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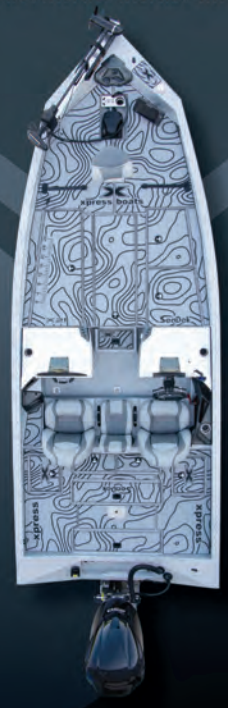
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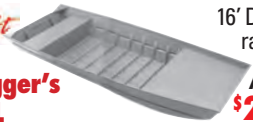
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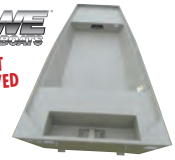
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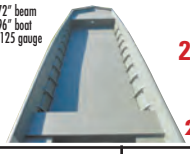
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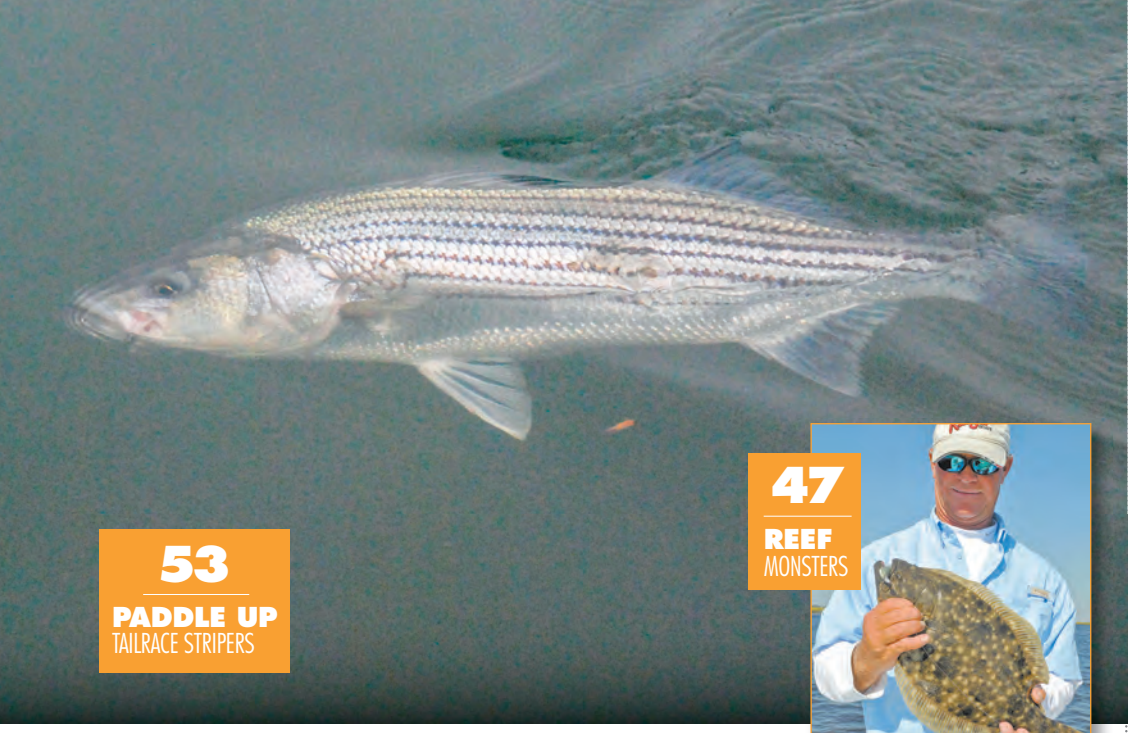
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Roanoke Island reds spark a great summer bite along North Carolina's coastline, and summer crappie highlight the menu on South Carolina's Clarks Hill Lake. Crappie photo by Brian Cope.

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Outdoor UPDATE with Dan Kibler

Dan Kibler *of Winston-Salem, N.C., is managing editor of Carolina Sportsman magazine. He has been covering outdoors issues full-time since 1985.*

SC LAWMAKERS TALK TURKEY

LEGISLATURE SPLITS SEASON, LIMITS EARLY HARVEST IN SWEEPING PLAN

Turkey hunters in South Carolina had better pay special attention to their 2020 regulations digest, because the state legislature has turned the spring season literally upside-down.



Joey Vahle took these two York County gobblers the same day in April 2018. That won't happen again because of changes in South Carolinas turkey regulations made this past spring by the legislature.

In legislation passed in late May, the legislature restructured the season and bag limits to address a statewide flock that has fallen precipitously from its highest levels just after the turn of the century. It set 40-day seasons, down from 47 days the past three years, and it split them, with Game Zones 1 and 2 in the western part of the state getting an April 1-May 10 season, and Game Zones 3 and 4 in the eastern part of the state getting a March 22-April 30 season.

The S.C. Department of Natural Resources had wanted a statewide season that opened April 10, in part to try and limit the number of gobblers that could be killed before hens had initiated nesting; that's a factor biologists think could be contributing to reproduction failure the statewide flock has been experiencing in recent years.

To address that, the legislature came up with what Charles Ruth, SCDNR's big-game biologist, called "bells and whistles."

Hunters can no longer tag more than one gobbler per day, and first and foremost, hunters can harvest only one gobbler during the first 10 days of the season. Take a bird in the Lowcountry on March 22, and you can't take another Lowcountry bird until April 1. Take a bird in the Upstate on April 1, and you can't take another until April 10. Here's another catch: harvest a bird in the Lowcountry in the first 10 days, if you head to the Upstate for the beginning of that season, you can only take one bird during the first 10 days in that section of the state.

"The legislature was trying to limit the early harvest, to mitigate the early removal of gobblers," Ruth said. "It's a novel approach, a different approach. I don't know any other state that has taken that kind of approach.

"I think when the seasons start, regardless of where you are, it is a more conservative approach than we have, and also, probably the most conservative that we've ever had.

"But you know, we're harvesting fewer turkeys, with more hunters, than we did 15 years ago, and that's a sorry state of affairs. We want to have more turkeys out there, and hunters killing more of them."

Ruth said a four-year study on the Webb Wildlife Center in Hampton County has set the average date for the beginning of nesting in the Lowcountry to be April 9, with hens sitting full-time on April 22. He said past harvest reports indicate 60 percent of gobblers are taken in the first 10 days of the season.

SCDNR got a couple of things it asked for from the legislature: money for turkey tags and electronic harvest reporting. Resident hunters will be charged $5 for three turkey tags. Non-resident hunters, on the other hand, will be charged $100 and get only two tags. And electronic reporting will begin in 2021.▪

NC deer harvest well down; new regs, weather blamed

TOP COUNTIES, OVERALL HARVEST, 2018-19

County	Harvest
1. Anson	3,487
2. Northampton	3,446
3. Wilkes	3,398
4. Randolph	3,273
5. Halifax	3,094
6. Stokes	2,989
7. Union	2,945
8. Rockingham	2,906
9. Stanly	2,806
10. Montgomery	2,553

TOP COUNTIES, BUCKS PER SQUARE MILE, 2018-19

County	Bucks Sq. Mile
1. Cabarrus	6.06
2. Watauga	6.04
3. Mecklenburg	5.95
4. Alleghany	5.85
5. Stokes	5.58
6. Gaston	5.55
7. Forsyth	4.49
8. Lincoln	4.30
9. Cleveland	4.26
10. Ashe	4.24

North Carolina deer hunters had another tough time in the woods this past season, with a drop of almost 25,000 in total harvest over the previous season.

The N.C Wildlife Resources Commission released 2018-19 harvest figures in early May. Hunters tagged 143,529 deer last season, compared to 167,854 in 2017-18, a drop of 24,325 or 14.49 percent. The harvest was a 9-percent decrease compared to the average harvest since 2015-16.

The biggest declines were in the Southeastern and Northeastern zones, while the harvest in the Central and Northwestern zones changed very little. The harvest in Western zone counties was up 7.3 percent.

Of the deer harvested, 51.5 percent were antlered bucks, 4.6 percent were button bucks and 43.9 percent were does. Most deer were harvested with a gun (81.1 percent), followed by blackpowder (8.1 percent), bow (6.3 percent) and crossbow (4.5 percent).

The Commission's harvest announcement pointed to significant rule changes and weather events — including the two fall hurricanes that swept across North Carolina — as possible drivers in the harvest drop. For example, hunters in the eastern half of the state were allowed only two bucks and four does last season, compared to four bucks and up to six does in previous seasons.

"We primarily focus on long-term trends rather than annual variations to monitor the population, and (we) have observed increasing trends in deer harvest in western North Carolina, likely due to an emerging deer herd and improved deer habitat on private lands," said Jon Shaw, the Commission's deer biologist. "In some areas, we have relatively stable harvest trends, while in large portions of eastern North Carolina, we are observing declining trends in harvest and deer numbers."

The Commission implemented rule changes in 2018-2019 to intentionally reduce the harvest, with the goal of stabilizing deer numbers and improving the sex ratio and age-structure of the herd. Additionally, in the Western Zone, the timing of doe harvest was shifted toward the opening of the season, which has numerous biological benefits for the herd.

"Changes in the structure and condition of the herd take years, but early results are encouraging and indicate we're heading in the right direction," Shaw said. "We will continue to closely monitor the herd, and with the help of hunters, will make additional adjustments if needed."

For the first time in decades, a county other than Northampton or Halifax topped the list of counties with the highest harvest. Anson County in the southern Piedmont wound up No. 1 with 3,487 deer reported. Northampton was second with 3,446, followed by Wilkes with 3,398, Randolph with 3,273 and Halifax with 3,094.

In terms of the number of bucks killed per square mile, Cabarrus County finished atop the list with 6.06. Watauga was second with 6.01, followed by Mecklenburg with 5.95, Alleghany with 5.85 and Stokes with 5.58.

SCDNR BOSS CALLS RETIRES AFTER 42 YEARS

Alvin Taylor, who has led the S.C. Department of Natural Resources since January 2012, announced his retirement on May 1, ending a 42-year run with the agency that manages South Carolina's woods and waters.



Alvin Taylor

Taylor became director of SCDNR after the controversial retirement of longtime director John Frampton, who, according to many reports, was forced out at the behest of members of the SCDNR Board appointed by then-Gov. Nikki Haley.

Taylor began his career with SCDNR's enforcement division, eventually rising through the ranks to run that division. He became SCDNR director and helped guide the agency through a time of budget-cutting and downsizing that threatened its ability to conduct its daily operations.

"Alvin became director at a time when the agency needed a leader who could find the best path through a storm," said Norman Pulliam, chairman of the SCDNR Board. "His integrity and friendly demeanor have set him apart as an agency leader, and he will long be remembered for his steady and honest dealing with political leaders, agency administrators and all SCDNR employees."

Taylor is universally credited with building SCDNR's active youth outreach program, including an extremely popular youth shooting sports program, which now involves more than 44,000 students in schools and clubs across South Carolina.

Shortly after Taylor announced his retirement, SCDNR's Board appointed Robert Boyles, the deputy director for Marine Resources, as the interim director. He has worked for SCDNR for 22 years. ▪

more updates...



Justin Bonds of Rockwell, N.C., killed this gobbler, which sported six beards totalling 47 inches, on his first-ever turkey hunt in mid-April.

FIRST TOM?
NC bird sported 6 beards

Justin Bonds said plenty of his buddies are telling him he'd better give up turkey hunting, even though he's only been one time.

But when that first trip results in a 21.09-pound bird sporting six beards, it's pretty obviously that everything is going to be downhill from here on.

"Everybody told me I might as well hang it up; I'll never top this," said Bonds, 36, from Rockwell, N.C.

He'd been seeing turkeys on a farm in Cleveland, N.C., and on April 20, the second Saturday of North Carolina's spring turkey season, he finally decided he had waited long enough to try hunting them.

"I see 'em all the time, and I've always wanted to go turkey hunting, so I borrowed a call and decoys and a seat cushion, and I borrowed some shells from my neighbor," Bonds said. "I knew where they were roosting and where they were coming out, so that's where I went."

Bonds hooted on an owl call to try and locate birds on the roost before daylight, and he was rewarded with gobbles from several birds.

"I found a good spot and sat down and started calling," said Bonds, who had borrowed a Primos slate call. "I started calling, and I called up an albino hen. She raised cane, so I kept calling, trying to mock her. Behind her, I could hear three or four toms gobbling, and one sounded like he was getting closer.

"I kept mocking the hen, and the gobbler came out at 100



yards. He was with five other hens. There was a little ridge in front of us, 60 or 75 yards away, and they stayed on the other side. Then they started away. When they were about 150 yards away, I started to call again.

"I had decoys in front of me, a hen and a jake, and there was a slight breeze and the decoys swiveled around. That must have caught his attention, because he went into a full strut, then he came at a dead sprint, as hard as he could run."

Bonds let the tom get to 20 yards and dropped him with a single shot from his 12-gauge Remington 870.

"I didn't know he was anything special, then I turned him over, looked at him and said, 'Dang, he's got more than one beard. Dang, he's got five!' I was so excited.

"Then, when I went to take the stuff I borrowed back to my neighbor, Terry McClellan, and he looked more closely, and he found the sixth beard."

The six beards ranged in length from 6 to 11 inches and totalled 47 inches. The bird's spurs measured 1 inch and 15/16-inch, and the bird weighed an ounce more than 21 pounds.

Acquaintances knew Bonds had something special, so they got him in touch with the National Wild Turkey Federation, and got the tom officially measured for the record book. Bonds plans to have a full-body mount of his first and best tom. ▪



more updates...





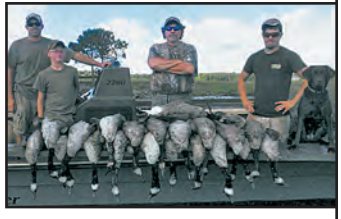
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WIN NC HUNTER-SAFETY TITLES

Once dominated by schools from the Foothills and northwestern corner of the state, North Carolina's Youth Hunter Education Skills Tournament now belongs to the southern Piedmont, as schools from neighboring counties won championships on May 2 at the John F. Lentz Hunter Education Complex in Ellerbe.

For the third-straight year, the Garnet team from Gray Stone Day School near Misenheimer in Stanly County won the senior division with 3,628 out of possible 4,000 points. Piedmont Middle School of Union County won the junior division with 3,301 out of 4,000 points.

Forbush High School's Red team was second in the senior division with 3,609 points. Southern Alamance Middle School was the junior division runnerup with 3,286 points.

Students competed in four events: archery, rifle and shotgun marksmanship, along with an orienteering and written hunter responsibility test combination event. The top three teams from each division are invited to compete in the 2019 Eastern Regional Tournament held in Breeseport, N.Y. in July.

Approximately 571 students from 60 teams participated in this year's state tournament. They advanced from their district tournaments, held across the state in March. The teams are made up of individuals from public and private schools, as well as home-school associations and 4-H Clubs.

Forbush Middle School was awarded the Fred Rorrer Trophy for sportsmanship. ▪

Special-permit deer hunt applications now available

Wildlife agencies in North Carolina and South Carolina will open this month the process of drawing for special permit deer hunts on public land.

Applications for the special draw hunts, aka lottery hunts, will be available July 1 from the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and S.C. Department of Natural Resources. Successful applicants will be notified in September.

Hunters in North Carolina can apply on-line (www.ncwildlife.org), by telephone (888-248-6834) or at any wildlife service agent.

Hunters in South Carolina can apply on-line (www.dnr.sc.gov), or by telephone (888-248-6834). Paper applications are available for customers without access to the internet.

Locations and dates of permit-only deer hunts will be made public when applications become available.

Non-refundable application fees are required in both states. ▪



The first European settlement in North America is surrounded by waters that are home to plenty of redfish, and summer is a productive season to target them. Here's how....

Reds of Roanoke Island

By Jeff Burleson

Jeff Burleson

North Carolina doesn't have many natural islands other than the barrier islands that line its coast. But along its northeastern coast lies one that is arguably the most-important island in the history of North America, Roanoke Island, site of the first European settlement in the "New World."

Roanoke Island is now an important tourist vista, and it's a special place for fishermen because of the waters that surround the 18-square mile rectangle. They offer redfish premier habitat, and summer is a perfect time to visit the waters.

The island is a bit more than 8 miles long and 2 miles wide, with typical marshes along its banks. But its location is special; it's a bottleneck between the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds and about nine miles from Oregon Inlet, which brings clean saltwater from the ocean into inshore waters.

Guide Bryan DeHart, an Outer Banks native, has several decades of fishing under his belt in these waters.

"You can leave any boat ramp on Roanoke Island and target puppy drum a couple of different ways," DeHart said. "You can fish the marsh edges and man-made structure around the island's banks, or you can sight-fish the grass flats towards Oregon Inlet."

Redfish are at home in these waters, with endless opportunities to set up and feed on small fish, shrimp and crabs. Summer conditions offer a near-perfect setup to catch as many reds as an angler wishes to catch — if he fishes the right areas with the right techniques.

The island's banks are lined with marsh grass and numerous docks, seawalls and other man-made structure, which DeHart said holds plenty of reds during the summer.

"I like to target from the banks along the new (US 64) bridge on the west side of the island all the way to Shallowbag Bay on the east side," he said. "There are miles of shoreline, bays, creeks and man-made structure that hold plenty of fish in the summer."

Primarily, DeHart is looking for water depths between 18 inches and 3 feet along structure, but he's also looking for bait, and he'll work his way from deeper areas to the shallow stuff until he develops a pattern.

"The fish are eating small (menhaden) and shrimp in these areas," he said. "I let the bait tell me where I need to be. If the bait is shallow, the redfish will be shallow, too."

The typical water color and clarity in the areas around Roanoke Island might look unappealing to many anglers accustomed to fishing other coastal waters. Brown, tannic waters and a dark bottom produces poor water clarity, common conditions in this area. But the fishing can be phenomenal even when you're forced to fish blind. DeHart relies on scented lures and lures with action in Island waters.



Roanoke Island is at a pinch-point where three inland sounds meet, not far from a major ocean inlet. That's as good as location gets.

Jeff Burleson

DESTINATION INFORMATION

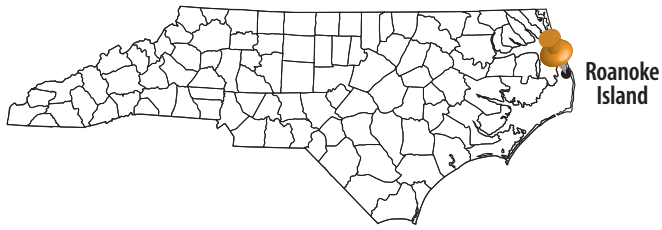
WHERE TO GO — The waters around the fringes of Roanoke Island and the western side of Bodie Island are prime summer redfish spots. Look for man-made structures, including groins, docks, sea walls and rocks. Grass beds on the north and south side of Oregon Inlet offer prime places to sight-fish for summer reds. Concentrate on the flats north of the Inlet on the incoming tide and the flats on the south end on a falling tide.

HOW TO GET THERE — Roanoke Island is the main point of access between the mainland and North Carolina's Outer Banks; it is close to the Albemarle, Croatan and Roanoke sounds. US 64 is the main route to the island from points inland, although US 158 and US 264 provide access from points north and south. Public boat ramps are available in Manteo, Wanchese, Manns Harbor and Oregon Inlet. Visit www.outer-banks.com/publicboatramps.asp.

WHEN TO GO — Depending on water temperature, summer fishing for redfish begins in June and continues into September. Concentrate on early morning and late-evening hours for topwater fishing.

BEST TECHNIQUES — Redfish feed on small fish, crabs and shrimp around Roanoke Island, and traditional jighead and soft-plastic combinations are good choices, especially scented baits. Gold spoons in ½- to ¾-ounce sizes are solid lures, along with spinnerbaits, especially around grass beds. A soft-plastic bait or live bait fished below a popping cork is productive. Live mullet, cut shrimp or cut crab will also draw redfish. Medium- to medium-heavy spinning gear is preferred, with reels spooled with braided line and fluorocarbon leaders. Rods need to be 6½- to 7-foot for long casts often needed.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — Bryan DeHart, 252-473-8632. See also Guides and Charters in Classifieds.



