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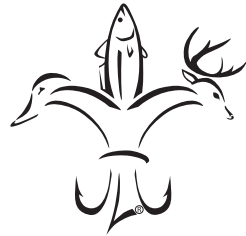


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ON THE COVER:



Turkey gobblers occupy the minds of a lot of Mississippi sportsmen this month. Learn how to face off with turkeys in the hills and those old birds that are tough, tough to tag. Photo by Rick Small.

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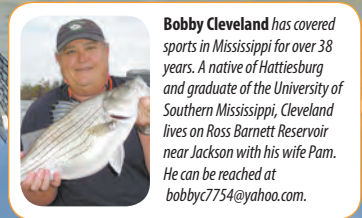


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Outdoor
UPDATE
with
Bobby Cleveland



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 bobbyc754@yahoo.com.

Dan Kibler

WELCOME TO CRAPPIE HEAVEN

APRIL PUTS SLABS IN THE SPOTLIGHT ACROSS THE MAGNOLIA STATE

When discussing April's options for Mississippi's outdoorsmen and women, the talk begins and ends with crappie. Turkeys, of course, are a close second.

Crappie is the king of gamefish here, just like the Magnolia State reigns over all others for crappie-fishing destinations. Boasting of

stops like the I-55 corridor's royalty (north to south): Arkabutla Lake, Sardis Lake, Enid Lake, Grenada Lake and Barnett Reservoir, with the crown jewels of the Delta being Lake Washington and Eagle Lake, Mississippi has every right to brag.

It shines brightest in April when the dogwoods bloom and crappie spawn. Going shallow makes them vulnerable to more fishermen, and limits leave the different lakes on a daily basis.

"With modern electronics, fishermen with deep-enough pockets to rig out a boat can catch fish all year," said angler Roger Wilson of Brandon, who fishes every opportunity he gets on Barnett Reservoir. "During the spawn, all those modern gizmos don't really come into play. Everybody, even

waders, can get to where the crappie are and catch fish. I've got a big boat with all the electronics, and I've caught just as many fish in April from my old john boat as I do now.

"When they are spawning, it's just a matter of putting a jig into as much structure as you can in a day. Of course, you still have to learn the areas where the most fish spawn, which comes from experience more than anything else, or from watching where all the boats head from the dock."

The spawn can begin in March and can last as late as June on some lakes, but April is the peak. Longtime perch-jerker Rabbit Rogers of Brandon has a saying he swears by: "If I had to pick one day that every year would put you close to the peak of the spawn, I'd say April 15. That's tax day, so it's easy to remember."

What Rogers means is, if a fisherman wants to arrange his schedule to be off from work and hopes to coincide with the spawning peak, the time around April 15 is the best bet. Not all crappie spawn at the same time, not even all the crappie in the same lake, but Rogers feels the time frame around mid-April is when the majority of fish will be getting busy.

The biggest segment of Mississippi sportsmen who could care less about crappie spawning are the avid turkey hunters.

"It's not that I don't like crappie fishing; it's just that I spend every free minute I have either chasing turkeys or planning my next chase," said Fred Wilson of Meridian. "I wouldn't be lying if I said I even think turkey when I sleep, because I dream about it, too."



Dan Kibler

Drop a jig in shallow brush this month, and a Mississippi crappie is liable to try and make it a meal of it.

Mississippi's spring turkey season began in mid-March and ends May 1, putting the full month of April in play.

"My favorite time is April, because I know that my No. 1 competitors, turkey hens, start leaving the gobblers alone more during the day to nest," Wilson said. "In March, the hens keep the gobblers pretty busy and make it tough to get a trophy tom's attention and call him into gun range. As more and more hens start heading to nest, my odds get better. Don't get me wrong; the odds are always on the gobbler's side, but the slightest tip in my direction is a wonderful thing. That happens more in April, even mid-April, than at any other time.

"I used to limit out in March on 2-year-old birds, but over time, I learned that it was more fun to battle the older, stubborn gobblers, and the sight of a hooked spur of a mature bird gets me going. Over the past 10 years, I bet that 90 to 95% of the gobblers that I've killed or have called up for other hunters have come in April. A lot of that success came from the time I spent chasing them and losing to the hens in March but learning about

their habits and areas."

This edition of *Mississippi Sportsman* offers tips and entertaining reading to all outdoorsmen.

For fishermen, Phillip Gentry treats us to a Mississippi River catfish piece called "A Wing (dike) and a Prayer" that provides tips for fishing around the man-made structures. Designed to direct the flow of the river, the dikes provide a holding spot for catfish.

There's also a feature about the spawning habits of speckled trout along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The spawn starts in April and will last throughout the summer, and guide Sonny Schindler of Ocean Springs shares his insight on where to find and how to catch these popular fish.

For turkey hunters, writer Andy Douglas discusses how using high ground can help locate more gobblers, and David Hawkins provides experts' tips on how to beat toms in April that have been heavily pressured earlier in the season.

All of that and more is available in this packed April edition of *Mississippi Sportsman*. Enjoy the read. ■

DON'T FORGET! REPORT YOUR TOM!

Mississippi may not have a tagging system for turkey hunters, but it does require an immediate report of harvest before the bird is moved from the site of kill. It's called Game Check, and it can be done simply through modern telephone technology — or by two other methods.

The reporting process must begin before the turkey is moved. The simplest way is to use the Game Check feature included on the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks app on either your Apple- or Android-based cell phone. This can be done even if you hunt in areas without cellular phone coverage. Open the MDWFP app, click the Report Turkey button and complete and submit the entry as directed. The entry will be automatically transmitted once coverage resumes. Once this process is completed, no other action is required.

Two other methods are available, but both require downloading a season harvest-record form that's available online at MDWFP.com before you go hunting.

After taking a gobbler and before it is moved from harvest site, the kill must be recorded on paper, either on the downloaded form or on a simple piece of paper. It requires recording your name, license number, address, phone number and date of purchase on the paper or form before leaving the site. Later, you will need to measure the beard and spur length and note the county of harvest before completing the report with MDWFP by visiting the agency's website at mdwfp.com/gamecheck or calling 1-800-BE-SMART.

Upon completion, you will be provided a confirmation number that must be added to your season harvest record.

Mandatory reporting of turkey harvests allows for more precise resource management. According to the MDWFP, the benefits include:

- Monitoring populations and harvest data more effectively than an annual hunter survey. The details gathered will improve regulatory decisions and allow for adaptive approaches to management.
- More thoroughly evaluating the impact of season frameworks on turkeys, hunters and hunting success.
- Providing — for the first time — timely and efficient county



Report your wild turkey harvest with the MDWFP before you move your bird from the spot where it flopped for the last time.

Dan Kibler

level harvest data, allowing MDWFP to identify areas with low harvest rates that could be targeted as areas that need to be improved.

- Identifying Mississippi's turkey hunters, which would allow for directed polls and surveys to understand the desires of this hunting group.
- Demonstrating to the hunting community that harvest management and bag limits are important and especially critical to those species that have a season limit. ■

RANKING TOP CRAPPIE LAKES

Outsiders like “Wired2Fish,” “In-Fishermen” and other online sites usually include three or four Mississippi lakes in their Top-10s and most all list Grenada Lake as the No. 1 destination in the nation for crappie fishermen.

But how do Mississippi crappie anglers feel about it? Truth be told, you can ask five people and get five different answers, some totally different.

For instance, the listings of Jeff Woods of Oxford are heavily skewed toward north Mississippi: 1. Grenada Lake, 2. Sardis Lake, 3. Pickwick Lake, 4. Arkabutla Lake, 5. Enid Lake.

When you ask Billy Brown of Jackson, his listings are, quite naturally, more centrally located: 1. Barnett Reservoir, 2. Eagle Lake, 3. Grenada Lake, 4. Lake Washington, 5. Lake Lincoln (State Park).

So, what about someone from south Mississippi, like George Thomas of Hattiesburg? Surprisingly, his list is all over the place: 1. Grenada Lake, 2. Barnett Reservoir, 3. Flynt Creek Water Park, 4. Eagle Lake, 5. Okatibbee Lake.

Heading to the Delta, Ray Wilson of Vicksburg loves the river lakes: 1. Eagle Lake, 2. Lake Washington, 3. Chotard/Albermarle, 4. Wolf Lake, 5. Grenada Lake.

What about an outdoor writer who has fished just about every puddle of water in Mississippi for over 50 years? I have it as:

No. 1. Grenada Lake. I’m no fool. This is the best lake in the world for chasing the elusive 3-pounder. Anytime a crappie smacks a jig here, my heart skips a beat anticipating what might be a fish of a lifetime.

No. 2. Barnett Reservoir. You won’t find many 3-pounders here, but what you will find is a healthy population of all age classes and an abundance of “keepers” from 12 ounces up to 2½ pounds.

No. 3. Lake Washington. In addition to producing a few trophy fish every year, this old oxbow near Glen Allen is small enough to learn in a few trips and, oddly enough, has different patterns than you won’t find anywhere else. Example: On one 100-degree day in July, we caught the limit of crappie spider-rig trolling with jigs and minnows between 3 and 5 feet deep.

No. 4. Eagle Lake. I love this old oxbow of the Mississippi River for many reasons, including its natural beauty. But what I really love about it are the fat slabs you can catch on a variety of patterns throughout the year. My favorite is the cold of winter when the black crappie gang up under the piers on the outside bends (Mississippi side) of the lake.

No. 5. Pickwick Lake. It is best known for its catfish and bass, but this magnificent TVA lake on the Tennessee River is an absolute monster for crappie. My first experience with Pickwick crappie was a bass-fishing trip one April, bottom-bouncing jig heads with grubs off a drop from 10 feet down to 20 feet. We were fishing the 20-foot side. Didn’t catch a targeted smallmouth, but it didn’t matter. We limited out on 2- to 2½-pound crappie in one spot in two hours. ■

The Goshen South boat ramp opened March 18, in plenty of time for Mississippi fishermen to find it, launch their boats and target Ross Barnett’s slabs.



Brian Cope

NEW BARNETT RAMP OPENS IN TIME FOR SLAB SPAWN

Crappie fishermen at Barnett Reservoir know that many of the prime spawning areas of the 33,000-acre lake are on the northeast side, just south of Mississippi Highway 43. In the past, access to those waters meant launching either a lot further south and going up the lake or launching with the horde of boats on the north side of Highway 43 and running south under the bridge.

But when the spawn takes place this spring at Barnett, those perch-jerkers will have better and closer access to those areas by using the new Goshen South Boat Ramp that opened March 18 across Highway 43 from the popular and always crowded Goshen North Boat Ramp.

“We’ve been needing a ramp on the north end of the main lake for a long time, especially in the spring when the crappie are spawning,” said Willie Green of Jackson. “There’s a lot of good fishing just off from that landing that will now be in safe reach for a lot of us that don’t have big rigs. I’ll feel a lot safer in my 12-foot john boat with a 15-horse engine launching over there than I do launching across the street and then having to motor through so many other bigger boats with bigger engines that go so darned fast.

“I won’t even have to crank my big motor except to idle about 200 yards, and I can start fishing spawning waters. This new ramp is perfect for us smaller boaters, but I’m sure it will be just as popular for the bigger-boat people. The good thing is that a lot of the area I want to go to during the spawn is too shallow for those guys to go lickety-split up through there.”

The new ramp is accessible off Mississippi Highway 43 and has parking spaces for about 55 boats. Once access channel has been dredged to an elevation of 292, so at the lake’s normal operation level of 297.5 feet above sea level, there is plenty of water. At the end of the dredged channel, boaters have a choice of turning north and following existing channels around Sunset Marina along Highway 43, or turning south and running an existing marked channel south to where it merges with the marked Pearl River Channel. ■

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: 2 BILLS ALIVE

As expected, the 2021 session of the Mississippi Legislature was quiet regarding hunting- and fishing-related bills. Of the more than 20 bills combined presented in the House and Senate committees on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, only two remain alive — one in each chamber.

Both bills received the “strike-all” label, meaning that the second chamber rewrote the language passed by the originating chamber and then approved the bill. Those bills now must return to the chamber of origin for consideration.

- The House approved Senate Bill 2035, which would allow the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks to do two things: allow and regulate the use of air guns, air bows and pre-charged pneumatic weapons

it deems necessary and proper AND allow the MDWFP to create special seasons for deer harvest to collect samples for chronic wasting disease (CWD) testing, including both inside and outside existing seasons.

If inside an already existing season, deer can be taken with weapons legal for that season. If outside any season, then the Wildlife Commission could regulate weaponry. The House voted 113-7, with two voting present, to approve the amended bill.

Air guns will be legal for hunting small game during the seasons for hunting small game. Air bows and pre-charged pneumatic weapons shall be lawful for hunting large game, except game-birds, turkeys and migratory waterfowl. Air bows and pre-charged pneumatic weapons may be used during any open season on deer with primitive weapons after Nov. 30, on private lands only.

- The Senate approved House Bill 382 regarding CWD testing inside enclosures (high-fence deer pens), after rewriting a clause to give the MDWFP the power to enter such an enclosure and use the best collection methods available to obtain tissue samples for testing where CWD has been diagnosed within 5

miles of the enclosure. The Senate voted 52-0 to approve the amended bill.

Despite the overwhelming votes, both measures were immediately held on motions to reconsider, leaving their final passage in doubt. If either or both bills are cleared of the reconsider motions, they would still face obstacles to passage. The originating chamber must vote to approve the amended versions. A positive vote would send the bill as written to the governor for his signature and approval, but a negative vote would lead to a conference committee to attempt a compromise version that both chambers would need to consider. ■

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READER REPORT**CATCH REDS AT BAYOU CUMBEST, NEARBY MARSHES****B** By Jerry and Travis Brashier
Gautier, Miss.

Bayou Cumbest in the southeastern corner of Mississippi is tidally influenced and stretches about 20 miles from Orange Grove to Point Aux Chenes Bay. The Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies described it as an abandoned fluvial course of the modern Pascagoula River system. Associated with the Bayou is one of the largest relatively undisturbed areas of marsh-wetlands in Mississippi and Alabama, a popular place to catch redfish, speckled trout, flounder and other species.

