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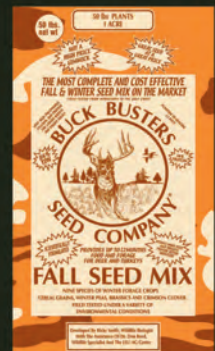
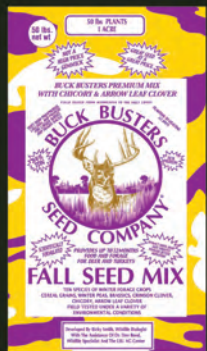


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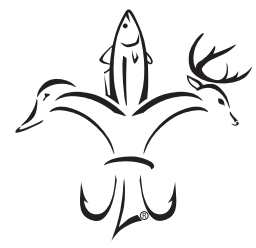
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Mississippi's artificial reef program has provided plenty of places for fishermen to catch fish like this scamp grouper. Photo by Brian Carroll.

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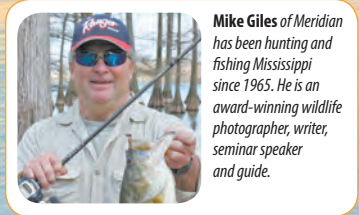


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Outdoor UPDATE

with
Mike Giles



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

HOT ACTION DURING THE DOG DAYS

THERE'S PLENTY TO DO IF YOU LOOK IN THE RIGHT PLACES

August is usually the hottest month for Mississippi outdoorsmen, but there are still a lot of opportunities to catch fish and harvest game if you know how to do it and where to go. While the bite usually slows down, there are a few hotspots like Pickwick Lake in Northeast Mississippi.

PICKWICK

Roger Stegall has been guiding on Pickwick for 35 years, and he knows more than a few things about catching fish during August.

"You can still catch fish on ledges, but the bass are tending to move shallower as minnows and shad start going back into the pockets and shallow-water grass beds," Stegall said. "The bass will be where the baitfish are most of the time, and if you're fishing the ledges or offshore structure, then Carolina rigs and Texas-rigged plastics fished slow are good. If the bass are up chasing shad, then I like to use a shad-colored War Pig or a chrome/blue back lipless crankbait. Small poppers are also good worked around grass where the bass are feeding on bait."

Stegall points to early morning as the best time to catch bass during the dog days, though he used to do quite a bit of night-fishing. These days, he prefers not

fishing with clients after dark, but there are some who are successful.

BASS FISHING AFTER DARK

A cooler alternative to fishing during the heat of the day is fishing at night, and a lot of younger anglers enjoy that because they can fish in the cooler night air after a hot day at work. A lot of bass are caught in the same areas as they are during the day, but the fish feed more actively after the sun goes down.

If you're willing to try something different, there are other fish that are active and fun to catch as well.

TROLLING FOR CRAPPIE

Anglers are also catching crappie in Yellow Creek and Bear Creek while trolling bright-colored crankbaits about 10 feet deep on 20-foot flats for the suspended perch. Trolling crankbaits is a fun way to beat the heat and catch slab crappie without working up a sweat. Many anglers will put up big fishing umbrellas and stay out of the direct sun while sipping cool drinks and catching big white perch. It's not for everybody, but it's a killer technique in hot weather.



Roger Stegall, a guide on Pickwick Lake and Mississippi Outdoors Hall of Fame Member, displays a nice bass he caught.

DEER SEASONS CONFIRMED FOR 2021-22

AVID BOWHUNTER IS ESPECIALLY EXCITED ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR THIS SEASON

Steve Brown of Starkville has been bowhunting since he was 11 years old, and he's never been more excited about the Mississippi's bow season for deer as he is this year. He is an avid bowhunter who hunts across the country, but the past few years, the October bow season in his home state has been especially productive.

"I'm getting pictures of good bucks on my mineral sites, and it's really fun watching them grow their antlers through the summer and fall," Brown said. "We only shoot mature deer, so we've got quite an inventory of older bucks built up, and I'm confident that I'll have opportunities to harvest some mature, trophy bucks this fall if the conditions continue as they are."

Brown said that while some areas of the state have sustained flooding, the areas he hunts on the east side of the state, which includes Noxubee County, Winston and areas around Starkville have seen prime growing conditions with plenty of moisture and vegetative growth.

"I'm excited about the prospects for deer hunting and believe it's going to be a good year in my hunting areas," Brown said. "The first couple weeks of the October bow season are usually the best for me, as bucks are still on a summer pattern, and they're easier to pattern if you know where they bed and where they're feeding. I usually stay in the woods the first couple of weeks of the early season, and then I go out to the Midwest. When I get back, mid-December is another prime time for harvesting trophy bucks around here as they're rutting and chasing does."

There's no doubt that the early season holds the promise of harvesting deer, either bucks or does but after that the rut, food availability and weather conditions will play a big part in deer movement and harvest opportunities.

Mississippi's 2021-2022 deer seasons have been confirmed by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks.

DELTA, NORTHEAST, NORTH CENTRAL, EAST CENTRAL, SOUTHWEST UNITS

Archery: Oct. 1-Nov. 19 (Either-sex on private land, open public land, and Holly Springs NF)

Youth Season (15 and under): Nov. 6-19 (Either-sex on private lands and authorized state and federal lands.) Nov. 20-Jan. 31 (either-sex on private lands. On open public lands, youth must follow below legal deer criteria.)

Antlerless Primitive Weapon: Nov. 8-19 (Antlerless deer only on private lands.)

Gun (with dogs): Nov. 20-Dec. 1 (Either-sex on private land and Holly Springs NF. Legal bucks only on open public land.)

Primitive Weapon: Dec. 2-15 (Either-sex on private land, open public land, and Holly Springs NF. Weapon of choice may be used on private land with appropriate license.)



Reid Edwards of Starkville harvested this buck last season.

Gun (without dogs): Dec. 16-23 (Either-sex on private land and Holly Springs NF. Legal Bucks only on open public land.)

Gun (with dogs): Dec. 24-Jan. 19 (Either-sex on private land and Holly Spring NF. Legal Bucks only on open public land.)

Archery/Primitive Weapon: Jan. 20-31 (Either-sex on private land and Holly Springs NF. Legal Bucks only on open public land. Weapon of choice may be used on private land with appropriate license.)

SOUTHEAST UNIT

Archery; Oct. 15-Nov. 19 (Either-sex on private and open public land.)

Youth Season (15 and under): Nov. 6-19 (Either-sex on private lands and authorized state and federal lands.) Nov. 20-Feb. 15 (either-sex on private lands. On open public lands, youth must follow below legal deer criteria.)

Gun (with dogs): Nov. 20-Dec. 1 (Either-sex on private land. Legal Bucks only on open public land.)

Primitive Weapon: Dec. 2-15 (Either-sex on private and open public land. Weapon of choice may be used on private land with appropriate license.)

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AUGUST: PRESEASON SCOUTING IS POSSIBLE WITH CELL-READY CAMERAS, ATTRACTANTS

When it comes to scouting, there's just no substitute for boots on the ground to determine where the deer are and what qualities they have. August is the perfect time to start taking inventory on your property, but don't let the heat of the summer deter you. We're not talking about hitting the swamps and thickets while trying to find sign and steering clear of poisonous snakes, but rather a newer form of preseason scouting that allows hunters to locate and find quality bucks and to keep up with them throughout the summer and fall on your hunting property.

Now, how might you do that, you may ask? Very simple. Obtain one of the new game cameras that will send every picture to your cell phone or app, whichever you may prefer. These days, there is no worry about spreading your scent in the area and spooking deer off of the property or making them relocate. If you have the right cameras and put a few in strategically located places like trails and crossings, you can keep up with them throughout the summer and fall.

Allen Shortridge of Meridian uses cameras and attractants to see what's on his property from late summer through the fall. He learned this technique from Ivan Hawthorne of Winnsboro, La., one of the first people to produce and use attractants.

"It's amazing the results that Hawthorne got with the C'Mere deer, Deer Candy and other attractants he used on his hunting

properties," Shortridge said. "He'd put out the attractant at his camera survey sites, and within 24 hours, he had several trophy bucks utilizing the site."

A HISTORY OF ATTRACTING DEER

More than 15 years ago, Hawthorne began developing deer attractants that worked. Through careful research and study of what deer liked, he created a whole variety of products, and then several all-natural attractants that field studies showed deer to prefer even more. He produces a variety of products for several companies who sell them under their brands.

Shortridge has also used his game cameras and attractants with great success to locate, track and discover quality bucks, and then harvesting some of those very same deer.

No matter what attractant you use, it's best to apply enough at the site so that you only have to visit the survey station ever month or two to keep it fresh and to keep human scent and activity to a minimum.

Start your scouting right now, and you just might harvest a trophy buck during the coming season. One thing's for sure; if you do it right, you can keep human intervention to a minimum while surveying which bucks are using your property throughout the summer, fall and winter and know exactly when and where they're living or coming through. ■

Get an overview of your hunting property's deer herd without disturbing anything by setting up trail cameras that communicate with your cell phone.



Photo by Mike Giles

HOG WILD PREDATOR CONTROL, JASPER COUNTY STYLE

As the sun disappeared below the horizon, I heard the sounds of hoofbeats coming down the hill in front of me. Suddenly, several small pigs appeared in a clearing, followed by a big sow and several other pigs. I centered the crosshairs of my Leupold scope on the big sow's neck and squeezed the trigger of my .270 Remington.

Tic-boom! As the rifle roared, the camo-brown colored sow collapsed in a heap, never twitching, as the smaller pigs ran into the thicket.

I'd received an invitation to the McKenna Ranch to help with some hog control and met Mark McKenna earlier that afternoon. After going over the details and strategy of the afternoon/night hunt, he gave me some advice on hunting pigs.

"When the pigs come out, pick out the biggest sow and shoot her," McKenna said. "The smaller pigs will run off, but give them some time, and they'll come back, and you can get some more of them. If you don't see any by 9 p.m., we'll ride in the UTV and use our night-vision scopes and spotting equipment and see if we can shoot some like that."

Wild hogs are considered a nuisance by farmers, landowners, biologists and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. It's legal to hunt them year-round, but most people do it outside of the regular deer seasons to avoid spooking deer.

I took McKenna's advice to heart and settled back into my stand, anticipating more action and wishing I'd shot a couple more. About 8:20, two more black sows charged out of the woods into the food plot and were quickly surrounded by a sounder of pigs.

This time I was ready and centered my crosshairs on the neck of the biggest black sow.

Pow-wap! As the rifle roared, the bullet struck gold and another wild sow bit the dust, collapsing as the other pigs ran in all directions. I bolted another bullet into the chamber, found another hog in the scope and squeezed off another shot. As that one dropped, I repeated the process until I'd fired all four bullets and had four hogs on the ground. I'd shot two big sows and two smaller ones in about a minute's time. My adrenaline was really flowing, and I was brimming with excitement, as I'd probably helped the turkey population just a bit by taking out several nest destroyers.

"The Mississippi Department of Wildlife told me that I needed to kill at least 70% of the hogs every year just to keep their population from increasing on my 5,000-acre ranch," McKenna said. "This is the first time in 25 years that I had to close our turkey season down because we didn't have enough birds to hunt. Since the hogs are predators and destroy many turkey nests, I figured we'd promote some hog hunts over the summer and see if we could kill a few hogs and keep their numbers down in the process."