ACCOMMODATIONS — Scarborough Inn, Manteo, 252-473-3979; Outer Banks Visitors Bureau, 877-629-4386, www.outer-banks.org.

MAPS — Capt. Segull's Nautical Charts, 888-473-4855, www.captainsegullcharts.com; GMCO's Chartbook of North Carolina, 888-420-6277, www.gmcomaps.com.



Reds of Roanoke Island

"I use scented lures like Gulp! on jigheads in a curlytail or paddletail, or I will use another soft plastic slathered in (scent gel)," he said. "I am a big fan of scented baits; I really believe it makes a huge difference under these conditions."

The dark, tannic waters around the island remove any sight-casting opportunities, but for anglers willing to travel to the south, the grass flats towards Oregon Inlet can offer some unique conditions.

"It can look like the Bahamas, with hundreds of acres of submerged grass in gin-clear water," DeHart said. "The reds will usually be a little bigger here and cruising and feeding just above the grass."

The waters flowing in from the Atlantic through Oregon Inlet to the sand bottoms offer prime conditions to support these large beds of submerged grass species, and redfish love cruising these areas because of the abundance of baitfish and shrimp that use these grasses for a refuge.

DeHart will slide down to the grass flats to sight-fish for reds every chance he gets when conditions are ideal.

"There are certain places that are better for sight-fishing than others," he said. "I will fish the grass flats north of the inlet on an incoming tide and the flats along the south side of the inlet on a falling tide."



Jeff Burleson

Productive lures for puppy drum around Roanoke Island are (top to bottom): spoons, spinnerbaits, soft-plastics, popping cork rigs and topwater plugs.



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Around the inlet, DeHart turns to a ½- to ¾-ounce gold spoon as his go-to lure. It is a solid lure that will work for anglers of any skill level, and it works along the grass flats. He also likes a spinnerbait that combines a soft-plastic paddletail trailer and a gold blade to create the best of both worlds.

"These fish can see a long way, and the combination of the action of the paddletail and a gold spoon will pull these fish from a long way," he said.

When the water is clear of floating debris, he will also use a popping cork with 8 inches of leader to a jighead and soft-plastic trailer. In low-light conditions, he will always have a topwater plug tied on.

"I love topwater fishing, and it can be incredible over the grass beds early in the morning," he said.

The waters surrounding Roanoke Island create a unique opportunity for the redfish angler. From the murky waters surrounding the man-made structures just outside of Manteo to the crystal clear flats at Oregon Inlet, Island anglers can find plenty of solid opportunities to catch a limit of redfish under the hot, summer sun. ▪



Jeff Burleson *is a native of Lumberton, N.C., who lives in Myrtle Beach, S.C. He graduated from N.C. State University with a degree in fisheries and wildlife sciences and is a certified biologist and professional forester for Southern Palmetto Environmental Consulting.*

Wind-driven vs. tidal-driven water

Most anglers along the Atlantic coast are accustomed to lunar tides, where the water rises and falls several times during a 24-hour period, with the fluctuation as much as 4 to 6 feet.

But many of the waters in estuaries around Roanoke Island, especially those away from Oregon Inlet, lack lunar tidal changes. Instead, anglers pay attention to wind-driven tides.

Wind tides play a big factor in guide Bryan DeHart's fishing plans.

"If the wind blows out of the northeast for a few days, the water will get real low, and the fish will pull off the banks on submerged points, irregular bottom and deeper grass beds," DeHart said. "The opposite can happen when the wind is pushing water up on the banks. I prefer a normal level when possible, but we have to monitor the prevailing winds to make a decision where we fish and how we fish."

DeHart will often switch to fishing live or cut bait when the waters get stacked up on the banks and pushes bait into those areas. The accompanying smells, sights and sound draw reds. Live mullet or shrimp under a popping cork can be deadly under these conditions. ▪

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Jeff Burleson

Water movements around Roanoke Island are driven by wind, not by lunar tides, and redfish anglers must know how to move with the water.

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Brian Cope



Close a fish's mouth and pinch its tail closed when you get ready to measure it. That's the way state wildlife and marine fisheries officers in the Carolinas want uniform measurements.

CLOSE THAT MOUTH, SQUEEZE THAT TAIL

MAKE SURE YOU'RE MEASURING THAT FISH CORRECTLY SO THERE'S NO SURPRISE WHEN THE WARDEN DOES

How does a fish that seems to be slightly undersized quickly become legal? The same way that what appears to be an upper slot-sized fish quickly becomes against the law to keep — with the pinch of a tail. This is a crucial step that many anglers fail to perform when checking the size of their catch. And it could cost you big time.

The majority of anglers follow the rules, or at least they try to. But some don't know that the proper way of measuring a fish — according to the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries and S.C. Department of Natural Resources — is to place a closed-mouth fish on a ruler at the "0" mark, then pinch the fish's tail. If any part of the tail fails to reach the minimum length — or exceeds the maximum length — for that species, it must be released.

So while that 13¾-inch black drum you just caught may break your heart at first glance, it's probably a 14-inch keeper (in both states) once you pinch its tail. On the same note, that big redfish you reeled in that's got you mentally sharpening your filet knife and heating up some canola oil just might stretch past the legal length when you give its tail a squeeze.

Wildlife officers and members of the marine patrol warn against anglers using flexible rulers, such as those used for sewing. These rulers, which bend at every lump and hump in a fish's body, can give false readings, making a fish appear longer than it is when properly measured. Some anglers mistakenly run these tapes from a fish's mouth, over the dorsal fin of its body, then to the tail while keeping the tape tight to the fish the whole time. This is definitely the wrong way to measure a fish, and it will surely result in a measurement that is longer than the fish actually is.

STICK ON A DECAL

Both states' wildlife and marine fisheries agencies provide measuring decals with the different minimum/maximum size limits for various species printed on them. Just make sure you apply the decal on a flat part of your boat or cooler. Putting one on a curved section will distort its true measuring accuracy. These rulers can also be accidentally stretched while applying and can shrink in sunlight before being stuck in place.

Fish-measuring boards like the Golden Rule and the Hawg Trough, available at a variety of outdoor stores, are the most-accurate means of measuring your fish. They have a 90-degree bend at the 0 mark. This allows you to easily put the fish's mouth at the correct starting point, freeing your eyes to focus on reading the number at the pinched tail.

FOLLOW GUIDELINES

The regulation guides from both North Carolina and South Carolina plainly state the proper way to measure a fish.



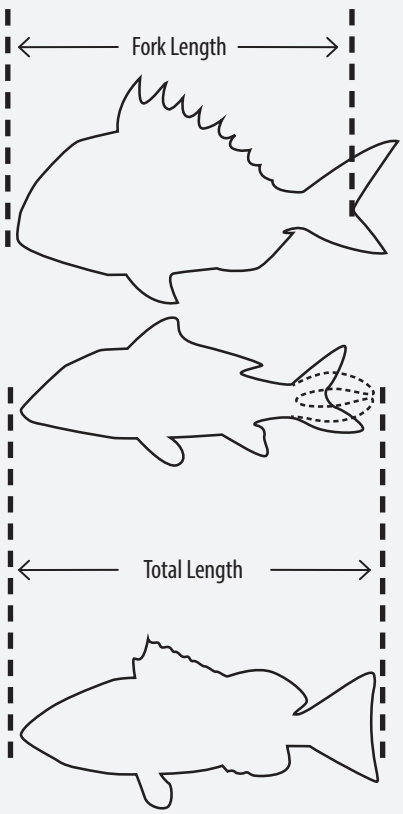
Brian Cope *of Edisto Island, S.C., is a retired Air Force combat communications technician. He has a B.A. in English Literature from the University of South Carolina and has been writing about the outdoors since 2006. He's spent half his life hunting and fishing. The rest, he said, has been wasted.*

'FORK LENGTH' AND HOW IT'S MEASURED:

Some saltwater fish, mainly offshore species, are measured by fork length instead of total length. This measurement is to offset the disproportionately long tails that some offshore species can grow, even among the same species of fish in the same body size. It also simplifies measuring some fish whose tips of their tails can grow like fine strands of hair as much as several feet long.

To get a fork-length measurement, place the fish on a ruler with its closed mouth at the "0" mark, then check the number at the inside fork of the fish's tail. That number is the fish's fork length. Pinching the tail is not required when measuring a fish for fork length.

From the S.C. Department of Natural Resources' manual: "To obtain fork length, measure from the tip of the closed mouth (snout) to the center of the fork of the tail. It is a straight-line measurement, not over the curvature of the body." It's worth noting that many anglers believe that fish, especially when placed on ice, can shrink slightly. It's also worth noting that a game warden will use his own official measuring device, which may be more accurate than yours. For those reasons, if your measurement is too close for comfort, it's best to toss the fish back in. It's not worth the fine, and it frees up space in your cooler for a bigger fish.



The Commission's booklet reads: "To obtain total length of a fish, measure the fish from the tip of the mouth to the tip of the pinched tail."

SCDNR's manual is a little more wordy, but also a little more informative of the manner in which game wardens from both states will hold anglers to. It says to measure a fish "from the closed mouth (snout) to the tip of the tail fin when pinched together. It is a straight line measurement, not over the curvature of the body." ▪

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'OLD DRUM' ACTION BEGINS IN NC WATERS

Sounds, bigger coastal rivers hold populations of huge, decades-old red drum

July marks the unofficial start of fishing season for "old" red drum in North Carolina's major sounds, coastal rivers and tributaries. The bite usually lasts through October, with August and September the peak months.

Redfish of all ages and sizes swim in these waters, particularly the Pamlico and Albemarle sounds and coastal rivers, principally the Neuse.

Richard Andrews of Tar-Pam Guide Service (252-945-9715) has chased these drum for many seasons, but the main fishing tactic has changed since the popping cork-artificial lure approach arrived on the scene about 10 years ago.

Instead of anchoring on ledges and using heavy tackle to soak chunks of cut-bait for hours, the technique now resembles one used for speckled trout, smaller redfish, flounder and striped bass.

"My rig includes a concave-mouth Bomber Paradise Popper cork and a 6-inch Z-Man (swimbait) on a ¼-ounce jighead — or I'll use a topwater lure," said Andrews, of Bath, N.C., who fishes ledges in the northern section of the lower Neuse River, plus the Pungo and Bay rivers.

His rig includes 30-pound braid spooled on a 4000 or 5000 Series spinning reel mated to a 7-foot, medium-heavy TSO rod, with the braid tied to a 2½-foot section of 60-pound monofilament, then 2½ feet of 60-pound mono leader tied to the popping cork's bottom swivel with a swimbait on the business end.

"The 60-pound (leader) is helpful when you've hooked a 50-pounder," Andrews said. "With a surge, a fish can break off at the boat. I also use a large landing net."

When he pops his rod tip, the cork's splash attracts drum, which hopefully see a lure that resembles a wounded menhaden. But if fish are feeding on the surface, Andrews may throw a 6- to 7-inch plug that anglers often cast for tuna or amberjack.

"(Old drum) don't really favor a specific color, as long as it includes some white," he said.

But Andrews' key visual clue is menhaden schools at the surface or below.

Craig Holt



Guide Richard Andrews has had trips that produced 30 'old' red drum caught and released.

"Sometimes (baitfish) don't show (on top), but you can look for them with a fish-finder," he said. "If you see bait schools below, often (old drum) will bite if you throw near them. Usually, baitfish associate with ledges, so if you don't see surface baits, you need to stay with it."

Andrews said a typical trip may feature six to 10 fish hooked and landed, but he said, "I have caught as many as 30. Any time you catch more than five old drum, that's a good day."

North Carolina regulations allow fishermen to keep only one drum per day in an 18- to 27-inch slot. Bigger and smaller fish must be released immediately.

"If you hook and land a big drum, get him to the boat as quickly as possible," Andrews said. "Net him and pull him onboard. Take a quick photo while supporting his belly with one hand and head with the other. But never pick up a drum or hold one vertically by the gills. Then, release him as quickly as you can." ▪

— Craig Holt

GO EARLY, DEEPER

for spot-tails in Georgetown's waters

Sunshine dominates the longest days of the year in the waters around Georgetown, S.C., and with high temperatures and humidity being the norm, anglers need to change their habits for the best fishing action.

Typically, spot-tail bass, aka redfish, are homebodies, living in the marshes in the same creeks and flats for most of the summer, but the hot water will stress them, pushing them into the deeper channels and main creeks.

Jordan Pate of Carolina Guide Service, a native of Pawley's Island, fishes plenty of different waters, but those around Georgetown are his favorites for redfish.

"While you can still find some spot-tails in the shallows around Georgetown, I tend to stay away from them when it gets real hot. I fish the deeper water around oyster points, ledges, and eddy water," said Pate (843-814-7900). "You also catch larger reds in these deeper spots."

When summer heat spikes, look to the first few hours after dawn and to deeper water for Georgetown spot-tails.



Jordan Pate

Deeper areas will have cooler water and plenty of places for spot-tails to ambush bait, and while the lower end of the tide is often the best, these areas will hold fish in all phases of the tide.

Winyah Bay offers deeper water on the shell banks lining the shipping channel, and the primary creeks that dump into North Inlet are great areas. Shell banks are a favorite redfish spot during the summer, and for good reason. The string of spoil islands are loaded with oyster bars and hard structure between the shipping channel and the shallow waters of Muddy Bay. Reds will set up along the cuts and next to the sparse grass lines, waiting for baitfish and shrimp to get swept out of Muddy Bay.

Pate leaves the dock long before many anglers wake up, because the first few hours of daylight remain the best time to be on the water when it comes to spot-tails.

"I get early starts every day," Pate said. "I always start my day casting topwater plugs to grass edges and oyster points. I am usually hunting a gator speckled trout at dawn on top, but I have caught some fat redfish early in the morning, too."

Some inshore species will feed at night during the summer — especially around the full moon — but fishing for many species is better with some light on the water. Cooler water makes a huge difference, even if only be a few degrees cooler at dawn.

Spot-tails feed on small fish and shrimp during the summer. A wide variety of lures and baits can entice a spot-tail, especially when the estuaries are packed with a buffet of options.

When not throwing topwater lures at dawn, Pate will be throwing some type of soft plastic on a jighead, preferring a Fluke-style lure in Gulp! or other brands. ▪

— Jeff Burleson



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By Pat Robertson

HOT SUMMER SLABS

DEEP BRUSH IS THE TICKET ON CLARKS HILL LAKE, WHERE SIMPLE TACKLE AND TACTICS ARE ENOUGH TO FILL A COOLER WITH HEALTHY CRAPPIE.

Brad Sasser eased the boat into the mouth of a large cove, then, intently watching his sonar, he began an ever-tightening counter-clockwise circle until he had the boat positioned exactly where he wanted it — over a submerged tree in more than 25 feet of water.

He set two anchors, quickly baited a half-dozen rods with small shiner minnows and dropped them down to just above the top of the underwater brush. Soon, a rod tip went down, and a 10-inch crappie was heaved into the boat.

That basically is the story of summer crappie fishing on Clarks Hill Lake, according to Sasser, the third generation of his family to fish the 70,000 acres of the reservoir also known as Thurmond Lake. He guides for his father's William Sasser Fishing Charters; the two have more than 80 years of experience fishing the lake.

William Sasser said his dad hunted rabbits all over the land that was eventually covered when the lake was impounded in the early 1950s, and he marked locations that he thought would be good fishing spots, such as sawmills and sawdust piles.

"Some of those places were the best crappie-fishing spots after the lake filled," he said. "Back in Grays Creek, there is a place he named the Sawdust Pile. I could not tell you how many crappie we caught off that place, and we have added trees to it since then."

Pat Robertson

Although there are public fish attractors established by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which manages the lake, the Sassers primarily fish spots where they have sunk trees, sometimes entire trees, in depths from 25 to 40 feet deep.

Typically, they sink oaks or other hardwoods because they last longer than other types, like Christmas trees, and they freshen those spots with new brush on a regular basis.

"I don't think you can be a good crappie fisherman on Clarks Hill unless you take the time and put in the effort to put out trees for crappie habitat. That has always worked for me," Brad Sasser said.

When fishing these spots, boat positioning is critical, he said.

"If you anchor just 10 feet off the tree, you can be too far from the fish," he said. "The best thing is to put the nose of the boat in the wind and back over the tree. And it is important to get on the right position on the first try. If you hang the anchor in the tree, you might as well move on to another spot."

William Sasser believes that most of the best spots for crappie are in the upper half of Clarks Hill Lake.

"I think 75 percent of the crappie in the lake can be found from the Fishing Village area up, in South Carolina Little River from the Little River Bridge up to the pumping station," he said. "Not that you won't catch crappie in the lower part of the lake, but your chances are much better in the upper half."

Although the water temperature can reach the high 80s and even low 90s in July and August, the warmer water is not really a factor when targeting summer slabs, Brad Sasser said.

However, the Sassers take plenty of small shiners when they are crappie fishing this time of year. It's better to re-bait with a lively minnow than to keep one on the hook that is lethargic in the warm water or has been injured by a missed bite, Brad Sasser said.

The Sassers' basic crappie tackle includes 8-foot Zebco Crappie Fighter rods and Daiwa 1000B Series spinning reels spooled with 6-pound Mr. Crappie Hi-Viz monofilament. A No. 2 gold Aberdeen hook is tied on the end, below a No. 5 split that provides just enough weight to get the minnow down to the fish.

Pat Robertson



Brad Sasser shows off the reward for hours of hard work sinking brush piles around Clarks Hill Lake.

TIMING IS KEY FOR
CRAPPIE AT NIGHT

Once popular, fishing at night for crappie has been on the wane at Clarks Hill Lake in recent years, but it is still a good way to catch summer fish, according to guide William Sasser.

There is no question that in July and August, it's a lot more comfortable to fish in the cooler after-dark temperatures.

The key to success, Sasser said, is to remember that timing is everything. He said the best bite will come sometime between midnight and dawn.

"The good bite never seems to come at 10 o'clock at night. In fact, I have had times when we were wearing the fish out over brush we'd put in the lake, and when the sun got behind the trees late in the afternoon the bite was over," he said. "They just don't like the dusk part of night. I've put out lights and sat there for three hours or more and decided there was no point in staying out there."

Sasser said it's probably best to try to catch a nap early in the evening, then venture out after midnight.

"I would target the traveling crappie around the smaller bridges on the lake, the Raysville Bridge, the bridges across Soap Creek and the other bridges up from mid-lake," he said, explaining that schools of crappie are on the move, and they travel under those bridges.

"People now are using LED lights at night. They can run all night and not drain the battery," Sasser said. "Clip one on the front of the boat and one on the back, then fish live minnows about 15 feet down."

Sasser said it is best to fish the edges of the light pattern on the water, not right under the light.

"They tend to hang on the outskirts of the light. They will circle, then dart in to get the bait," he said. ■

"I try to stick with the lightest tackle I can use," Brad Sasser said. "The 6-pound line is strong enough, thin enough and light enough, and it drops really well with the light weight. If you hang the gold Aberdeen hook in the tree, it usually comes out pretty easy. It is a very forgiving hook."

Sasser said the summer bite is usually very aggressive compared to the more-subtle bite in late spring.

"They hit it pretty good this time of year," he said.

That is, if they are biting on a certain brush pile.

"When you pull up on a hole, if you don't have a bite in the first 10 to 15 minutes, you might as well move on to another spot," he said. "If I am on a spot catching fish and the bite slacks off, I'll wait from maybe 10 to 20 or 25 minutes, and if I don't get another bite, it's time to move."

A typical summer crappie trip might produce a few fish in the pound-and-a-half to 2-pound range, he said, but the catch usually is mostly 10- to 14-inch fish, with some 15 inches or better.

"One thing about brush-pile fishing; you might pull up on a spot and only have 4-inch crappie, but the next spot might be all 12-inch fish."

Time of day is not a major factor, Brad Sasser said, although he prefers to fish mornings before the sun heats things up.