The past several years, my son, Travis, and I have fished for redfish, speckled trout and flounder in many places along Mississippi's coast, including the Pascagoula River and many of its tributaries, waters adjacent to Deer Island, Biloxi Bay and Bayou Cumbest and nearby marshes. Our favorite place to catch legal-sized redfish, by far, is Bayou Cumbest and the nearby marshes; we catch our limits of three fish each, ranging from 18 to 26 inches long, except for one 38-pound fish caught in the bayou on a purple Paul Brown Soft-Dine. We check the stomachs of many of the redfish and have found they often fed on crabs and/or mullet.

When there is a neap tide — the least change between high and low tides — we don't fish. We like shallow, moving water, a tidal range from a foot to more than 2 feet, and prefer an outgoing tide, but we catch fish on an incoming tide. However, when the high tide pushes water back into the smooth cordgrass marsh, fishing is less productive.

PRODUCTIVE LURES

We launch at Point-of-Pines; the cost is \$5. Some free ramps are in the area; however, we haven't used them. Fishing is usually good in Bayou Cumbest south of the Point-of-Pines ramps. Starting at daylight, we use a trolling motor and fish for redfish and speckled trout. We usually catch fish on "walk-the-dog" lures like a Heddon Super Spook Jr. or MirrOlure SheDog — which produce explosive strikes — and Matrix Shad.

Later, we fish the shallow, nearby marshes, where we often catch more redfish than in the bayou. Long casts are required

Travis Brashier with a beautiful redfish caught on a Matrix Shad in shallow water near marsh close to Bayou Cumbest.



Photo by Jerry Brashier

to keep from spooking fish. We cast directly to where the water meets the smooth, cordgrass marsh. Our preferred baits are swimbaits 3 to 4½ inches long, including Matrix Shad and baits made by Berkley, Strike King, Storm and Z-Man. Lure colors that mimic a crab or mullet entice redfish strikes. We prefer Shimano baitcasting outfits, 7-foot rods, 30-pound Power Pro braid and a 25-pound fluorocarbon leader 12 to 18 inches long.

LOOKING TO SPRING

Year-round, Bayou Cumbest and the nearby marshes are great places to catch legal-size redfish in shallow water. We have found that 3-fish catching limits is easier from spring through the fall. In the winter, crabs and mullet, their two primary prey species, may be less abundant. Crabs likely bury in the mud; some mullet may leave the area to spawn offshore. Redfish may also leave the shallows because the water is just too cold.

We suggest using "walk-the-dog" lures early. When using swimbaits, fish them in crab or mullet colors and add a little chartreuse color to the tails. Long casts with long rods will help keep the fish from spooking. When the shallow water is really clear, don't use lures with shiny spinner blades. If you are not catching redfish, look for mullet; when you find them, cast.

Pay attention to regulations: three redfish are allowed per angler; they have to be at least 18 inches long and only one can be longer than 30 inches. Learn where the Mississippi-Alabama border is and don't fish east of that line without an Alabama license. ■

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REVAMPED MARINA HAS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Louis Faust walked around the marina he would ultimately buy and revamp, always with the same thought. “Man, what the heck?” Faust said. “There’s so much potential around here... It could be so much more.” Faust has put those thoughts into action in recent months. He bought The Dock Marina and renamed it The Pointe Marina and Grill of Slidell, La., with a lot of investment capital going toward revitalizing the marina and its surroundings. Among the improvements is a brand new bait and tackle shop

for fishermen, new gas pumps, fishing docks and boat launch, a widened boat deck, redone landscaping and about 8 acres of overgrown grass and 30 40 yard dumpsters of debris gone. The volleyball court is being redone and a soccer field is being built; Faust has no plans to make this “only” a fishing marina, but a recreational area for all of Slidell, which is only a few miles from the Mississippi state line.

“We want to be more than that, for sure,” Faust said. “The idea is to draw other people, more families, out to see what we have to offer. Every component back there is going to feed off of one another. So this is really working out as a place for families where each person has something to do.”

Faust is looking to have the facility organically grow within itself, catering to the needs and the requests of the surrounding neighborhoods.

A father or mother who isn’t interested in taking a boat out, for example, can still use the marina to get a little work done on it. Their son or daughter, meanwhile, may want to play a little soccer, but if not, they could elect to go kayaking, play volleyball or just walk the farmer’s market. On certain holidays such as Halloween, there will be a pumpkin patch that the families can visit by boat with their kids and get their pumpkins, plus Christmas trees as Christmas approaches.

FILLING A COMMUNITY VOID

There will be a lot of things to do, and, particularly for young people, that fills a need in the Slidell community, Faust believes. “Everyone has long said the same thing... There’s nothing for



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kids to do here. There's such a lack of it that it's unbelievable," Faust said. "I've always been eyeing up this property, and it kind of fell in my lap, and everyone says at the same time that there's nothing to do out here. So let's do something about that, I figure."

The marina will also be friendly for birthday parties and other outdoor events, with a roofed area offsetting the risk of bad weather spoiling the day's fun.

The most important thing, Faust said, was to listen to the community, not just during the clean-up process, but to be a work in progress throughout the year.

TAKING CARE OF ANGLERS

Meanwhile, The Blue Crab Restaurant will be opening its doors this spring as part of the Pointe experience. Fishing rodeos and poker runs are being scheduled, and Faust has put considerable effort into making the details count; while drawing people outside of the fishing community is a target, he also wants to take extra good care of his anglers and boatmen as well.

"We have an electric pressure washer, so they can rinse their boat off, free of charge," Faust said. "It's having things like that, we hope, that sets us apart from the others. We're going to really be an all-in-one recreational spot."

On top of that, it will be a safe place for a good time as well. Part of the investment has been installing top-notch security cameras



A wider boat deck and a covered, fish-cleaning area are part of the upgrades at The Pointe Marina and Grill of Slidell, La.

around the marina and lighting to help ensure visitors know that they and their items in their vehicles will be secure.

"There used to be a lot of riff-raff going on out here to all hours, and we're putting an end to that," he said. "This is a place for families to come and have good clean fun now, in place of those bad elements." ■

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FROM THE LAKE TO CLEANING TABLE TO DINNER TABLE

A GOOD FISH-CLEANING TABLE HELPS PERFECT THE PROCESS

E By Kinny Haddox
everyone who catches fish and likes to eat them has one thing in common: they need a good spot to clean and properly prepare freshly caught fish. Any fish that you plan on eating should be kept alive or on ice after they are caught. Properly handling fish from the lake to the cleaning table to your dinner table helps you get the most out of your catch.

There are a wide variety of types of places to clean fish, but they also have some common features. You need a smooth, level surface on which to clean the fish. You need a good source of clean water to rinse your fish and a proper place to properly dispose of the carcasses. Other than a good, sharp knife or two, that's all you need. If you use electric knives, a

good ground-fault electrical outlet nearby is a must.

When I was growing up, my school-teacher father and I fished multiple times each week. He took an old, rolling barbeque pit frame and made a piece of wood to fit on the top. We rolled it over to the backyard hydrant and had an old washtub into which we threw the remains. They were later buried in a compost pile by the garden and helped grow awesome vegetables.

But fish-cleaning stations have come a long way since then.

"You see people using just about every kind of setup you can imagine to clean fish, from an old 2x12 on the tailgate of a truck to fancy, stainless steel fish-cleaning stations like they have at the state parks

and some marinas," said Josh Maxwell of Arcadia, a member of Team Overalls. "But the more organized you are for cleaning fish, the better. And the way you clean and handle your fish does have an affect on the quality when you cook them."

Maxwell fishes mainly for crappie, but he said the same principles apply no matter what kind of fish you're cleaning.

A PERFECT TABLE

"I have an old, stainless steel table that I use, and I like stainless because it cleans up so easily," he said. "It's also good and flat and is easy to maneuver the fish around on. Some of the ones like they have at our state parks and marinas are really nice because they have the tables, plug-ins, water and even collection areas for the fish remains. Some of them even have grinders that make mulch out of the entrails and run them back in the lake."

One thing Maxwell does is use two big, stainless steel pans with cold water. When he filets a fish, he throws the halves in the first pan. Then, he takes them out, cuts out the rib portion and puts the finished filet in fresh water. Depending on the temperature, he always keeps them cold.

Saltwater fishermen usually have the

A big pile of fresh fish filets is a whole lot easier to manage with an organized approach to fish cleaning. **OPPOSITE:** This plastic folding table is full of slab crappie that will soon be ready for supper after being prepared on this popular type of fish cleaning setup.

same type of setup, but on a larger scale. Some marinas have almost setups almost like butcher shops. Another popular setup for small- to medium-sized fish are portable, fold-up plastic tables. Many anglers who live on the water also have tables built in to their boat docks with double sinks and city water run out to the cleaning area.

"There's not a right or wrong way to do it," he said. "Just have a good cleaning table area where you can be efficient, and keep it clean. That's the key to making the most of your fish from lake to table ... to table." ■



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Terry Denmon said MOJO decoys are made for a tough environment, but taking a little extra care of them can help them last longer and be more dependable. **BELOW:** The key elements in maintaining MOJO reliability are proper cleaning and maintenance of batteries and electrical connections.



GET 'MO' OUT OF THAT MOJO

Most hunters are tired by the end of Louisiana's 60-day duck season, and they are content to grab up all their gear, clean their guns and store the decoys and other gear in the corner of the garage or storage building.

But if you hunt with motorized duck decoys, that's a mistake, but it's not too late to fix. Take a few minutes to perform a little routine maintenance and save lots of dollars and headaches before next season begins. It will help you get "mo" out of your MOJO or other motorized decoys.

"These products operate in an environment that is tough on electrical equipment: very high moisture and greatly varying temperatures," said Terry Denmon, owner of MOJO Outdoors. "They are routinely operated in adverse outdoor conditions, then stored, even if overnight, in a heated environment. That's a formula for corrosion."

"Almost all, if not all, batteries do not

maintain life well if stored uncharged, and (they are) worsened by leaving the battery connected to the electrical system, which further depletes the battery and causes corrosion and similar connections."

And that is just during the season. Putting up motorized wing decoys for the long offseason just compounds those problems. Think of parking your truck or ATV in the barn at the end of the season and trying to start it 9 months later. Modern batteries do not recover well, if at all, if left fully depleted.

Even if you have already put up your MOJO decoys for the offseason, it's not too late to do a little routine maintenance.

Denmon said that first, fully



charge the rechargeable batteries and disconnect them from the decoys' electrical systems. For products with disposable batteries, take them out and dispose of them. If left in place, they cause corrosion at the terminals and connections that may not allow the decoy to work — even with new batteries. If there is any corrosion, clean it up immediately. Spraying the battery connectors with a corrosion resistant or rust preventive spray similar to Dielectric Grease or Corrosion X or similar products will help prevent problems.

"The original chargers for MOJO batteries were not 'smart' chargers and should not charge the battery for over 24 hours," Denmon said. "Those chargers do not monitor the status of the charge and can damage both the battery and the charger. More recent chargers are 'smart' and not as sensitive to this issue, as they will monitor the charge and only add as needed, but still should not be left charging batteries or plugged into the AC electrical system for long periods of time."

Batteries will deplete somewhat even disconnected and on the shelf, and it is good to recharge a few times during the off-season.

It's not just the batteries that need attention. The motors will inherently take on moisture and sometimes fall underwater. While they are not waterproof, this does not cause much harm, if any, but they should be run for at least 15 minutes in a dry environment. A drop or two of a light oil such as 3-in-1 placed where the motor shaft exits the motor housing will help to keep them running sound.

Cleaning the decoys' bodies also helps preserve the natural, attractive finishes. They should be stored in a shaded or dark room where the sun's rays don't contact them, causing the paint surface to fade.

If you have any issues with your MOJO, don't panic. Double check all the electrical connections.

"As a note, most of the decoys that are returned to us that do not run are just electrical connections," Denmon said. "The ones with the AA batteries, most of the time, we just spin the batteries and they run." ■



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Billy Stokes

Billy Stokes poses with a big buck he killed in the Delta National Forest.



Peyton Davis

Peyton Davis caught this 62-pound blue catfish n the Mississippi River near Port Gibson on rod and reel.



Cassin Gant

Normally a bowhunter, 16-year-old Cassin Gant decided to use her little brother's gun and killed two does and this buck all in the same week.



Jenny Payne

Jenny Payne of Rankin County killed this buck in Newton County on Jan. 3.

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Levi Dees

Levi Dees of Philadelphia got his first deer on Jan. 16, 2021, in Neshoba County. The young man made a perfect 100-yard shot. He attributes the success to the lucky hat he was wearing.



Kaylee Ott

Kaylee Ott killed her first buck at Belle Island Hunting Club near Eagle Lake on Dec. 22.



Carlie Lunceford, 10, shows off the big Panola County 10-point buck she killed on Dec. 13, 2020 in Como. It was her first deer.

Carlie Lunceford



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THE HILLS ARE ALIVE!!!

...OFTEN WITH THE SOUND OF GOBBLING TURKEYS. AND MISSISSIPPI FEATURES PLENTY OF HIGH GROUND ON WHICH HUNTERS CAN DO BATTLE WITH BIG TOMS. HERE'S HOW ONE HUNTER TRACKS THEM DOWN.

■ By Andy Douglas

MISSISSIPPI HAS HILLS;

some are gently rolling, while others are rough and rugged. Turkeys thrive there, too.

Getting close to a mature gobbler can be downright difficult, whether you're hunting the North Central Hills, the Piney Woods' rolling hills, the Appalachian Foothills, or the treacherous Loess Hills in western Mississippi that extend from the Tennessee line in Desoto County to the Louisiana line in Wilkinson County.

"Chasing turkeys in the big hills will test your stamina and isn't for the faint of heart," said Shane McCullough of Wesson, who hunts the Bluff Hills near Rodney in Jefferson County. "If you know your territory and have a little bit of skills, it can be very rewarding."

Hunting big hills and high ridges, accompanied by deep ravines and wide hollows, takes patience, woodsmanship and a little know-how. Here are a few things to consider when turkey hunting any of the Magnolia State's rugged hills.

HUNTING HIGH

A gobbler likes ridges and hills. Often, the vain baron of the woods will quietly pitch down at the best vantage point and parade with swagger, gobble with purpose and establish his daily dominance — all with great procrastination. Distant hens will readily hearken to his thundering calls across many hollows and ridges and quickly make their way to join an early morning harem.