The author helped Jasper County rancher Mark McKenna out on a recent Friday night hog hunt.



Photo courtesy Mike Giles

Sows can have up to four litters a year, so it's hard to control their population when they are such prolific reproducers. After skinning out one of the big sows, we rode around the ranch and scoped out the territory, spotting game and looking for hogs. Though I'd never hunting hogs like this after last light, it was very interesting and fun. By the end of the hunt, I'd shot several hogs and passed on a few more and added another exciting form of summer hunting to my repertoire. ■

For more information on hunting wild hogs contact Mark McKenna at 601-692-3224.



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Brady Jones caught this beautiful red snapper off Horn Island.



RED SNAPPER SEASON WILL REOPEN AUG. 13

T From News Reports
The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources announced that red snapper season will reopen for private recreational anglers and state for-hire vessels at 12:01 a.m. on Friday, Aug. 13, with a projected closure date of Monday, Sept. 6, at 11:59 p.m.

The recreational red snapper season will close if the assigned quota for recreational fishermen is reached at any point after the season opens.

Private recreational anglers may fish out to 200 nautical miles. Vessels with state for-hire permits can fish in state territorial waters, which is nine nautical miles south of the barrier islands. ■

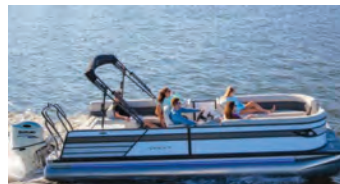
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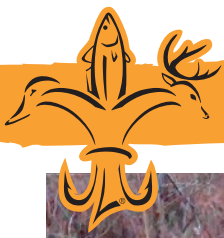
APPLY FOR PERMITS FOR DEER, RABBIT, TEAL DRAW HUNTS

B From News Reports
Beginning Aug. 1, MDWFP will accept draw-permit applications for deer, rabbit and early season teal hunts on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs).

Applications for early season teal hunts will be accepted through Aug. 15. Applications for deer hunts will be accepted through Aug. 31. Applications for rabbit hunts will be accepted through Oct. 15.

Applicants must apply online at www.mdwfp.com/ draws and have a valid Mississippi hunting license before applying for a WMA draw hunt.

For more information regarding WMAs in Mississippi, visit www.mdwfp.com/wma. ■



Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



Sophia Reagin

Sophia Reagin took her first buck in Kemper County.



Joyce Moody

The Mississippi Gulf Coast did not disappoint for Joyce Moody's first time red snapper fishing.



Malaina Kuhn

Malaina Kuhn, 12, shot her first deer, a 10-point buck, in Montgomery County on Jan. 3, 2021. She was with her father, Michael Kuhn, who stood by and watched proudly.



Terry Lott

Terry Lott helped his grandson Cohen Lott, 3, catch this 6-pound bass in a private pond in south Mississippi near Pass Christian. They used a 6-inch juniebug lizard.

GOT PICS? We want 'em

Email images to: images@ms-sportsman.com

All images will be considered, but those taken on the water or in the woods will have the best chance of being featured.
*Digital images must be sent in jpeg format. High-resolution images (taken on your camera's highest setting) will work the best. All images (physical and digital) become property of Mississippi Sportsman and cannot be returned.

CAPTAIN'S SWORDFISH SETS RECORD IN BILLFISH CLASSIC, FOR \$300K

It By Will Martin had been a 5-hour fight in stand-up gear, a grueling battle that had tested the resolve of every man on the boat, and Donnie Jackson, Jr., a 32-year-old charter captain from Metairie, La., panted on-deck as he looked down at the massive, 309.9-pound swordfish he'd just landed on June 12, the final day of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Billfish Classic, well offshore, hundreds of miles west of Biloxi.

He knew it was a Mississippi state-record swordfish, worth \$300,000 in the Classic if he could get it back to Biloxi Marina by 6 p.m.

Jackson checked the time. Noon.

Despite the 200-gallon fuel bladder he'd brought along, he knew that he'd need to stop in Venice to refuel. Not enough time.

Jackson was joined in the tournament by his father, Don Jackson, Sr. of Metairie, Russel Webb of Biloxi and Alabama residents Mitch Bronson and Whitney Barron..

There had been plenty to keep them worried during the catch. "The fish kept doing these violent head shakes," Donnie Jackson said. "We'd get him up a little, and then he'd go right back down to the bottom."

Again, and again, they'd fight the fish to a few hundred feet, and he'd remain at that depth or dive.

"We thought that he was done after 2½ hours," Jackson said. "It was just a big, big fish."

FISH IN THE BOAT

It took all five members of the crew to muscle the huge swordfish through the tuna door onto the deck of the *Tails-Up Sea Cruiser*.

"We had three gaffs in her and a tail rope to bring her in," Jackson said.

But the fish was onboard. That part of the mission was complete. All the money he'd spent preparing his boat, the work, the time and the discomfort and stress of spending three days and two nights aboard his vessel, it was worth it. Almost.

They were already an hour behind. Earlier, Jackson had calculated that 11 o'clock was the latest they could depart for Biloxi and make the 6 p.m. cutoff. So, as the triple 425s of his Contender

The crew of the Tails-Up Sea Cruiser pose with their 309.9-pound, state-record swordfish at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Billfish Classic.



Photos courtesy Donnie Jackson, Jr.



39 roared to life, he said a silent prayer.

"Usually, I don't run my boat wide-open," he said, "but with so much on the line, we did; we ran that boat wide-open."

Venice was 200 miles away, so the crew iced the fish even as the boat reached speeds topping 60 mph.

RUNNING ON FUMES

Jackson estimated that they had enough fuel onboard to make it to Red Pass, but he hadn't considered that they'd be running the motors so hard. The late catch of the record-breaking fish had changed everything.

"When I got about 3 miles from Red Pass, the engines started missing and the fuel lights were flashing; the boat came to a halt," Capt. Jackson said. "We were out of fuel in our big tank."

Doubt began to set in.

"We were heartbroken," he said. "Luckily, I remembered that I saved 9 gallons of fuel in one of my side tanks for this reason."

"I switched the tanks, pumped the fuel bulbs, and we were back in action," he said. "I had to creep up Red Pass at 30 mph to (stretch) our leftover fuel enough to make it to Venice Marina, which was about a mile closer than my home marina, Cypress Cove."

Jackson put everyone on the bow to make sure the boat planed through the water as they made it through the pass.

"There were a few boats in front of us, but I explained to a buddy of mine what was going on, and he let us get fuel before him and use his pump; so, we were able to get 160 gallons of fuel in 10 to 15 minutes," Jackson said.

Once refueled, Jackson and his crew sped for Biloxi, 90 miles away.

"We couldn't have one issue happen for us and make it," he said. "I ran the boat wide-open from Baptiste Collette to Ship Island on pins and needles, going 64 mph for the last 90 miles."

JUST IN TIME

Jackson and his crew arrived at Biloxi Marina with 5 gallons of fuel and 8 minutes to spare.

"Luckily, we had good weather conditions," he said.

"Without the 1- or 2-foot seas, there's no way we could have made it, because we wouldn't have been able to run as hard as we did."

Jackson is ecstatic about what this big victory will mean for his business and family, not to mention the well-earned pride that landing a record-breaking fish brings.

"You know, to catch one 309 pounds in stand-up gear is a huge accomplishment," he said. "I've fished out of Louisiana my whole life and haven't got one close to that big."

"And it couldn't have come at a better time," he said. "It was a great family thing, too. I'm a father of two with a fiancé, and my kids were a part of it. I got to do it with my dad, who's getting older. . . . It was just very meaningful. Just a great story." ■

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MISSISSIPPI'S ARTIFICIAL REEF PROGRAM HAS CREATED DOZENS OF FISH-ATTRACTING STRUCTURES ALONG ITS GULF COAST. HERE'S HOW GUIDES APPROACH THEM AND WHAT THEY CATCH.

■ By John N. Felsher

OASIS FOR FISH — OR FISHERMEN?

FOR EONS, THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI RIVER

carried uncountable tons of silt and dumped it into the Gulf of Mexico, turning the bottom off the Mississippi coast into a massive mud flat with little structure to hold fish.

As early as the 1960s, people dropped old cars and other objects off the coast to attract fish. In 1999, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources officially started its Artificial Reef Program to create habitat for multiple species. Algae grows on hard structures, which attracts small creatures that eat algae. Larger creatures feed upon smaller ones.

“Each reef is a fish oasis,” said guide Sonny Schindler of Shore Thing Fishing Charters (228-342-2206) in Bay St. Louis. “Reefs changed the way we fish. When the bottom was mostly just sand and mud, we might pluck a few trout off the beaches or spot some diving birds. Now, even on windy, rough days, we can load the boat with all kinds of fish by the reefs. I wish the state would line the entire coast with artificial reefs, because they are such good places to fish.”

Today, numerous reefs dot the coast from inside the bays to far offshore. They range from a few pieces of limestones to sunken ships. Many exist where anglers in small boats, even kayaks, can reach them. In some places, anglers can wade and fish the reefs.

“We have a very extensive artificial reef program,” said Matt Hill, finfish bureau director for the MDMR. “By putting hard structure out, we created a lot of habitat for the entire food chain. We have several reefs scattered throughout our bay sys-

tems for easy access by smaller vessels.”

Nobody living along the coast wants to see another hurricane, but some good came from natural disasters. Powerful storms leave tremendous debris fields in their wake, but the state recycles that wreckage to build fish habitat, bringing life from destruction.

“Most of the material that we deploy is material of opportunity,” Hill said. “When we have a natural disaster, we try to make something positive out of it. We’re working with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to possibly enhance and extend Katrina Key. We also want to continue refurbishing our existing smaller sites inside the bays.”

After Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, the state built Katrina Key mostly from storm rubble, including the old US 90 bridge spans that once connected Biloxi to Ocean Springs. One of the most-popular and easily accessible reefs, Katrina Key sits outside Back Bay, just south of Deer Island. The reef stretches about a mile, so many anglers can fish it simultaneously for varied species.

“We catch fish off Katrina Reef all-year long, but the species vary according to the season,” said Robert Brodie of Team Brodie Charters (228-697-7707) in Biloxi. “Baitfish is the key. The reefs give cover to baitfish. Once baitfish get around the reefs, everything else follows. When we catch the conditions just right on a calm day, we fish the reef with topwater baits and catch a lot of huge speckled trout.”

Mississippi built artificial reefs all along its coastline to provide cover for fish. Many anglers fish these reefs, like this one in Mississippi Sound near Pass Christian.



Katrina Key sits in about 9 feet of water, but much of it breaks the surface. Anglers can work topwaters along its edges like fishing a shoreline for redfish or trout. Topwater baits imitate wounded baitfish and typically attract attention from bigger fish.

“When looking at a topwater bait, fish see a profile that resembles a larger prey fish, like a mullet,” said Ronnie Daniels of Fisher-Man Guide Services (228-323-1115) in Pass Christian. “I experiment with different retrieves and colors. Sometimes, fish want almost non-stop movement. Sometimes, they want it slow. Sometimes I pause to let a topwater bait sit still for a second or two. My all-time favorite color for trout is bone with a slight silver pattern to it.”