"If we start about 6:30 to 7 in the morning, we should wrap up with a cooler full of fish about 10 or 10:30," he said.

As for the best summer crappie fishing he can remember, the younger Sasser thought for a moment before saying, "All the guide trips usually turn out good, but the childhood memories with me, my dad and my grandfather are the ones that really stand out." ▪



Pat Robertson *covered outdoors issues from the swamps to the state house over more than 30 years for The State and The Columbia Record newspapers. Now retired, he is a full-time free-lancer living in Blythewood, S.C., where he and his wife, Jan, raise beagles and compete in field trials.*



Pat Robertson

ABOVE: Brad Sasser said Clarks Hill produces plenty of crappie a pound or heavier, but the average fish is 10 to 14 inches long. **BELOW:** The author's wife, Jan Robertson, caught the makings of a great fish fry on Clarks Hill Lake last summer.



Pat Robertson

DESTINATION INFORMATION



HOW TO GET THERE — US 378 runs from McCormick, S.C., across South Carolina Little River and the Savannah River to Lincolnton, Ga. SC 28 runs along the east side of the the lake from McCormick to the Clarks Hill community. US 221 runs west from Clarks Hill across Thurmond Lake Dam into Georgia, where it picks up GA 47, which crosses Georgia Little River and runs up the west side of the lake to Lincolnton, Ga. For a complete list of boat-access areas, visit: http://stromthurmond.uslakes.info/POI/Boat-Ramps/

MAPS — Fishing Hot Spots, www.fishinghotspots.com; The Lake Store, www.TheLakeStore.com; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers website: http://www.sas.usace.army.mil/About/DivisionsandOffices/OperationsDivision/JStromThurmondDamandLake/PlanaVisit/BrochuresMaps.aspx.

WHEN TO GO — During summer, it's more comfortable to fish in the morning before the heat sets in, and the fish do seem to feed better at that time of day. If night fishing, wait until after midnight and plan to fish to daylight.

BEST TECHNIQUES — Using your boat's sonar, search the mouths of coves on the main lake or main tributaries for submerged trees and other structure in 25 feet of water. Use medium-action spinning tackle with 6-pound line for fishing brush piles. Tie on a No. 2 gold Aberdeen hook with a No. 5 split shot for live minnows. Small shiners or tuffy minnows are the best crappie bait.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — William Sasser's Guide Service, 706- 589-5468; Palmetto Angler, McCormick, S.C., 864-852-3373. See also Guides and Charters in Classifieds.

ACCOMMODATIONS — McCormick County Chamber, 864-852-2835, www.mccormickscchamber.org/; Columbia County Chamber of Commerce, 706-651-0018; Lincoln County (Ga.), Chamber of Commerce, 706-359-7970 or visit chamber@lincolncountyga.com.





SUPER SUMMER SPOTS

By Phillip Gentry

Lakes in the Carolinas that are full of spotted bass and blueback herring present anglers with a unique summer opportunity and choice: chase or lie in wait. Learn which tactic works the best.



Phillip Gentry

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YAMAHA

How spotted bass came to reside in many reservoirs in the Carolinas is a subject of much debate. They are in several mountain and Piedmont lakes in North Carolina as well as the lakes on or connected to the Savannah River chain in South Carolina.

Native to Illinois, Missouri and Ohio, southward to eastern Texas and the Gulf of Mexico — including most major drainages of the Mississippi River — they have been introduced into many eastern lakes and reservoirs, usually to the detriment of the native black bass species that exist there.

Love them or hate them, spotted bass have become a staple for many bass anglers because of their aggressive nature and willingness to bite once you determine their location.

Few know better than Jayme Rampey of Liberty, S.C., a pro bass angler who hails from the middle of spotted bass territory. He said the lakes that seem to have the best spotted bass fishing have several characteristics in common: deep, clear water with blueback herring as a primary or at least prevalent food source.

Rampey said the trick to catching spotted bass during the summer, when water temperatures climb into the high 80s and above, is to look for them in deep water.

"Spots go deep in hot weather," he said. "Look for them to be holding on any type of wood structure in 25 to 30 feet of water. You'll be able to see them holding on the wood on your graph."

Rampey employs one of three tactics for catching spots in July, and they are related.

The first is a topwater bite, which typically occurs early and late in the day but may also possibly happen in the middle of the day.

"I think these fish have better eyesight than largemouth," he said. "They might be sitting in 30 feet of water, but they can see that surface commotion, and they'll come up and check it out."

Rampey said if the fish are shy about coming all the way to the surface, then he'll throw a weighted or unweighted Fluke as a subsurface lure. If that doesn't work, then he will position his boat right over the fish and use a drop-shot rig.

"Spots are not hard to catch," he said. "Probably the hardest part is finding them, not getting them to bite."

Rampey recommended fishing depths of 25 to 30 feet. They typically produce even better if there is structure like a long point or hump that has even deeper water close by. This is a classic ambush spot in herring lakes for predator fish to hold while waiting for herring to swim past.

Because Rampey's tackle choices will vary between topwater, sub-surface, and bottom-fishing gear, he keeps at least three rods rigged to tackle spots in the summer.

His topwater rod will be a 6- to 7-foot baitcasting outfit spooled with 40-pound braid. He's not overly concerned with spotted bass seeing the braid, since the majority of the line is out of the water as he's walking-the-dog with a chrome-colored Zara Spook. The chrome might be changed to a bone or white on a cloudy day, but he sticks with light colors.

For sub-surface baits, he'll spool a similar 6- to 7-foot baitcasting or spinning rod with 15-pound monofilament and tie on a white or pearl Zoom Fluke. He has found that spotted bass that would hit the topwater bait and then quit, will still eat the Fluke an hour later if it's fished in a jerky manner just below the surface or if allowed to fall 5 to 6 feet on the retrieve.

The drop-shot rig is the finesse tactic. He spools a 6- to 7-foot, light- to medium-action spinning rod with 6-pound mono. A tungsten drop-shot weight anchors the rig and a drop-shot/mosquito hook is tied in-line 2 feet above the weight.

"I'll fish the drop-shot right in the wood," he said. "I think the light line is necessary because you're putting your bait right on the fish, and they do have pretty good eyesight, especially in clear lakes."

He rigs the hook with a either a Zoom Prism shad or a Z3 trick worm.

Rampey said spots make up an important component in putting together a winning weight in summer bass tournaments.

"Like I said, they're so aggressive, they're easy to catch, so I usually concentrate on putting five decent fish in the boat, all spots, and then start looking for two or three bigger largemouth to draw a check," he said. "So a summertime bag will mean I'm weighing either two or three spots mixed with two or three largemouths." ▪



Phillip Gentry

Topwater baits and Flukes fished just below the surface are two go-to baits for catching spotted bass in the summer.



Phillip Gentry of Simpsonville, S.C., is host of "Upstate Outdoors," a weekly radio show that can be heard on Saturdays at noon on WORD 106.3 FM.



Phillip Gentry

Spotted bass go deep during the summer but will frequently rocket up from 30 feet of water to hit a topwater bait.

BLUEBACK HERRING: the deepwater baitfish

For fishermen who remember the days before blueback herring became established in many reservoirs across the Carolinas, predators like largemouth, striped and later, spotted bass were forced to choose between invading the shallows to feed on threadfin shad, gizzard shad and other shallow-water forage during the summer when water temperatures skyrocketed, or going on diets in the deeper, cooler waters where predators were more comfortable but shad preferred not to visit.

Fast-forward to modern day after the arrival, most likely by illegal stockings, of blueback herring, which became established quickly in deeper, clearer lakes across the Carolinas. Predator fish found a nomadic, deepwater food source that ultimately changed many summer fishing patterns across the board.

The reason predator fish no longer have to go on a summer diet is because, unlike shad — which prefer shallower water and do not require higher levels of dissolved oxygen — blueback herring have a similar hot-water intolerances. Herring much prefer the deeper and darker waters with adequate dissolved-oxygen levels during the summer.

The end result is "two-story" bait: one that bass can gorge on at deeper levels during the summer, until cooler weather and water prevails and predators can add the remaining shallow-water food sources back to their menus.

Herring lakes throw a lot of bass anglers off their game because herring live a nomadic lifestyle. Cliff Pace, a Mississippi bass pro who has made no bones about his disdain for herring lakes, once made the adept analogy that it's like moving the refrigerator around in your house.

"One day the refrigerator is in the kitchen; the next day it's in the living room and then the next day it's in the guest bedroom closet," he said.

South Carolina pro Jayme Rampey, who prefers fishing herring lakes, said chasing the baitfish can be frustrating. The key to catching spotted bass, or any predator that regularly preys on herring in the summer, is to understand how the fish relate to the bait.

"A lot of bass anglers who don't regularly fish herring lakes try to pattern the herring to find the fish," he said. "That might work to a degree, but your bigger fish are going to lay in wait on some wood on a point or hump and let the herring come to them." ▪



Phillip Gentry

While some spotted bass may chase blueback herring all over a lake, bigger specimens will find an ambush point and wait for the bait to come to them.





All bass won't move deep for the summer on Lake Marion; Kevin Davis battles this one hooked in thick cover.

DON'T ABANDON THE SHALLOWS

PLENTY OF JULY BASS, BREAM WILL STILL BE IN SKINNY WATER

Terry Madewell

July's hot weather pushes some species deep, but when it comes to largemouth bass and big bream, skinny water still rules.

Kevin Davis, a guide who owns Blacks Camp on the Diversion Canal between Lake Moultrie and Lake Marion, said that the fishing from mid-June through July will remain outstanding in the shallows for both species.

"The largemouth bass action will be excellent in shallow water, but not in the same places we caught them in the spring," he said. "The key to shallow-water success now will be to fish the thickest vegetative cover you can find."

Davis said anglers must find the bass-rich, shallow areas and focus their efforts on those targets. Search slightly deeper water than during the prespawn and spawn periods that has gnarly cover. Search for concentrations of bass in the 4- to 7-foot depth range

Davis (843-753-2231) will focus his efforts primarily around and in heavy cover throughout most of the day, but low-light conditions offer other opportunities.

"Very early and late in the day, there will be a flurry of topwater action where bass may roam away from the dense weeds to feed," he said. "Also, throughout the day, good numbers of bass can be caught, and a reasonable opportunity for hooking bigger fish exists. Trophies are not caught as frequently as during spring, of course, but 7-pound-plus fish are often caught — and an occasional huge bass as well."

Davis said some of the best baits include creature baits worked in very dense cover, such as soft frogs. Also, topwater lures such as the Zara Spook, Zoom Horny Toad and the Skinny Dipper will produce excellent action and other good baits include Senkos, Pop-Rs and buzzbaits.

Casting ability also makes a big difference in this type of fishing, and the prime target zone will usually be quite small, especially for quality fish. Also, good bass action will occur on ledges that drop from 5- to 15-foot depth using soft plastics and deep-diving crankbaits.

Both Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie should be very productive in July

BIG BREAM BUSTIN'

Bream and shellcrackers are caught on both lakes throughout July, but they are typically bunched up in specific areas unless they're bedding.

"Many bream fishermen think the bedding season is over by July, but that's absolutely not the case," Davis said. "Bream are still caught in big numbers and sizes on the beds during July. But the prime time is generally about three days either side of the full moon. In May and June, we'll find bream bedding on the dark moon, too, but not as much in July."



Terry Madewell, *of Ridgeway, S.C., has been an outdoors writer for more than 30 years. He has a degree in wildlife and fisheries management and has a long career as a professional wildlife biologist/natural resources manager.*

Steve Pack out of Packs Landing in upper Lake Marion said bream will often shift prime bedding sites away from shoreline shallows to 3- to 5-foot depths in open water. The bottom must be sandy, not mucky, for bream to bed in open water. Fishermen with side-scan sonar capability can work sandy bottoms and often find beds far from the shoreline.

When bream are not bedding, look for them to be scattered around weedy cover and cypress trees. Pack said the large areas of trees in the upper end of Lake Marion provide plenty of fishing opportunity at this time of the year.

Pack (803- 452-5514) said fishermen can get back into the trees and fish crickets or red worms around trees, stumps, logs and weeds until they work out the pattern for the day.

"Usually, multiple bream will be caught in a confined area even when not bedding," he said. "But limits of quality bream are still taken during the summer and fishing back in the trees does moderate the bright sun," he said. ▪



Terry Madewell

CATFISH CONNECTION:

The "sunset clause" lapse that caused the 2014 blue catfish regulations to be repealed last summer was not reinstated by South Carolina's General Assembly during the 2019 session.

According to Chad Holbrook, a fisheries biologist for the S.C. Department of Natural Resources whose responsibilities include the Santee Cooper lakes, the catfish bill was introduced and assigned to a committee but did not make it out of the committee. The 2019 legislative period was the first year in the legislature's two-year session, so the bill introduced during the spring of 2019 will still be active and available for consideration when the legislation re-convenes in January 2020.

Holbrook said when the regulations digest is printed this summer, it will list no creel limit on blue catfish for Santee Cooper, with only one fish longer than 36 inches allowed in that creel. That's the wording from the previous regulation, enacted in 2007, that the 2014 law replaced. The 2014 law stipulated a creel limit of 25 fish per angler with only two per day over 32 inches. With the 2014 law repealed, the regulation automatically reverted to the previous law.





Bobby Padgett (left) and the author show off the kind of bass that Lake Eufala produced in offshore spots where understanding and using your electronics are vital.

ELECTRONICS: LEARN, TRUST THEM

THE BEST DEEP-WATER BASS FISHERMEN HAVE ALWAYS BEEN GREAT WITH THEIR DEPTH FINDERS. COPY THEM.

Davy Hite

I was in Columbus, Ga, in late May to see my oldest son, Parker, get his captain's bars at Fort Benning, and to make a great trip even greater, I had a chance to fish Lake Eufala on the Georgia-Alabama border with the fishermen who is generally considered that lake's best, and one of the best offshore bass fishermen ever.

Bobby Padgett lives in LaGrange, Ga,. where he runs Country's Barbecue, but he probably spends as much time on Lake Eufala as he does in the barbecue pit. He won a Bassmaster tournament on Lake Eufala back in 1996, just dominated it, beating some awfully good offshore fishermen. And Eufala means a lot to me; I won my first Bassmaster tournament there in 1994, and I came within three ounces of winning again in 2002, but that was the tournament when I clinched my second Angler of the Year.

I expected great things when I fished with Bobby — I was really excited — because I knew he was a great offshore fisherman, but when you get in the boat with him for a full day, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., well, there's nothing like what you can learn being in the boat with someone that good. It was a joy to see somebody who has mastered the game the way he has.

We fished from my boat; I've got four Humminbird Helix 10s with 360 imaging and Lake Master maps, but it was obvious that he learned that lake without the technological advances we have now in electronics. He is one of the best ledge fishermen I know; he used a paper graph when most of us were using flasher units.

ELECTRONICS VITAL

What I'd like to emphasize is, electronics mean so much to us these days, even more so in the dead of winter and the dead of summer. All the great offshore fishermen I've ever known, guys like David Fritts, Bobby Padgett and Rick Clunn, they are all really great with their electronics, no matter what brand they were using, or whether or not they used a flasher or a paper graph.

They are special individuals who, back in the day, could get it done with what we had available. It was like they could pull up to a spot and know what the bottom looked like while the rest of us were looking at the surface. That had a natural, God-given talent to be able to fish offshore.

Now, with all the advances we've had, from the 1980s to the 90s and the 2000s and now almost the 2020s, if you're going to fish off the bank, you need to



Davy Hite *of Ninety Six, S.C. is a two-time BASS Angler of the Year who won the 1999 Bassmasters Classic and 1998 FLW Tour Championship. He is sponsored by Phoenix, Evinrude, Bass Pro Shops, Rapala, Buckeye, VMC, Humminbird, War Eagle and Yamamoto.*

use your electronics. If you're going to fish in the dead of winter or dead of summer, you really need to rely on your electronics. Now, we have things like mega-imaging and side-imaging and down-imaging and GPS, and you have to master them to be competitive if you're fishing any tournaments.

When I fished with Bobby Padgett, we fished ledges a lot of different ways, finding a spot, setting up on it, casting, knowing the fish were on it. There were some places we fished that I always fish at Eufala, where we caught fish and didn't have to mark them, but electronics are so good, if you see fish there, you know they're there.

A MATTER OF TRUST

If you know your electronics and trust them, you know what's down there. You might move around and cast from different angles to make sure you brought that DT-14 or DT-16 back across the spot just right. Bobby did one thing I really paid attention to: we went across the tip of a point, and he turned around 180 degrees and threw back the other way, fishing the front edge of it after we'd fished it from the other direction.

You have to learn your electronics; they are so advanced, they can do so much for you, you can't afford not to master them. What I would suggest for a fisherman who wants to learn about his electronics — or has just gotten some new electronics — is to go to a place you know well. You know what is down there from experience; you want to see what it looks like on your electronics.

Your electronics are not going to lie to you you. So many fishermen see something on their electronics and think, "That can't be there. There can't be that many fish there," but there are.

PICK A KNOWN SPOT

Another thing to do is ride past the end of a boat ramp, ride under a bridge. You can see the concrete ramp, the pilings, on your electronics; you will know what they look like, how your unit shows a hard bottom. The next thing you know, you can locate hardbottoms with rock or shell, places that will hold fish. You start to trust your electronics, and you're on your way.

It is easier now, because there are hundreds of kinds of units, and with all the modern stuff, your learning curve is much lower than it was for people like Bobby Padgett and David Fritts when they were coming along 30 years ago. I am just amazed at how aware Bobby Padgett was, how he learned Lake Eufala with something like an X-16 paper graph.

There are a lot of good electronics out there; you spend time with them, learn how to use them, learn to trust them, and you can become a good, deep-water fisherman. ▪



CHILL OUT WITH NC SMALLMOUTH BASS

Summer rules around Forks of the New River

Bruce Ingram



Guide Ben Lucas shows off what he calls an average smallmouth bass from the South Fork of the New River.

For summer smallmouth bass, North Carolina sports many superb streams, including the French Broad, Nolichucky, Little Tennessee, and, of course, the New, which is generally revered as the state's best. Ben Lucas of Crumpler, N.C., a guide for Rock on Charters, said two of his favorite destinations this month will be on the South and North Forks of the New.

Lucas (540-520-9629) said that on the South Fork, one of his preferred floats is 6 miles from the SR 1159 bridge to the NC 88 bridge in Alleghany County.

"The first half-mile is not worth fishing, but after that, the rest of the trip is almost non-stop, high-quality smallmouth habitat," Lucas said. "Basically, the float is a series of ledges, rock shoals and deep-water, rocky pools below rapids and riffles. You'll see a few homes here and there, but you'll feel like you're on a wilderness float.

"The South Fork doesn't have the number of big smallmouth that the New River does — no river in the state does, I believe. But you should catch plenty of smallmouths, with a good number in the 14- to 16-inch range."

Lucas said that the South Fork does not receive nearly as much fishing pressure as the main stem of the New, and that the North Fork receives even less pressure than its sister tributary, which co-mingle near Crumpler. He said his top North Fork junket is the farthest downstream on the river, from the NC 16 bridge 8 miles to the confluence of the two forks.

"The number of smallmouths on the North Fork rivals the fishing on the South Fork," Lucas said, "and the better fish fall in that same 14- to 16-inch range, too. The habitat is very similar to the (SR) 1159 bridge float, except there is one Class II rapid. I would also say the North Fork float has a little more push water above rapids."

Effective lures are the same on both forks. When the water is low and clear — as is often the case by mid-summer — Lucas favors buzzbaits and topwaters such as Tiny Torpedoes, Pop-Rs and Whopper Ploppers. If the bronzebacks are deeper and there's more color to the water, Lucas opts for Texas-rigged finesse baits, such as straight-tailed worms and 4-inch jerkbaits, rigged on 1/0 wide-gap hooks and ⅛- or 1/16-ounce tungsten weights.

Boat rental and shuttles are available at Zaloo's Canoes (800-535-4027). ■

— Bruce Ingram

MONTICELLO BASS

spend July in deep water — but biting



Aside from an early morning topwater bite, Andy Wicker counts on deep-water bass for most of his July catches at Lake Monticello.

