backs of creeks and the upper, river section of a reservoir are great spots to fish one. ■



FALL BASS TIPS

DEEP OR SHALLOW, BASS WILL BITE

By Dustin Wilks

November in the Southeast can provide some really good bass fishing, but it can also be a tad frustrating since fish can be doing so many things. The positives are obviously that decreased fishing pressure and cooling water have the fish much more active and moving to new areas.

One of the frustrating things is the thermocline is gone in reservoirs, so bass and baitfish can now go as deep as they want with no oxygen problems. This can make some spots really good that are far deeper than most anglers are accustomed to fishing. Sometimes, that 25- to 40-foot level attracts baitfish in clearer lakes since they now have access to plankton below the depth of the former thermocline. Often, I just ignore this since fishing that deep requires so much time to find the fish.

If you like to fish that deep and are really familiar with your lake, you can use spoons, drop-shot rigs or heavy jigs to get down to the fish. Often, you can catch a lot of fish in a short period of time when fishing this way. Deep flats near points

and channel swings seem to hold the most fish for this pattern.

If you are like me and just want to go out and fish for a few hours, then shallow is the way to go. There are always shallow fish to be had, and November can be one of the best times for skinny water. Just as the deep-water bass are taking advantage of baitfish seeking a new place to feed, the shallow fish are taking advantage of the repositioning of the bait as well.

Often, our lakes drop in the fall, and the water will be low if there have been no hurricanes or other major rain events. This pushes bait out of the backs of the shallow creeks and shallow weeds where they once hid. Baitfish either seek shelter in skinny water just outside of these areas or they start seeking a little deeper water in ditches within the creeks.

This movement caused by dropping and cooling water creates my favorite pattern for November: fishing shallow ditches in creeks. The fun with this pattern is there is a lot of anticipation when you go into a certain creek and get to what will be the

sweet spot, often the last channel bend before the water gets too shallow or silty. Often, there is some wood there, and the wood holds the fish. These types of places hold fish all year, but they just get better as the water drops since the fish are less spread out.

The best baits for this pattern are crankbaits and creature baits. I like shallow-running baits that can get through cover, mostly in shad colors. If you have the luxury of multiple crankbait rods, rig them up with different-sized lines. The heavier the line, the shallower the crankbait tends to dive, so use maybe 17- or 20-pound test for really skinny water and 12- or 14-pound test for those 4- or 5-foot spots. My No. 1 creature bait is a 3½-inch Culprit Incredicraw in either black/red flake if the water is dirty or green pumpkin/blue flake in clear water.

With these two patterns, you can be well on your way to having a great November bass season. Good luck, and always have a topwater rigged up in case a school pops up. ■

Lower water levels on reservoirs in the fall will concentrate fish on cover that's still in the water.

TOP 3 WAYS TO KILL A BUCK ON OPENING DAY

FOOD SHOULD DICTATE EARLY STAND LOCATIONS

1 If you're in one of the areas of Mississippi where gun season begins this month, it's a sure bet you're staying up late dreaming about opening day. The thought of making a quick kill is just too exciting to allow for sleep.

That's definitely true for veteran hunter Blake Charles, who is antsy to get in a stand and put some lead in a deer.

But there's more to early success than just flipping a coin and climbing into a box stand on your lease.

Charles, who has killed his share of nice bucks, said there are three factors that go into deciding where he'll be sitting when that magical morning dawn.

Food is central to each:

1 "Look for oak trees that are producing acorns," Charles said. "White oaks are still dropping the little gold nuggets around the time rifle season starts."

Unfortunately, not every tree that drops mast is favored by deer. So it's important to know the signs that deer are frequenting a particular.

"A good feed tree with fresh acorn hulls and deer scat is a sure bet for opening weekend," he said.

2 If your lease borders some farm land, you should definitely key on game trails leading to these feeding areas.

"Agriculture fields are great for the season opener, even if the crops have been harvested," Charles said. "The farmer's combine always leaves enough grain on the ground after harvesting to draw deer from miles around."

There could even be more available to deer than grains and beans.

"If a soybean field has been harvested in early October, and good old Mother Nature is kind enough to bless us with rain, soybean grain left on the ground will start to germinate and produce tiny, tender, fresh soybean stalks that deer absolutely love," he said.

3 Sometimes a hunter doesn't have access to either producing oak trees or agricultural fields, and that's when green patches really play into the opening-day formula.

But Charles said you want to choose one that hasn't been hunted on a regular basis during bow season.

"In a year when acorns are scarce, large food plots (two acres or more in size) that have had minimal hunting pressure from bowhunters are great places to catch a buck by surprise," he said. ■



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