For redfish and trout, anglers commonly use jigheads tipped with soft-plastic trailers. These frequently snag when fished around such structures as reefs. Instead, use smooth, cylindrical, banana-shaped sinkers on Carolina rigs. Tie the sinker to the end of the line. Above it, attach a soft-plastic shrimp or minnow imitation. Insert the hook into the plastic to make it snagless. The curved shape and smooth exterior of the banana sinker allows it to slip over rocks and blocks more easily without snagging.

Katrina Key and other reefs provide great cover for many species to hide or hunt. Besides redfish and trout, anglers might also catch black drum, flounder, croaker, white trout and ground mullet, aka whiting or channel mullet, and several other species. However, sheepshead particularly like hard structures. They nibble the barnacles growing on the objects. Sheepshead rarely hit lures, but they’ll grab a shrimp, even a plastic one.

For sheepshead, specks, reds and other species, use a popping-cork rig to keep baits above the structure. Position the boat near the downstream tip of the reef. Toss the rig baited with a live shrimp or a plastic imitation upstream. Make it land close to the reef, but not close enough to snag. Let the tide

carry the cork parallel to the structure with the bait suspended off the bottom. Periodically, jerk the rod so the cork makes a surface commotion like a fish striking.

“Sheepshead are not always on the bottom, especially in deeper water,” Brodie said. “They move up and down the water column and suspend. When fishing a reef, we use a popping cork baited with a live shrimp so we don’t snag the reef. Drift it right above the bottom structure.”

In Mississippi Sound near Waveland, the state established Jailhouse Reef with debris from a jail demolished by Katrina. Other good reefs in this area include Bayou Caddy Reef, Pass Christian Key just east of Pass Christian Harbor and the Square Handkerchief, also called Gene Taylor Key. These reefs stick about 3 to 5 feet above the water.

Around these reefs, anglers can catch any fish that swims along the coast. Depending upon the location and water conditions, anglers might entice some Spanish mackerel or bluefish, possibly tripletail. For toothy blues and mackerel, throw shiny spoons or other metal lures that mimic baitfish. Use a cork and a live shrimp to entice tripletail.

Giant redfish spend most of their lives in deep Gulf waters offshore. In late summer and fall, bulls come closer to shore and often travel in huge schools, terrorizing mullets and other baitfish. When the bulls make a run, the powerful, vicious fish offer anglers outstanding opportunities for intensely exciting topwater action. Cast lures that mimic mullet or dangle a live baitfish under a cork. Anglers could also fish live bait on a drift line without a weight.

“On the Mississippi coast, we’ll see the ‘running of the bulls’ from about mid-July through the first cool snap in late October,” said Mark Wright with Legends of the Lower Marsh Charters (228-324-7612) in Pass Christian. “When those big bulls come inshore, they are feeding up for the spawn. They will eat anything they can swallow.”



John N. Felsher is a professional freelance writer and photographer with more than 1,700 articles in more than 117 magazines to his credit. He worked as the outdoors editor for several Louisiana newspapers and currently co-hosts a weekly outdoors radio show on WNSP 105.5 FM in Mobile, Ala. You can contact him at JohnNFelsher.com.





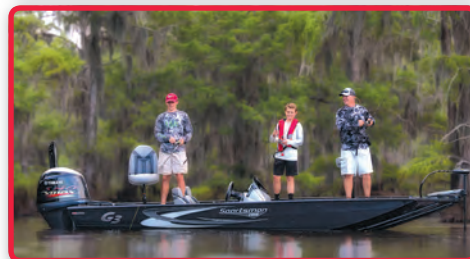
Clay Thompson shows off a red snapper he caught while fishing a reef in the Gulf of Mexico. **BELOW:** Mississippi uses different materials, including concrete chunks and old culverts, to create artificial reefs. Here, workers deposit new material at Katrina Key, a reef just outside Back Bay.



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The state also established offshore reefs. Most consist of concrete rubble, culverts, old barges, sunken boats or ships and other materials. Some offshore reefs stretch over 10,000 acres of bottom. In addition, the remains of numerous decommissioned petroleum platforms still create fish habitat under the “Rigs-to-Reefs” program, providing homes for snapper and other bottomfish.

“Most of the more popular reefs are 30 to 40 miles offshore, but some are roughly 70 miles out,” Hill said. “We also work with the oil and gas companies when they want to decommission a rig. We have certain permitted zones where companies can place the jackets and legs of those rigs without incurring the expense of hauling them ashore and disassembling them. Some rigs-to-reefs sites are more than 90 miles offshore.”

Recently, the state added a massive new offshore reef. Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula needed to replace an aging concrete and steel drydock and donated it to the state for an offshore reef.

“We secured funding through NFWF to place the material at Fish Haven 13, which is one of our more popular red snapper reefs,” Hill said. “It’s approximately 35 miles off Pascagoula. It was such a large amount of material that we were able to create multiple reefs with it at no cost to the state of Mississippi.”

The new reef sits in about 75 to 90 feet of water and should attract good concentrations of red snapper and other reef fish. When targeting bottomfish, bait a drift line or two with live fish or other succulent temptations and place the rods on holders. The bait might attract roving king mackerel, cobia and other big fish.

“Anglers fishing the reefs are usually more successful than people fishing elsewhere,” Hill said. “The artificial reef program has been a great success with the help of our partners. It costs the state very little money to keep the program going.”

For more information about the artificial reefs or to donate materials, call 228-523-4110. For reef locations, see dmr.ms.gov/artificial-reef. ■

INSHORE ARTIFICIAL REEFS MAP >

Ronnie Daniels of Fisher-Man Guide Services unhooks a speckled trout he caught on a topwater bait fishing a reef in Mississippi Sound near Pass Christian.



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Oasis for fish — or fishermen?







John Godwin might be more famous for his quips and advice from a duck blind in the television show *Duck Dynasty*, but put him in his boat on a good crappie lake somewhere in his home state of Louisiana or an oxbow on the other side of the river in Mississippi, and he's just as happy.

One of Godwin's favorite way to fish for crappie — if not his most-favorite — is long-line trolling. While many anglers share his passion for the technique, most will abandon long-lining during the summer once water temperatures heat up.

Godwin said that's a mistake.

"I love long-lining," he said. "To me, it's the most-fun way of fishing for crappie, but it's also really productive in the summer, too."

Godwin described two types of bodies of water that hold the majority of crappie: reservoirs and oxbow lakes, especially the latter that are still tied to the Mississippi River.

By Phillip Gentry

LONG-LINING, THE GODWIN WAY

ALL REFERENCES TO THE WALRUS AND HAM SAMMICHES ASIDE, OUTDOORS PERSONALITY JOHN GODWIN KNOWS HIS STUFF WHEN IT COMES TO SUMMER CRAPPIE FISHING.

Courtesy John Godwin

WHITE CRAPPIE: ON THE MOVE

“On reservoirs in the summer, white crappie will roam around and chase bait,” he said. “If you want to catch a black crappie, you gotta troll across the tops of the brush piles, but white crappie stay more out in the open.”

Godwin theorized that by August, thermoclines have set up, holding baitfish higher in the water column. It’s not unusual, he said, to go out first thing in the morning or late in the evening and see schools of baitfish dimpling the surface. He said crappie will often suspend below the baitfish, and long-lining lets him put his baits between the baitfish and the crappie.

“The fish are shallow, so I’m not going to use anything heavier than a 1/16-ounce jighead, and a lot of times, I’ll even use a 1/32-ounce jighead,” Godwin said. “I like the Fin Spins for long-lining in the summer; that extra flash from the blade really helps the bite.”

Godwin sets up his Sea Ark boat with eight rods. On each side of the boat, he will start with the shortest rods toward the stern and the longest rods closer to the bow. He uses a 10-foot B’n’M Duck Commander trolling rod closest to the stern, followed by a 12-footer and a 14-footer after that.

“It seems like with the fish so shallow, you tend to push them out to the sides of the boat. That’s why I like the longer trolling rods,” said Godwin. “I even started using a 16-footer all the way up. It’s a B’n’M Prostaff trolling rod. It seems like those outer

rods end up catching all the better fish.”

Godwin looks for places that are showing bait on the surface, but he also has some spots that he fishes because it seems like they always hold baitfish in the summer. He said there’s no real rhyme or reason to it, but he likes to know the bait is there or he won’t catch many crappie.

“It’s hard to see the bait on the graph; they’re so high up in the water,” he said. “The 1/32-ounce jigs will get down to about 3 feet when you pull them at one mile per hour, and the 1/16-ounce jigs will get to about 6 feet at one mile an hour. That’s using 6-pound test line.”

Godwin said his top pick of baits are Crappie Magnet’s Slab Curlies, and that his color choices are typically based on water clarity. His favorites in clear water are purple and chartreuse and a color called “sho nuff” that he describes as the “monkey milk” color with a chartreuse tail.

Godwin said river lakes are still high this year, and as they heat up, the shad will also come to the top.

“I don’t understand why,” he said. “They don’t form thermoclines like the reservoirs, but the bait will be right on the surface, so I fish those lakes the same way I do the reservoirs.”

Godwin generally targets flats that may be 14 feet deep on some lakes and deeper on others.

DEVELOPMENT OF LONG-LINING ➤

John Godwin said crappie will suspend just below bait on the surface in many thermocline reservoirs and oxbow lakes, and to be careful not to troll under the fish.



Courtesy John Godwin

DEVELOPMENT OF LONG-LINING

It's hard to argue about when long-lining first came into existence. Fishermen have been trolling hooks behind their boats for ages. Long-line trolling probably came about with the advent of long rods to space out offerings and give crappie a variety of baits in the wake of the boat.

When long-lining for crappie became popular, Godwin fell in love with the tactic and points to it as his go-to tactic any time crappie are suspended and chasing baitfish.

"Long-lining works best when fish are holding near the surface," Godwin said. "Long-lining also works better when crappie are relating to roving schools of baitfish than when

specifically relating to structure."

Like slow, vertical trolling, aka tight-lining, long-liners may follow a contour line but most likely would be trolling the expanse of a flat. This allows an angler to cover more water as the normal boat speed is twice that of tight-lining.

"Crappie will follow a contour line, like a creek channel, and that's a great place to look for them, but active, feeding fish are often all over a flat chasing baitfish. That's the best situation to find crappie when you're long-lining," Godwin said.



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.

TROLLING VARIABLES >



Phillip Gentry



Courtesy John Godwin

Long-line trolling specifically targets suspended fish that are chasing bait high in the water column. ABOVE: Godwin's choice of rods are B'n'M Duck Commander trolling rods. He said the further out to the side of the boat you can get, the better the big fish like it.



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TROLLING VARIABLES

For those not familiar with long-lining, the depth a bait is presented is a function of boat speed, the amount of line out, the weight of the jighead and line diameter. Each factor plays a part in how deep jigs will swim and whether you reach the level at which crappie are suspended.