In July, South Carolina's Lake Monticello — like other Southern reservoirs — is in the midst of the dog days of summer, so called because it is a time when Sirius, the "dog star," rises and sets with the sun and is not seen at night in the Northern Hemisphere.

One description of this sultry summer period from July 3 through Aug. 11 said it is a time marked by lethargy, inactivity or indolence, a trait exhibited by largemouth bass when the water heats up to an uncomfortable level.

"This normally means the bite is a little more sporadic," said bass pro Andy Wicker of Pomaria, S.C., "However, when they are biting, it can be pretty good."

When summer temperatures are at their peak, Wicker will spend the first hour of daylight throwing a topwater bait like a popper around the bank, targeting any visible cover that is in the water.

"But most of my time in July will be spent out deep. I'm targeting humps and points that have bait and brush in 20 to 35 feet of water," said Wicker, who will work big, deep-diving crankbaits and big worms early in July before slowing down later in the month to a shaky head or drop-shot rig to catch deep fish. Any sort of finesse worm will work and natural colors, such as green pumpkin, seem to be best, he added.

Another factor that plays a major role in July is the current in the lake, he said.

"This lake fluctuates every day due to power generation," Wicker said. "Although it's not as much current as a river or TVA lake, in July, the bass seem to feed in small windows around the strongest current. Pay attention to that and make sure you are fishing the places you think are best when there is current being generated."

These tactics work well, he said, until the weather and water start changing in August.

"When it changes, the schools break up out deep and the fish scatter. Normally, they move back into the 15-foot range then," Wicker said. ▪

— Pat Robertson



RIVER SMALLMOUTH ROCK!

SC's Broad River is mecca for bronzeback paddlers

It's hot, and that makes fishing on some bodies of water pretty tough, and not just for the angler. Many fish spend the dog days of summer trying to beat the heat throughout the day, opting to eat only in the early morning and late evening.

But that's not the way smallmouth bass spend their summer days on South Carolina's Broad River. This water is much cooler than most places, and the smallmouth can eat all day-long.

Canoes and kayaks are the most-widely used craft for anglers on the Broad, partly because boat ramps and other public access points are very limited. It's also because the rocky nature of the river makes any other kind of boat non-feasible. Wading is very popular, even among canoe and kayak anglers, especially this time of year. Standing in the cool waters for just a few minutes can make the July heat bearable, especially when you're reeling in fish.

Mike McSwain has been fishing and guiding on the Broad River for more than 10 years, and he loves fishing in July. The water level, which can fluctuate depending on the weather, is usually what he calls "perfectly low" this time of year. That exposes more of the rocky shoals that smallmouth gather around, giving anglers specific targets to cast around.

McSwain uses many different lures and has success with most. Mepps Aglia spinners, and the Black Fury, also from Mepps, are tough to beat.

"Both of these lures are great. They give off different vibrations than each other, and they run at different depths," said McSwain, who operates Broad River Smallmouth Guide Service. "So when the Aglia isn't producing, switching to the Black Fury can get them biting, and vice versa. But often, they both work equally well."



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Brian Cope

Guide Mike McSwain loves to fish Mepps spinners for Broad River smallmouth bass.

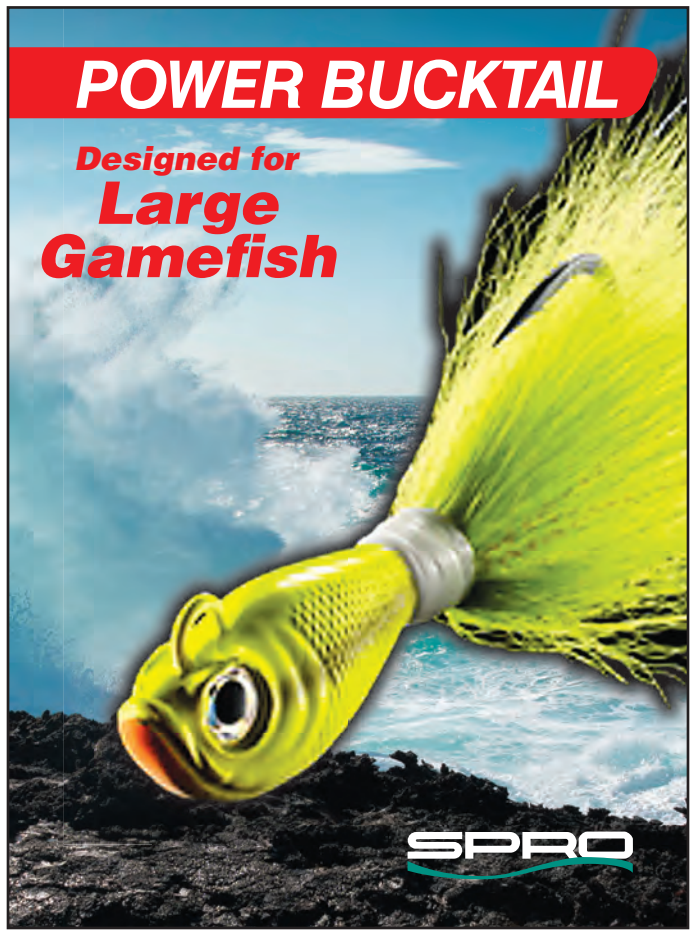
McSwain (843-763-3805) said those lures are best fished when cast upriver at a 45-degree angle, then retrieved quickly enough that the angler doesn't lose contact with the lure due to the current. Casting directly upriver is not advisable; the current will carry the lure downstream quicker than the angler can reel. This makes it difficult to detect bites.

Soft plastic lures are also good bets. McSwain likes the Zoom Ultra-Vibe Speed Craw, Texas-rigged. It's good in the current, around rocks, and when cast toward the banks around downed trees. He said anglers can pick up fish that short-strike this lure by quickly reeling it in, then casting back to the same spot. But instead of letting it sink, he begins reeling before the lure hits the water, then burns it back, keeping the lure gliding along the surface.

"Most people don't realize how effective fishing weighted soft plastics can be. But it's deadly on this river," he said, "especially on a fish that just missed it on the bottom."

— Brian Cope





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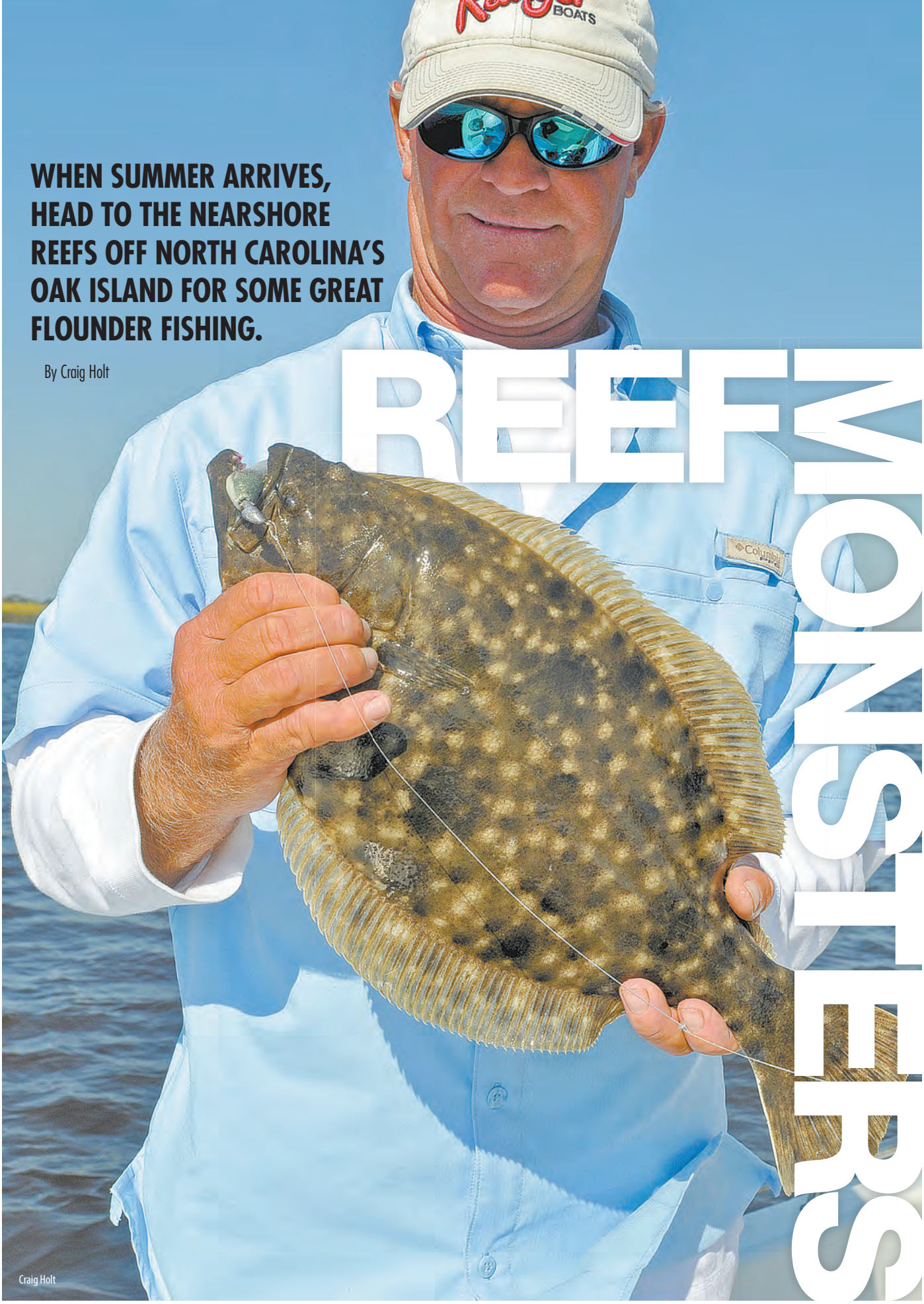
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WHEN SUMMER ARRIVES, HEAD TO THE NEARSHORE REEFS OFF NORTH CAROLINA'S OAK ISLAND FOR SOME GREAT FLOUNDER FISHING.

By Craig Holt



Craig Holt

Anyone who has fished for flounder along North Carolina's coast in May and June knows they are two of the best months to find flatfish in inshore waters.

However, air and water temperatures usually climb during the summer, making these prized fish more difficult to find in bays, marsh creeks and brackish-water rivers. Flounder-fishing success is basically restricted to tide changes around inlets or deep holes with cooler water.

Happily, an answer to the problem exists in 30 to 40 feet of water around nearshore artificial reefs, wrecks and ledges in the Atlantic Ocean. The water is cooler, and bottom structure attracts baitfish that flounders love to eat.

Kevin Sneed of Holden Beach, N.C., who has been guiding saltwater anglers for a decade, knows where to find doormats in deeper water. The owner of Rigged & Ready Charters explained that flounder don't move into the ocean following bait.

"I asked a biologist why flounders go to the ocean (in summer), and he gave me a sensible explanation," Sneed said. "When water temperatures get so hot — into the 80s and even 90s — bacteria grows rapidly and overtakes oxygen in the water. Flounder just move to deeper, cooler water."

Conversely, Sneed said flounder come from the ocean to inside waters in April, May and June when water temperatures are more to their liking, to rid their bodies of tiny skin lice.

"A fishing friend once taught me how to troll for flounder up the Shallotte River in early spring," he said. "I couldn't believe we'd catch anything, but we did. He said flounder came into brackish water to get little mites off them that get on them in the ocean. When you caught a flounder, you could see 'em; you could scrape 'em off their skin."

But when temperatures rise in July and August, flatfish retreat to the ocean because the water is cooler and baitfish also are plentiful around structure.

"All the artificial reefs hold flounder," Sneed said. "In a half-day, it's not hard to land a limit (four 15-inch fish), if you find structure.

"Generally, ocean fish are bigger than flounder you catch inside," said Sneed, whose heftiest reef flounder weighed 7 pounds.

Favorite spots include the Yaupon (AR-425), Tom Mcglammery (AR-420) and Jim Knight (AR-430) reefs, which are off Oak Island in 30 to 35 feet of water. The Brunswick County Fishing Club Reef (AR-440), a little farther offshore, has an average depth of 42 feet.

"Two ways to fish artificial reefs and bottom structure for flounder (are): use a trolling motor on a bay boat to troll around, mark structure, then fish it; or anchor a big boat over good structure and fan-cast live baits on Carolina rigs," Sneed said. "I'd rather jig a 1½- to 2-ounce white Gulp! shrimp. When a flounder hits that rig, you know it's a good fish most of the time; you don't have to wait for him to eat a bait."

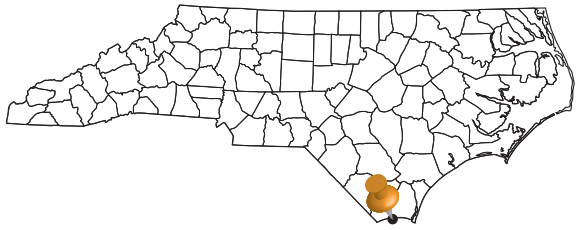


Finger mullet 4 to 6 inches long are favorite live baits for reef flounder anglers, but doormats will hit pinfish, little spots, croakers and mud minnows.

Photo by Craig Holt

Craig Holt

DESTINATION INFORMATION



HOW TO GET THERE — Kevin Sneed's homebase of Holden Beach, N.C., is easily accessed east and west from US 17 via NC 130, and from the central part of the state via NC 87, NC 701, NC 211 and NC 130. US 74/76 is prime access from the Charlotte area to NC 130.

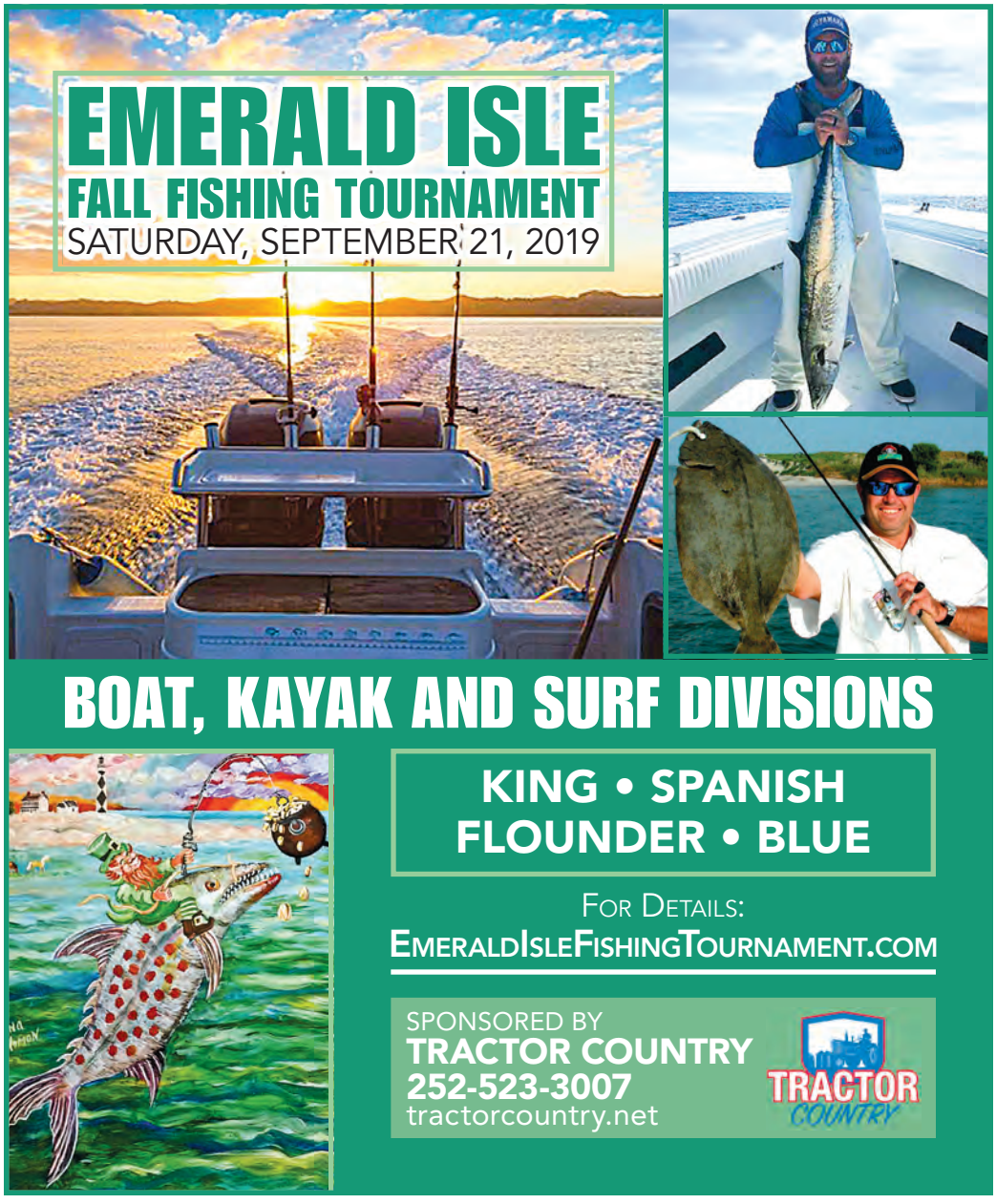
WHEN TO GO — June through August.

BEST TECHNIQUES — Around nearshore reefs and wrecks, fish 4- to 6-inch finger mullet on Carolina rigs or jig a 1- to 1½-ounce bucktail. Any small panfish or baitfish — pinfish, spot, croaker or mud minnows — will work. Use 7-foot spinning rods with flexible tips and 4000 class reels spooled with 30- to 40-pound braid, with a 30-pound fluorocarbon leader from 12 to 18 inches long. Hooks should be 1/0 to 3/0 wide-gap or Kahle-style, depending on the size of the baitfish. It will take a 1- to 1½-ounce weight to get baits down to the reefs.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — Kevin Sneed, Rigged & Ready Charters, Holden Beach, N.C., 910-448-3474, www.holdenbeachcharter.com. See also Guides & Charters in Classifieds.

ACCOMMODATIONS — Brunswick County Chamber of Commerce, 800-426-6644, www.brunswickcountychamber.org.

MAPS — Sealake Fishing Guides, 800-411-0185, www.thegoodspots.com; Capt. Segull's Nautical Charts, 800-473-4855, www.captainsegullcharts.com. The N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries' Artificial Reef Guide is available in print or at www.portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/recreationalfishing.




Courtesy Kevin Sneed

Ocean flounder may weigh up to 7 pounds and generally are larger than inside fish during summer's hottest days.

Sneed's flounder tackle around reefs is a spinning outfit with a 4000 series reel loaded with 30- to 40-pound braid and 12 to 18 inches of 30-pound fluorocarbon for a leader. A 1- to 1½-ounce egg sinker slides on above a swivel tied to the leader, with a 1/0 to 3/0 wide-bend or Kahle hook on the business end, depending on the size of the baitfish used.

"I mostly use finger mullet or (small menhaden)," Sneed said, "but flounder eat pinfish, little spots, croakers and even mud minnows. If you put a live bait in front of a flounder, he's not picky; he'll eat it."

Sneed uses a cast net to catch finger mullet — "at least a hundred or maybe more" — before heading to a reef.

"You're gonna lose some rigs, and you can use up a lot of baitfish," said Sneed who teaches clients a familiar hookset for live-bait flounder fishing.

"They've got to wait with live bait," he said. "When you first feel a bite, wait 15 to 30 seconds to let him eat it, then set the hook. If a flounder starts to move, he won't go far, maybe 4 or 5 feet, before he settles back down. Just put your reel in free spool if he moves and let him eat (the baitfish). He should have it in his mouth long enough then to hook him."

Sneed believes moon phases affect the ocean flounder bite.

"It can be really good during the first full moon in July," he said. "All the artificial reefs hold flounder that time of the year."