Old-school turkey hunting tactics teach you to maneuver to a higher position than a hammering gobbler whenever possible. A hunter can see, hear and move easier from ridges and hilltops, just as a wiley tom can.

Pre-dawn listening, early morning hunts and evening hunts are better on high ground. This is where hunters will find strut zones, travel routes, places of assembly and dusting bowls. Ridges and hills are more often the locations that turkeys begin and end each day — and so should a hunter.



HUNT THEM LOW

Turkeys don't always stay in high places. A tom normally follows his harem as a spring morning progresses. They seek out lower ground in search of leftover acorns, insects and green vegetation near creeks and drainages. It's always cooler in wooded hollows and deep ravines, and the birds will tarry for hours as temperatures rise.

"I always seem to end up in a deep hollow late in the mornings. It's not on purpose; I'm simply getting as close as I can to a vocal gobbler. Wherever I hear him, that's where I go," McCullough said.

Hunters should know when stalking a tom that's gobbling in a deep hollow or ravine, his location will muffle the sound. The gobbler may be closer than he seems, especially later in the season as foliage greens.



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

TARGET SADDLES AND BENCHES >

The author took this mature gobbler from the Loess Hills in Jefferson County. **OPPOSITE:** Mississippi has hills — some are gently rolling while others are rough and rugged. Turkeys thrive in these areas.



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TARGET SADDLES AND BENCHES

Long, narrow ridges in rugged terrain will have dips or low spots called saddles. When turkeys move from one hollow to another, they will usually cross a ridge in a saddle. An old tom will often linger on top of the saddle, displaying and sounding off a few times, reiterating his dominance before continuing behind his harem.

Benches are flat spots located on the sides of hills or slopes. They can be from a few feet wide to several yards wide. Dominant toms like to post up on benches and strut; they can watch hens at lower elevations and can be seen from a distance.

Saddles and benches are excellent places for hunters to sit and call. Patience will pay off. If there's no action, stay put at these locations. It will increase your odds of encountering a tom.

THE FOOD-PLOT ADVANTAGE

Many hilltops and ridges feature logging roads and ATV trails. The more rugged the country, the truer this will be. Deer hunters make food plots along these travel corridors; in territory such as the Loess Hills, it's their only option.



Most hilltops and ridges have logging roads and ATV trails. The more rugged the country, the truer this will be. **LEFT:** This tom was taken at 11 a.m. while strutting on a 30-yard wide bench. The author was sitting beside to a large pin oak tree in a deep ravine next to a drainage.



Food plots are among the best locations to sit and wait for a gobbler in hill country. If there are turkeys around, sooner or later, they will show up.

“There’s one long ridge that I like to frequent, I bet it’s a mile long. It has two small food plots about halfway, and they’re only 50 yards apart. I sit in between them with a 25-yard shot into the edge of each one. I can’t tell you how many big gobblers I have been close to there,” McCullough said.

Calling from food plots is a good tactic; so is sitting patiently and quietly. Add a decoy or two at a strategic spot, and you may wind up toting out a big tom.

CONCLUDING

Hunting rugged country has its advantages; the hills and hollows are your friend. Use the terrain to move on unsuspecting toms. If he’s on a ridge, drop into the hollow and move closer, keeping some ground in between you and the bird. If he’s in a hollow, move back from the hilltop and walk halfway-down on the backside, close the distance, and set-up on top of the ridge or a saddle.

Pack some snacks and hunt late, or better yet, pack a lunch and stay all day if you have the time. Any day and all day — it’s great hunting in the hills. ■

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PRESSURE By David Hawkins **RELEASE?**

TURKEYS THAT HAVE BEEN HUNTED HARD PRESENT SOME SPECIAL PROBLEMS FOR MISSISSIPPI HUNTERS. HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO HELP YOU PUT YOUR TAG AROUND AN OLD TOM'S LEG.

Anticipation is a driving force for **TURKEY HUNTERS.**

Preseason planning is second only to deer season, mentally and physically. For many, turkey season never really ends.

Charlie Cox of Forest admits that the anticipation is so great he has trouble sleeping the night before opening day. As the season progresses and gobblers become more educated, sleepless nights are more likely the result of challenging situations instead of anticipation.

Nobody likes to lose any contest, but losing can be the end result of some turkey hunts. At times, a bird is more clever — educated, if you will — than the hunter. Birds learn how hunters act, and they adapt a whole host of defenses to trick human predators.

These are pressured birds that have seen and heard it all.

It would be great if every turkey hunt had a successful ending, but that just ain't so. Successful hunts seen on television make it look easy, and birds appear predictable. Many of those shows are produced by companies that want you to buy a product or service. Truth be known, a great deal of video is left on the "cutting room floor."

The Eastern wild turkey has been called the smartest of the

turkey species. As birds go, they have large heads and brains and excellent senses of sight and hearing. They can perceive movement and process that information with amazing speed. Now, the comparison of the predator and the prey: turkeys assemble and remember sensory input. Hunters need to assemble and remember the same input.

Long-range rifle shooters are often seen with cheat sheets showing windage and elevation settings to help them make an accurate shot. For a turkey hunter to try to write down every if-then option would look like Sean Payton guiding the New Orleans Saints with his playlist — but that's just what a hunter needs to do.

For example, you settle down in your listening location in anticipation of hearing a gobble. You know these facts: it's April, hens have begun nesting, a perfect morning is shaping up and soon the morning music of the dawning woods starts to proclaim a new day. You are on public land, so you know the gobbler you're targeting has likely been called to before. You want to wait until he gobbles so you can close the distance before you set up to call.



Well-positioned decoys can be one step turkey hunters take to outsmart an old, wily turkey gobbler who will be tough to kill.

From the creek bottom comes a barred owl asking “Who cooks for you?” Your prey responds; you start to make adjustments in your location. A woodpecker drills against a hollow tree, likewise trying to attract a mate, and your gobbler shouts, “Is that all you got woodpecker?” as he shakes the leaves with a thunderous gobble.

You make it to an old logging road on the same ridge as the roosted gobbler. Fanny cushion in place, you settle in to call. Your imitation of a roosting hen’s limb yelp, announcing to the world that everything is good, sets the gobbler on fire, and he double gobbles. Other hens in the area open up, and you try to cut in on their desire with a call of your own. This scene continues until the hens hop from their roosts, cackle, and with a distinctive fly-down wingbeat, stretch and preen, purring and clucking all the while.

You see the gobbler pitch out and sail into the road you’re watching. The hens begin to amble in his direction, and together, they disappear around a curve in the logging road. Fifty more yards and he would have landed in your lap, the hens behind you — or you might have busted the whole roost. At this point, you have a few choices:

- Sit tight and perhaps a subordinate gobbler will respond to your calls hoping to steal a lover from the gobbling dominate bird.
- Wait long enough, and the dominate bird will finish with his hens and come looking for the one he left behind. Speaking of behind, yours may be pretty numb by now, and a relocation may suit you.
- You might hop-scotch ahead of the flock and get to a favorite bugging area before they arrive. Get a decoy up and toss some tender purrs and yelps at the approaching troupe. All this time,



Hiding in the right place and making the proper calls for the situation are musts for hunters dealing with toms that have had their share of schooling.

you have to be cognizant that long periods of silence must be endured. Just as you heard the turkeys, so did bobcats, coyotes and other hunters.

As the hens all head off to lay, the gobbler will replenish his strength with insect and plant life. But don't be disheartened; you have added to the treasure trove of information — but so has the turkey. Tomorrow, the gobbler will again be near that flock of hens. He will again gobble, listen, look and learn. You must do the same things you did today: listen, look and learn.

"Persistence is the one best piece of advice I can offer those who hunt pressured birds," said Preston Pittman, a legendary Mississippi

turkey hunter. "I don't know anyone who has all the answers to proper technique when turkey hunting. Birds are just as different as the people who hunt them. But persistence is always the key to success."

Pittman said the difference in birds can work in the hunter's favor. Since no two hens sound the same, hunters can get away with some not-so-perfect calling, as long as the cadence, and call used fit the situation. Naturally, you don't use a fly-down cackle at noon in the edge of a meadow where a kee-kee may far more appropriate. Nor is a cutting call the one to use when other birds are quiet. These are things hunters can learn by reading books, magazines and attending seminars, but the best teacher is time in the turkey woods.



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IMPOSTERS

Decoys can fool pressured birds, especially in the afternoon when mature gobblers feel less threatened. But remember, the mature veteran of many hunts knows that a hen is supposed to come to him, or at least meet him halfway. So a pretty model posed in the edge of a field calling aggressively just doesn't ring true. Placing a hen decoy in a squatted, submissive pose with a jake decoy, using purrs and clucks, is much better for closing the deal. No matter how smart, a mature tom with raging hormones has trouble managing his anger at a jake taking a hen he wants.

A gobbler fan and a hen decoy will serve the same purpose. A little breeze will cause a fan to twist and flirt, adding another dimension to the illusion created by the hunter. The added, life-like movement will go a long way in getting a pressured bird to commit.

There is also the old fade-away trick. A jake gobble and purring in the woods at the edge of the field is an invitation to test an old bird's dominance. More easily done by two hunters, the calling hunter can fade or sound as if he is moving away from the field edge, taking the hen with him. Hell hath no fury like a tom turkey scorned.

Afternoon setups in meadows or fields are good locations. Turkeys will also frequent areas recently subjected to prescribed burns. They seem to have a taste for roasted grasshoppers. The ashes also provide great opportunities for dusting.

KEEP IT SOFT

Jim Spencer, the author of *Bad Birds*, *Bad Birds 2*, and *Turkey Digest* has spent countless hours in the turkey woods in every state that offers turkey hunting. He is a proponent of calling seldom and softly.

"Once a gobbler has answered your yelp, put your call down and let that gobbler come to you," Spencer said. "The more you listen, the more you learn. If your hearing just isn't what it once was, there are all sorts of hearing aides and amplification devices. They are worth their weight in gold."

“**““** Many an old turkey has added to his years and died of natural causes because hunters didn't know when to shut-up.

Spencer said most crusty, old turkey hunters will turn up their noses at the use of mindfulness in the hunting woods, but that's just what you need to do. Be aware of every sound, not just what grabs your attention, Listen to every sound and understand what it is and what it means being made.

"As you do this, you'll hear soft purrs and clucks that when

Richard Latham of Scott County is certainly happy about this gobbler that he called into range after a long hunt.



used in a decoy set will put old, smart birds at ease," Spencer said. "Many an old turkey has added to his years and died of natural causes because hunters didn't know when to shut-up."

WALK AWAY

Every turkey hunter has a bird that bested him. Maybe you have wasted the better part of the season trying to kill a gobbler that was just better at living than dying. Mine was a bird we named "Queer Bird" because of his odd behavior. He never gobbled, ever. Charlie Cox and I saw him a number of times, always just out of range at 50 to 60 yards, before the days of TSS shot and super-tight choke tubes.

We roosted him one afternoon and were on him the next day, gobblers sounded off in the distance. Queer Bird never made a peep. In the weeks that followed, we discovered he did respond to calling, but he never made the commitment to the caller; decoys didn't help. We patterned his roost habitats and identified him by three, white-tipped tail feathers. Maybe he had been called and shot; perhaps he had a physical defect that prevented him from making a sound. But Queer Bird beat us. ■



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

HAS WINTER'S ICE STORM AFFECTED MISSISSIPPI TURKEYS?

David Hawkins



Other than possible habitat damage that hasn't been reported, the late-winter ice storm that affected Mississippi probably didn't negatively affect the Magnolia State's turkeys.

What is or has been the effect of this winter's freezing weather and ice storm on our turkey population?

"At present I do not have anything to gauge how (late February's) weather will have affects turkeys," said Adam Butler, the turkey program leader for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. "My guess is that they were not adversely affected in a major way. Wild turkeys persist all the way into southern Canada, and I have personally run into turkeys while ruffed grouse hunting in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, so they obviously do well in environments where (that kind of) weather would be merely shaken off as mild, mid-winter days.

"Any more longer-term effects would be linked to damage done to forest canopies and the subsequent effect those could have on forest understories, but I honestly have not yet really

heard reports of how bad such damage might have been. I know the '94 ice storm was significant enough to alter the structure of many forest under/mid-stories in areas of central and north Mississippi, but again, I haven't really heard one way or another as to whether damage from this storm is in that same category or not." ■

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Jerry Dilsaver

OVEN BAG TURKEY BREAST

HERE'S A WAY TO MAKE THAT TOUGH, OLD TOM A LITTLE MORE PALATABLE

Many regular readers look to April for a recipe for wild turkey. You might be disappointed that it doesn't come from my buddy Robert Cardwell this year, but I think this recipe of mine for cooking one side of a wild turkey breast will be one you'll love.

Sometimes, wild turkey breasts can get dry and even a little chewy, especially if you manage to outsmart an elder-statesman longbeard. This recipe is any easy way to prevent drying out, and it doesn't require a lot of actual prep time. Eliminating issues without adding prep time or difficulty is one of the purposes of this column. This recipe hits those marks and tastes good, too.

April has finally arrived, and sportsmen across the Southeast are beginning to creep through the woods searching for Mr. Tom Turkey. Fishing is kicking off, too, with plenty of opportunities, but turkey season is only open for a month or so, and each year, we try to have a turkey recipe for successful hunters to enjoy the bounty of their hunt.

Turkeys are a wildlife success story. They were missing from many areas as recently as 30 years ago, but reintroduction of birds and waiting to see that flock re-established before opening areas to hunting has allowed flocks of birds to become established in many states.

Turkey hunting has grown exponentially as opportunities have increased. As they have flourished, April has become a special time for hunters.

Not only are turkeys the largest non-migratory game birds in the Southeast, they are delicious and can be prepared in a variety of ways. Younger turkeys are typically more tender, but older turkeys — wily, smarter and much more difficult to coax within

Wrapped up in all kinds of goodies — sliced apples, onions, bacon and asparagus, this wild turkey breast, in its new home in an oven bag, is ready for heat.



Jerry Dilsaver

shotgun range — can be a bit tough on the table. That's where this recipe shines.