Taking a page from Long-Lining 101, a good rule of thumb is to suggest trolling a 1/16-ounce jighead on 6-pound line the distance of an average cast — 40 to 50 feet — behind the boat. The remaining variable then becomes boat speed. Speeding up will bring the bait up in the water, and slowing down or momentarily stopping the boat will cause the jigs to fall.

Courtesy John Godwin



Godwin said to catch black crappie, he'll troll across the tops of brush piles, while white crappie prefer to be more out in open water.

Similar results can be achieved by making sharp turns when trolling instead of just running straight lines back and forth across a stretch of water.

"To be good at depth control means you spend a lot of time pulling jigs," Godwin said. "It's also gonna work different on my boat than it does on someone else's boat, so you need to figure out what works best on your boat."

His advice was to find a 10-foot deep flat with a level bottom and experiment with different variables to find what combination will put you occasionally skimming bottom, then work from there on getting your boat dialed in for the line you use, the rod holder setup you have, and the various jigheads and baits you pull.

Godwin admits there might be one thing he likes better than long-lining for summer crappie.

"I like eatin' em," he said, grinning. ■

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WEIGHING IN

Crappie anglers are familiar with using jigs that weigh considerably less than typical bass jigs. Popular jig weights for crappie include 1/32-, 1/16-, and 1/8-ounce, but those weights can vary considerably from one manufacturer to another, sometimes even one jig to another.

"I've seen jigs marked 1/16-ounce that weighed anywhere from 1.5 grams to 2.1 grams," said tournament angler Kent Driscoll. "That's why I also ways carry a gram-scale with me and measure each jig individually before I put it in the rotation."

Driscoll said what may seem to be a negligible difference in weight can make a lot of difference in the depth that jig will swim when it's pulled behind the boat. Add to that the weight and buoyancy of the jig's body, and most anglers have no real clue what depth they're fishing.

"The best water for long-line trolling is going to be stained, which means

reduced visibility," he said. "A crappie may only be able to see the bait at a distance of about 2 feet. Another factor — and any good angler knows — is a crappie always feeds in an upward position and will completely ignore a bait that passes just 6 inches under its nose."

Using a gram scale, which can be found at most hardware stores that sell precision tools and equipment for around \$15, instead of having only three or four choices of jig weights, he can broaden that range to around a dozen. The subtle weight difference allows him to hone his swimming depths to get around a foot of depth tolerance, which can and has made a huge difference in the number of bites he gets. ■

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Phillip Gentry



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Designed for all-day wear under the worst conditions, they feature an 8mm thick, molded EVA footbed that provides plenty of underfoot cushioning and support. The GRIP-X outsoles deliver unbeatable traction to avoid slips and spills, no matter how slick the deck or dock may become. The rubber

and neoprene upper is incredibly durable.

The boots weigh in at 38 ounces per pair, lightweight for fishing boots. They are available in sizes 7-14 (full sizes only) and in three colors: grey, Huk blue and white, and in three camo patterns: Mossy Oak Hydro Standards, Storm and Mossy Oak Bottomland.

MSRP: \$85-\$95.

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The pullover utilizes 4-way stretch construction, allowing for maximum range

of movement. Likewise, the pullover features wicking moisture management, and it can easily be stowed away in a pack and is incredibly breathable. It also features an adjustable hood and zip front for custom venting and total coverage, as well as a zip dump pouch for quick access to gear.

The pants' Ever-Adjust waistband and button closure makes for a comfortable fit, while cargo pockets provide convenient storage for accessories.

MSRP: \$100 per piece.

For more info, visit: nomadoutdoor.com



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Barnett has been known for producing quality crossbows at affordable prices, and its latest offering, the Hyper Whitetail 401, will not disappoint.

Paired with Barnett's HyperFlite arrows, this crossbow offers 410 fps speed, delivering 141 foot pounds of downrange energy. The arrow's Front-of-Center location and improved ballistic co-efficient reduces wind drift, and the new

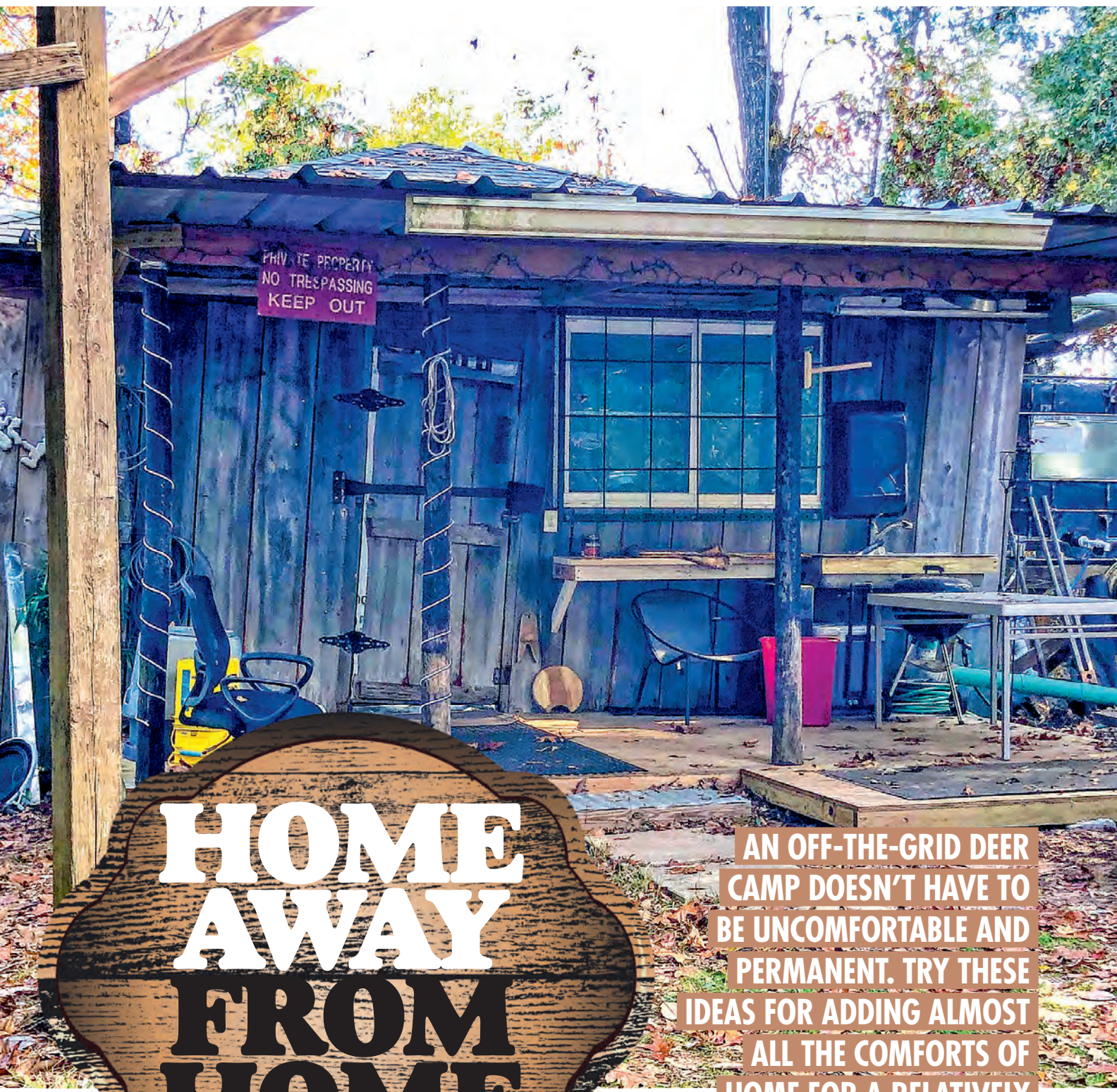
capture nock increases string-to-nock engagement by 30% for better accuracy, reduced string wear and longer string life. Combine that with burning arrow speed for a more-accurate shot at that big buck.

The Hyper Whitetail 410's metal-injected, molded trigger comes with a crisp, 3-pound pull for better accuracy, and an Anti-Dry Fire system and nock system ensure correct arrow placement. The bow comes with a Halo 4x32 scope and a premium, side-mount quiver and two arrows. A pre-installed, crank cocking system is available.

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HOME AWAY FROM HOME

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■ By Chris Holmes

FOR MOST HUNTERS,

especially those who live in larger metropolitan areas, finding land to lease means having to travel a few hours from home, sometimes even out of state.

Having a comfortable place to stay and basic facilities are top priorities; however, leases are not forever, and building a hunting cabin can be an expensive proposition you can't recoup when it is time to go. But setting up a place to operate off-the-grid is fairly easy and inexpensive, and it can even be done with portability so you can move it to another location.

Two friends and I were excited to see a deer-hunting lease that was available a couple hours from home. The excitement grew when the owner mentioned that the 300-acre property featured a "camp house."

It sounded like the perfect place for the three of us. I had dreams of a cozy cabin with a white picket fence. We took a tour of the property and saw decent deer sign, good trails and roads, nice terrain mixed with hills, creek bottoms, pine plantations and a couple of small fields with shooting houses. It was just what we dreamed about.

However, when we came to the camp house, it more closely resembled a crack house. No utilities, rat-infested — and the previous group apparently lived like cavemen.

My hunting buddies, Steve Savoye and his son, Steven, are uber-talented carpenters and builders, so we knew converting the shack into a livable space wouldn't be a problem. However, we quickly found that paying to have electricity and water run to the property and installing a septic system were not economically feasible. The landowner was only holding the property for timber investment and had no interest in sharing the costs. We decided to go ahead and lease the property, even if it meant staying in a hotel room 15 miles away in a nearby town.

But after a few weekends of hard work, the camp house was transformed into a clean, comfortable, livable space. We had the option of using a generator for electricity, but that meant carrying it back and forth, not to mention the maintenance, fuel and noise. After doing a little off-the-grid research, we added a 100-watt solar panel to the roof. Combined with a single, high-capacity, 12-volt, deep-cycle battery, power was supplied to several bright lights, interior and exterior. The 12-volt LED bulbs have lasted for years, and disposable aluminum baking pans were used as reflectors.

The same system also powers dual USB outlets at each bunk for charging phones and operating other small USB items such as laptops and small fans. The solar-controller installation is easy, and for wiring, you only need to know positive from negative. The solar panel and controller was about \$150, and the battery another \$100.

Water for drinking and cooking is necessarily brought in via 5-gallon jugs and cases of bottled water. However, an installed rainwater collection system was built from plastic gutters and a 330-gallon metal-framed plastic tote for storage. The tote was painted black to limit sunlight and is regularly treated with chlorine tablets to inhibit bacterial growth. The water enters and exits the tank through DIY gravel, sand and charcoal filters. The water from the tank is *only* used for the toilet, shower, and outside washing of the skinning rack and ATVs, etc. A small, 12-volt, pressure-sensitive pump runs off the solar system and carries water throughout simple PEX/PVC piping.