Sneed can get to the reefs out of Lockwood Folly Inlet in just minutes; they're also easily accessed from the mouth of the Cape Fear River. The Yaupon Reef is about a mile offshore from Oak Island Pier. The McGlammery Reef is 4.6 nautical miles from the Oak Island lighthouse, the Jim Knight Reef is 6.7 miles from the lighthouse, and the Brunswick County Fishing Club Reef is 4.1 nautical miles from the sea buoy in Lockwood Folly Inlet. ▪





Craig Holt *of Snow Camp, N.C., has been an outdoor writer for almost 40 years, working for several newspapers, then serving as managing editor for North Carolina Sportsman and South Carolina Sportsman before becoming a full-time free-lancer in 2009.*

ARTIFICIAL REEFS NO LONGER FEATURE BUOYS

The yellow buoys are no more.

In the early 1970s, North Carolina established an artificial reef program to enhance sport and commercial fishing and boost the state's economy.

Early reefs were funded privately. Morehead City's Fabulous Fishing Club created the state's first nearshore artificial reef in 1964, two miles off Atlantic Beach. It later became AR-315.

For years, anglers with seaworthy boats and a rough idea of which magnetic heading to take found yellow buoys marking reefs that were teeming with king and Spanish mackerels, flounders, sea bass, red drum, sharks and many other species.

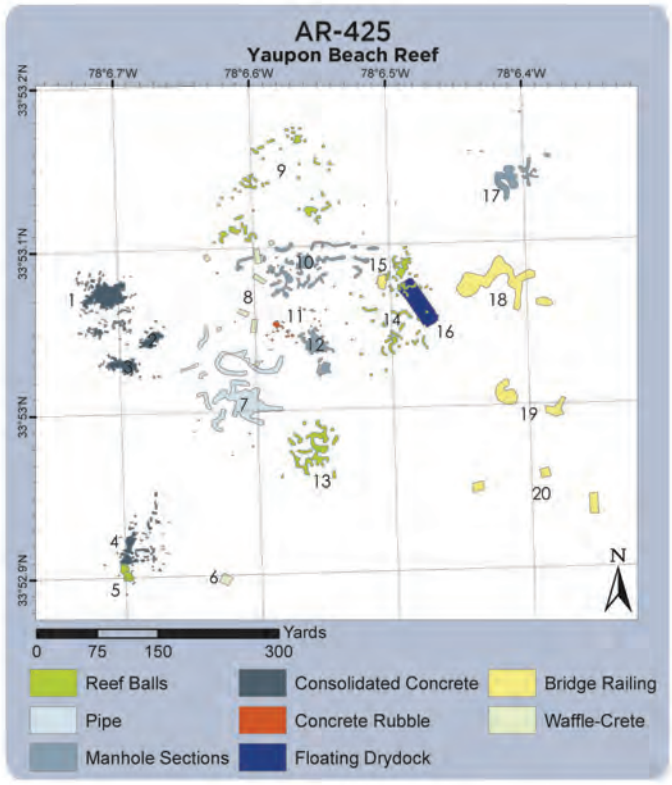
However, with the creation of GPS devices to aid navigation, the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries began to remove buoys from artificial reefs because it no longer had equipment capable of servicing them, and contracting for the service would be cost-prohibitive.

A series of storms and hurricanes had moved or broken loose plenty of buoys, and by November 2016, all buoys marking 43

continues on page 52

To illustrate the DMF's Artificial Reef Guide, AR-425, the Yaupon Reef, shows types of bottom debris, where it's located and GPS coordinates for the reef.

Courtesy N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries



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AR-425 Yaupon Beach Reef				
87.1° magnetic - 6.3 nautical miles from Lockwood's Folly Inlet Sea Buoy 252° magnetic - 3.8 nautical miles from Oak Island Light 326.5° magnetic - 7.4 nautical miles from Cape Fear River Sea Buoy 30 feet average depth				
ID No.	Material	Deployed	GPS (Decimal Minutes)	
1	Consolidated Concrete: Scrap Panels, Rubble, Pipe, Dock Header Beams, Scrap	2006	33° 53.074' N	78° 6.716' W
2	Consolidated Concrete: 183 Pieces Roof Panel, Headers, Panels and Dock Headers	2006	33° 53.050' N	78° 6.698' W
3	Consolidated Concrete 69 Pieces Roof and Dock Panels	10/2006	33° 53.030' N	78° 6.704' W
4	Consolidated Concrete: 24 Tons Manhole Sections, 132 Tons Pipe	2/2004	33° 52.920' N	78° 6.698' W
5	50 Ultra Reef Balls	2/2004	33° 52.903' N	78° 6.706' W
6	Waffle-Crete	10/1997	33° 52.897' N	78° 6.633' W
7	Pipe 147 Pieces	2/2001	33° 53.013' N	78° 6.618' W
8	Waffle-Crete	10/1997	33° 53.069' N	78° 6.606' W
9	Reef Balls	3/2001	33° 53.132' N	78° 6.583' W
10	Consolidated Concrete: Pipe/ Manhole Sections	1992-1994	33° 53.089' N	78° 6.574' W
			33° 53.089' N	78° 6.574' W
11	Concrete Rubble 600 Tons	9/1986	33° 53.050' N	78° 6.588' W
12	Manhole Sections	1992	33° 53.037' N	78° 6.561' W
13	83 Reef Balls	1998	33° 52.976' N	78° 6.566' W
14	139 Reef Balls	3/2000	33° 53.070' N	78° 6.500' W
15	Bridge Railing	1989	33° 53.077' N	78° 6.512' W
16	Floating Drydock	Late 1950s	*33° 53.077' N	*78° 6.497' W
			**33° 53.051' N	**78° 6.475' W
17	Manhole Sections 150 Tons	3/2002	33° 53.141' N	78° 6.414' W
18	Bridge Railing	1989	33° 53.076' N	78° 6.436' W
19	Bridge Railing	1989	33° 53.003' N	78° 6.408' W
20	Bridge Railing	1989	33° 52.947' N	78° 6.387' W
*Bow and **Stern GPS Locations				

artificial reefs in the ocean had been removed.

With GPS coordinates and accurate mapping software available, artificial reefs are much easier to find. The NCDMF continues to maintain reefs, periodically adding material. NCDMF also publishes print and online versions of its Artificial Reef Guide. The guide (portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/recreational fishing contains GPS coordinates for all artificial reefs, information about reef sizes and materials and exact locations of reef structures. ▪

PADDLE UP TAILRACE STRIPERS

Not all reservoir stripers spend the summer in deep water; some never leave the area below upstream dams where their spring spawning runs ended. And kayaks and canoes are great ways to get to them.

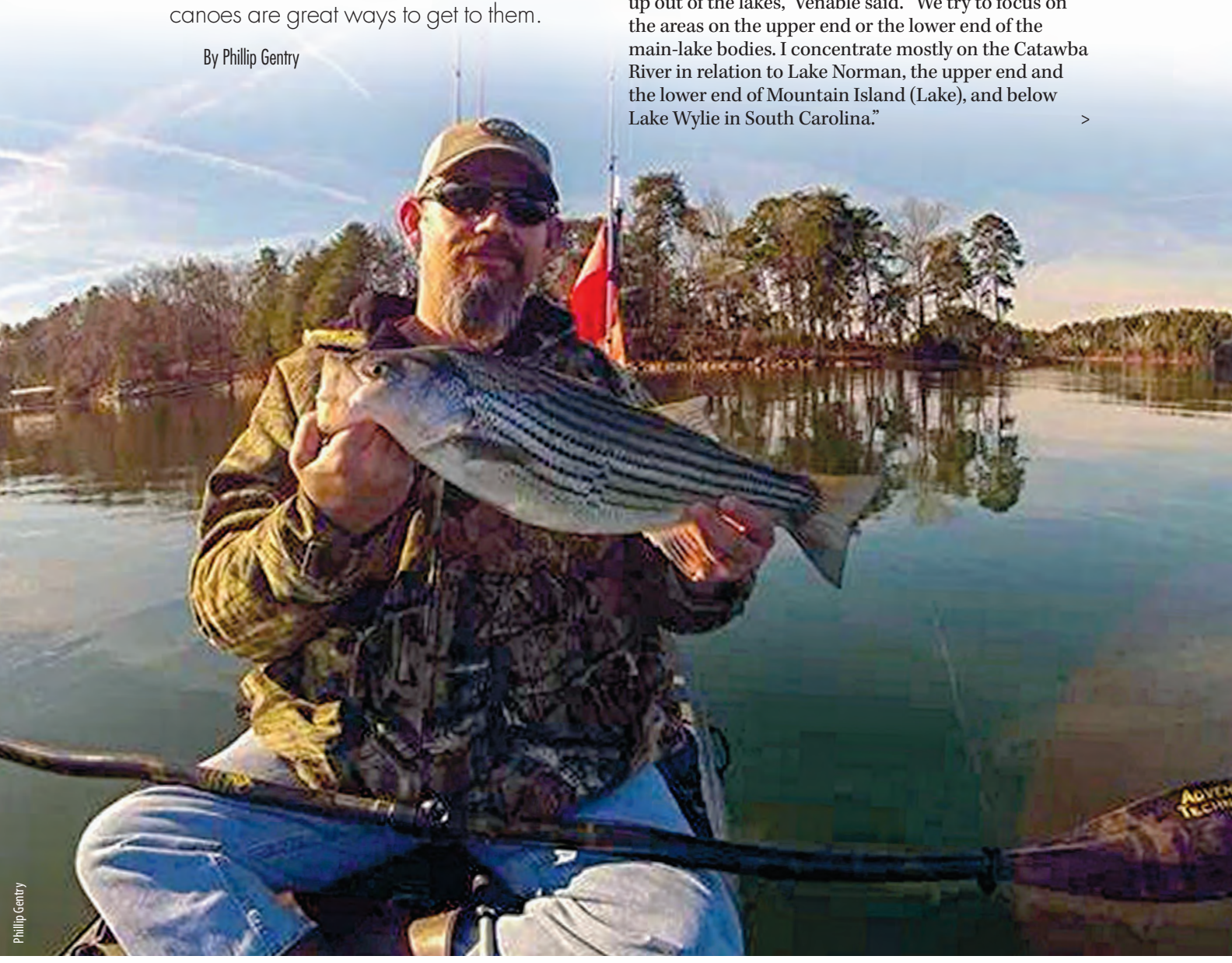
By Phillip Gentry

Long before striped bass were introduced into reservoirs, they lived in rivers. Coincidentally, long before the invention of modern fishing boats, Native American anglers pursued river stripers from small, sleek, self-propelled watercraft. Today, a select few anglers earn their stripes that old-fashioned way.

Stuart Venable is one of them. He's a member of a group of fishermen who call themselves "River Stalkers" because they concentrate on catching stripers in rivers across the Southeast.

A native of Charlotte, N.C., Venable grew up as the son of a competitive bass angler but he decided to focus on a slightly different fishery: striped bass in the trailraces below dams on the Catawba and Yadkin river systems.

"I really like to fish tailraces, primarily fishing the Yadkin and Catawba, because of all the fish that come up out of the lakes," Venable said. "We try to focus on the areas on the upper end or the lower end of the main-lake bodies. I concentrate mostly on the Catawba River in relation to Lake Norman, the upper end and the lower end of Mountain Island (Lake), and below Lake Wylie in South Carolina." >



Phillip Gentry

Other tailraces within reach of paddling anglers are the tailrace below Oxford Dam (Lake Hickory) and below Lookout Shoals Dam, and below High Rock, Tuckertown, Falls and Tillery dams on the Yadkin/Pee Dee system.

After the spring spawning run, a percentage of striped bass will remain in the tailraces and headwaters of reservoirs. The combination of cool water, food and shelter provides all they need to survive the summer.

Venable and two of his "River Stalker" buddies from north Georgia, Evan Howard and Eric Hughes, concentrate on paddling their way to tailrace stripers and have developed approaches that will consistently catch them in waters where a lot of fishermen can't — or won't — go.

"The pattern is the same in just about any other river you name in Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, South Carolina and North Carolina," Howard said. "Stripers migrate as far they can for their spawning run out of the lakes. After spawning, they kind of spread out. Some run up tributary arms and smaller rivers, and some will run straight up to the nearest dam and stop there.

"On the Catawba, most of them are going to be running straight up into the dam. You find a lot of them will stay there after the spawn; they will disperse and kind of spread out, seeking cooler water."

Hughes, who owns Georgia Kayak Adventures, said, "People are starting to really get interested in chasing striped bass on the rivers, and that's kind of what we all do."

WHERE RIVER STRIPERS LIVE

In order to catch striped bass in a river run, anglers need to be able to read water and determine what areas striped bass will find the most attractive for just hanging out or stalking prey. Howard compares it to trout fishing.

"They're not like bass where they sit anywhere there is good cover; they usually have to have cooler water and a little bit deeper water if there is much sunlight," he said. "They'll either go way up creeks looking for slightly deeper water, especially big fish; they love to stack up in the creeks or they'll hold in the main river in fast water. They like deep shoals with some faster, moving water. They'll get in the deepest cut and sit in it, just sit on the bottom under the faster water."

Deciding which pattern to fish and which baits to use, will be dictated by weather, water levels and the angler's preference and skill level. Venable said that kayaking anglers who aren't comfortable in moving water can fish the slower pools further downstream from the dams.

"The approach is going to vary depending on whether or not we're fishing directly below the dam or we're having to hunt fish in the pockets," he said. "Directly below the dam, we can use a few different approaches. Of course, live bait is always an option. If we're using live bait, we're going to be using medium-heavy tackle and 4/0 circle hooks with live shad. I prefer a relatively small weight that will bounce along the bottom without hanging up. We want that bait to move with the current but to be slow enough to where the fish can get a good profile on it and attack the bait."

WATER-RELEASE FACTORS

Most of Venable's outings involve one-way floats on which a group of anglers put in below a dam, float and paddle a few miles downstream, taking out without having to go upstream. Timing these floats with water releases from the upstream dam has its advantages for fishing, but is a little more difficult to navigate.

"With experienced paddlers, it's not as big an issue because the releases are don't necessarily becomes a safety issue," he said. "We usually do try to time it somewhat, coinciding with water releases,as long as they're following the schedule, which, of course, the power companies don't always do."

Fishing during a water release isn't mandatory; Venable said the fish don't leave the area. In fact, striped bass that commit to an upstream lifestyle aren't likely to leave, because crossing an open lake full of hot water is not an option.



Live baits (above) like river herring and shad are a primary option for anglers paddling their way to tailrace stripers during the summer; bucktails (below) are the other major option when it comes to fishing artificials, which work well in moving water.







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Phillip Gentry

Don't expect the stripers you catch in tailraces below dams during the summer to be trophies; most will weigh from 4 to 10 pounds.

"We can catch fish anytime," he said. "The advantage of running water is the fish move up directly below the dam. If they're not running water, we can hunt them down in the deeper pockets below the dam, because the fish will back off the dam into deeper holes. We can find them there, even when they're not generating water."

HUNGRY RIVER STRIPERS

Another big advantage to fishing in the river is that striped bass tend to be less finicky in their eating habits. If an opportunity presents itself, they'll typically bite, whereas lake stripers have more downtime when conserving energy is more important than feeding.

"The good thing about the stripers in the rivers is they don't necessarily have a defined feeding schedule like you experience in a lot of the lakes," he said "The moving water stays relatively cool all day. The fish will be more active throughout the day than they would be in the lake."

According to Venable, the size fish you'd expect to find in both the Catawba and Yadkin river tailraces are comparable to what you'd find in the lakes: 4 to 10 pounds.

Unlike fishing from a stationary boat, kayak anglers will learn to fish on the fly. Occasions also arise where the angler can get out of the boat and fish from a rock or shoal before continuing downstream.

"I rarely anchor. I go with the current, and then I'll paddle back up and drift down again," Howard said. "If it's faster than that, where you can't fish by drifting, it's too fast to anchor because it'll flip you in the current. When fishing artificial baits in fast current, which is usually what I do, I'll find a rock somewhere where I can park the boat, make my casts, then continue on." ▪



Phillip Gentry of Simpsonville, S.C., is host of "Upstate Outdoors," a weekly radio show that can be heard on Saturdays at noon on WORD 106.3 FM.

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Guide Preston Harden looks for July stripers on the lower end of Lake Hartwell and concentrates on finding fish with his electronics.

Pat Robertson

HARTWELL STRIPERS

require good electronics as they move deep

The most-important piece of equipment on the boat of a striper/hybrid fisherman on Lake Hartwell in summer is a good sonar unit, according to Preston Harden of Bucktail Guide Service.

"By July, we are fishing down-lines 30 to 40 feet deep, and your electronics come into play a lot more," he said. "You don't see surface activity by July, so you have got to be able to find the fish. It's more like hunting the fish, and I don't fish until I see them on my sonar."

Harden (706-255-5622) said stripers and hybrids start congregating in the lower part of the lake this month.

"By late June, the thermocline has pushed the fish down the rivers towards the lower lake, and all the big fish have moved into the lower basin," he said.

Harden uses two tactics to target fish in July and August: live bait on down lines in deep water and power-reeling lures such as big swimbaits and big spoons. If you are fishing live herring on down lines, the key is to keep the bait alive, he said

"It's very important to put ice in the water in your live tank, and when you drop a live herring in the water, you need to get the bait down quickly into the deeper water before it dies," he said.

Power-reeling, he explained, is working a bit swimbait or tear-drop spoon up and down through the fish when they are ganged up in the deep water.

"I like to use a 1-ounce jig-head with a 5-inch paddletail swimbait," he said. "The 8-inch and 10-inch Ben Parker spoons are really popular for striper fishing, and the bass fishermen use them, too," he said. "When the water gets warm, they will hit a big bait. It's just a reaction bite when you are reeling it through them."

Striper and hybrid fishing prospects in Lake Hartwell are outstanding, Harden said.

"Hartwell has the numbers of fish," he said. "They (Georgia and South Carolina wildlife agencies) have loaded the lake up in response to fish kills."

Harden said that while numbers of the bigger stripers appear to be down, 8- to 10-pound fish are common, and a 30-pounder was recently caught.

"Hartwell might not be the spot right now for a trophy fish, but it is the place to come for lots of 5-, 6- and 7-pound hybrids," he said. ▪

— Pat Robertson



Jeff Burleson



Application of fertilizer to a food plot is the easy part; figuring out what the soil and plants need starts with a soil test, following recommendations for amounts and compounds is a little more complicated.

GOOD SOIL, GOOD TOIL

SOIL TESTS CAN POINT TO NEEDED CHEMICAL APPLICATIONS



CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

Agricultural Service Laboratory
171 Old Cherry Road, Clemson, SC 29634
Phone: 864-656-2068 Fax: 864-656-2069

Date: 5/14/2019
Soil Report for:

Lab Number:
Account:
Chem Id:
Sample ID: Wilson
Soil Code: 4

Analysis **Results**

Soil pH 5.2
Buffer pH 7.50

		Low	Medium	Sufficient	High	Excessive
Phosphorus (P)	7	lbs/acre				
Potassium (K)	94	lbs/acre				
Calcium (Ca)	1014	lbs/acre				
Magnesium (Mg)	131	lbs/acre				
Zinc (Zn)	3.8	lbs/acre				
Manganese (Mn)	85	lbs/acre				
Boron (B)	0.8	lbs/acre				
Copper (Cu)	0.9	lbs/acre				
Sodium (Na)	9	lbs/acre				
Sulfur (S)		lbs/acre				
Soluble Salts		mmhos/cm				
Nitrate Nitrogen		ppm				
Organic Matter		% LOI				

Calculations **Base Saturation**

Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC)	Acidity	Ca	Mg	K	Na	Total
7.2 meq/100g	4 meq/100g	35%	8%	2%	0%	45%

Recommendations (lbs/acre) **Lime** (lbs/acre)

Crop	N	P_2O_5	K_2O	Ca	Mg	Zn	Mn	Cu	B	S	Target 5.5	Target 6.0	Target 6.5
Fall Deer Alfalfa	0	150	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			4500
*See Comments: 1,105													
Legumes for Wildlife	0	100	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			4500
*See Comments: 1,105,515,518													
Fall Deer Mix, Brassicas	80	100	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		3000	4500
*See Comments: 1,105,514													
Grasses for Wildlife	100	100	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		3000	4500
*See Comments: 1,105,514													

Every hunter that his time and money invested in a food-plot program wants to see results in more ways than one. As fall arrives, hunters would love to see a big-racked buck making regular visits to their food plot, where blood, sweat, and tears have taken hold.