This is a very simple and easy way to prepare a single breast, and works well with all turkeys. However, it may be just the thing to make one of those tough, old birds a welcome addition to the table. The one in the photos was a wily old bird, at least 4 years old, and even my wife commented on how tasty and tender he was.

If you aren't aware of the magic of oven bags, this is a great example of how well they work. The big secret of oven bags is keeping the meat moist, which helps keep it tender. This is best served right out of the bag, and it often dries out and may toughen up a bit if allowed to cool. If there are leftovers, don't try to warm them, make turkey salad. ■

OVEN BAG TURKEY BREAST

I may get shot for saying this, but that young turkey with a barely legal beard is going to be most tender on your table. It's true, but sometimes they can act so stupid there isn't much challenge in luring one within range. I can't speak for all hunters, but as much as I enjoy eating game, I enjoy the challenge of outsmarting it too. I let a bunch of small deer and turkeys walk every year.

My personal best turkey is a big, old tom that weighed 23½ pounds, with a 10¾-inch beard and 1½-inch spurs. I remember every detail of that hunt, and I remember the first time I bit into a piece of that bird, which was as tough on the table as he had been in the wild. I chewed my way through a small serving and made some finely chopped turkey salad a couple of hours later. This began a quest to find a better way to prepare those older, wiser and tougher toms.

I tried a bunch of things, including a pressure cooker, but my success was limited. One day, talking with an old goose-hunting buddy, he asked whether I still ate as much duck and goose as I did in college, and the light bulb appeared over my head. I was a late-bloomer and an older, non-traditional college student. My winter college diet wasn't tons of fast food, but a lot of ducks, geese most years. I skinned them rather than plucking them and cooked them in an oven bag so they wouldn't dry out and get tough.

PREPARATION:

Mix the dressing and wine and use a Zip Lock bag; marinate the turkey breast in it for at least 12 and up to 24 hours. Shake the bag and turn the breast several times. Remove the breast, allow it to drain and sprinkle it all over with the Tony Chachere's seasoning. Less seasoning will be milder, and more seasoning will be spicier.

Cut the onion and apple into slices and trim the asparagus. After removing the turkey breast, marinate the onion and asparagus for 30 minutes to an hour, turning the bag several times.

Pre-heat the oven to 350. Put the tablespoon of flour in the oven bag and shake it well, then lay it in a 9-inch baking pan. Remove the onions and asparagus from the marinade and use them to cover the bottom of the oven bag. Melt the butter and mix it with the olive oil and pour half over the vegetables. Place the breast on the vegetables in the oven bag. Pour the rest of the olive oil and butter over the turkey breast. Lay the apple slices on and around the breast. Lay

the bacon slices across the apple slices on the breast. Seal the bag and cut several small vent holes in the top to allow steam to escape.

Bake at 350 degrees for approximately 75 to 90 minutes. Allow to sit for several minutes. Open and serve immediately.

Serve the breast and vegetables together. A baked potato or baked sweet potato is a good addition, as is beginning the meal with a green salad or lettuce wedge. I like to save my salad for dessert, but those who like sweets should find a warm piece of apple pie, with or without a scoop of ice cream, is an excellent way to complete the meal. ■

It was a great memory, and I soon found that cooking in an oven bag works well with wild turkey. I use a small oven bag and cook a breast at a time and save the legs, back, neck and other pieces for soups, stews and pot pies. Every now and then, an old bird still holds on to some of its toughness, but this works well most of the time.

I use sangria, specifically Duplin Winery White Sangria. Another wine will probably work fairly well, but I believe the citrus juices in the sangria and the vinegar in the Zesty Italian dressing combine to penetrate and tenderize the breast. This may not be important with a younger, bird, but if you're cooking a tough, old gobbler, anything that helps tenderize it is welcome.

Cooking the vegetables in the bag seems to help, too. Regular readers know I encourage experimenting and adding or removing things to suit your personal tastes. You can vary everything but the apple slices. I don't understand exactly how they react with this, but it's definitely different without them.

Give this a try the next time you want to cook a wild turkey breast. It works for young and old turkeys alike, and so far, all the folks that have eaten mine like it. I believe you will too.

Enjoy! ■

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INGREDIENTS:

1 wild turkey breast

2 slices bacon

¾ cup Zesty Italian salad dressing

¾ cup white Sangria

1 small, sweet onion

1 bundle fresh asparagus

1 apple

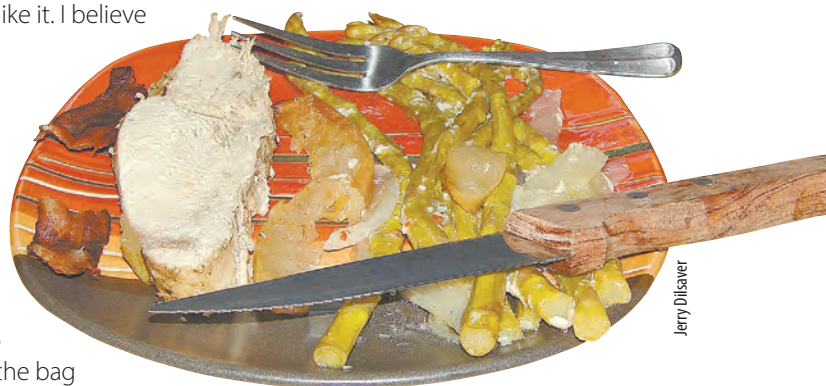
Tony Chachere's Original Creole Seasoning (Substitute Cavender's All Purpose Greek Seasoning for a milder taste)

½ stick butter

½ cup olive oil

1 tbsp flour

1 small oven bag



Jerry Dilsaver

The breast of a wild turkey, even an old, tough one, can make you forget any store-bought gobbler you've ever eaten.



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.

HUNTING SEASONS

SPECIES	SEASON DATES	BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT
Doves	Sept. 5-Oct. 18 (n), Sept. 5-20 (s) Oct. 24-Nov. 21 (n), Oct. 10-Nov. 8 (s) Dec. 23-Jan. 8 (n), Dec. 19-Jan. 31 (s)	15	45
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/Bobct	Oct. 1-Oct. 31 (food/sport) Nov. 1-Feb. 28 (food/sport/pelt)	5/day, 8/party No limit	
Rails			
King & Clapper	Sept. 1-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 Nov. 27-29, Dec. 4-6 Dec. 9-Jan. 31	6 6
Geese	Sept. 1-30 Nov. 13-29, Dec. 4-6, Dec. 9-Jan. 31	5 Canada 3, Brant 1 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 Nov. 9-20 (antlerless primitive weapon) Jan. 21-31 (archery/primitive weapon)	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 21-Dec. 1 (dogs) Dec. 16-23 (no dogs) Dec. 24-Jan. 20(dogs) Nov. 7-20 (youth)
East Central	Oct. 1-Nov. 20 Nov. 9-20 (antlerless primitive weapon) Jan. 21-31 (archery-primitive weapon)	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 21-Dec. 1 (dogs) Dec. 16-23 (no dogs) Dec. 24-Jan. 20(dogs) Nov. 7-20 (youth)
Southwest	Oct. 1-Nov. 20 Nov. 9-20 (antlerless primitive weapon) Jan. 21-31 (archery-primitive weapon)	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 21-Dec. 1 (dogs) Dec. 16-23 (no dogs) Dec. 24-Jan.20(dogs) Nov. 7-Jan. 20 (youth)
Southeast	Oct. 15-Nov. 20 Jan. 21-31 (either-sex arch-primitive) Feb. 1-15 (archery-primitive bucks only)	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 21-Dec. 1 (dogs) Dec. 16-23 (no dogs) Dec. 24-Jan. 20(dogs) Nov. 21-Feb. 15 (yth)
Delta/South Delta	Oct. 1-Nov. 20 Nov. 9-20 (antlerless primitive weapon) Jan. 21-31 (archery primitive weapon)	Dec. 2-15	Nov. 21-Jan. 1 (dogs) Dec. 16-23 (no dogs) Dec. 24-Jan. 22(dogs) Nov. 7-Jan. 20 (youth)

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/ mahogany/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
Bigeye tuna	27" CFL@	no limit
Tripletail	18" TL	3/day
Spotted sea trout (speckled)	15"	15/day

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

FRESHWATER

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

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

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

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

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

* Possession of certain species of sharks is prohibited.



■ By Bobby Cleveland

APPROACHING SPAWN PUTS TROUT ON THE FEED, ESPECIALLY AROUND MISSISSIPPI SOUND'S BARRIER ISLANDS. DON'T MISS IT.

APRIL SPECKS ARE FOOLS

Tommy Sutton turned off the big motor on his 24-foot Blue Wave, which started drifting through the shallows south of Cat Island on the western edge of the Mississippi Sound. He pointed to his electronics and smiled.

“Look, 79-degree water, and at sunrise,” said Sutton, a veteran angler originally from Columbia but now living in Slidell, La. “Pretty good for mid-April, and you know it will top 80 degrees when the sun’s been on it. Last night was the full moon, so the specks should be spawning — or at least getting ready to.”

Quickly, Sutton had a rod in his hand and the trolling motor in the water. He gauged the wind direction and turned the boat to set up a drift line parallel to the island.

“Grass mats are all over in here; we just have to drift until we find one holding trout,” Sutton said. “We’ll work that patch of grass and keep doing the same pattern all day, and I bet we find ‘em stacked on a couple of mats.”

The first mat provided our first two bites, but the trout were undersized, so we kept drifting.

“The next one up here about 100 yards is the one we killed them on last year in early May, big fat sows,” he said.

“Remember that day? Between here and Flat-bottom Key we limited out in a couple of hours.”

Bam!

“Tom, I got one,” I hollered. “Look at my line and throw it past there; I haven’t moved it 10 feet. Throw right behind where it meets the water.”

His grub landed just feet from where mine had been eaten. Bam!

“I’m poling down, ‘cause we got a double,” Sutton said, holding his rod high with one hand and fumbling with the Power Pole fob around his neck. We quickly boated the first two keepers of what would become a fine box of trout.

For two hours, we drifted from grass mat to grass mat and slick to slick, and we hooked up on a lot of good trout. We would put the anchor poles down and work each mat or slick until we were satisfied, then move on.

We kept mostly male trout, which were drumming in our hands, and a few of the smaller but legal females up to 2 or 3 pounds. The big, fat females, anything over 3 pounds, we turned loose.

For us, it’s a matter of taste and biology. The smaller fish taste better to us, and the bigger fish are the backbone of the fishery. Older sows, 20 inches and up, are the most prolific spawners, and biologists urge their release.

BIOLOGY: ABOUT THE SPAWN >

BIOLOGY: ABOUT THE SPAWN

Speckled trout begin spawning in mid-April when surface temperatures get to 78 degrees or higher and stay there. The spawn peaks in May and June and ends in mid-September, according to the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Research Lab in Ocean Springs. Specks will spawn as often as every four days in the best habitat, which includes a salinity level of about 25 parts per thousand (ppt). They'll spawn at least once every 14 days in less-than-prime habitat.

Big females produce as many as 10 to 15 times more eggs per spawning event than do smaller ones, according to the GCRL. A female 10 to 11 inches long has reached spawning maturity.

There is evidence that trout 20 inches and up can produce more than a million eggs per spawning event and up to 15 million in a year in both Louisiana and Texas, but those numbers are lower in Mississippi. GCRL statistics for Mississippi show an average of 153,000 eggs per event for an 18- to 20-inch fish that's 4 years old and 350,000 per event for a fish longer than 20 inches that's 5 years old, with an average of about 5 million per year.

Those statistics make it clear that the catch-and-release of big, female speckled trout is a good idea for the sake of the fishery.

Trout eggs are miniscule, the size of a grain of sand, and each has a high oil content that gives it buoyancy, allowing it to float in saltwater. That is why a moderately high salinity level — 25 ppt is ideal— is required for a spawn, and why most spawning occurs outside of bays along barrier islands or natural shorelines. In bays, what spawning does take place is extremely close to the mouth of the bay closest to open water where salinity levels far exceed the levels further up into bays.

Specks are broadcast spawners; they don't build nests, and neither sex hangs around after the eggs and milt (male sperm) are expressed and mixed as they float below the surface. Eggs hatch within 18 to 24 hours, and the miniscule fry immediately seek cover like grass or shell bottoms. They grow fast, up to 2 inches in 6 to 8 weeks and to 10 inches in a year.

Specks spawn in schools. Males make a thumping noise — drumming — to attract females and encourage them to

Big female trout are the key to a successful spawn; they regularly produce 10 times more eggs than smaller females.



An influx of freshwater, like those in recent years from the Bonnet Carre Spillway, can change water salinity and move speckled trout to different areas.

drop eggs. The thumping can often be heard by fishermen, especially those in an aluminum boat. The mass spawning puts more milt and eggs in the water, yielding a higher level of fertilization success.

Buoyancy is important so the milt can completely surround each egg and is a reason why specks target forage fish with a high oil content like mullet and menhaden during the pre-spawn and spawn. Fishermen love to see an oil slick pop up on the surface in a spawning area and will immediately move to fish that area.

Trout mostly spawn at night, from sunset to about midnight, and since spawning is a high-energy task, they feed heavily the next morning, which is why a peak time to fish is sunrise to about 9 a.m. during the full and new moon periods.

APRIL ACTION: 'IT'S CRAZY'

Guide Sonny Schindler has fond memories of April trout action. Those memories are important, because in recent years, the influx of freshwater from the opening of the Bonnet Carre Spillway to alleviate high water in the Mississippi River west of New Orleans has hurt early season trout fishing in his primary area on the west end of the Mississippi Sound.

"Two straight years and a few others in the last decade, I've had to rely on redfish due to the low salinity in April," said Schindler, who operates the multi-boat fleet that is Shore Thing Charters in Bay St. Louis. "But I can clearly remember the many great days in April that we enjoyed with specks.



"When everything is right, it's crazy."

Everything being "right" begins with salinity levels, continues with warm weather and bait-filled waters and closed gates at Bonnet Carre.

Full or new moons are the final key.



Bobby Cleveland has covered sports in Mississippi for over 40 years. A native of Hattiesburg and graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, Cleveland lives on Ross Barnett Reservoir near Jackson with his wife Pam. He can be reached at bobbyc7754@yahoo.com.