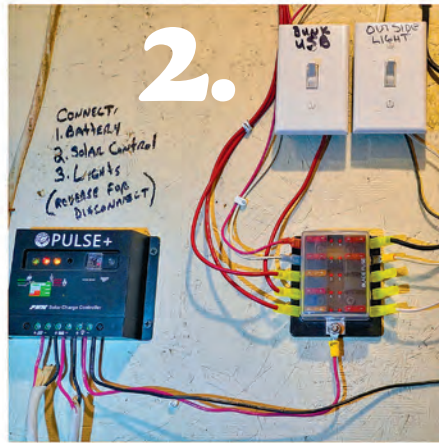


Chris Holmes is a lifelong Louisiana resident and has hunted everything from squirrels to bear across numerous states in the continental United States and also Hawaii, Canada and Mexico.





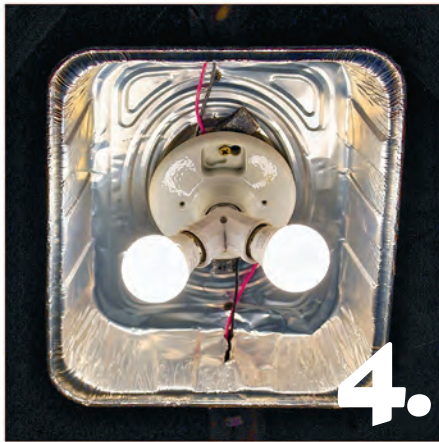
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CAMP ITEMS LIST

- 1) Urinal from 5-gallon, plastic water jug
- 2) Solar controller and 12-volt fuse panel
- 3) Propane Mr. Heater wall heater
- 4) Porcelain fixture; 12-volt LED light bulbs and aluminum pan reflectors
- 5) Pet-food container for food storage
- 6) 12-volt, pressure sensitive water pump
- 7) Rain water collection/ storage system
- 8) Dual outlet USB phone charger
- 9) On-demand propane water heater

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

For the shower, a three-walled plastic enclosure was an easy install. A small, on-demand propane water heater provides instant hot water. It is certainly nice to have access to a shower after a hot October bow hunt or hours working in the sun planting food plots.

Time to go? No buckets or outhouse needed. A urinal fashioned from a cut-out, 5-gallon water jug and a fully functional indoor toilet connects to a small, nearby D-I-Y septic waste system. The system is easy and inexpensive to build; the hardest part is digging the trench for the piping, the holes for the two 55-gallon plastic waste barrels and the gravel leach field. Instructions and detailed plans are available on the internet for about \$30. We bought used, plastic drums for \$10 each, and the PVC pipe was about \$50 — about \$100 for a simple, easily maintained septic system.

Although I believe the camp solar panel could handle extra lighting, a voltage drop running wire from the camp out to the skinning rack caused the lights to be dim. A second solar panel and smaller battery was added to power a large LED light for unloading the trucks upon arrival, and two LED spotlights are plenty bright enough to clean deer.

For cooking, a combination of a flat-top griddle, single gas burner and a seafood burner all run on portable propane, as does the large wall heater. Battery operated smoke and



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OPPOSITE PAGE: Steve Savoye cleans a doe shot on an evening hunt. A separate solar panel and battery was installed to light the skinning rack. **RIGHT:** A solar panel and 12-volt, deep-cycle battery powers indoor and outdoor lighting, water pump and phone chargers.



carbon monoxide detectors add a level of safety. Any food not in cans or jars is stored week-to-week in a heavy duty, air-tight, plastic pet-food container. Although not a single rodent has been seen in the camp, it is better not to do anything to attract them.

Additional outdoor lighting comes from stand-alone solar/LED rope, wall and even Christmas lights. A couple of motion-sensor LED spotlights activate upon loading up in the morning or walking or riding up after an evening hunt. A couple of game cams are strategically hidden to monitor for any unwanted visitors while no one is there.

We were lucky and had a rudimentary building to work with, but many leases are property only. When it is time for us to go, almost everything can be removed and re-used. However, these

same systems can be added to portable sheds and shipping containers and made into small camps that can be moved off the property if you lose the lease or decide to go elsewhere.

When you walk into the camp and flick the switch, the lights come on just like at home. The 12-volt system can't run an air conditioner, but a small generator can power a compact window unit for those few early season hunts where it may be a bit warm. Inexpensive, removable, portable and off-the-grid. Pretty much all the comforts of home and no utility bills. ■

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THE DOG DAYS OF SUMMER MIGHT NOT SEEM LIKE THE BEST TIME TO CATCH A BIG LARGEMOUTH, BUT CERTAIN TACTICS AND SITUATIONS CAN SPAWN SOME BIG-FISH BITES. HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW.

■ By Mike Giles

**SOME (BASS)
LIKE IT HOT!**



MAGNUM TUBES FOR SUSPENDED BASS

Terry Bates of Greenville and I once spent a couple hours fishing an old oxbow lake along the Mississippi River with nary a bite. The river had risen, and the bass were scattered as a result, with little brush or wood cover visible.

Bates pulled out a rod rigged with a magnum tube and started fishing flooded willow trees. He concentrated his efforts on the base of the trees, pitching his tube near them or into any limbs that were submerged. As he approached one tree that had limbs broken and hanging into the water, he pitched a tube into it and let it free fall, but it didn't get far before it stopped falling.

Wham!

Bates reared back on his rod, and a lunker bass exploded through the surface, slashing and thrashing back and forth as it fought wildly. Bates made quick work and horsed him into the boat in no time.

"Any time you have a sudden rise on the river during the summer, the bass will suspend in the flooded trees and laydown logs," Bates said. "It's just a numbers game then, and you have to keep that bait in the water and cover a lot of territory. I'd key on the laydown limbs, if I can find any, and work the bases of the trees if not.

"I'll let the lure fall about 10 feet and bring it back to the boat and pitch to the next one. The bass are usually suspending in the cover or beside the tree trunks, and they'll eat the tube if you put it on them."

I watched as Bates' cherry-picked several bass in the 5- to 7-pound range from the flooded timber, and I quickly rigged up a tube of my own. He was using 20-pound fluorocarbon with a pegged bullet sinker, glass bead and magnum tube.

It didn't take many casts before I pitched beside a tree, and the lure only went about 5 feet before stopping. I reared back on the rod and was stopped cold for an instant before a bass started tearing line out of my reel. After a short fight, I wore him down and landed him, took a few pictures and released him.

According to Bates, the key is to watch your line, and if it twitches, moves to the side or stops after a few feet, reel in the slack and slam the hook home.



Tube baits aren't just for tempting spawning bass. In magnum sizes, they can be effective on fish suspended in cover.

Pitching and flipping a magnum tube has consistently worked for me in hot weather or after a cold front in brush tops from 5 to 12 feet deep as well. Whether they're along a bank, on a flat or on a ledge, pitching a magnum tube will draw strikes from lunker bass when nothing else will.

COOL NIGHTS, HOT BITES ➤



COOL NIGHTS, HOT BITES

Big bass become more active after the sun goes down, and many anglers take advantage by fishing at night. Over the years, I've taken advantage of cooler temperatures and active bass. I'll fish the same areas where I find bass during the daytime; the big difference is that bass actively feed after the sun goes down, and many will move up to the top of the submerged ledges and drop-offs in search of an easy meal.

One summer evening a while back, my boat was anchored on top of a submerged hump as the sun went down. I'd gotten a few bites, but at 9:30, I worked a 14-inch black worm through a submerged tree about 10 feet deep. As the worm came over a limb and fell, my line never stopped. I never felt a thing, but I knew it should have stopped by then.

Wham!

I jerked the rod back as quickly and hard as I could, and the angry bass felt the sting of my 5/0 Gamakatsu hook. He fought like a demon, diving toward the bottom and stripping line off my reel. I finally wore the bass down and turned him toward the boat, but it was nip-and-tuck as he took out line and I reeled some back in. Back and forth it went for a while. As the bass surfaced, he wallowed on top like an alligator and sent a wave of water across the bow.

I quickly led him to the net, and we got him safely into the boat and could barely believe our eyes. The bass was definitely over 12 pounds, one of the biggest I'd ever caught. After a couple of pictures, I released him and watched as he swam towards the safety of the bottom. I rested for a few minutes and drank a soft drink to cool off and settle down before I started back fishing.

We continued working the hump, which was 10 feet deep on the top and dropped off to 15 or 20 feet on the sides. The key was to work the lure over any brush we could find, as the bass had moved up onto the top and were actively feeding after spending the day on the bottom.

I switched to a Carolina-rigged Bass Pro Shops Magnum worm in grape color with about a 5-foot leader and kept working the area along and to the side of the ledge. At 10:45, I pulled the worm through the limbs of another submerged brush top, and another bass grabbed the worm and yanked my rod straight down.

Bam!

I bowed up and drove the hook deep into the jaw of another monster bass, and it bore down into the treetop. I worked him back and forth and finally cleared the brush and brought him back to the boat, finally netting him after an epic battle. This bass was almost a twin of the first, both weighing more than 12 pounds.



OPPOSITE PAGE: The author caught this Mississippi River bass on a crankbait last summer while fishing a ledge on an oxbow lake near Rosedale.

BIG CRANKBAITS AND LEDGES

Paul Elias of Laurel has made a living out of finding and catching big bass on deep-diving crankbaits; he even designed a lure for Mann's Bait Company that bore his name: Paul's Bait. It was perhaps the ultimate crankbait when Mann's came out with it, a great ledge bait I used to win many tournaments on Okatibbee Lake and in lakes along the Tombigbee River. Elias bounced the big crankbaits off of stumps and ledges to win the 1982 Bassmaster Classic on the Alabama River, and it's still an effective technique today.

I learned it fishing Ross Barnett with my grandfather, J. P. Nolen, and my uncle, Jimmy Nolen, back in the 1970s and have caught hundreds of lunker bass since. It's still a favorite technique that I employ during hot weather.

During one tournament on Okatibbee, I worked the crankbait along a submerged creek channel on the main lake. I caught four, 4-pound bass on consecutive casts on a scalding, hot day by bouncing the crankbait off of a stump on the lip of the ledge. With a solid 5-fish limit, I won the tournament by several pounds.

If you're looking to catch big bass in hot weather, a large crankbait is just the ticket to entice a reaction bite. No matter what crankbait you like to throw, if you can bounce it off of a stump or ledge, bass just can't resist it. They'll bite it when they won't chase anything else.