Ultimately, most hunters hope to shoot a nice deer in their plots, but most land managers will credit their hard work as successful when a solid source of nutrition is created and used regularly by the local herd. In order to create these nutrient-rich meccas, it starts at the ground level, literally, with a soil test, but what do all of these numbers mean?

Everything grows from the dirt, and having the right chemical composition will directly affect the outcome and the potential uses by wildlife. A soil test is the first step to creating an ideal food source for wildlife. Soil tests allow hunters and property managers to make precise and accurate soil amendments to create the ideal chemical environment for their intended food-plot plans.

IT'S THE CHEMISTRY

Plants require a specific chemical environment to survive and thrive. Whether growing peanuts, corn or soybeans in Williamsburg County, S.C., or bright, green turf grass on one of the world-famous golf courses in North Carolina's Sandhills, soil chemistry is the starting point.

Soil tests are about as inexpensive as a hamburger combo at a fast-food place and very easy to collect. But after the results return, how should one interpret them and use them to his advantage?

Test results produce lots of numbers that can look foreign for people not adapted to reading them. While all of the reported numbers contribute to the success of the crop, there are several key numbers that will have the biggest impact on the crop's outcome.

The pH and the buffer pH should be the first numbers to which you should pay close attention.. The soil pH is the groundwork for all chemical reactions in the soil. Plants need nutrients, and the specific pH of the soil determines what nutrients will be soluble and usable to plants, and what nutrients will be held unavailable. A soil pH of 7.0 is considered neutral, and anything less is considered acidic. Most agriculture plants flourish when soil pH is slightly neutral or between 6.5 and 7.0.

continues on page 60

FERTILIZER CALCULATIONS MADE EASY:

Soil test results make it easy for landowners to make fertilizer applications on their land for their fall food plots. All plants need a wide variety of soil nutrients in order for a bountiful crop to flourish, and commercial fertilizers are an easy way to improve the nutrient availability in the soil. But how much does it take to provide the necessary nutrients for the field?

Not everybody likes math, but figuring out how many bags of fertilizer to add is relatively simple without any treacherous calculus, geometry or advanced algebra.

Fertilizers contain both macro-nutrients and micro-nutrients where the composition by percent volume is reported on the label. Most labels will show the major macro-nutrients in the three-digit label (#-#-#) that equates to the percent volume of Nitrogen-Phosphorus-Potassium. Other nutrients are located on the more-detailed accounting of the label where the remaining micro-nutrients are included. The amounts of nutrients to be applied can be easily calculated by using the weight of the bag, percent volume of each nutrient on bag, and then by the area of treatment.

Here is a simple example to demonstrate the math. A landowner is planting a one-acre food plot, and the recommendation is for 70 pounds of phosphorus per acre — that was all that was required. A 40-pound bag of triple super-phosphate is labeled as 0-46-0. Forty-six percent of the 40-pound bag is phosphate — 18.4 pounds per bag. For the 70 pounds of recommended phosphorus, it would require four 40-pound bags or 160 pounds. At this rate, it would provide approximately 73.6 pounds of phosphorus from the four 40-pound bags.

Typically, most farmers apply fertilizers with a mixture of both micro- and macro-nutrients so they can meet all of the nutrient needs at one time. The percentage of the nutrients can be easily calculated using the same method as with the triple super-phosphate above.



Jeff Burleson



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The buffer pH value illustrates how adding lime can effectively raise the pH to desired levels. Buffer pH is produced in the soil laboratory after a controlled alkaline solution is added to the soil sample. The difference in the soil pH and the buffer pH values will determine how effective a lime treatment can adjust the soil pH. A wide range between soil pH and buffer pH essentially means a lime treatment will have a dramatic effect on the soil pH. By contrast, a small difference between the two values means lime won't have a big effect on the soil pH.

HOW SOIL RESPONDS TO LIME

The amount of organic content and the soil texture determine the effectiveness and prescribed interval of lime treatments and the buffer pH values. Soils high in organics and clay content in the soil have a high reserve acidity that takes longer to convert to higher pHs with alkaline solutions but will take fewer lime applications after pH values have been adjusted, compared to sandy soils. Well-drained, sandy soil will respond quickly to lime, but it must be added frequently due to important chemicals leaching out of the root zone.

As a rule of thumb, both sandy and clay soils will need recurrent lime applications over time. However, sandy soils can receive an annual burst of a quick-liming product 30 to 45 days before planting to have a positive affect on soil productivity. Clay-based soils should be limed using slow-release dolomitic lime in several split applications every few years.

In addition to the soil pH, the levels of macro- and micronutrients are reported from the soil sample. These nutrients are important for successful plant survival and the potential for rigorous growth. Fortunately, nearly all of the listed soil nutrients can be supplemented and usable to plants as long as the soil pH is within an ideal soil pH range. It's important to note that using fertilizers high in potassium and phosphorus in very acidic soils isn't recommended because these two elements will be insoluble to plants.



NEUTRAL PH IS BEST

Chemicals react and form compounds in the soils that can be either soluble or insoluble for plants. Most soil chemical compounds are more usable to plants when located in a near neutral pH environment. Generally, soil chemicals are reported in pounds per acre, and most soil laboratories provide an indicator chart to show whether levels are deficient, sufficient, high or other relative factor language.

Fortunately, soil-laboratory reports have an easy button that gives landowners summary recommendations to help assist in application rates. These are given in per acre amounts, and some reports even show the recommended rates for specific plant groups, such as: legumes, grasses, brassicas, etc.

Soil testing is an economic but vital component to all food-plot preparation schedules. And the reports can be easy to interpret when the basic components are understood. ▪



Jeff Burleson *is a native of Lumberton, N.C., who lives in Myrtle Beach, S.C. He graduated from N.C. State University and is a certified biologist and professional forester for Southern Palmetto Environmental Consulting.*

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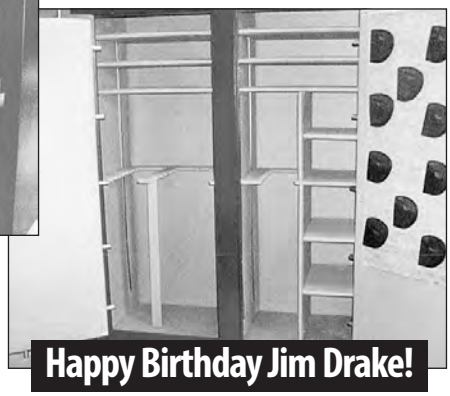
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Phillip Gentry



The Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway provides anglers with hundreds of miles of fishable water along the coast of the Carolinas. **BELOW:** Flounder and other bottom-feeding fish are less likely to be affected by the heavy, summer boat traffic of the ICW.

SEINING THE SUMMER ICW

CHANGE YOUR SCHEDULE, LOWER YOUR EXPECTATIONS, FISH THE COVER

Phillip Gentry

Imagine the Intercoastal Waterway along any populated stretch on the Carolina coast during July. The weather is hot. Streams of pleasure boaters are running to and fro. Throw in an equal amount of jet skis, stand-up paddlers and touring paddlers.

It's a constant parade of vacation water traffic that makes the average kayak angler wonder if there's even a fish to be found anywhere in sight.

Rather than fight the crowds, it's better to adjust your fishing schedule to early and late in the day, before the pleasure crowd hits the water or after it's gone. You should plan on rising early, fishing until mid-morning, then returning in the late afternoon and fishing until dark.

Don't expect to see schools of redfish nosing around in high-traffic areas, but it may be more common than you think to cash in on bottom species such as whiting, croaker, small sharks or flounder that don't mind it so much when things are getting stirred up. Don't overlook predator species like bluefish, redfish or even trout to take advantage of baitfish that are moving in.

The most obvious cover to fish in and around the ICW and its associated cuts, canals, and sounds is man-made structure. Look for boat docks, bridges, pilings or ditches that have been dredged to allow boat traffic to pass. All of these have good fish-holding potential.

It's hard to beat live or fresh dead baits when fishing in high-traffic, high-pressure areas. Live baits — mud minnows, shrimp and small crabs — along with cut fish, offer the appeal of both sight, smell and taste over artificial lures that may be harder to see in busy, murky water.

Stake-out poles and anchoring systems are a must for your kayak, especially if there's any current in the area. Likewise, gear to contain and keep live bait alive is a necessity if you're using bait.

You may not have the luxury or "playing" a fish if you are around barnacle encrusted structure or fishing in a high-traffic area where other boats aren't going to cut you any slack. At least medium-action, 20-pound tackle with 20- to 30-pound braided line is a good idea. If using a leader beyond the braid, a section of 40- to 50-pound mono or fluorocarbon will help get fish past the obstacles and to the side of your vessel. ▪





Phillip Gentry *of Greenville, S.C., is host of "Upstate Outdoors," a weekly radio show that can be heard on Saturdays at noon on WORD 106.3 FM.*

PADDLE UP A FEW SUMMER SHEEPSHEAD

Targeting sheepshead from a plastic boat can be an advantage when hitting busy creeks and waterways. Sheepshead don't seem to be as spooky as other species, especially during the summer, maybe because they're used to hiding under boat docks. Paddlers often report sight-fishing right under the kayak on an incoming tide bringing clearer water, picking sheepshead off the rocks or dock poles as they slowly paddle along.

Two approaches work for catching sheepshead from a kayak. The first is to lower or jig a rig around vertical structure like dock pilings or posts. The second is to lower the rig to the bottom and let the weight sit while the bait waves in the current.

To distinguish a bite, feel for a chewing sensation that can be duplicated by rolling the leader between your fingers on a tight line. A "thump" on the line is indicative of a fish snatching the bait off the hook and rarely results in a hookup.

While working your way through docks, the best method to insure a steady presentation is to hold onto the structure with one hand so you can fish vertically with the other. If a congregation of fish is under one dock or in a specific area, a brush hook or clamp is better than anchoring or staking out, as anything that disturbs the bottom has a tendency to spook fish.

An old timer's trick for getting sheepshead to bite is chumming. Clams or oysters can be stored in a burlap sack and crushed into smaller pieces with a hammer. When arriving at a spot, reach in, grab a handful of crushed shell and goo and toss it in the water.

Another old school method is to pack a garden shovel or rake in the kayak. If an area that should produce doesn't or has been producing and stops, the paddler can reach over with the rake or shovel and scrape barnacles and shell into the water to get the party started. ▪



Sheepshead are readily available around man-made structures like docks, piers, and bridge pilings.

Phillip Gentry

BEST BETS

NORTH CAROLINA

WHAT — Whiting, flounder, redfish, bluefish

WHERE — Manteo

HOW — Most kayak anglers vacationing on the Outer Banks don't care what type of fish they catch so long as they catch something. The best "something" rig on the market is the two-hook, bottom-bouncing rig baited with mud minnows or live shrimp. Fish this on the bottom in deep water cuts, channels or around man- made structure.

LAUNCH — A popular public boat ramp is across from Pirate's Cove Marina, on the western side of the Washington Baum (US 64) Bridge. Parking is available for up to 50 vehicles, and there are several pedestrian walkways for easy, boat-free fishing. A public boat ramp in Mann's Harbor, across the Croatan Sound from Manteo on the mainland, allows easy access to the sound.

INSIDER TIP — The Old US 64 bridge at Mann's Harbor is a favorite kayak-fishing destination. The hundreds of pilings will hold fish from top to bottom.

SOUTH CAROLINA

WHAT — Sheepshead

WHERE — Folly Beach

HOW — Use a light-action spinning rod with a sensitive tip, work a Carolina rig with a ½-ounce weight and a No. 2 Aberdeen bronze hook baited with a live fiddler crab around any of the old pilings.

LAUNCH — A public boat ramp on Center Street in Folly Beach will provide kayakers with access to the backside of Folly Beach and a lot of man-made structure to fish. The Sol Legare Boat Landing, off of Folly Road provides access to the Stono River and possibly less boating congestion for that immediate area.

INSIDER TIP — Make sure you are fishing in at least 4 feet of water, the deeper the better.

continues on page 64



SOFT-CRATE TACKLE SYSTEM



Plano has designed the Kayak Soft Crate Tackle System to complement storage options many fishermen are already using. The soft, lightweight bag is sized specifically to fit inside a milk crate or rest on deck or in the tank well.

The paneled design features multiple compartments sized to fit StowAway® utility boxes or offer bulk storage. All sections are easily removable, allowing you to customize the bag to meet your needs. The Soft Crate is ideal for beginners building up their gear collection or skilled anglers who need options to make a bag their own.

The Soft Crate is secured to your boat by a series of sturdy zippers, straps and latches. The system also features numerous D-rings and two tool holders that offer easy access to pliers, hook removers, etc.

The four-panel design allows you to carry as much or as little as you need with a large, open interior with two sections of bulk storage and side storage panels that double as carry handles.

The lid also features a large storage area and additional zippered pocket to carry frequent use items right at your fingertips.

MSRP is $49.99.

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ANGLER CLASSIC KAYAK PADDLE



The best-selling kayak fishing paddle on the market, the Angler Classic kayak fishing paddle from Bending Branches, is the staple of durability on the water. It has all the bells and whistles of high-end fishing paddles at a price any kayak fisherman can afford. The rugged, fiberglass-reinforced nylon blades are on a 2-piece, fiberglass shaft, giving you the push you need without worrying about durability.

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The Angler Classic comes with a snug-fitting, 3-hole snap-button ferrule that allows for adjustable feather angles of 0° and 60°, left- or right-hand control. It is available in sizes from 220 cm to 260 cm, in 10 cm increments. The blades measures 6.9 x 17.5 inches.

MSRP is $139.95.

Available at www.bendingbranches.com.



2019 NORTH CAROLINA FISHING REGULATIONS

Not an official document.
Refer to official fishing regs at NCWRC and NCDMF websites.

SALTWATER

STATE COASTAL WATERS REGULATIONS (0 - 3 miles)

FISH SPECIES	Minimum Lengths	Creel Limit (per person)
Greater amberjack	28″ FL	1/day
Blue marlin	99″ LJFL	1/vessel/trip
White marlin	66″ LJFL	1/vessel/trip
Sailfish	63″ LJFL	1/day
Sharks	%	%
Cobia	33″	2/day
Bluefish	5 longer than 24″TL	15/day
Red drum (channel bass, puppy drum)	18″ min., 27″ max.	1/day
Black drum	14″ min., 25″ max.	10/day
Flounder	15″TL	4/day
Dolphin (mahi-mahi)	none	10/day
Groupers (black and gag)	24″TL	1/day
Red, scamp, yellowfin, yellowmouth	20″TL	3/day
Speckled hind/Warsaw Grouper	closed	closed
Wahoo	none	2/day
Red porgy (aka silver snapper, pinky)	14″TL	3/day
King mackerel	24″ FL	3/day
Spanish mackerel	12″ FL	15/day
Sea bass (north of Hatteras)	12.5″TL	15/day
Sea bass (south of Hatteras)	13″TL	7/day
Yellowfin/Bigeye tuna	27″ CFL	3/day
Bluefin tuna	Contact NMFS (http://www.nmfspermits.com)	
Spotted sea trout (speckled)	14″	4/day
Weakfish (gray trout)	12″TL	1/day
Snappers: Gray (mangrove), yellowtail, queen, cubera, dog, mahoghany, schoolmaster	12″TL	10/day in federal waters
Sheepshead	10″	10/day
Red snapper	closed	closed
Mutton snapper	16″TL (federal waters)	10/day
Vermillion snapper	12″TL	5/day
Striped bass ^	28″TL or more (ocean waters)	1/day
Hickory shad	None	10/day
American shad	closed	closed

^ see NCWRC/NCDMF regs for inshore Management Area limits. % Contact NMFS Highly Migratory Species, 888-872-8862, visit hmspermits.noaa.

FRESHWATER

FISH Species (Inland waters)	Minimum Size Limit	Creel Limit (per day)
Crappie +	None +	None +
Largemouth, smallmouth, spotted bass +	14″ (2-fish exception)	5
Channel catfish	No restrictions	None
Blue/Flathead catfish	No restrictions	None
Striped bass, hybrid (Bodie) %	20″	4 %
Sauger	15″	8
White bass	None	25
Walleye#	None	8
Muskellunge	42″	1
Kokanee salmon	None	7
Red drum	18″ min., 27″ max.	1
American and hickory shad	None	10 (1 American shad)
Spotted sea trout	Closed	Closed until June 15
Flounder	15″	4/day@

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)

+ See specific lake exceptions in NCWRC regulations digest or www.ncwildlife.org

% Striped bass creel limits and size minimums vary by lake. See NCWRC regulations digest or www.ncwildlife.org.

Lake James, minimum size is 15 inches. Lake Gaston, minimum size is 18 inches, creel limit 5.

@ Hook-and-line and flounder giggers restricted to 4 fish per day per trip, 15-inch size minimum.

2019 SOUTH CAROLINA FISHING REGULATIONS

Not an official document.
Refer to SCNDR's official fishing regulations pamphlet or www.dnr.sc.gov.

SALTWATER

STATE COASTAL WATERS REGULATIONS (0 - 3 miles)

FISH SPECIES	Minimum Lengths	Creel Limit (per person)
Greater amberjack	28″ FL	1/day
Blue marlin	99″ LJFL	1/day
White marlin	66″ LJFL	1/day
Sailfish	63″ LJFL	1/day
Sharks	%	%
Cobia	36″ FL	1/day&
Bluefish	None	15/day
Black drum	14″ minimum 27″ maximum TL	5/day
Redfish (red drum, channel bass)	15″ minimum 23″ maximum TL	2/day
Flounder (state waters)	14″TL	10/day
Groupers (black and gag)	24″TL	1/day
Red, scamp, yellowfin, yellowmouth	20″TL	3/day
Speckled hind/Warsaw grouper	closed	closed
Red porgy (aka silver snapper, pinky)	14″TL	3/day#
King mackerel	24″ FL	3/day
Spanish mackerel	12″ FL	15/day
Sheepshead	14″	10/day (30 per boat)
Spadefish	None	20/day (agg. grouper)
Black sea bass	13″	7/day
Dolphin	20″ FL	10/day (60 per boat)
Yellowfin tuna	27″ CFL	3/day
Bluefin/Bigeye tuna	Contact NMFS (http://www.nmfspermits.com)	
Tarpon	77″ FL	1/day
Spotted sea trout (speckled)	14″	10/day
Weakfish (gray trout)	12″	1/day
Wahoo	None	2/day
Gray, yellowtail, queen, cubera, dog, mahoghany, schoolmaster snapper	12″TL	10/day#
Red snapper	closed	closed
Mutton snapper	16″TL (federal waters)	10/day
Vermillion snapper	12″TL	5/day

% For shark seasons, bag and size limits, contact NMFS Highly Migratory Species Division, 888-872-8862 or hmspermits.noaa.gov. # Check with the SAFMC at www.safmc.net or 843-571-4366. & Cobia, 1 per person per day up to 6 per boat. Closed May 1-31 south of Jeremy Inlet, 1 per person, up to 3 per boat, after June 1 south of Jeremy Inlet. # No more than 6 redfish per boat.

FRESHWATER

FISH Species (Inland waters)	Minimum Size Limit	Creel Limit (per day)
Crappie/Panfish +	None	30 bream (15 red-breast), 20 crappie
Largemouth, smallmouth, spotted, redeye, bass%	none largemouth 12″ smallmouth	5 lg/sm/r, 15 spots
Channel catfish	No restrictions	None
Blue catfish	No restrictions=	None=
Flathead catfish	No restrictions	None
Striped bass or hybrid bass	Varies by location&%	Varies by location&%
Mountain Trout	+	5
White bass	None	10 (except Sav. River)
Walleye and sauger+	None	8

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).

+ See specific lake and river exceptions in SCDNR's Regulations Digest

= In the Santee Cooper system, only two over 32 inches with daily possession limit of 25 fish. In Congaree/Wateree rivers, no possession limit.