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"April starts in the prespawn period, when it's kind of like the fish realize, 'Hey, guys, we got to get busy eating because we're fixing to have a lot of work to do,'" Schindler said. "I'm looking for clean, salty water with some grass or shell bottoms, and in Mississippi, that means the barrier islands. We're very fortunate to have that habitat.

"We concentrate more on Cat Island, but the other islands like Ship, Petit Bois and Horn are just as good. But why would we run over productive water to get to others? Both the north and south sides of the barrier islands have spawning potential."

Once at his destination, Schindler looks for surface activity.

"I look for bait flicking or gamefish hitting on the surface and slicks, boy, I love to fish the slicks," he said. "There's only one reason for a slick to appear. Something is feeding on something nearby. I depend on them all year, but particularly in the spring. If you're around grass or an oyster bed and a slick pops up, man, you are in the money.

"Your better bites are almost always on the full and new moon cycles, one or two days on either side. A calm day on a full moon in April — it just doesn't get any better. It's crazy."

On those days, the bait or lure really doesn't matter.

"They'll hit anything," Schindler said. "Normally, I'm an 'Elephant-will-eat-a-peanut' sort of guy, meaning I like to throw small baits. Look, I cut fish open nearly every day and see what they eat, and I'm telling you, it's rare that you see big prey in trout. The exception is April or any spawn or prespawn feeding frenzy. A 12-inch trout will try to eat a Zara Spook. It's crazy.

"My No. 1 choice as a charter captain during the spawn is a healthy croaker under a Boat Monkey float with a split-shot to keep it down. Around grass, you have to have the float. The split-shot just irritates and aggravates the croaker and makes him cut up and croak more often, and that improves your chances of getting bit.





“The last two years have been tough in the marsh, again because of the freshwater influx from Bonnet Carre through lakes Ponchartrain and Borgne,” he said. “But some of my most memorable April trips have been in the (Biloxi Marsh). It can be crazy.

“I remember this one morning, on a full moon...”

Memories of such days fill the minds of all coastal fishermen. To make one of your own this April take note: The full moon is scheduled for April 27. ■

To contact guide Sonny Schindler, call 228-342-2206 or visit www.shorethingcharters.com. To contact guide Bobby Chouest, call 985-637-3979.

**MARSH MAN
MASSON >**

Shrimp or soft-plastic shrimp may produce a lot of speckled trout on a regular basis, but bigger trout are happier eating a croaker. **OPPOSITE:** The full and new moons in April will bring big trout in Mississippi Sound out to eat.

“My No. 2 choice is healthy, live shrimp, then I go to the soft plastics. I have no problem with a guy who wants to throw a top-water or a suspending jerkbait, and I know they’ll work, but as a charter captain, I’m not always working with clients who have the expertise to work those baits.”

Bobby Chouest of Bon Chance Charters in Grand Isle, La., was the first guide to introduce me to croakers and spawning trout, pulling up in front of Elmer’s Island.

“You want big trout, you’ve got to have croakers,” Chouest said. “You can catch a lot of trout on a lot of baits but if you want a big trout, a gator trout, you can’t beat a croaker.”

Chouest then proceeded to prove it by helping his four clients put 100 trout, all bigger than 18 inches, in his huge fish box. Every one was caught on a croaker in the surf, over a shell bottom in a rocky area, on a Carolina rig with a weight about a foot above the hook. Two 7-pounders were released.

“He was right when he told you that,” Schindler said. “Big trout like big croakers. There’s no doubt about it. You can probably catch more fish on shrimp, but when targeting big fish, you want croakers. Live bait, whether it’s croakers or shrimp, stacks the deck in your favor.”

Schindler, who ran charters out of Venice, La., before returning to his native Mississippi, often fishes the Biloxi Marsh across the border in Louisiana at the far west end of the Mississippi Sound.

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MARSH MAN MASSON

Todd Masson



SPRING FISHING: TIME FOR HARD PLASTICS

TWITCH BAITS TAKE CENTER STAGE WHEN APRIL ARRIVES AND BIG TROUT ARE ON THE PROWL

I've fished for speckled trout with nearly every style of lure invented. If it looks like a mullet, pogie, glass minnow, cocaho or shrimp, it's probably spent some time tied to the end of my line.

But there's one thing I've always wondered: why do specks hit hard-plastics so much harder than soft-plastics? It's almost universal. If you're working a twitch bait like a MirrOdine, or a jerkbait like a Rapala X-Rap, one moment you'll be minding your business, waiting to make your next twitch, and the next, the rod will nearly be yanked from your unsuspecting hands.

It's always such a thrill that it makes fishing hard-plastics even more desirable, and that's especially true this time of year, when they're so productive.

On spring mornings, when he's out fishing for fun, Capt. Justin Bowles of JB Fishing Charters has a hard time keeping topwater lures locked up in his tackle sleeves, particularly when water temperatures are in the 70s. But when

temperatures are down or the sun is up, he has a tendency to reach for subsurface plugs.

"In spring, fishing grassy, flat areas, I prefer to use non-lipped hard-plastic twitch baits, like a MirrOdine (or) a MirrOdine XL; those are the two main ones I throw," he said. "I'll also throw the SoftDine, and then if it's more shallow, I'd throw the regular Corky."

NO. 1 SITUATION

These lures can certainly produce anywhere, from bayous to bays, but there's a specific scenario that makes subsurface twitch baits irresistible to Bowles in the spring. It's one that's prevalent in the eastern Pontchartrain Basin area that Bowles fishes.

"I just look for submerged grass over a 3- to 5-foot flat, and of course, look for bait in the area and decently clean water," he said.

When he finds that, he breaks out his hard-plastic trout tackle.

"I normally fish them on a light-powered rod with 20- to 30-pound braid (and) 12- to 15-pound fluorocarbon leader," he said. "I cast it out, let it sink and then twitch it with long pauses in between. If I start picking up grass or hitting bottom, I'll speed it up."

"I do two twitches and then a pause — a pretty long pause if it's not too windy and making you drift too fast. The slower that you can fish those baits, the better, especially if you want big fish."

Also, stealth is CRITICAL when fishing this way. Speckled trout in the spring are much less likely to stick around if they know you're there. The fish that were so oblivious to crowd noise in the winter simply won't abide it in the spring.



A former editor of *Louisiana Sportsman*, Todd Masson has published the *Marsh Man Masson* YouTube channel since 2017.

“If you’re fishing over a flat, you want to be drifting,” Bowles said. “If the wind’s blowing you too fast, I’d use a drift sock to slow myself down. Otherwise, I’d Power-Pole down and fan-cast the area, and then drift a little further and Power-Pole down again.”

“If you’re trying to work the trolling motor and are fighting the wind or the current, all you’re doing is making noise, and you’re pushing those big fish farther and farther away from you. At that point, you’re just chasing your tail.”

That’s especially true if you’re looking for fish to take pictures of and post on social media. Every speckled trout angler has caught school trout on hard-plastic baits, but those who fish them regularly aren’t necessarily interested in numbers.

“You’re not really fishing for limits of fish but fishing for quality fish, so you want to just keep covering water,” Bowles said. “It’s usually not like you pick up 10 to 20 fish in one stop fishing these lures.”

In recent weeks, Bowles has caught specks up to 23 inches on hard-plastic baits. That size should increase this month. ■



Capt. Justin Bowles fishes hard-plastic lures over grass flats for large speckled trout.

An advertisement for Okuma DTR Custom Offshore Rods. The background shows a fisherman in a purple long-sleeved shirt and sunglasses, smiling while holding a fishing rod. On the left, several fishing rods are displayed vertically. The text 'DTR Custom OFFSHORE RODS' is prominently displayed in the upper left. Below it, the phrase 'INSPIRED BY THE GULF' is written in large, bold letters. A small blue horizontal line is above the text. At the bottom left, the Okuma logo and website are visible. At the bottom right, there is text about the rods' design and availability.

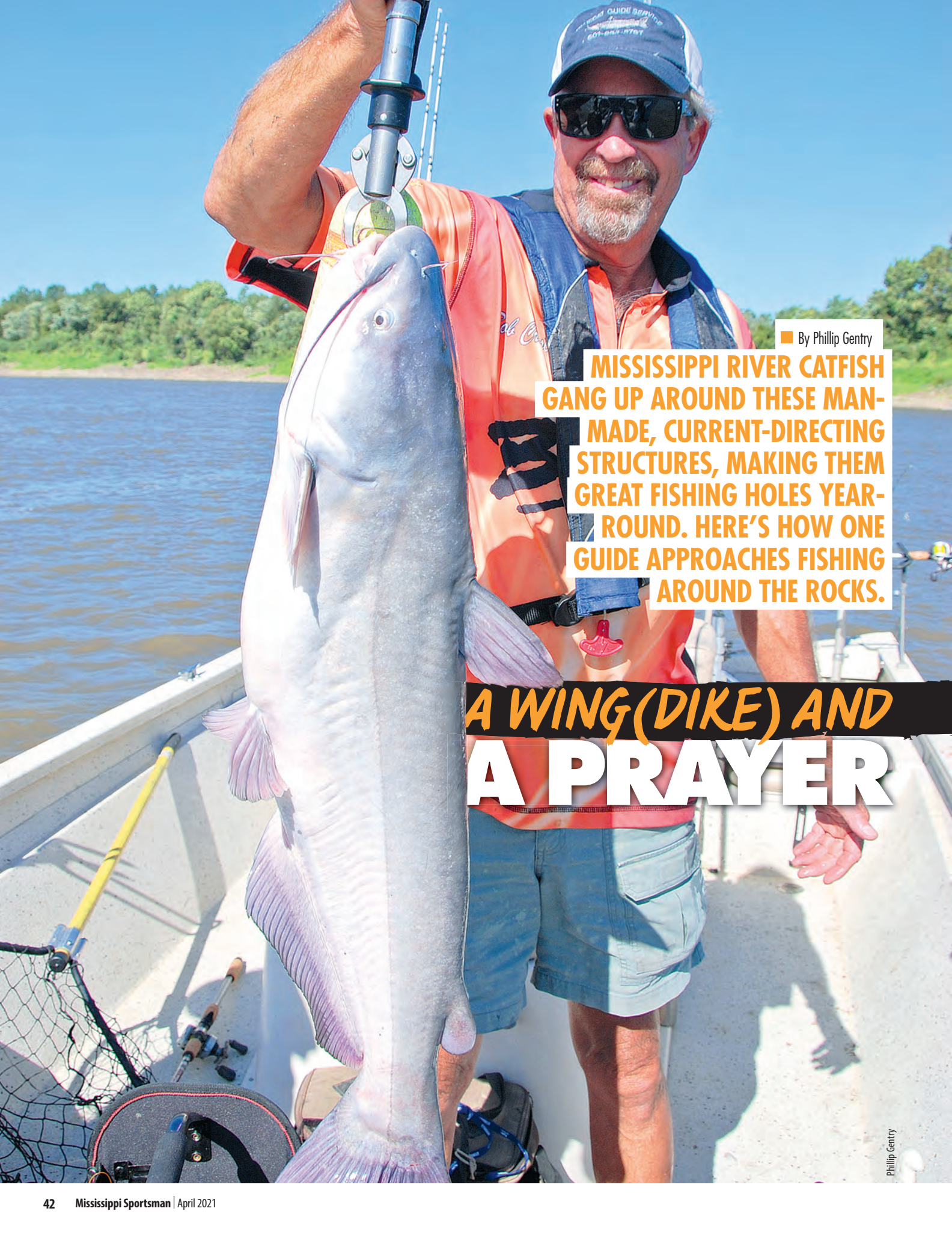
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■ By Phillip Gentry

**MISSISSIPPI RIVER CATFISH
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GREAT FISHING HOLES YEAR-
ROUND. HERE'S HOW ONE
GUIDE APPROACHES FISHING
AROUND THE ROCKS.**

A WING (DIKE) AND A PRAYER

Phillip Gentry

One of the keys to catching big catfish from the Mississippi River is knowing

WHERE TO FIND THEM.

Almost any time of year, big catfish will lay up in deep holes, and one of the easiest, most-consistent places to find good catfish holes is around a wing dike.

Wing dikes are plentiful and found up and down many large rivers. Sometimes called a wing dam, a wing dike is a man-made barrier that, unlike a conventional dam, only extends part of the way into a river. These structures force water into a fast-moving center channel that reduces the rate of sediment accumulation, while slowing water flow near the bank.

Guide Bob Crosby of Madison focuses much of his fishing efforts on deep holes, often referred to as scour holes, that are created by wing dikes in the Mississippi River. These wash-outs typically have plenty of deep water, anywhere from 40 to more than 100 feet depending on the river stage, and some structure inside the hole that will provide a current break for catfish to hold behind.

“You don’t just pull up to a dike and start fishing,” Crosby said. “You have to learn to read a dike and the water moving around it to determine if it will hold catfish.”

Crosby said there are two phases to fishing wing dikes: when the structure is underwater and when it is out of the

water. Typically in the spring, all of the dikes on the Mississippi River will be submerged, depending on the rainfall and snow melt upriver. He spends a lot of time during the fall riding the river looking for potential new areas and making notes about what he sees.

“You need to do some scouting to know when a particular dike goes under the water,” said Crosby. “That will change the current around it and how it fishes.”

When the dike is out of the water, Crosby immediately goes to the deep end and looks for currents, especially eddy currents, which move in a big circle around the end of the structure is much better than a straight-line current. If a dike has a good eddy current, you’ll see a lot of foam and debris around the end of the dike.



In situations where the current will not allow his trolling motor to keep his boat from swinging, guide Bob Crosby will suspend baits from rod holders and either let the boat swirl in the current or bump around with the trolling motor.

Philip Gentry

When the structures are underwater, Crosby looks for holes at either end: one between the bank and the rocks and one at the deep end of the dike. He often prefers the inland side if the water and current is moving too fast out in the river.

“Never try to motor over a dike; most of them are marked with buoys, but you can’t trust that,” he said. “Most charts will have them on the maps, and you also can tell by looking at the water. Most of the dikes are 100 feet or so long, but I’ve hardly ever found any decent fish anywhere except on the ends. I just stay away from the middle areas.”