FROGS IN THE SALAD PATCH ➤



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



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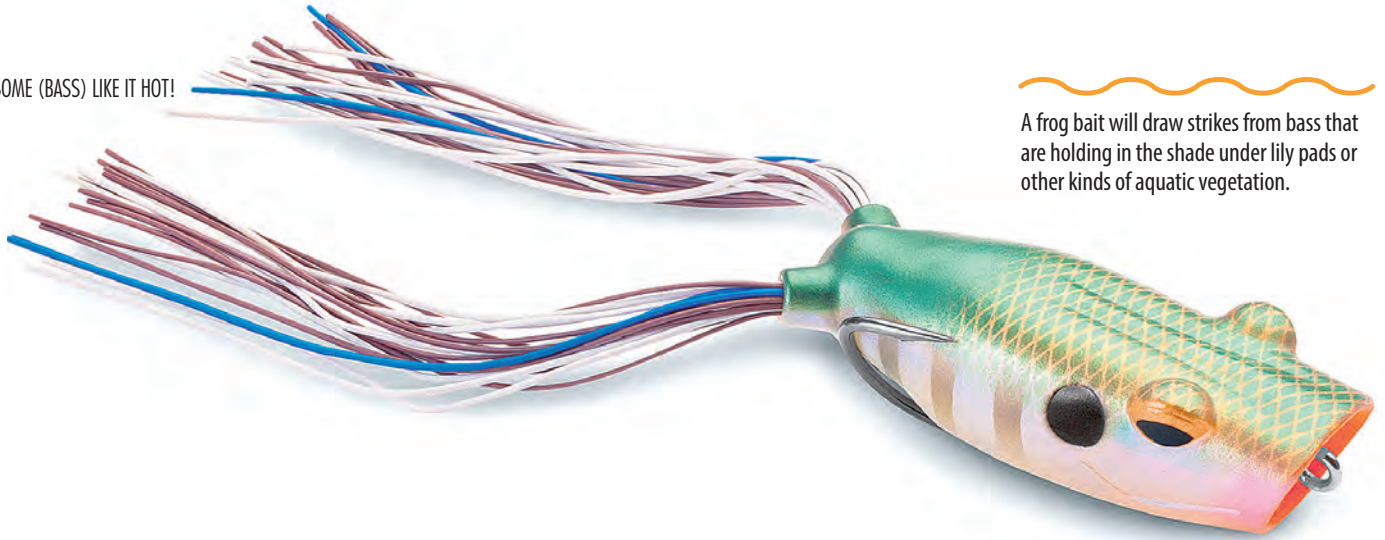
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SOME (BASS) LIKE IT HOT!



A frog bait will draw strikes from bass that are holding in the shade under lily pads or other kinds of aquatic vegetation.

FROGS IN THE SALAD PATCH

Many lakes have only shallow water, so the bass can't get deep enough to beat the heat, and some may have various types of

grass or lily pads. Bass and baitfish escape the heat by living under the pads and grass, and you're subject to catching a bass any time of the day on a frog. I learned how to fish a frog on Ross Barnett, and they are big-bass magnets no matter where you fish.

While the best times are early and late, when bass are active, or on a cloudy, drizzling day, frog baits may entice strikes from bass during the hot part of the day. If you work that frog right on top of them, they just can't stand it. Sometimes they want it fast, and sometimes they want it slow, but they will usually hit a frog if you fish it long enough to see just what action they're looking for.

I'll hit the edges of the pads, the holes or pad openings or cast across pad points. I've even enticed strikes from bass at high noon from lakes as clear as Turkey Fork. I'll find an area with movement of baitfish or sounds of bream sucking and feeding under the pads and use a popping frog in a walk-the-dog fashion, along the edge of the pads or in openings. Some of my biggest bass caught on these frogs have come from gin-clear water in the pads.

If you want to catch a lunker bass in August, you might want to try a few of these tried and proven tips and techniques. You just might catch the bass of a lifetime. ■

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GETTIN' FRESH

Hal Schramm

This 13½-pound bass was donated to Texas's ShareLunker program. Progeny from this fish and a male Florida bass were stocked into the Texas impoundment where this fish was caught.



CAN WE BUILD BIGGER BASS?

SELECTIVE BREEDING YIELDS FASTER GROWING LARGEMOUTH

TPWD photo

For bass anglers, bigger is better. This mantra has stimulated fisheries management agencies to introduce larger-growing, Florida-strain largemouth bass into northern fisheries where water temperatures remain sufficiently warm for their survival. Texas, which has long maintained an aggressive Florida bass-stocking program, went one step further: stocking the progeny of bass bred from the biggest bass caught in Texas.

Selective breeding has been practiced for centuries by agriculturists to produce crops and livestock with better yields or other desirable characteristics. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's ShareLunker program began in 1986 to promote angler involvement in fisheries management and, relying on the fundamentals of selective breeding, produce bigger bass. A study by TPWD biologists provides a first look at whether selective breeding can produce bigger bass.

The ShareLunker program involves mating trophy female largemouth bass donated by anglers with pure, Florida-

strain largemouth bass males and raising the progeny for stocking into Texas reservoirs. The cost of producing these selectively bred ShareLunker bass is 20 times greater than the cost of producing Florida-strain bass. After 30 years of pursuing a "good idea" and with advances in genetic analysis that allow definitive identification of a bass's parentage, it was time to see if the expensive effort was actually working.

THE EVALUATION

Samples of 4-year-old bass were collected from six Texas reservoirs stocked with ShareLunker progeny. All lakes previously had been stocked with Florida-strain bass, so the resident bass naturally spawned in the lake had Florida bass genes and the potential to produce oversized bass. Modern genetic techniques and computer programs that allowed identification of the parental fish from fin clips enabled the ShareLunker bass to be distinguished from the resident bass.

The ShareLunker bass were longer and heavier than the resident bass in

five of the six lakes, and the lengths and weights of age-4 ShareLunker bass were significantly greater than resident bass in three lakes.

Among all six lakes, the average length and weight of age-4 ShareLunker bass was 16.6 inches and 2.62 pounds, while age-4 resident bass were 16.0 inches and 2.18 pounds.

QUESTIONS REMAIN

Adding Florida-strain bass to a population of northern largemouth is known to produce larger bass, both from the stocked pure Florida-strain bass and their hybrids with the existing northern bass population. The ShareLunker progeny from the largest bass caught in Texas produced faster-growing bass than



Hal Schramm is an avid angler and veteran fisheries biologist.

bass with some Florida-strain genes. Selective breeding appears to work, but 4-year-old 2-pounders are hardly trophy bass.

Growth to double-digit weight, even for fast-growing Florida-strain bass, takes at least 10 years in Texas waters. The validity of extending the TPWD's results to predict the growth of fish more than twice as old as the age-4 bass studied requires understanding a little about bass growth.

Fish have "determinate" growth — if they survive to old age, they achieve a certain maximum size. This is largely controlled by genetics.

Bass have a consistent growth trajectory. They grow quickly in length at young ages, but the annual growth increment decreases as the fish get larger. As a bass continues to grow, the annual growth increment diminishes to nearly zero, becoming *asymptotic* to the maximum length — the determinate length — for the population. This asymptotic length is a population characteristic, and individuals will vary, some growing larger before they die of old age, some dying before they reach asymptotic length.

FAST GROWTH = BIGGER FISH?

An often-repeated adage in fisheries is "grow fast, die young." So, is the greater length and weight of ShareLunker progeny at age-4 a good indicator that these bass will achieve larger size?

While grow-fast-die-young is sometimes true, it is also often incorrectly applied. Faster-growing largemouth in the South die younger — commonly at 10 to 14 years old — than slower-growing largemouth in the North that die at 18 to 20 years old. The bass growing season is shorter in the North, but both northern and southern largemouth grow to similar determinate lengths — they just get to that length sooner in the South. Size, not age, is a more important determinant of how long bass live.

A more definitive test of the ShareLunker progeny producing larger trophy bass requires analysis of trophy-size bass, but this is not easily done.

First, trophy sized bass are rare in the population. Collecting a sufficient number of fish for a meaningful analysis would be extremely difficult, if not impossible.

Second, comparing growth rate requires knowledge of the age of the bass. Old bass can be accurately aged with otoliths, but collecting otoliths requires sacrificing fish. This would be counterproductive to the goals of TPWD's trophy fish program and would cause a firestorm with anglers.

The aging problem is partly solved: the same genetic analyses that allow determining a ShareLunker progeny's parentage can be used to assign a spawn date. The problem, however, remains for aging the wild-spawned resident fish.

Other approaches can be used to assess the contribution of Share Lunker fish to the trophy bass population, so further support for selective breeding to grow bigger bass may be forthcoming. At this point, I would conclude that the effort, although expensive, can produce bigger bass. ■

LUNKER LINES >

Will this fast-growing 5-year-old largemouth bass continue to grow into a double-digit, trophy bass if it survives a few more years?



LUNKER LINES

Paul Elias



FISH ENID FOR AUGUST BASS

RIPRAP NEAR DAM, POCKETS UP THE LAKE ARE KEYS TO HAVING A GOOD FISHING DAY

Enid, a 6,100-acre lake about 50 miles south of Memphis in Yalobusha County, has plenty of cover and some nice, 3- to 5-pound bass.

Due to the amount of rain received, Enid has been flooded much of this year, which means new cover for bass to use as ambush points. Once the water leaves during the summer drawdown, bass will probably hold on shallow cover. To catch these bass, which will weigh 1½ to 3 pounds, I'll fish mostly hard cover like riprap, logs, stumps, blowdowns and bushes.

EARLY MORNING

Just before first light, I'll be fishing about 500 yards of riprap on the south end of the dam, moving away from it. Next, I'll run across the lake and fish about 500 yards of the riprap in the same fashion.

The key to having success fishing this riprap is to arrive early. I like a ¾-ounce white buzzbait on a 7-foot-1, medium-heavy FX Custom rod with a 7.3:1 Bruin ELS reel that's spooled with 20-pound White Peacock fluorocarbon. I'll parallel the riprap with the buzzbait, fishing it fairly fast and keeping it as close to the rocks as possible.

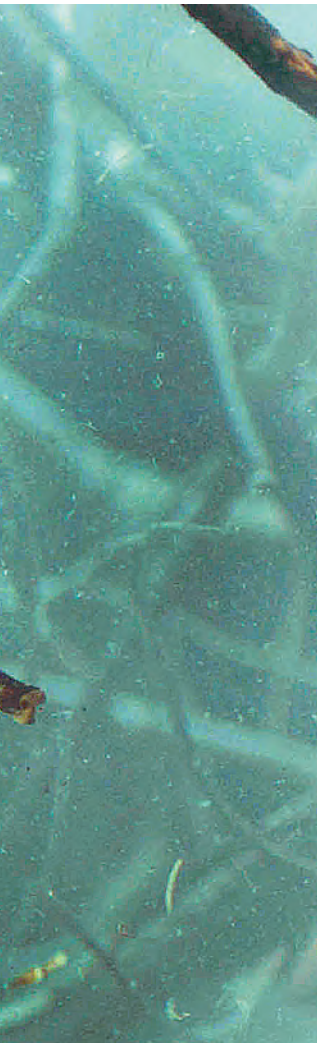
On my casting deck, I'll also have a shad-colored Zara Spook on 20-pound braid with a 12- to 14-inch fluorocarbon leader on a 6-foot-9, medium-action rod with an 8:1 reel. The fluorocarbon leader keeps the Spook's treble hooks from getting tangled up in the braid. I'll use the buzzbait to fish plenty of water fast and



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



Spring II worm



Fishing in August, Paul Elias likes to fish a jig around stumps and laydowns in pockets on the upper end of Enid Lake.

the Zara Spook to fish quickly when I spot bass blowing up on the surface, chasing baitfish.

Another key bait will be a new Mann's SpringR II worm in green pumpkin with a curled tail that straightens out as it falls. Movement of the worm makes the tail curl. If a bass blows up on a buzzbait or the Spook, and I don't hook it, I'll shake my rod tip and use that SpringR II worm without a weight as a follow-up bait, since it falls slowly. I like this new worm because the bass haven't seen it before, and it looks alive due to the way the tail of the worm curls and uncurls.