% For lake-specific regulations, see the SCDNR's Regulations Digest or visit www.dnr.sc.gov. Keeper season in the Santee Cooper system is Oct. 1-June 15.

& In Lake Russell and its tributaries, the daily creel limit is two fish, only one of which may be more than 34 inches long.

COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver

GRILLED DOLPHIN ON BLACKENED CORN RELISH

If you didn't realize it or didn't get the memo, it's summer again in the Carolinas. After the mild winter, the spring was hot; the 90-degree days began before Memorial Day weekend. Folks from the Palmetto and Tarheel states don't need a calendar to know when summer has arrived. It's here for 2019, so let's try to enjoy it.

With the right clothing and a 5-gallon bucket of sunscreen, July is a good time for fishing off the Carolinas. Unless there is a tropical system in the mix, most days begin pretty calm, then develop a sea breeze as the temperatures rise. The breeze picks up around mid-morning, just when the heat is about to become overbearing, and it is at its strongest blowing toward land when fishing is over and fishermen are heading in.

Dolphin are a favorite fish of all anglers who head to the bluewater. Many call them Mahimahi to distinguish them from Flipper, but most enjoy them as the guest of honor at dinner.

Sometimes, the experience of catching fish adds to the flavor, and this is one of those times. All fresh fish are good, but eating ones you caught yourself earlier that day makes it really special. These fish are mild-flavored, and almost everyone likes them. Adding the grill and a little smoke from blackening the corn relish makes it even better. The Carolinas might not be the tropics, but this is definitely tropical.

The proper care of fish begins as soon as they hit the deck, especially when it's hot and sunny. Fish should be covered in ice, not just tossed in the fish box on ice, as soon as possible. If they come in green, flip them into the fish box until they quiet down, then remove the hooks and cover them with ice. When days are super hot and the sun is bearing down, even a few minutes on the deck can negatively affect the quality of fish. Ice is your friend; cover your fish in it immediately. ▪



Jerry Dilsaver

Serve fillets on top of the corn relish and try to get some of each on every forkful. **INSET**: Marinating dolphin fillets in spicy Italian dressing will help keep them moist while grilling.

GRILLED DOLPHIN ON BLACKENED CORN RELISH

INGREDIENTS:

2 pounds dolphin fillets
1 16-ounce jar sweet and spicy corn relish
Spicy Italian salad dressing
Blackened seasoning
1 tbsp olive oil
¼ stick butter
Salt and coarse ground black pepper
Non-stick cooking spray.

This is a unique way to eat dolphin. As much as we like dolphin, when you find them, you usually catch a lot, and eating them grilled, baked or blackened can get rather mundane. This recipe began while sitting with a group of fishermen and talking about different ways to prepare seafood, especially dolphin, when you come in with a big catch and have enough for a bunch of meals.

This recipe doesn't blacken the fish, but the corn relish. Actually, blackened might be a little overstatement, as the corn relish is really more caramelized with the seasoning, rather than being blackened. I believe you'll appreciate the juxtaposition.

Take care to remove all the liquid you can from the corn relish without squeezing it. It will stay moist with the olive oil and butter in the pan. The little bit of olive oil helps keep the butter from scorching.

This is another example of my food philosophy: if two things taste good separately, there's a good chance they will taste good together. Corn relish basically amounts to pickled corn, but with both sweet and sour tastes. It usually has onions and some peppers, and there are many different recipes. You can find options to make it yourself by Googling "corn relish," but in staying with the easy part of this recipe column, I used some Jardines Corn Relish from the shelf at a local grocery store, and it can also be found at most farmers' markets.

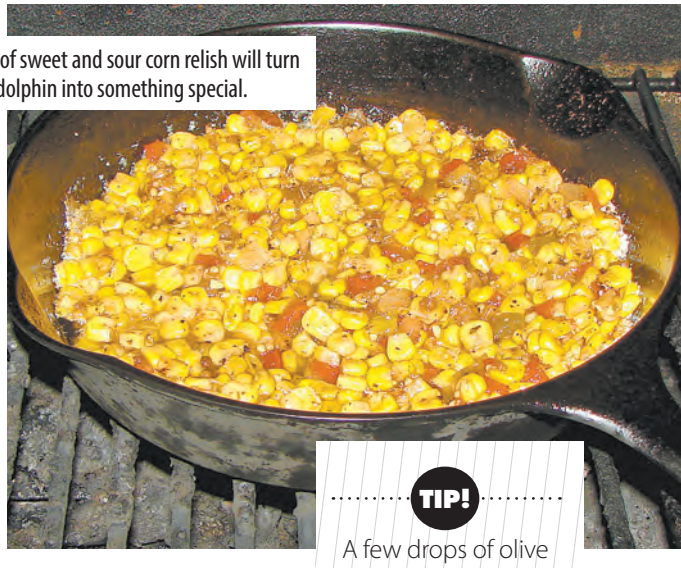
I use Chef Paul Prudhomme's Blackened Redfish Magic blackened seasoning, rather than making the salt-free blackened seasoning I usually make from scratch. There are many different combinations for making your own salt-free or regular blackened seasonings that can be found by Googling, and I'm still experimenting with them.

The zesty Italian dressing doesn't impart much flavor to the fillets, but the combination of vinegar and oil penetrates and keeps them moist while grilling. I use a lot of coarse ground black pepper and not much salt, but this can be tailored for individual tastes.

Be sure not to overcook the dolphin fillets. As soon as a fork slides in easily and they flake, take them off the heat and move them to an upper warming rack or to a heated plate. It will only take a couple of minutes to cook the corn relish once the butter has melted. The pan will still be warming when you put it in. This is a caramelization, not a usual blackening, so as soon as you see any black in the relish, remove it from the heat and serve it.

Serve this with the corn relish on the plate and the dolphin fillet on top of it. They are good eaten separately, but try to get some corn relish with each bite of the fillet. The combination of flavors that aren't typically mixed is what makes this special.

Even though it's really easy, I don't use this recipe often and I don't expect anyone will. However, just about every time I use it, one of us makes a comment that we should fix dolphin this way more often and maybe even try it with other fish. ▪



The flavor of sweet and sour corn relish will turn a meal of dolphin into something special.

PREPARATION:

Trim away any larger, red areas of the fillet and cut it into approximate 8-ounce pieces. Place fillets in Ziplock bag, barely cover with spicy Italian dressing, squeeze out all the air and seal. Marinate at least 30 minutes in refrigerator.

Strain the corn relish and shake to remove all liquid possible. Put corn relish in a bowl and sprinkle with blackened seasoning (to taste), then stir to mix.

Place fillets on grill tray and season to taste with salt and coarse ground pepper. Grill fillets over medium heat for a few minutes on each side and move them to a warming tray. Be careful not to overcook the fillets.

Turn grill to high. Put olive oil and butter in a cast-iron frying pan and put the pan on the grill. When butter has melted, pour corn relish into pan and sprinkle on a little more blackened seasoning (to taste). Stir regularly while cooking. This will caramelize quickly, and you don't need to scorch it as in other blackenings.

Serve by spreading corn relish on a plate and placing the dolphin fillet on top. I serve this with a green salad or lettuce wedge. If you would like dessert, key lime pie is an excellent choice ▪

TIP!

A few drops of olive oil in a frying pan will keep butter from scorching



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



North Carolina has restricted the first six hours of opening day of the catch-and-keep season on delayed-harvest streams to kids under age 18. It's a great way to introduce young anglers to trout.

DELAYED HARVEST:

KIDS OPEN TROUT WARS

Robert Satterwhite

On opening day of the catch-and-keep season on North Carolina's delayed-harvest streams, kids under age 18 had the streams to themselves — older ones fishing on their own, younger ones assisted by parents and grandparents, all of them experiencing the thrill of hooking and landing a trout, an experience that likely will last a lifetime.

The practice began in 2009, when the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission initiated the youth-only segment of the first Saturday in June when catch-and-release turns into catch-and-keep on those popular streams. Originally, fishing was limited to kids under 16, but the rules were later amended to allow all kids under 18 to fish.

What better way to introduce youngsters to fishing than to put them on a stream where they are almost guaranteed to catch a limit of trout, and what better way to ensure future generations of avid trout fishers?

This past June 1, scores of youngsters fished the 5-mile section of the Tuckasegee River's delayed harvest waters. By noon, pull-offs on both segments of the river were crowded with vehicles as hundreds of adult trout fishers crowded the river, taking their turn on the stream, pulling in trout after trout.

The catch-and-keep season attracts a different type of trout fisher than the ones who dominate the stream during the catch-and-release season. The majority of the catch-and-keep fishers fish for food, not sport. They fish with spinning gear and closed-face reels, not top-of-the-line fly rods. They fish with red wigglers, night crawlers, wax worms, even corn niblets and marshmallows, not custom-made flies.

WELL-ESTABLISHED

Implemented on a trial basis in 1992, North Carolina's delayed-harvest program included portions of five streams; the catch-and-release season ran from March 1 through the first Friday in June. As the program gained wide popularity, new waters were added, and in 1996, the catch-and-release portion of the season was extended to eight months. The program now has 34 streams and two small lakes in 20 counties. The only western counties without delayed-harvest streams are Avery, Buncombe, Cherokee, Rutherford and Stokes.

South Carolina has portions of five streams designated as delayed-harvest waters: the Chattooga River, Chauga River, Cheohee Creek, Devils Fork, Howard Creek and Eastatoee Creek. The South Carolina catch-and-keep seasons runs from May 15 through Oct. 31 Creel limit is five trout.

Biologists estimate that approximately 50 percent of stocked trout are caught in



Bob Satterwhite *has been writing about the outdoors, particularly trout fishing, for more than 25 years. A native of Morganton, N.C., he lives in Cullowhee, N.C., close to the Tuckasegee River, Caney Fork, Moses Creek, and several other prime trout streams.*

the first two weeks of the catch-and-keep season. With the population drastically reduced, the remaining trout have a better chance of surviving the summer when stream levels drop, water warms and food sources are limited.

Biologists also estimate that a third of stocked trout in delayed-harvest streams are lost during the catch-and-release season. Some die because of improper catching and handling, some migrate to tributaries, and some are poached.

What are the chances of catching trout in delayed-harvest waters after opening week?

Delayed-harvest streams were heavily stocked with rainbow, brook and a smaller number of brown trout for the catch-and-release season, most averaging 10 inches, with a few lunker fish thrown in for good measure. Most stockings, which are generous, end in June. For example, the 5-mile upper section of the Tuckasegee River in Jackson County received approximately 50,000 trout in five stockings. The lower section, in Swain County, received another 18,000.

Creel limits of seven fish are often easily reached on opening day of the catch-and-keep season. Fishers who get out early often catch their limit in the first hour of fishing. Unfortunately, some fishers take their limits home and return for a second or even a third limit. Wildlife officers monitor the streams on opening day, but violators are difficult to catch unless they're caught with too many fish in their creels or ice chests. Violators caught with too many trout face replacement costs of the fish, fines, court costs, confiscation of fishing gear and loss of fishing privileges.

KEEP ONLY SUPPER

Even if the trout need thinning out, there's no rule that says you must take home a limit every time you go fishing. A good rule to follow is keep only what you'll eat for supper. Too many people catch their limit, go back the next day and catch another limit,and put the fish in the freezer. Six months later they remember the trout are in the freezer and throw them out because they're not worth eating. The only trout worth eating are the ones fresh from the water.

Delayed-harvest streams are especially popular with older people, youngsters, and beginners. The streams provide an excellent environment to learn to fish, try out new fly patterns or lures, or spend a pleasant day catching trout.

The beauty of the delayed-harvest fishing program is that fishers of all skill levels get their time on the streams.

Stocking schedules, stream locations and maps, and a host of other pertinent information about trout fishing in North and South Carolina can be accessed via the Internet at www.ncwildlife.org and www.dnr.sc.gov. ▪



Chris Bush



The author landed this nice speckled trout on a Megabass Darksleeper, a Goby-type soft-plastic bait. **BELOW:** Ned rigs are mushroom-shaped jigheads that allow soft plastics to stand upright when in contact with the bottom.

THREE NEW TRICKS FOR MORE BIG TROUT

NED RIG, DARKSLEEPER, S-WAVER 120 HAVE POTENTIAL TO FOOL TROPHY SPECKS

Chris Bush

I think it's safe to say our fishing world is changing, and since it's summer, ICAST, the world's largest sportfishing trade show, looms in the immediate future, scheduled for July 9-12 in Orlando, Fla.

Designers, manufacturers and anglers gather to view, reveal and introduce technological advances before they can be purchased in the mainstream market.

I bring this up because I'm going to discuss three lures that meet the definition of ICAST's intent: view, reveal and introduce. Having fished these on plenty of trips, I can confidently write they all have high production value, as well as big-fish potential.

THE NED RIG

Year after year, this simple setup produces tremendous results on heavily pressured fish when downsizing is appropriate. A mainstay in almost every freshwater angler's arsenal, its transition to inshore saltwater fishing is virtually flawless.

The rig is remarkably simple and includes a jighead and soft-plastic lure. Unlike traditional jighead styles — round, aspirin or arrow — it features a "mushroom" profile. Simple as it may seem, this jighead allows the bait to stand straight up when in contact with the bottom. Additionally, pairing it with smaller soft plastics gives great fishability and heavily pressured fish a less-invasive offering.



I prefer the Owner Blockhead in the 1/16- and 1/8-ounce sizes, but Z-Man also makes a NED Lockz HD jighead, and I prefer those in the 1/6- and 1/5-ounce sizes for heavier-tide and windier situations.

Soft-plastic selections being endless, I prefer ZMan's Finesse TRD and Trick Shotz, mainly because they are buoyant and compact. For fishing purposes, this is a jig, and I fish it as such — making one or two twitches, then letting the bait sink to the bottom while maintaining contact with the lure. Bites can be very subtle, but they can also be very big since many large summer trout are looking for smaller, quick offerings.

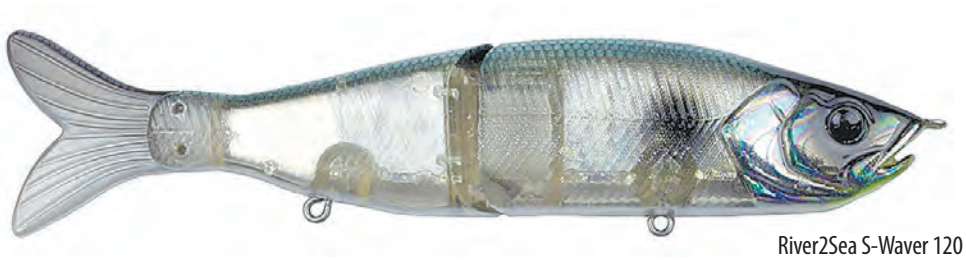
MEGABASS DARKSLEEPER

Newest of the three to market, this Goby profile soft plastic made by Megabass has unlimited inshore potential. Unlike many all-in-one swimbaits, it has an exaggerated set of dorsal fins that act as weed guards and allow an angler to fish grassy or rocky substrate virtually unscathed.

Although they are made in three different sizes, the 3-inch is the most versatile. Production weights vary depending on the length of the bait, but the 3/8- and 1/2-ounce are perfect for most, if not all, inshore situations. If you're like me and initially thought the offered weights are too heavy, I can tell you, the fishability of the 3/8-ounce is comparable to a tradi-

tional ⅛-ounce jig and soft plastic, while the ½-ounce fishes more like a 3/16-ounce bait. In terms of technique, fish this lure as you would any soft plastic/jighead combination.

Keep your rod tip elevated and give the bait two or three twitches, letting the bait sink while maintaining contact with your lure. Most hits, if not all, come on the fall, and since it's a compact offering, a majority of the hooksets occur on the inside of the mouth, particularly the cheek. This bait was designed to target smallmouth bass in clear, northern lakes, so the reduced visibility of most inshore estuaries renders this bait the perfect croaker silhouette.



River2Sea S-Waver 120

RIVER2SEA S-WAVER 120

I dare you to walk into any tackle shop on the California coast and mention the word "glide bait". What I would imagine taking place is a store clerk offering a myriad of samples and customers producing copious numbers of pictures of large bass with jointed baits longer than most human forearms. With that said, I took it upon myself to test the West Coast success and apply it to the Gulf Coast, particularly for large trout. After overcoming a large learning curve, I found these baits to be very effective and very versatile.

I chose the River2Sea S-Waver 120 mainly because of the price point and size. Most glide baits are produced in small batches. In other words, they are expensive. The S-Waver is one of the cheaper alternatives, yet it is still $15.99, but if you are serious about targeting big fish, these baits provide that option. The 120 is 4¾ inches long and weighs 1 3/16 ounces. Since, I wade the majority of the time I'm fishing and use lighter rod and reel combos, the 120 still falls in that option window and won't give me shoulder fatigue. Heck, Corky Fat Boys weigh almost a full ounce.

The options for fishing this bait are endless, but know that I found a long, exaggerated walk-the-dog cadence to be most effective. What makes this lure so effective is the long, sweeping side-to-side motion. It's great for shallow flats or a topwater alternative on lighter tide/calmer days. I find the only downside to these baits is the clumsy/loud entry into the water. Additionally, I almost exclusively fish these lures on braid or 100-percent, pure fluorocarbon, with nothing less than a medium-power/extra-fast action rod. Not only will the bait run true, but hookup-to-land ratio goes up exponentially with slightly heavier tackle. Don't ask me how I know!

Technology is giving some very creative lure producers endless possibilities, and as the angling world continues to change, it doesn't hurt to keep an eye out for those crossover lures that may give you the edge on big fish in your estuary. So keep plugging and remember, take what you need and release the rest. ▪



Chris Bush *is a U.S. Air Force officer and a licensed charter captain. He spends his time targeting big speckled trout and sharing knowledge on his website, Speckled Truth.*



Sammy Romano



LET ROGUE STRING YOU ALONG

BOWSTRING MANUFACTURER ENTERS MARKET WITH QUALITY PRODUCT YOU'LL NEED

As summer sets in, many hunters' thoughts turn to the upcoming early archery seasons.

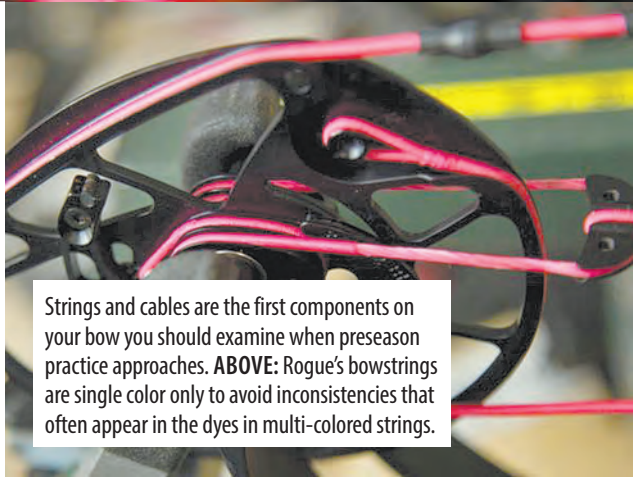
While a lot of them daydream of cooler fall days in the woods, very few begin to practice this early. Whether you start practicing or not, it's time to check your bow and bring it to your local pro shop for any needed maintenance, especially if you need to replace your string and cables.

Your bow's string set is the engine that propels your arrows toward the target. It is also often the weakest link; it fails first, and this causes untold numbers of hunting trips to be missed or cut short.

Most manufacturers recommend replacing your string set a minimum of every two years with average use, while people who shoot way more than average should replace theirs once a year. Obviously, if a string or cable shows extreme wear or nicks and frays, it should be replaced immediately regardless of its age.

Modern compound bows contain a massive amount of stored energy, even when at rest. Not only can a string or cable breaking cause damage to parts of your bow, but it can also cause severe injury to the archer. Don't push your luck riding a damaged string; replace it at once to avoid even costlier repairs or worse.