Crosby is looking for the deepest holes he can find, but something like a washed-out tree or rock pile that has been exposed in the scour hole is often a gold mine.

When setting up, boat positioning is critical. Not too many years ago, how and where to anchor would have been a huge factor, but with a trolling motor with a positioning sensor that holds the boat in place, Crosby no longer has a reason to anchor and fish.

“Anchoring in the Mississippi River is tough business and probably the most dangerous thing you can do,” he said. “I have a Minn Kota trolling motor that has a feature called spot-lock.

It will hold the boat in position with a lot less hassle and backache than fooling with ropes and anchors.”

Crosby will give each scour hole about 30 minutes to produce. He may move around the hole once or twice if it’s a big one, but he’s usually made up his mind on the first setup.

Crosby will motor into a scour hole using his electronics to look for catfish before he puts out rods. He said a good, deep hole with circular current will almost always hold some fish, but he wants to make sure he’s marked one or two big arches before he wets a line.

“The spot-lock works off the position of the trolling motor,” he said. “If I mark some good fish, I’m hoping that the boat will settle out near the edge of the current so it stays straight and the trolling motor is holding me into the edge of the current. Then, I can fan-cast rods to different locations in the hole, just as if I was tied down with an anchor.”

In a steady position, Crosby will fan-cast 8-foot B’n’M heavy action catfish rods around the boat. The baits are on the bottom, held in place by a sliding sinker rig with 6 to 8 ounces of weight on a short leader. He transitions from his 65-pound braided line to a 50-pound monofilament leader via a stout barrel swivel. The business end of the mono holds an 8/0 Octopus circle hook.

The other option is either bumping around the hole using the jog feature on his trolling motor or, in the event the boat won’t position without the stern swinging around is to fish the hole with baits suspended directly under the boat.

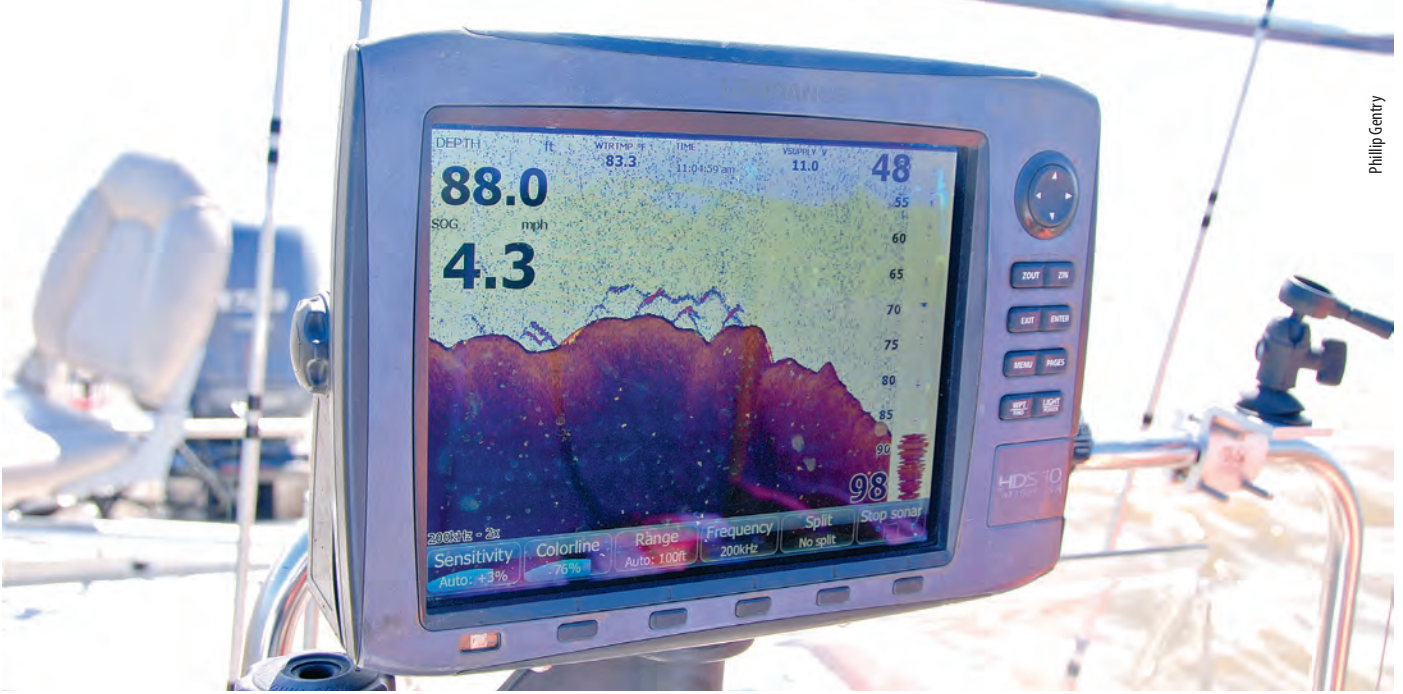
“B’n’M makes a 10-foot, Silver Cat Magnum rod that works great for helping spread baits out when you are fishing suspended,” he said. “I will stagger baits deep, just a couple turns off the bottom, and shallow, maybe about halfway to the bottom.”

In this situation, Crosby will double or even triple the size of his weights to keep the line vertical in the water column. He has installed heavy duty rod holders around the perimeter of his boat, which gives him the



Phillip Gentry

Favored baits for river catfish include skipjack herring fished on a bottom rig or suspended in the water column.



Before he soaks a bait, Crosby will graph the scour hole he intends to fish to confirm the presence of catfish in the location.

option of spreading his lines out even more to keep them from tangling.

The bait of choice is fresh-caught skipjack herring. The bait is often caught and preserved by several methods including vacuum sealing and freezing. Crosby points out that gizzard shad are also a good choice, and one bait that is rapidly gaining in popularity is Asian carp, an invasive species that has wreaked havoc on some inland fisheries ecosystems. ■

You can contact Bob Crosby of Blue Cat Guide Service at 601-953-5767 or www.bluecatguideservice.com.



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.

WING DIKES; WHAT'S THE POINT? ➤

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Wing dikes were constructed, many dating to the 1800s, to redirect the Mississippi River's current so it kept the main shipping channel from silting in.

A wing (dike) and a prayer

WING DIKES; WHAT'S THE POINT?

A first-time visitor to the Mississippi River often first notices the immense size of the river and later is intrigued by its many working parts, wing dikes among them.

The system of wing dikes was installed in the river by construction companies authorized by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. They were designed to divert the flow of water to help scour a navigation channel, and many of these structures date back to the mid to late 1800s.

Wing dikes are man-made, typically of stone, but some other substances have been used. Unlike a dam, a dike only extends into the water a short distance for the purpose of steering current flow to the middle of the river. In turn, this helps reduce sediment or at least control it so that shipping channels are less likely to silt in.

Typical construction methods involved constructing floating mats made from bundled willow trees. The mats were held in place by large ships while layers of rocks were placed on the mats until they sank to the river bottom.

Wing dikes are a history unto themselves, using technology from days gone by. In fact, many of the structures no longer



Philip Gentry

function for the purpose originally intended, which was to increase the overall depth of the shipping channel. Later studies showed that weirs and conventional dams were more effective.

Piles of rocks extending into the Mississippi River certainly pose hazards to recreational boaters, especially when the rocks are submerged. Buoys are maintained for navigational safety but are frequently damaged by river traffic or floating debris.

The physics behind the effects of wing dams on sediment control is complex, to say the least. Recent research supports that while sediment and silt are removed from the main channel of the river, it is later deposited further downstream, which may worsen flooding conditions in the river. ■

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GETTIN' FRESH

Hal Schramm

The bragging-sized female bass that anglers love to catch are also the best spawners, producing more and healthier eggs and fry.



BIG BASS, BIG SPAWN?

OHIO STUDY POINTS TO HEALTHY FISH DOING THEIR PART TO REPLENISH POPULATION

Photo courtesy Roger Stegall

The odyssey to a trophy bass begins with a fertilized egg, but recent research suggests that factors that occur before that egg is released by the female may affect reproduction and recruitment.

Bass management usually isn't compli-

cated, at least biologically. A few principles keep bass populations producing the quality fishing that anglers enjoy: maintain good habitat for spawning and all life stages, keep growth rates high and keep harvest low enough that some bass survive and grow to acceptable sizes and



Hal Schramm is an avid angler and veteran fisheries biologist.

These females are more likely to be found in larger reservoirs with bass populations that are lower in density.

a few to grow to memorable sizes.

The prevalence of catch-and-release makes harvest a non-issue in most waters. If good habitat is available, the second principle — keeping growth rate high — becomes the primary challenge. High growth rate among bass requires abundant, vulnerable-size forage, but the key to fast growth is abundant forage for each bass. Therefore, fast growth can be achieved by increasing the amount of forage or by reducing the number of bass. Research by Ohio Department of Natural Resource biologists indicates the same conditions needed for fast growth also benefit successful bass spawning.

THE STUDY

Sexually mature largemouth bass from 9 to 22 inches and 0.3 to 6.7 pounds were collected immediately before or at the beginning of the spawn in 19 reservoirs ranging in size from 37 to 1,280 acres.

The fish were sacrificed and ovaries and otoliths (ear bones) were removed. The ovaries were processed to determine the number of eggs that would be spawned in the current spawning season and the energy density: the amount of energy per unit weight of the ovary. Higher ovary energy is presumed to indicate better egg quality, as this energy is needed for proper development of the embryo and early survival after hatching. The otoliths were used to age the fish and allow calculation of growth rate.

Standardized electrofishing surveys were used to estimate the catch per hour of largemouth bass. Electrofishing catch rate is a common and effective way to index the density of largemouth bass in a population: more bass per hour electrofishing signals a higher density of bass.

THE RESULTS

To better help understand the results of this study, the desirable conditions are high fecundity (more mature eggs) and high ovary energy density.

The estimated fecundity of female largemouth bass ranged from 687 to 176,224 mature eggs per female and increased linearly with bass weight. The ovary energy density increased with bass weight.

The relationships of fecundity with bass weight and ovary energy density with bass weight were always positive but differed between reservoirs. The fecundity-bass weight relations were greater for populations that had greater ovary energy density, indicating populations with greater fecundity also had greater energy density.

The relationship between fecundity and bass weight were less positive for slower-growing bass populations and in smaller reservoirs. Similarly, the relations between ovary energy density and bass weight were less positive for slower-growing bass populations and in smaller reservoirs.

Largemouth bass growth, fecundity and ovary energy density decreased with increasing bass density.

Finally, smaller reservoirs and those with lower productivity had more dense, slower-growing bass populations with lower fecundity and lower ovary energy density.

Summing this up, larger and faster-growing female largemouth bass have greater fecundity and higher ovary energy. These females are more likely to be found in larger reservoirs with bass populations that are lower in density.

IMPLICATIONS

Studies on other sportfish have also found positive relationships between female size, fecundity and ovary energy density. These studies have also found that the progeny of larger females also have greater chances of survival. A simple conclusion is this: more large spawners — individuals that are relatively rare in a population — better ensures successful spawning.

Similarly, fast-growing bass are better spawners, and their progeny have a greater chance of survival. These fast-growing bass are most likely to be found in lower-density bass populations in large, productive reservoirs.

This study offers an additional important piece of information for fishery managers: not all bass in a population have equal reproductive output, and the size structure and growth rate of bass should be considered in populations where reproduction may be limited.

A key question awaits an answer: are the offspring from the larger, faster-growing and better egg-producing females more likely to survive their first year of life — which includes their first winter — than those produced by small, slowly growing females from high-density populations? Considering the many environmental and biological factors affecting young bass from hatching and through their first winter, the question will not be easily answered.

The hard work of the Ohio biologists demonstrates that the same conditions that lead to excellent bass fishing — fast growth rate and appropriate harvest to produce a population with large size structure — are the same conditions conducive to successful reproduction. ■



Fueled by a diet of abundant shad, this well-fed bass can be expected to produce a lot of high-quality eggs.

LUNKER LINES

Paul Elias

In April, bass in Pickwick Lake should be spawning on stumps, rocks, buck brush, laydowns and other shallow structure near the bank.

PICKWICK'S APRIL PRIZES

SPAWNING, PRESPAWN BASS CAN MAKE AN ANGLER'S SPRING DAY

Try to fish Pickwick Lake in April for several reasons, including that the bass primarily will be prespawn or spawning in shallow water. Use your depth finder, but also wear polarized sunglasses to help you see the structure and the type of bottom to target spotted, smallmouth and/or largemouth bass.

Hooking 30 to 40 bass on an April day at Pickwick isn't uncommon, especially when fishing cover on the bank. I'll fish pockets, main-river points and secondary points inside creeks with spinnerbaits, buzzbaits and a Mann's Hardnose Freefall worm.

Bass primarily will be in the pockets and on secondary and main-river points, as they're moving into the spawn or already spawning. I don't expect to see any post-spawn bass at Pickwick this month.

I'll fish the banks and cover plenty of water, perhaps 200 to 300 yards without getting a bite. But on the next 100 yards, I may catch four bass. In that same area, you may change baits and possibly catch the same amount. In a full day of fishing, you may identify three or four locations,

stretches of 100 yards or less, where you can catch plenty of bass by rotating where you fish.

WHAT BAITS, WHY

Tennessee River bass love spinnerbaits and buzzbaits this month. A spinnerbait allows you to cover a lot of water quickly, while identifying the sections, pockets and points holding the most bass. I like to fish a ½-ounce spinnerbait with a chartreuse and white skirt and No. 4 and No. 6 Indiana blades. I'll use a 7-foot-1, medium-heavy FX Custom rod with a 6.2:1 gear ratio Legend Bruin reel and 23-pound White Peacock fluorocarbon. I'll fish a buzzbait on the same rod with a 7.3:1 gear ratio reel and 20-pound Iguana monofilament.

I'll alternate between the spinnerbait and the buzzbait. Knowing that fluorocarbon sinks more than monofilament, I prefer the monofilament when fishing the buzzbait; I want it to ride on top of the water. On the back of the buzzbait, instead of having a skirt, I'll have one rod rigged with a soft-plastic, white frog

and another rigged with a black frog. I'll alternate between the two, until the bass tell me which they prefer. The frog serves two purposes: it holds the buzzbait up in the water, and its kicking legs give the buzzbait more action to attract more bass. The frog helps me catch more bass than a skirt does.