I'll fish it on spinning tackle with a 7-foot-4, medium-action rod with yellow, 10-pound braid and a 10-pound fluorocarbon leader. Since the strike often occurs as the bait falls, I can spot the bite more easily on yellow line.

I'll fish this worm on a slack line. Once I twitch my rod tip, the tail of the worm will uncurl, and the bass often will take it when the worm's tail starts to curl back toward the head. I'll fish it with an Eagle Claw No. 1/0 drop-shot hook, a small hook that comes with a pack of these worms, with instructions on how to rig it.

AFTER SUN-UP

Later in the morning, once the sun comes up, I'll go up the lake and search for shallow pockets, since Enid has good numbers of these. I'll fish as many small pockets as possible. If the lake's high, I'll be fishing flooded bushes. If the lake's at normal pool, I'll concentrate on fishing stumps and laydowns. I'll use a ½-ounce Stone Jig on a 7-foot-3, heavy action rod and a 7.3:1 reel with 30-pound braid. I'll pitch the jig to shallow structure and try to pull it over stumps and logs and into flooded bushes. If I don't get a strike, I'll move on to the next piece of cover.

I'll also fish these shallow pockets with a C4 crankbait and a Baby 1-Minus in a shad color. I'll fish the Baby 1-Minus on 19-pound fluorocarbon with a 7-foot, medium heavy cranking rod with a 6.2:1 reel. I want to run that Baby 1-Minus right over the tops of the stumps that are in less than 2 feet of water. Sometimes the Baby 1-Minus bounces off the stumps. The bass often will be around the roots of the stumps. I'll use the same rod, reel and line set-up when I'm fishing the C4 in the stumps that are 3 to 5 feet deep.

If you fish only early in the morning and late in the afternoon in August, you'll probably catch seven or eight bass. Fishing all day, you should catch 12 to 15 bass or more. However, I won't be surprised if someone catches 18 to 20 bass — maybe even a 5-pounder. ■

A good August day on Enid Lake for Paul Elias would produce somewhere between a dozen and 20 bass.



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LURE REVIEW >

LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

Kajun Boss spinnerbaits are hanging and ready to go at Kajun Boss Outdoors. A model with an orange Colorado blade and gold Indiana blade is one of the most-popular, according to co-owner Marcus Curry of Centerville.



Kajun Boss Outdoors

KAJUN BOSS SPINNERBAITS

LOUISIANA PAIR HAS GONE FROM CATCHING BASS TO HELPING ANGLERS

What began as a hobby to help Marcus Curry of Centerville and Levi Louviere of Franklin

catch bass has turned into a small, but growing business to help others catch bass.

Kajun Boss Outdoors entered the fishing tackle industry in the mid-2010s. At first, Curry and Louviere offered tungsten weights, but they soon started making and selling the spinnerbaits on which they caught so many bass in and around the Atchafalaya Basin. Later, they introduced swimbaits.

“Our main deal is spinnerbaits,” Curry said. “It’s one of the better ones around here. A lot of people catch (bass) on it. Two of the best would be the ¼- or

¾-ounce chartreuse/white models with a gold Indiana blade and an orange Colorado blade, Curry said. That orange blade acts like a dinner bell.

“It’s a good, all-around spinnerbait in muddy water and clear water,” said Curry, who won’t get any complaints from Caleb Sumrall of New Iberia, one of the top bass anglers on the Bassmaster Elite Series. A member of the Kajun Boss pro staff, he relies on Curry’s spinnerbaits because of their black-nickel hook, light but durable .032-gauge wire and realistic 3D eyes.

Sumrall said it’s his favorite spinnerbait, one that gave him one of his highest finishes as a pro, in 2018 on Table Rock Lake in Missouri. He likes to match the

blades to the size of baitfish present in the waters he’s fishing.

He prefers a white or white/chartreuse skirt, trying to match the brightness to the color of the water he’s fishing. If it’s dirtier water, he uses a whiter white or a brighter chartreuse, he said.

His Kajun Boss spinnerbaits get a workout on his home water in the Atchafalaya Basin.

“Yeah, in the Basin, you can throw it around wind-blown trees, wind-blown



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.

Marcus Curry (right), co-owner of Kajun Boss Outdoors, and bass pro Caleb Sumrall of New Iberia hold some big, thick bass they caught on Kajun Boss spinnerbaits.



points, also laydowns, anything near moving water. Drains will be a good place, anywhere you've got water fluctuating out of a drain," he said.

Curry, 37, prides himself on the fact the spinnerbaits are custom-made in a shed behind his home in Centerville. They can mix or match blades — Indiana, Colorado and willow-leaf — as well as silicone skirt colors.

According to Curry, some popular colors other than chartreuse/white are toxic shad, junebug and bream, but they make any color combination with skirts, which have approximately 55 strands.

"Basically, all the different color skirts we make ourselves. That gives us the advantage of doing custom colors, something different," he said.

Kajun Boss spinnerbaits are made with an R-bend instead of a twist eye for the line tie. The size of the wire is a big plus, Curry said.

"It's a lighter gauge. It's a thin wire. It's basically designed to get more vibration out of it," he said.

Are they durable?

"For a .032-gauge wire, yes, 'til you catch a choupique (aka grinnell, bowfin or mudfish) or something like that," he said, chuckling.

Kajun Boss Outdoors also offers spinnerbaits designed especially for fishing at night — a model with an oversized Colorado blade — and for redfish — a single-bladed model adorned with either a silicone skirt or a soft plastic cocahoe.

The spinnerbaits are racking up bass in areas other than Cajun Country, where they are in six stores. The biggest store is the online website.

"We make baits and do orders all over the country, plus Australia and South America. Basically, we sell them all over the world through our online store," he said. ■

For more information on Kajun Boss spinnerbaits and other Kajun Boss Outdoors products, visit www.kajunboss.com or call 337-277-3937.

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VICTORIES IN HOPES OF
SPREADING THE WORD.**

■ By Andy Douglas

It's man against **BEAST**, hunters vs. **SWINE**, landowners battling **INTERLOPERS** and native wildlife combating an **INVASIVE SPECIES**.

Wild hogs have become a huge problem across much of the South. They root-up hunters' food plots, damage farmers' crops, tear up right-of-ways and compete with wildlife for food. The struggle is real; it's an all-out war against the hated feral hog.

"Wild hogs are no good for the land," said John Haralson of Bogue Chitto, an avid deer hunter and hog hunter, and a landowner who also leases hunting property. "They are fun to

hunt, but there is nothing they do that is good; they have nothing positive to add."

LANDOWNERS BEWARE

Many people have seen or heard of the immense damage wild hogs cause row crop and cattle farmers, but they can wreak havoc on any landowner including tree farmers.

"I recently planted some hardwood on our Claiborne County land, and the hogs had a heyday with them. I had to replant 5 to 6 acres; they pulled the young saplings out of the ground and chewed their roots," Haralson said. "I trap them and hunt them anyway I can."

Trapping isn't the only way to kill big numbers of feral hogs. Jason Robertson demonstrates how an effective hunter can stack them like cord wood at night.

IT CAN GET WORSE ➤



IT CAN GET WORSE

Mississippi has hog problems across the state; it's worse in some places compared to others. A look at Texas shows how bad it can be.

"I live on our 150-acre farm here in east Texas, Nacogdoches County, 30 minutes from Louisiana," said Jason Robertson of Nacogdoches, Texas, who owns Outdoor Legacy Night Vision Optics and has been battling hogs for years. "I have improved pasture for cattle, as well as timber and log roads though the timber. I also lease adjoining acres of timber for hunting. My property is in a large creekbottom, and it is covered up with hogs. They move up and down the bottom following the creek, so there is a constant influx of new hogs all the time.

"I constantly fight hog rooting damage to my pasture; what a group of hogs or even a single large hog can do in 15 to 20 minutes can take me hours to repair with a tractor and farm implements."

TURN ON THE PRESSURE

Until the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks can pull a rabbit out of a hat and come up with a means of controlling wild hogs, hunters and landowners will have to band together to battle these worrisome vermin.

Haralson and Roberson agree that it's critical to keep hunting pressure on them to keep them at bay.

"They don't like pressure. If you keep the pressure on them, they will leave for a short period of time," Haralson said.

Hunting and shooting pressure will leave a big impact on hogs. In most cases, unless all the mature hogs are killed out of a group, shooting at them and killing one or more can have an immediate effect on them not returning to the same place for some time.

"Hogs will never be eradicated, but by keeping constant pressure on them, I can essentially run off groups of hogs that move in; they learn there are easier and safer places to live. This can last for a few days or

sometimes, in a best-case scenario, up to a few weeks before more hogs move in," Robertson said.

LIVE CAPTURE

Trapping is an effective way to control wild hog populations; there are many different traps and trapping philosophies. The use of traps with the remote monitoring cameras and cellular-controlled drop gates can catch an entire sounder.

"Larger, corral-type traps work well," Haralson said, "but hogs are smart; once they have seen others trapped, they will avoid the same trap."

Once a trap has caught a few hogs and is no longer productive, it should be moved to another area on a property.

Remember that state laws say that live hogs cannot be transported without a permit. After capture, they should be dispatched.



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.

Jason Robertson said hunting hogs at night with thermal optics is the best way to take out the bigger and smarter feral hogs on your property.



LET THE DOGS OUT

Hunting with dogs is another great way to put pressure on feral hogs. You may not have dogs to do this, but if you are a landowner wanting to control hogs on your property — seek help from a dog hunter.

“Dog-hunting is very effective for farmers with mature row crops and when it’s difficult to trap,” said Haralson.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Wild hogs have become an epidemic sweeping its way across the South. They have earned their place as the most destructive animal around. Farmers, hunters, and landowners are sick of it and have declared war.

Join the fight: hunt them during the day, hunt them at night, hunt them with dogs, call them, trap them — kill as many as you can as often as you can. ■

MATCH TACTICS TO SITUATION >

Donnie Haralson from Bogue Chitto has been at war with wild hogs for years. He traps, hunts them with dogs, and recently has started hunting them at night with thermal optics.



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Trapping is an effective way to control populations. The use of traps with the remote monitoring cameras makes it even better.



Andy Douglas

SPARTAN GC-Z4Gb2 M 05/26/2021 05:48:41 070°F P5

MATCH YOUR HOG-HUNTING TACTICS TO THE SITUATION

Jason Robertson battles feral hogs year-round. The owner of Outdoor Legacy Night Vision Optics, he shares his routines for hunting hogs in hopes that it will help others find more success:

"Since I live on my own land, I hunt mostly by what I call 'opportunity kills,'" he said. "Meaning, I scan my pasture for hogs with a thermal monocular multiple times a night between dusk and 1 a.m. If I see hogs, they are usually rooting and eating and in no rush. I can gear up and then perform a basic spot-and-stalk.

"Another method for places that I can't easily access or see on remote properties is using cellular game cameras that send e-mails or texts when they are triggered and placing them over corn feeders, corn piles or pig pipes. This works well even when I don't have time to go to the location and kill the hogs, because after multiple nights of getting photos, a pattern can often be

established. It's not written in stone and the pattern might not last more than a few days or a week, but it is valuable information. If I can only go one night for an hour or two, I'd rather go at a time when I know for a fact hogs have been there recently vs. picking a random time to hunt.

"Calling is another great tool that should be used when you are working off your schedule and not the hogs'. If you have limited time or just don't want to spend hours sitting and waiting, calling is a great technique. It's also excellent when you have smaller pastures or openings that limit how far you can see. By calling hogs, you are effectively extending the range by much further than you can see and you can also reduce the amount of time you have to sit and wait to see if hogs randomly show up in a certain place." ■

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SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope

Florida pompano are a surf fisherman's dream fish: aggressive, hungry and a good test on light tackle. Just don't cast too far.



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: FLORIDA POMPANO

Brian Cope

SMALLEST MEMBER OF POMPANO FAMILY IS SURF-FISHERMAN'S DELIGHT

Despite their name, Florida pompano, *Trachinotus carolinus*, are found in many areas outside of Florida. They are part of the jack family and are the smallest of pompanos, being dwarfed by African and Cayenne pompanos.

Florida pompano have very flattened or compressed bodies and very short snouts. Their bodies vary in color from silver to yellow, and their dorsal areas can be any combination of blue, green or silver. Their bellies are usually yellowish. They are found all along the Atlantic Ocean and in the Gulf of Mexico.

Florida pompano spend most of the late summer months very close to shore, so close that many anglers fishing from the beach cast far beyond their reach. They primarily feed on mole crabs, which are often referred to as sand fleas or sand crabs. Anglers sometimes catch them "by mistake" when reeling in their surf-fishing rigs and letting them rest in extremely shallow water while preparing other rigs for the next cast. The

white, foamy suds that form after a wave crashes are prime areas to find Florida pompano. This water is usually not much more than ankle deep, so inexperienced surf anglers overlook it. But those targeting these fish are keen to make short casts with small hooks baited with mole crabs, small pieces of shrimp, and commercially available Fishbites. Very small, split-shot weights are added to get the bait on the bottom while allowing it to wash around in the surf.

FAST SWIMMERS

Most Florida pompano caught in the surf weigh less than 3 pounds and are between 12 and 17 inches long, but fish heavier than 8 pounds and longer than 26 inches are sometimes caught.

These fish are fun to catch on light tackle. Many anglers who fish with bigger rods and cast past the breakers for other species also keep a smaller rod handy just to target these fish.

Nicknames for Florida pompano include pompano, pomp, little pompano

and surf pompano. They are sometimes confused with permit, which have a similar shape but generally grow much larger.

Florida pompano are schooling fish, so when an angler catches one in the surf zone, it's a sure bet that more are nearby. They are fast swimmers and have sharp teeth. They will often pick at one piece of bait for an extended time before fully eating it. During winter, they leave the surf zone and head offshore.

Louisiana's state-record Florida pompano weighed 8½ pounds and was caught by Buddy Pons in December 1969. Mississippi's state record weighed 4 pounds, 15.7 ounces. Jack Alexander caught this fish on Feb. 9, 2002. ■



Brian Cope of Borden, 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.

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/

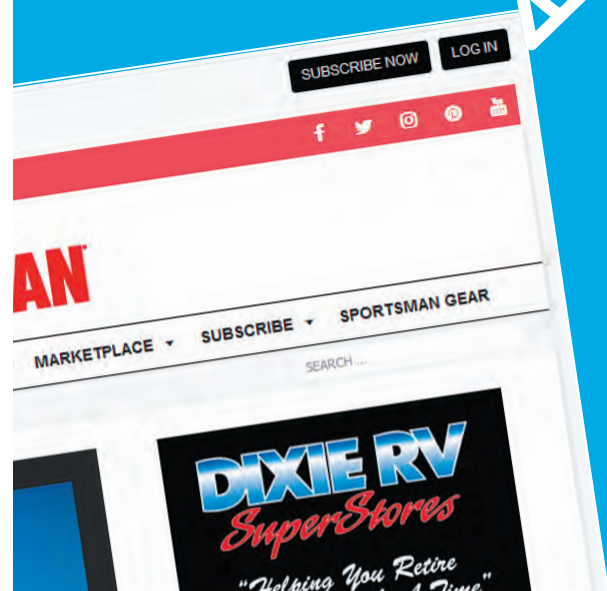
In Lake Okhissa and Percy Quin State Park, the creel limit is 50 per day.

* Possession of certain species of sharks is prohibited.

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POGEYS ON THE MENU

KEEP 'EM ALIVE, AND YOU'LL CATCH LOTS OF SPECKLED TROUT

As By Adam Jaynes
the heat continues to take its toll, speckled trout can be much more difficult to fool into biting a lure. An often overlooked and under-utilized live-bait option is the menhaden, aka pogey.

Many of us associate pogies with the putrid smell from processing facilities or from rafts of floating by-catch more than putting one on a hook; however, they can make an excellent bait choice when chasing speckled trout, among other species. They make for a much-cheaper alternative than throwing live shrimp or croaker and are generally rather easy to locate and catch in a cast net.

The key to pogey fishing is keeping them alive. Many anglers will load a livewell full of great baitfish only to find them floating belly up a short time later. Pogies are susceptible to meeting an early demise in the livewell, typically due to overfilling. An easy way to help keep your pogies alive is to reduce the number you put in the livewell. Often, it only takes one throw of the cast net to catch way more than you will need. Depending on the size of your livewell, I recommend keeping six dozen or so. They will still catch fish as fresh, dead bait, but they are definitely much better alive.

There are probably more ways to rig a live pogey than there are to skin a cat, but these two are my favorites: just in front of the dorsal fin and just forward of the tail.

I fish it hooked just in front of the dorsal the majority of the time. Rigging the baitfish this way seems to give it plenty of action, keeping the pogie very lively and generating a lot of vibration that can be felt through the line. I believe the placement helps to increase hookups with



Capt. Brian Windsor is no stranger to catching solid speckled trout.

Photo courtesy Capt. Brian Windsor

short-striking fish as well. Hooked in the tail, just forward of the anal fin, the pogey seems to swim down and away. I like this method when fishing for fish that are deeper in the water column.

Both of these techniques generally keep the pogie very lively and make it easier to cast. Pogies also seems to stay on the hook better than hooking it

through the nose.

I like to use bigger pogies, at least the length of the palm of my hand. Big baits for big fish, right? Depending on current and depth, I may fish them weightless or add on a small split-shot to get to the desired depth. Large rockpiles and jet-ties are great places to cast one. With a stronger current, the outside or Gulf side

is better, and vice versa with a slack or slow-moving current. Exercise caution when fishing in channel with the ship traffic. Large wakes have been known to cause boats to end up on top of the jetty — or even worse. If you are anchored, pull it up before their wakes get to you and get on the big motor or trolling motor to maneuver over their wakes. If it is calm enough, try your luck at the short rigs; those trout out there especially love those larger pogeys. Free-lining them from the upcurrent side back toward the rig is the ticket. ■

For information on fishing with Capt. Adam Jaynes, visit justfishsabine.com.

Brian Jaynes showing off just how large some of these bull reds that will hit menhaden are. They provide a heck of a fight for some great entertainment.



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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.

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2021 AUG	BEST DAYS				VALUE
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	
Sun 1					52
Mon 2					48
Tue 3					48
Wed 4					49
Thu 5					60
Fri 6					71
Sat 7					81

Sun 8					85
Mon 9					74
Mon 10					61
Tue 10					74
Wed 11					48
Thu 12					41
Fri 13					39
Sat 14					42

Sun 15					51
Mon 16					40
Tue 17					35
Wed 18					33
Thu 19					42
Fri 20					52
Sat 21					61

Sun 22					68
Mon 23					59
Tue 24					51
Wed 25					43
Thu 26					40
Fri 27					40
Sat 28					42

Sun 29					48
Mon 30					60
Tue 31					52

25 50 75
AVERAGE

MOON RISE	LUNAR PERIODS TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED				MOON PHASE
	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD		MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
	MOON RISE	MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	MOON UNDERFOOT	
12:48 AM	6:08 am - 9:18 am	2:46 PM	6:33 pm - 9:43 pm	Apogee	
1:19 AM	6:47 am - 10:09 am	3:43 PM	7:12 pm - 10:34 pm		
1:55 AM	7:29 am - 11:01 am	4:41 PM	7:54 pm - 11:26 pm		
2:36 AM	8:15 am - 11:55 am	5:37 PM	8:40 pm - 12:20 am		
3:23 AM	9:06 am - 12:46 pm	6:30 PM	9:31 pm - 1:11 am	High	
4:16 AM	9:59 am - 1:39 pm	7:19 PM	10:24 pm - 2:04 am		
5:15 AM	10:56 am - 2:28 pm	8:03 PM	11:21 pm - Midnight		
6:17 AM	11:53 am - 3:13 pm	8:41 PM	Midnight - 2:53 am	New	
7:22 AM	12:50 pm - 3:56 pm	9:16 PM	12:18 am - 3:38 am		
8:27 AM	1:49 pm - 4:35 pm	9:48 PM	1:15 am - 4:21 am		
9:32 AM	2:46 pm - 5:12 pm	10:17 PM	2:14 am - 5:00 am		
10:37 AM	3:43 pm - 5:49 pm	10:47 PM	3:11 am - 5:37 am		
11:43 AM	4:42 pm - 6:28 pm	11:18 PM	4:08 am - 6:14 am		
12:51 PM	5:42 pm - 7:08 pm	11:52 PM	5:07 am - 6:53 am		
2:00 PM	6:45 pm - 7:53 pm		6:07 am - 7:33 am	Half	
3:11 PM	7:48 pm - 8:44 pm	12:31 AM	7:10 am - 8:18 am		
4:20 PM	8:52 pm - 9:40 pm	1:16 AM	8:13 am - 9:09 am	Perigee	
5:25 PM	9:54 pm - 10:40 pm	2:09 AM	9:17 am - 10:05 am	Low	
6:23 PM	10:54 pm - 11:42 pm	3:10 AM	10:19 am - 11:05 am		
7:12 PM	11:47 pm - Midnight	4:16 AM	11:19 am - 12:07 pm		
7:53 PM	Midnight - 12:45 am	5:25 AM	12:12 pm - 1:10 pm		
8:28 PM	12:32 am - 1:48 am	6:33 AM	12:57 pm - 2:13 pm	Full	
8:59 PM	1:14 am - 2:46 am	7:38 AM	1:39 pm - 3:11 pm		
9:27 PM	1:52 am - 3:40 am	8:41 AM	2:17 pm - 4:05 pm		
9:54 PM	2:26 am - 4:34 am	9:41 AM	2:51 pm - 4:59 pm		
10:20 PM	2:58 am - 5:28 am	10:40 AM	3:23 pm - 5:53 pm		
10:48 PM	3:32 am - 6:18 am	11:38 AM	3:57 pm - 6:43 pm		
11:18 PM	4:06 am - 7:08 am	12:35 PM	4:31 pm - 7:33 pm		
11:51 PM	4:44 am - 8:00 am	1:33 PM	5:09 pm - 8:25 pm	Apogee	
	5:23 am - 8:53 am	2:31 PM	5:48 pm - 9:18 pm	Half	
12:29 AM	6:08 am - 9:44 am	3:27 PM	6:33 pm - 10:09 pm		

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 ☀ = 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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