I'm searching for logs, stumps, boulders, buck brush, willow trees and blown-down trees. I prefer fishing the lower end of Pickwick and primarily will search for pockets off the creek and the main river channels where the bass like to spawn.

FISHING THE BAITS

Initially, I'll fish the first pockets away from the dam on the main river and then on up the lake. When I reach Bear Creek,



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.

depending on how many bass I've caught, I'll cross the lake and fish the other side of the river from the dam up. In April, bass often will simply follow the spinnerbait or buzzbait and not eat them. As a follow-up, I'll use a 7-foot-3 FX Custom rod with a 7.3:1 Legend Bruin Reel and 23-pound fluorocarbon rigged with a junebug-colored Mann's Hardnose Freefall worm with a 1/32-ounce nail lead in its head. This worm falls slowly and is an easy meal for a bass to catch.

EXTRA ADVICE

- Use a 360-degree depth finder like my Garmin with its LiveScope feature to spot bass in less than 1 to 3 feet of water. I can see the cover and bass before I get close enough to make a cast in an area.

- Fish a big, soft-plastic, Lucky Craft swimbait. I'll fish this 7-inch lure on braid and reel it as slowly as I can back to the boat. You won't get a lot of bites, but you'll have numbers of bass following it back to the boat — telling me where the big spawners are holding. Then, I can cast back to them with a buzzbait, a spinnerbait or a worm and catch them. However, most of the bass you'll catch in April will be males, because they'll be more aggressive than the females.

These April tactics apply primarily to largemouth bass. To catch smallmouth and spotted bass, target the pea-gravel points, flats and secondary points, and use the same rods, reels and line. ■



Shoreline cover is a magnet for Pickwick Lake bass in April, when most fish are shallow, in prespawn or spawning. **INSET:** Remove the skirt from your buzzbaits and replace them with soft-plastic frogs this month.



LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

A purple/chartreuse Wedgetail made by Egret Baits hands out of the mouth of a redfish that gobbled it up along the Gulf Coast.



Photo by Chris Berzas

EGRET BAIT'S' WEDGETAIL

BUILT-IN ACTION HAS MADE THIS SOFT-PLASTIC BAIT AN INSHORE FAVORITE

Fishability. Catchability. Likeability. Egret Baits has several artificial lures that fill the bill. One of the oldest proven models is a soft plastic — unlike the company's widely known thermoplastic baits — that triggers fish to attack, to bite.

It's the Wedgetail, which impersonates a mullet, a delicacy for saltwater fish.

Ken Chaumont, CEO at Egret, has overseen its rise through the years as a go-to bait across the Gulf Coast. It's one of his favorites.

"I use it. I was a fan all along," said Chaumont, 66. "It's a different bait than a boot tail. I think they do better than a boot tail in sandy or brackish water. Fish key on vibrating patterns.

"The vibration is especially effective in off-colored water and cold water. Off-colored water is a great place to throw the Wedgetail."

It's the thump of the specially designed tail that puts the bait over the hump. That's right. The patented shape of the tail says it all about its performance.

Chaumont inherited the tail's patented design — by Bob King — when he and his business partner purchased Stanley Jigs and formed Egret Baits in 2004.

"It was one of the properties when we bought the company," he said. "We had a licensing agreement with him. We're the only company that has a patent, the only company that has that shape tail."

Egret Baits introduced the Wedgetail in the mid-2010s.

EASY TO WORK

"It's been around a long time," Chaumont said. "One of the key features is you don't have to be a genius to work it. The tail has so much resistance in the water, all you have to do is reel it. A lot of guides have told me it's a good bait for kids. The tail does all the work."

For that and other reasons, it has a strong following among saltwater fishermen in Texas and Louisiana who target speckled trout, redfish and flounder. Its popularity spreads beyond that region to Mississippi and Florida.

"We sell most of the Wedgetails between Corpus Christi and Biloxi; that's the core of the market," he said, including the hotbed around the Venice area. Saltwater fishermen in the Florida Panhandle also covet the Wedgetail.

Egret Baits recommends two sizes — two sizes only — of jigheads for the Wedgetail. For 2- to 5-foot depths, Chaumont said use a 1/8-ounce model, and for 5- to 8-foot depths, use a 1/4-ounce model.

Also, if you're fishing a Wedgetail under a popping cork, as so many anglers do, "We definitely recommend a 1/8-ounce. (That's) the way to go," he said, noting that size jighead allows the soft plastic to fall more slowly between pops of a cork.

It's easy for Chaumont to pinpoint the Wedgetail's most popular colors.



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.

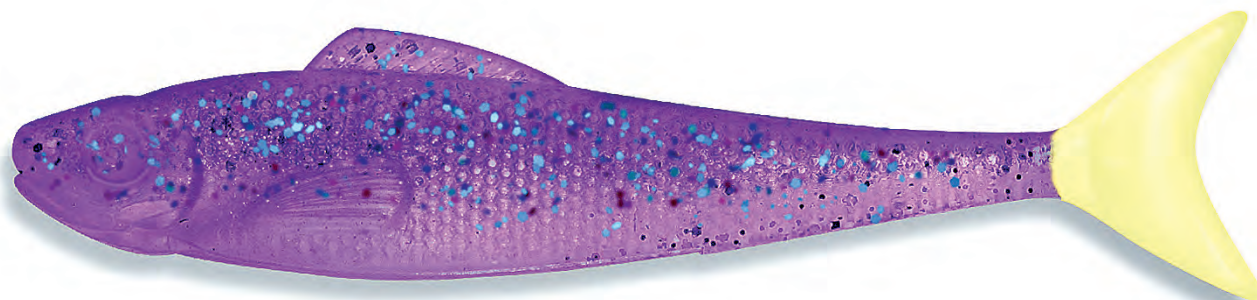


Photo courtesy egretbaits.com

Egret Baits' Wedgetails catch plenty of redfish and flounder, as well as speckled trout, from Corpus Christi, Tex., to Florida's Panhandle.

The No. 1 color across Louisiana's coast is purple/chartreuse, which Egret Baits call the "LSU color." There are blue flakes in the purple. Opening night and Cajun pepper/chartreuse are the next two favorites, the latter especially popular along the Texas and Louisiana coasts. Pearl/chartreuse and glow/chartreuse are others high on the color chart. The No. 1 color for redfish is black/chartreuse.

"That's definitely the atomic bomb for redfish. Those are good ones," he said. "We don't do a lot of colors in this bait, because you only need 10 or 12 colors to go catch fish across the country with a Wedgetail."

Monofilament, fluorocarbon and braid work equally well with a Wedgetail.

"The majority of the people I talk with, what I call 'everyday fishermen' — guys that are the salt of the earth for our company — (they) primarily use mono," he said.

Braid has its role with Wedgetails. That's when the angler feels the bait's action the most.

"If you put the Wedgetail on braided line, you'll think you're throwing a Rat-L-Trap," he said.

"We do have (redfish anglers) use braid because they want to get the fish out of the grass in the marsh. The flounder guys use a lot of braid because they can feel that real, real soft bite."

When Chaumont and so many others are fishing open water, they throw the Wedgetail on fluorocarbon and rarely, if ever, heavier than 12-pound test. ■

For more information about the Wedgetail and other Egret Baits products, visit www.egretbaits.com or call 318-256-6904.

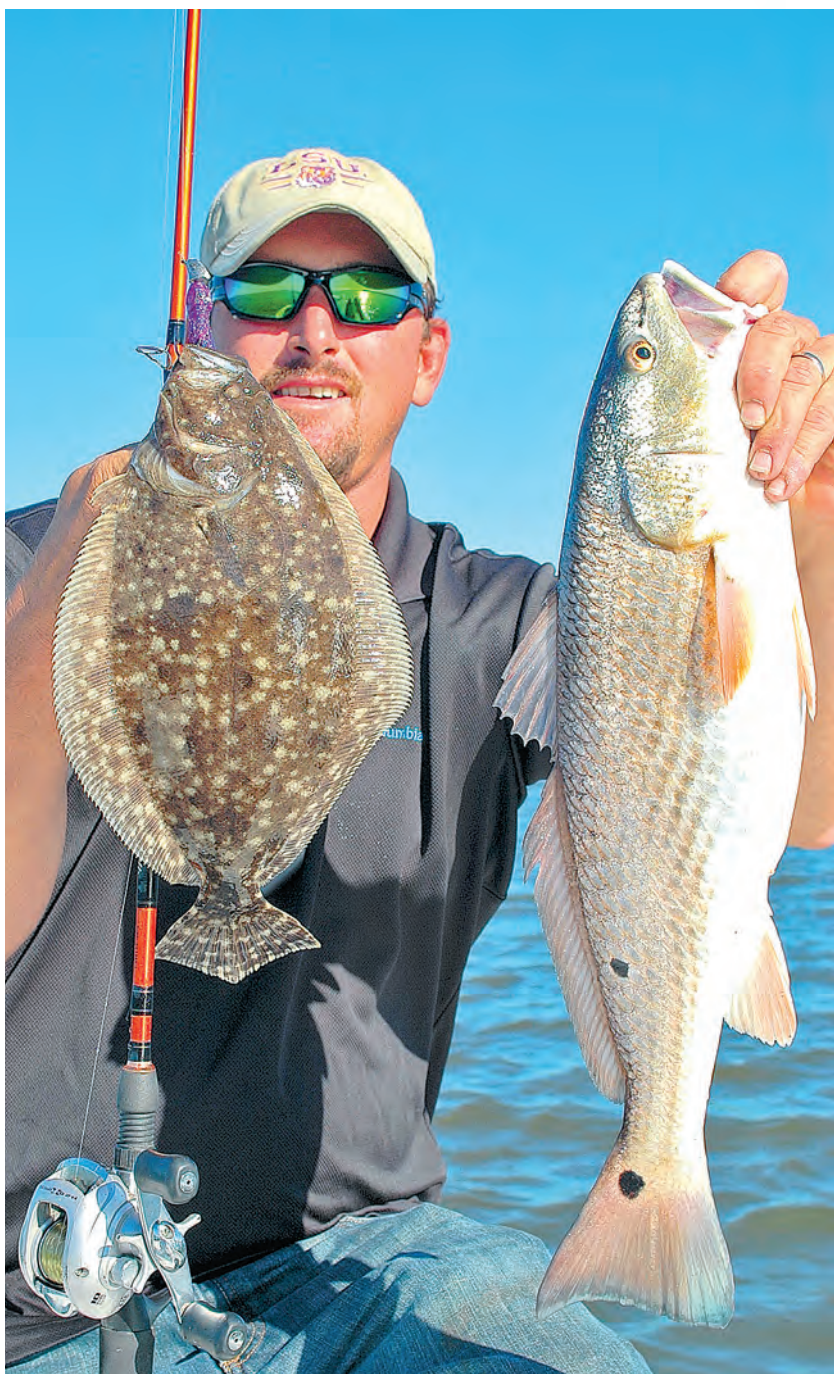


Photo by Chris Berzas

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope

The redear sunfish, aka shellcracker, is identified most easily by the colorful edge around its ear flap. It can range from yellow to orange to red.



Brian Cope

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: SHELLCRACKER

THIS PANFISH CAN BE CAUGHT ALMOST ANYWHERE IN THE SOUTH, BY ALMOST ANYBODY

Redear sunfish, *Lepomis microlophus*, commonly referred to as shellcrackers, are a species of panfish. They have the typical panfish body: the body is longer than it is tall, and it is relatively thin. Holding your hand with the thumb facing up and pinkie finger facing down offers a glimpse at the overall shape of a shellcracker.

These fish vary widely in color based on the waters in which they live, but shellcrackers usually have a good bit of yellow on their sides, with darker backs.

The name redear sunfish comes from the red ring that outlines the fish's black ear flap, aka operculum; sometimes it's bright yellow or orange. Its more recognizable name, shellcracker, comes

from the fish's habit of eating snails and mussels, cracking their shells with a set of teeth located in the throat.

Aside from snail and mussels, shellcrackers also eat worms, insects, small crawdads and tiny insect larvae. They mainly feed along the bottom and are often found by anglers in the same areas as bluegill and other panfish, but deeper in the water column.

Another common nickname for this fish also comes from its feeding habits. Known by some anglers as "stumpknocker," this fish is known for ramming into submerged stumps and vegetation to knock potential food free. They are also known as chinquapin and yellow bream.

COMMUNITY BEDS

Shellcrackers begin spawning in the late spring or early summer, once the water temperature reaches 70 degrees. They spawn in circular nests, known as beds, that can be as shallow as 6 inches or as deep as 10 feet. These fish usually build beds in huge groups that can number anywhere from a few dozen to more than



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 hundred. Their beds are sometimes located directly beside or even intermingled with bluegill beds and the beds of other panfish.

Shellcrackers can be found in many different water types throughout the United States. They are common in ponds, lakes, swamps, streams and small rivers. They prefer calmer areas and are easily found in swift rivers by finding areas with current breaks.

While many anglers catch shellcrackers only in shallow water, these fish spend much of their lives in very deep water, moving shallow only when it's time to spawn.

TOUGH TO ID

Anglers sometimes misidentify shellcrackers with a number of other panfish, including bluegills, redbreasts, green sunfish, and pumpkinseeds. Pumpkinseeds are the most similar to shellcrackers, and it's not uncommon for the two species to spawn together, creating hybrid offspring. Just look for that colorful border on the ear flap.

The Louisiana state record shellcracker weighed 2.87 pounds and was caught from Caney Lake by Jerry Smelly in August 1998. Mississippi's state record, a 3.33-pound fish, came from Tippah County Lake in November 1991. It was caught by James Martin. The world record, a 5-pound, 12-ounce shellcracker, was caught by Hector Brito in February 2014 from Lake Havasu, Ariz. ■



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Okuma has added carbon fiber to its lineup of spinning reels with the ITX Carbon series, a group of eight reels — four high-speed and four standard-speed retrieves. The reels are lightweight and compact, constructed of rigid, C-40X long-strand carbon fibers, which are 25% stronger than standard graphite reels.

The 1000, 2500, 3000 and 4000 size reels have a multi-disc, carbon-fiber drag system with Okuma's Hydro Block gasket, which keeps water out and your drag running spool. A total of eight ball-bearings keep the reel smooth, along with a machine-cut brass pinion gear. The Quick-Set anti-reverse feature and screw-in handle design are other fisherman-friendly features.

MSRP: \$119.99. For more info, visit: okumafishing.com



NOMAD KILLIN' TIME TURKEY VEST

What do turkey hunters want in a vest? That changes from time to time, as the accessories that hunters carry into the woods change, and NOMAD is keeping up with the times.

The company has debuted its Killin' Time Turkey Vest, just in time for the spring season across the Southeast, and its design and features show that NOMAD is keeping up with the changing needs of turkey hunters.

The vest features a removable, high-density foam seat cushion, horizontal and vertical box call pockets with a pouch for call chalk, an external Thermacell pocket, dual pockets

for water bottles, an adjustable game pouch with pockets for decoy stakes, even a stow-away stow sack for morel mushrooms you might stumble on while slipping into position to take that big gobbler.

The vest, which comes in Mossy Oak Bottomland or Shadow Leaf, has 28 general and specialize pockets, including four mesh pockets for mouth calls, and it has 14 points of adjustment for one-size-fits-all customization.

MSRP: \$180. For more info, visit: nomadoutdoor.com

BUBBA PRO SERIES ELECTRIC FILLET KNIFE

The folks who brought you the Bubba Blade, a top-drawer fillet knife, have gone a step further with an updated, improved version, the PRO Series Electric Fillet Knife.

The redesign includes a heavy duty drive system, aluminum alloy housing, superior ergonomics and a brushless motor for longer-lasting power output.

In addition, the carrying case has been upgraded to a hard-sided shell with a textured, non-slip grip.

A secondary replacement battery and a charging cord come with the package.

The PRO Series knife comes in three blade lengths — 7, 8 and 12 inches — and in either FLEX or STIFF styles. Blades are high-carbon stainless steel, coated with titanium-nitride for extreme corrosion resistance.

For more info, visit: bubba.com



GAMAKATSU GIKA RIG

Want to combine power fishing and a finesse technique?

Gamakatsu has done just that, with one of its latest terminal tackle offerings, the Gika Rig.

The Gika Rig uses an offset worm hook and an elongated drop-shot weight attached directly to the hook eye by a snap and split ring. The snap allows fishermen to quickly change out the size of the weight, depending on the presentation needed or the depth targeted.

The weight's position allows the worm or other soft-plastic bait to fall more freely and rotate from side to side as it descends. Virtually weedless, it can slip through vegetation and other kinds of cover.



DUNSTAN CHESTNUT TREES

Want to make the remarkable addition of a natural wildlife food on your hunting property without having to drop the first disc, plow or cultipacker in the soil?

Just dig a hole and let a Dunstan chestnut tree do the rest.

Dunstan chestnuts are a hybrid between a Chinese chestnut variety and a single, American chestnut that survived the deadly blight of the 1930s that destroyed 30 million acres of what was arguably the most-important tree in the nation's first 150 years.

The hybrid chestnut was the brainchild of Dr. Robert Dunstan, a Windsor, N.C., native and graduate of Trinity College,

The Gika Rig weights come in 1/8-, 3/16-, 1/4- and 3/8-ounce sizes to be matched with 2/0, 3/0 and 4/0 hooks. The weights have their size stamped into the side for easy recognition, and the weights and the clip are both painted black.

MSRP: \$5.82-46.60.

For more info, visit: gamakatsu.com



the predecessor of Duke University.

Chestnuts are high in carbohydrates and proteins and will attract deer, squirrels and other wildlife, and they produce at only 3 to 5 years of age, eventually dropping up to 50 pounds of nuts (20 to 35 per pound) per tree every September and October — not every other year like some oaks.

Best times to plant in the Southeast are spring months.

MSRP: \$24.95-\$29.95.

For more info, visit: chestnuthilloutdoors.com

RECTIFIRE SHOTGUN CHOKES FOR TURKEY SEASON

Rectifire Inc. of Brunson, S.C., makes plenty of accessories for serious shooters of rifles and shotguns, and with April approaching, their Cyclone and Diamond shotgun chokes for turkey hunters take center stage.

Made from 17-4 stainless steel with a conical-parallel internal design and finished in natural, black or camo, Rectifire's turkey chokes will fit most any hunter's preferences and favorite weapons. According to Alan Tuten, the company's president, hunters who are targeting gobblers with traditional lead or copper-plated shot in Nos. 4 to 6 should go for a Cyclone Series choke; if you're into the newer TSS loads, the Diamond Series chokes are a better choice.

The Cyclone Series chokes come with helical, slotted ports that will slow the shot wad, allowing better shot patterns and reducing recoil.

Chokes are available in 12- and 20-gauge sizes for most shotgun manufacturer's offerings. Turkey

chokes offer constrictions normally of .0070 or .0075 from the original bore diameter.

MSRP: \$72-103.

For more info, visit: rectifire.com





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

The "Best Days" column is based on the ever-changing positions of the sun and the moon, rating each day on a scale of 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more solar/lunar influence that day is experiencing (see "Value" column or corresponding black bars). The two Primary periods (Moon Overhead and Moon Underfoot) vary in length from one hour to three-and-one-half hours, depending on a number of important lunar cycles, such as how close the moon is to the earth that day and how high its orbit is. The solar symbols alert you to when a Primary period overlaps a major solar period (eg: Dawn, High-Noon, and Dusk). The secondary periods of Moonrise and Moonset last about one hour each... 30 minutes before and after the listed time. (See key at bottom of each month for more detail.)

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

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

AVAILABLE PRODUCTS:

The 2021 PrimeTimes Wall Calendar. \$13.95 (plus \$4 s&h). Know the best days, best times, and their relative strengths for all of 2021 with this information-packed, full-color, 11-inch by 17-inch, graphic peaks

and-valleys forecaster. Includes rise and set times for the sun and moon, space to log your catches, "Timely Tips," plus fish and game symbols showing you each month's don't-miss periods. Also includes exclusive summary charts revealing the best and worst days of 2021, the year's best periods, a look ahead at 2022, and more. Comes with FREE 2021 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for \$8.95, plus \$3 s&h.

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

2021 Ultimate PrimeTimes software for PCs. \$29.95 (plus \$3 s&h, or no s&h if downloaded from web). The world's best forecaster allows you to fine-tune the peak times to your exact location, quarry, and even weather. Too many features to list here, including making your own App. For more details, please call us or visit our web site (see below).

SPECIAL PACKAGE OFFERS:

- #1: *Wall Calendar, Astro Tables and "How to Know..." book...* \$19.95 (plus \$5 s&h).
- #2: *Same as #1, plus Software...* \$47.95 (plus \$6 s&h).
- #3: *Same as #2, minus book...* \$38.95 (plus \$5 s&h).

Send to: PrimeTimes 2021 • Dept. LS • 2487 NW 75th Ave., Ste. 100 • Ankeny, IA 50023

For credit/debit card orders, call 515-964-5516, or go online to primetimes2.com and click **Catalog**.

2021 APR					BEST DAYS				
MOON RISE	MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	MOON UNDERFOOT	MOON PHASE	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	VALUE
Thu 1									32
Fri 2									30
Sat 3									33
Sun 4									42
Mon 5									31
Tue 6									27
Wed 7									29
Thu 8									40
Fri 9									52
Sat 10									63

Sun 11									70
Mon 12									62
Tue 13									54
Wed 14									47
Thu 15									46
Fri 16									48
Sat 17									50

Sun 18									51
Mon 19									56
Tue 20									66
Wed 21									55
Thu 22									48
Fri 23									57
Sat 24									65

Sun 25									74
Mon 26									79
Tue 27									66
Wed 28									52
Thu 29									39
Fri 30									32

25 50 75
AVERAGE

For more, visit primetimes2.com

LUNAR PERIODS					TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED				
MOON RISE	MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	MOON UNDERFOOT	MOON PHASE	MOON RISE	MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	MOON UNDERFOOT	MOON PHASE
1:29 AM	4:00 am - 5:06 am	9:44 AM	4:25 pm - 5:31 pm	☾	1:37 AM	5:04 am - 6:00 am	10:32 AM	5:29 pm - 6:25 pm	☾
2:39 AM	6:08 am - 6:56 am	11:26 AM	6:33 pm - 7:21 pm	☾	2:39 AM	7:08 am - 7:56 am	12:26 PM	7:33 pm - 8:21 pm	☾
3:32 AM	8:03 am - 8:55 am	1:29 PM	8:28 pm - 9:20 pm	☾	3:32 AM	8:03 am - 8:55 am	1:29 PM	8:28 pm - 9:20 pm	☾
4:17 AM	8:51 am - 9:53 am	2:33 PM	9:16 pm - 10:18 pm	☾	4:17 AM	8:51 am - 9:53 am	2:33 PM	9:16 pm - 10:18 pm	☾
4:55 AM	9:34 am - 10:50 am	3:35 PM	9:59 pm - 11:15 pm	☾	4:55 AM	9:34 am - 10:50 am	3:35 PM	9:59 pm - 11:15 pm	☾
5:28 AM	10:12 am - 11:44 am	4:36 PM	10:37 pm - 12:09 am	☾	5:28 AM	10:12 am - 11:44 am	4:36 PM	10:37 pm - 12:09 am	☾
5:57 AM	10:48 am - 12:36 pm	5:34 PM	11:13 pm - 1:01 am	☾	5:57 AM	10:48 am - 12:36 pm	5:34 PM	11:13 pm - 1:01 am	☾
6:24 AM	11:21 am - 1:27 pm	6:32 PM	11:46 pm - Midnight	☾	6:24 AM	11:21 am - 1:27 pm	6:32 PM	11:46 pm - Midnight	☾
6:49 AM	11:52 am - 2:18 pm	7:28 PM	Midnight - 1:52 am	☾	6:49 AM	11:52 am - 2:18 pm	7:28 PM	Midnight - 1:52 am	☾
7:15 AM	12:25 pm - 3:07 pm	8:24 PM	12:17 am - 2:43 am	☾	7:15 AM	12:25 pm - 3:07 pm	8:24 PM	12:17 am - 2:43 am	☾
7:42 AM	12:57 pm - 3:57 pm	9:21 PM	12:50 am - 3:32 am	☾	7:42 AM	12:57 pm - 3:57 pm	9:21 PM	12:50 am - 3:32 am	☾
8:11 AM	1:35 pm - 4:47 pm	10:18 PM	1:22 am - 4:22 am	☾	8:11 AM	1:35 pm - 4:47 pm	10:18 PM	1:22 am - 4:22 am	☾
8:44 AM	2:13 pm - 5:39 pm	11:15 PM	2:00 am - 5:12 am	☾	8:44 AM	2:13 pm - 5:39 pm	11:15 PM	2:00 am - 5:12 am	☾
9:21 AM	2:58 pm - 6:30 pm	12:12 AM	2:38 am - 6:04 am	☾	9:21 AM	2:58 pm - 6:30 pm	12:12 AM	2:38 am - 6:04 am	☾
10:03 AM	3:44 pm - 7:24 pm	1:07 AM	3:23 am - 6:55 am	☾	10:03 AM	3:44 pm - 7:24 pm	1:07 AM	3:23 am - 6:55 am	☾
10:52 AM	4:35 pm - 8:15 pm	1:58 AM	4:09 am - 7:49 am	☾	10:52 AM	4:35 pm - 8:15 pm	1:58 AM	4:09 am - 7:49 am	☾
11:47 AM	5:30 pm - 9:06 pm	2:45 AM	5:00 am - 8:40 am	☾	11:47 AM	5:30 pm - 9:06 pm	2:45 AM	5:00 am - 8:40 am	☾
12:47 PM	6:27 pm - 9:53 pm	3:27 AM	5:55 am - 9:31 am	☾	12:47 PM	6:27 pm - 9:53 pm	3:27 AM	5:55 am - 9:31 am	☾
1:50 PM	7:24 pm - 10:40 pm	4:05 AM	6:52 am - 10:18 am	☾	1:50 PM	7:24 pm - 10:40 pm	4:05 AM	6:52 am - 10:18 am	☾
2:56 PM	8:23 pm - 11:23 pm	4:40 AM	7:49 am - 11:05 am	☾	2:56 PM	8:23 pm - 11:23 pm	4:40 AM	7:49 am - 11:05 am	☾
4:04 PM	9:23 pm - 12:03 am	5:12 AM	8:48 am - 11:48 am	☾	4:04 PM	9:23 pm - 12:03 am	5:12 AM	8:48 am - 11:48 am	☾
5:13 PM	10:26 pm - 12:42 am	5:45 AM	9:48 am - 12:28 pm	☾	5:13 PM	10:26 pm - 12:42 am	5:45 AM	9:48 am - 12:28 pm	☾
6:24 PM	11:28 pm - Midnight	6:18 AM	10:51 am - 1:07 pm	☾	6:24 PM	11:28 pm - Midnight	6:18 AM	10:51 am - 1:07 pm	☾
7:38 PM	Midnight - 1:24 am	6:54 AM	11:53 am - 1:49 pm	☾	7:38 PM	Midnight - 1:24 am	6:54 AM	11:53 am - 1:49 pm	☾
8:53 PM	12:34 am - 2:06 am	7:34 AM	12:59 pm - 2:31 pm	☾	8:53 PM	12:34 am - 2:06 am	7:34 AM	12:59 pm - 2:31 pm	☾
10:08 PM	1:41 am - 2:53 am	8:21 AM	2:06 pm - 3:18 pm	☾	10:08 PM	1:41 am - 2:53 am	8:21 AM	2:06 pm - 3:18 pm	☾
11:22 PM	2:48 am - 3:46 am	9:14 AM	3:13 pm - 4:11 pm	☾	11:22 PM	2:48 am - 3:46 am	9:14 AM	3:13 pm - 4:11 pm	☾
	3:55 am - 4:43 am		4:20 pm - 5:08 pm	☾		3:55 am - 4:43 am		4:20 pm - 5:08 pm	☾

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

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