Your string and cable(s) serve a vital role in the performance and accuracy of your bow setup; this is no place to cut corners. A little extra money spent up front will lead to fewer tuning issues and maintenance down the road. Higher-quality strings and cables have tighter servings that don't space, "creep" less and have fewer peep-rotation issues than bargain strings do. This better quality is due to better construction processes, as well as better materials. It's a lot like cooking, where you need both technique and quality ingredients to prepare an outstanding meal.



Strings and cables are the first components on your bow you should examine when preseason practice approaches. **ABOVE:** Rogue's bowstrings are single color only to avoid inconsistencies that often appear in the dyes in multi-colored strings.

ROGUE STRINGS: A RISING STAR

For the past several years, we have been installing primarily string sets by Rogue Bowstrings in our pro shop. I have found their quality to be outstanding, as well as their customer service. Their exacting attention to detail and how quickly they fill orders sets them apart from other manufacturers. Rogue offers string sets in a rainbow of color options, and at different price levels to accommodate any archer's budget. They are big enough to produce top-quality and innovative strings, yet small enough that they always treat you like family.

Joey Hershberger Rogue's chief operating officer, said Rogue got started in December 2016. Although it is a newer manufacturer, all of its employees came from within the string industry, forming an all-star lineup. String and cables are built to order and to exacting specifications, then quickly shipped to the customer. Rogue offers string sets from its R-15 — a great entry level string set — to its new R-21, its flagship.



R-21: THE NEXT LEVEL OF STRINGS

Earlier this year, Rogue introduced its R-21 string, a proprietary blend of materials resulting from collaboration between Rogue and BCY.

"We always wanted our own blend of materials, and through an extensive, multi-level testing process partnered with BCY, we feel we have found the perfect blend in R-21," Hershberger said, "compared to 452X, for example, which tends to fuzz more, increases hand shock and often slows the bow down 5 to 8 feet per second from factory specs.

"R-21 is resistant to fuzzing, cushions the shot and maintains factory speeds. Not only that, it has a much-higher tensile strength in a thinner material, allowing the use of more strands for added strength. Whereas 452X has a single strand tensile strength of 100 pounds, R-21 boasts a tensile strength of 120 pounds. This is further compounded by the fact the strings often have as many as 28 strands. When this is factored in, the R-21 string has a tensile strength that is 560 pounds stronger. That's a huge advantage whether hunting or target shooting."

R-21 is available in nine solid colors — black, red, blue, pink, white, fluorescent green, fluorescent orange, silver, and tan —and is offered as a single-color string only, to avoid inconsistencies caused by varying thicknesses of dyes that would lead to unbalanced strings, according to Hershberger.

If you are due to change your string set, I encourage you to give R-21 some serious consideration. String sets can be ordered from any pro shop that is a Rogue dealer, or by contacting Rogue Bowstrings at 866-9-STRINGS or www.roguebowstrings.com. ▪



Sammy Romano *is a lifelong hunter who has worked in the archery industry for more than 24 years. His expertise includes compounds and crossbows. He can be reached at samboka31@aol.com.*

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TRY YOUR LUCK ...

AFTER DARK

By Phillip Gentry

WAITING UNTIL THE SUN GOES DOWN PROVIDES MORE SUMMER FISHING OPPORTUNITIES

As summer heat and recreational boat traffic make daylight hours less than hospitable to the serious angler, many turn nocturnal in pursuit of crappie, stripers, catfish and other fish that readily bite after hours. Many also view night-fishing as a traditional summer pasttime, spending the night on the water with friends and family sharing time between bites.

How you go about night fishing can spell the difference between a successful outing and just losing sleep. Keep these five steps in mind to help insure your success.

LIGHTING

Whether or not you intend to use lights to attract fish to your bait, having proper lighting is critical to night-fishing success. Being able to see to navigate, prepare rigs, unhook fish and fix the inevitable mishap that arises will require the ability to see. If using batteries, make sure they are fresh and charged. Some anglers rely on portable generators, which may be noisy but insure you don't lack for lighting power.

When possible, rig rods during the daylight and carry spares.

TACKLE

In the event of a malfunction, it's easier to swap a rod than fix a problem. Rod holders make it much simpler to stay organized and keep lines spaced apart when fishing with multiple rods. Keep repeated-use items like hooks, weights, nets and pliers within easy reach so you can find them in the dark.

ORGANIZE

Most night-fishing occurs from a stationary position. Arrange anglers things so each has space to move, be comfortable and tend to rods without having to step over or around obstructions. Clear pathways so each angler can freely move about the boat without tripping over items.

ANCHORING

Whether using an anchor or tying off to fixed objects like trees or bridge pilings, make sure your anchor points are secure. Keep anchor lines clear in the event that weather, conditions or simply moving to another spot makes it necessary to move.

LOCATION

Regardless of your quarry, fishing at night typically involves intercepting fish as they move from deep water to shallow in search of food. Target areas that provide a variety of depths in close proximity. Other considerations to keep in mind are structure, current, thermoclines and the presence of baitfish.



Weedless, spinning spoons will draw strikes from plenty of inshore saltwater fish, including flounder, speckled trout and red drum.

Jerry Dilsaver

SPOON-FEED SALTWATER FISH

By Jerry Dilsaver

DON'T FORGET THE OLD FAITHFUL WEEDLESS SPOON

Most saltwater anglers have an array of soft plastics, jigheads, topwater plugs and floating- or popping-cork rigs in their tackle boxes, but often, one of the most-important, productive lures is missing: weedless spoons.

"Any fisherman who doesn't have some weedless spoons in his tackle box is missing out," said guide Allen Jernigan of Breadman Ventures in Sneads Ferry, N.C., "I carry gold and black weedless spoons in ¼- and ½-ounce sizes and constantly use them as go-to lures. I know a lot of fishermen overlook them because they look so simple, but I won't leave home without them.

"Like many other fishermen, I first started using them for puppy drum in areas where other lures would stay hung up, but I've caught speckled trout, gray trout, flounder and more with them."

Jernigan doesn't hesitate to use both colors at the same time. He feels like the gold spoons might be a little better over darker bottoms, just because they show up better. Similarly, the black spoons might be a little better on light colored or sandy bottoms. However, he emphasizes he has caught drum, trout and flounder while fishing both colors regardless of the bottom color or structure.

Jernigan said water clarity is the real factor that determines his color choice, even though he still might try both colors for a few casts to be sure. He feels black is a little better in clear water because they don't shine too much and spook fish. Gold spoons have more flash, and he uses them when the water is dirtier.

"I prefer to throw the ¼-ounce spoon unless it is really windy," Jernigan said. "It is smaller, and I've found that fish will break their patterns to eat smaller baits far quicker than they will for larger baits. I believe they think the smaller bait is easier to catch, especially if it is moving erratically. However, when the wind is blowing very stiff, which it often is during the afternoon, I switch up to the ½-ounce spoon to add a little more weight to help punch through the wind."

Jernigan prefers the ½-ounce spoon when fishing oyster beds. It is a little wider as well as longer and doesn't fall between oysters and get hung us as much as the smaller spoon.

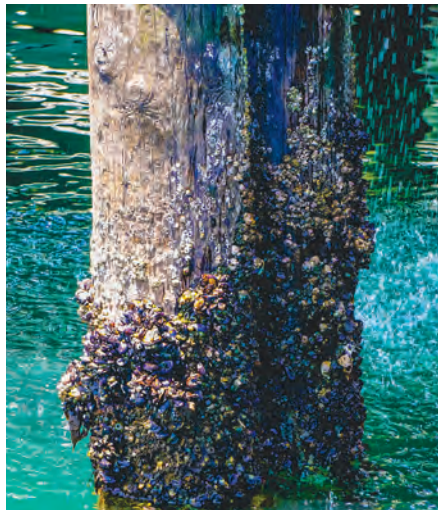
"I fish spoons on outfits loaded with 10- and 15-pound braided line," Jernigan said. "The smaller-diameter line deflects less in wind and current and makes it easier to control the lure. It also doesn't have any stretch, so I can work the spoon over things without it hanging up a little and then jumping too far like with mono. I use an 18- to 24-inch piece of 25-pound test fluorocarbon for a leader, and this disappears in the water so it separates the spoon from the braided line."

Jernigan, who ties the leader directly to the eye on the spoon, said one of the keys to being successful with spoons is to learn to fish them slowly enough they don't spin, but wobble from side-to-side. This doesn't put any twist into the line, and is the action that makes weedless spoons most appealing to fish. ▪

CHUM UP A SHEEPSHEAD

By Jeff Burleson

CRUSHED CRABS, BARNACLES WILL ATTRACT CONVICT FISH



Once located, it's not difficult to get sheepshead to bite, but finding them first is the key, and chumming can be a way to concentrate the hungry convict fish.

Sheepshead are suckers for free food, and they can smell things at great distances — almost like sharks. Many expert sheepshead fishermen believe that chumming is as important as tying on a hook.

South Carolina guides Tommy Scarborough and Jordan Pate chum heavily for sheepshead, whether fishing nearshore reefs during the winter or the Winyah Bay jetties during the summer.

"I am not a biologist, but they have got to have one of the best senses of smell there is," Scarborough said. "You will be surprised the difference it makes."

The best chum for sheepshead can be barnacles or oysters scraped off pilings or rocks. They can be busted up into smaller pieces and tossed out bit by bit in small amounts.

"It creates a feeding frenzy and makes it easy to fill up the box in a hurry," said Pate.

Scarborough will also use busted up barnacles and oysters, but he prefers to pick up fresh-dead fiddlers from are tackle shops. He then smashes them up and puts them inside a tubular cricket basket that he'll tie off and hang down in the water.

"The thin wires of the cricket basket will not allow all of the chum to float out at the same time. The chum smell really gets them going," he said. ▪



Sheepshead can be drawn to an area by anglers chumming with crushed fiddler crabs or with barnacles (inset) scraped off rocks or pilings.

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Sometimes, it takes a little extra effort to connect with bragging-sized Spanish mackerel, and a trolling bird may be the ticket. **INSET:** A Spanish mackerel's teeth are impressive, but don't connect trolling birds to trolling spoons with a wire leader; go with a heavier fluoro or mono leader.



Dan Kibler

FLIP SPANISH A REAL BIRD

By Jerry Dilsaver

TROLLING BIRD IN FRONT OF SPOONS WILL ATTRACT FISH

Since May, many fishermen have been targeting Spanish mackerel, particularly off the beaches from Oak Island, N.C., to the South Carolina line, and the good fishing will last into September. If you're a novice and want to get in on the action — and have a better chance of success — try "teasing" fish with a "bird."

That's one trick that Kevin Sneed of Rigged & Ready Charters uses to put more fish in the cooler, and it's a simple one. Birds are hard-plastic lures that resemble flying fish, shaped like a tiny bowling pin with angled "wings" protruding from both sides of the body. About 5 inches long, they skip across the water's surface when trolled at 7 mph or faster — standard trolling speeds for Spanish mackerel.

"I think the commotion on the surface is what gets the attention of Spanish," said Sneed (910-448-3474), who uses them along with Nos. 0 and 00 Clark Spoons in trolling spreads. "For some reason, I catch bigger Spanish with birds than I do with spools that are trolled deeper."

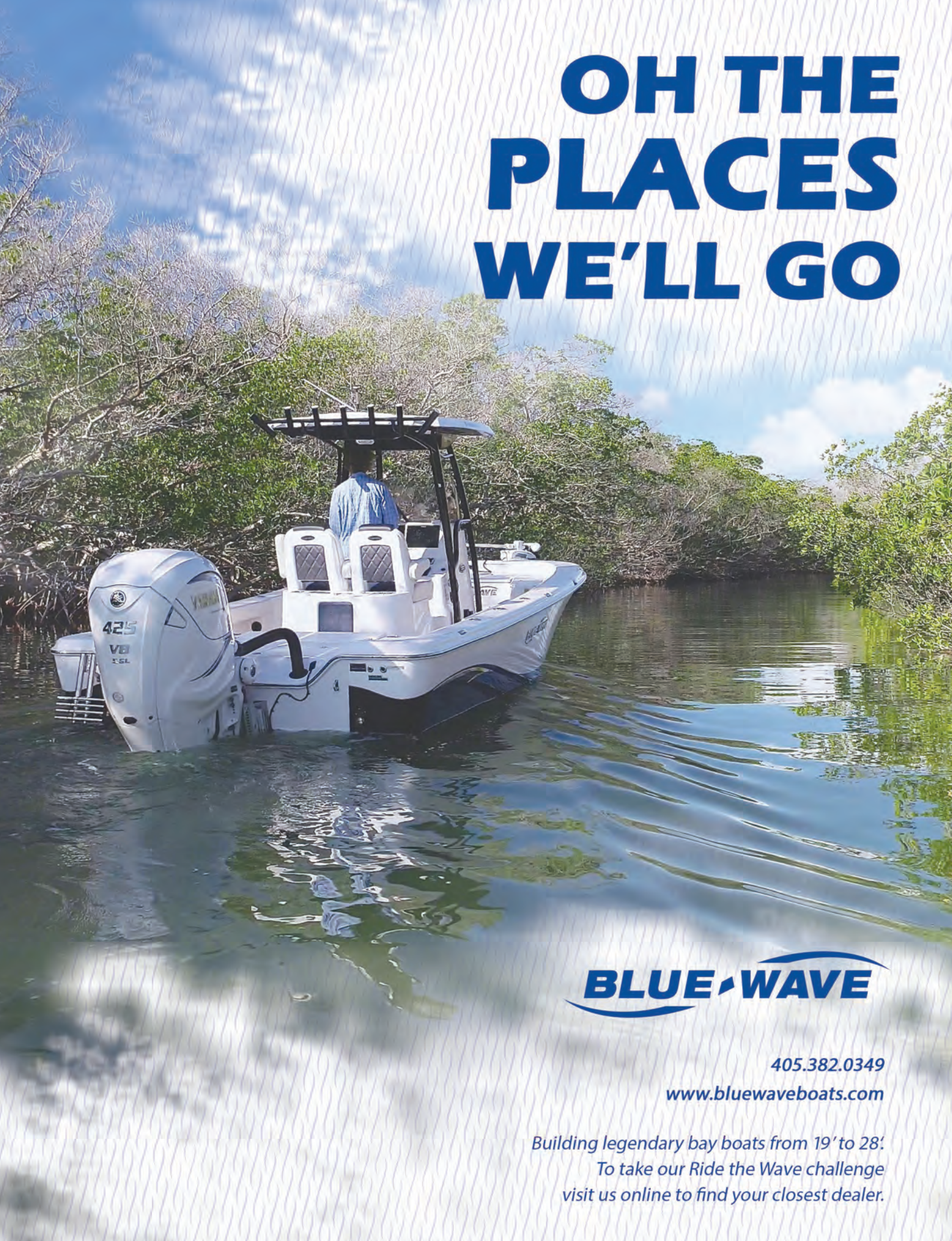
Sneed likes a white bird with a red stripe down the back.

"I use 25-pound Momoi diamond monofilament on a Shimano Speedmaster reel mated to a Capt. Brant live-bait rod," he said. "It's basically a king mackerel setup."

Sneed uses blood knots to tie on a ball-bearing snap swivel to the end of his main line, and then snaps on the bird. He'll then tie another snap swivel to the front of 15 to 30 feet of 20-pound Momoi leader then snaps that to the back of the bird. He ties Clark Spoons to the end of his leader line. The ball-bearing swivels prevent line twist.

If fish are finding his spoons but won't bite, he changes his leader to 8 feet of 12- to 15-pound fluorocarbon.

Birds also may be used to pull "daisy chain" teasers — several plastic lures in an umbrella rig arrangement also called a "dredge." The big surface commotion caused by a dredge will also attract Spanish. ▪


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Spanish mackerel action heats up with the summer weather along the Grand Strand.

Bill Fetter

Sportsman

FISHING HOTSPOTS

SUMMER ARMADA

Grand Strand waters fill up with hungry, aggressive Spanish mackerel

The heat is on in more ways than one. In the ocean around the North Carolina-South Carolina border, the Atlantic is rolling with more than just big waves. Spanish mackerel are firing off in both big numbers and jumbo sizes this month, and anglers need to have lines in the water by mid-morning for the best chances to bring back a cooler full of beauties.

Ned Campbell of Murrells Inlet (S.C.) Outpost catches everything in the ocean, from flounder inshore to king-sized wahoo 70 miles offshore, but Spanish mackerel are one of his favorites.

"The best time to catch Spanish is about mid-morning during the summer. They bite better after the sun has (been) up some," said Campbell (843-460-0186). "Between 8 and 9 a.m. is usually when we have the best bite in summer for Spanish."

Spanish mackerel move nearshore early in the spring to feed on the bounty of baitfish along the beachfront, around inlets and around nearshore reefs. As the summer progresses, mackerel will shift around to take advantage of conditions. They can be caught using several different tactics, and luckily, Spanish aren't too selective and will generally hit a wide variety of lures, especially ones that are small, shiny and moving fast.

"There are several ways to catch them, including trolling spoons, casting spoons and even free-lining live finger mullet. We traditionally troll small drone spoons or Clark Spoons on No. 1 or No. 2 planers," he said.

"They start hitting green and pink Clark Spoons much better than the solid silver and gold spoons around mid-summer. They gravitate to the colors for whatever reason. I put out a selection of green, pink, or pink and green together. They will hit one color better on some days and others better on other days," he said.

Campbell will troll spoons on planers to get them to run in the middle of the water column or will pull a weighted spoon on surface lines. Got-Cha's Jigfish is his favorite lure that can also be cast into schools of feeding fish.

"We always have a few Jigfish tied on for trolling up top or for casting into schools of bait," he said. "They are very versatile lures. We jig for gray trout with them, troll for Spanish behind the boat, or will use them for casting into a school of feeding Spanish. Everything will hit them and they are very effective for Spanish with a fast retrieve," he said. ▪

— Jeff Burleson

CAPE FEAR DOLPHIN

move within range of beaches this month



Warming waters and migrating baitfish pull dolphin in closer to the beaches off Cape Fear in mid-summer, giving more anglers a chance to do battle.

Jerry Dilsaver

Dolphin are a favorite target of many bluewater fishermen, and they should be. They are almost always feeding, make hard runs and acrobatic jumps and are top-notch fare for the dinner table. There doesn't seem to be a downside, except that for most of the year, they are along grass or weed lines well offshore at the Gulf Stream.

During the summer, however, dolphin, aka Mahimahi, follow baitfish and move closer to land as the water warms, which puts them in the range of lots of fishermen. They are often less than 15 miles off the beach along North Carolina's Cape Fear in July and August.

The waters off Carolina Beach and Wrightsville Beach are cleaner than the waters off Brunswick County, and dolphin may be within sight of the beaches. Fishermen should not be surprised to add a dolphin or two to their catch at places like the Dredge Wreck, the Schoolhouse, the 30/30 and more.

Many summer dolphin are caught incidental while slow-trolling for king mackerel. They will readily hit live menhaden, cigar minnows and sardines, plus frozen cigar minnows, sardines and chub mackerel. These are often slow-trolled on live-bait rigs for kings, with a pair of treble hooks or a nose hook and a trailing treble.

Two popular rigs for dead cigar minnows, sardines and chub mackerel are the Pirate Plug from South Chatham Tackle (www.southchathamtackle.com) and the Mackahoo from Big Nic Fishing (www.bignicfishing.com). Both use a weighted head to hold the bait upright and allow trolling a little faster to cover more water.

Summer dolphin are typically smaller fish but are often found in schools and many can be caught quickly. Sometimes, a huge bull is watching from below, and the excitement gets him to bite. Wise fishermen check under any flotsam, weed or grass lines. Spotting one telltale flash of blue/green/yellow can be key to putting a bunch of tasty fillets in the fish box. ▪

— Jerry Dilsaver

NORMAN FLATHEADS

pick up steam as peak of summer arrives



Guide Justin Goodson said he catches plenty of flathead catfish on Lake Norman during the summer when they're feeding on white perch and other live baits.

Justin Goodson of Fishers of Men Guide Service comes from a catfish-crazed family that had him fishing just as soon as he could hold a rod. A native of Catawba, N.C., he's the son of Garrett Goodson, host of an old TV fishing show who gained acclaim for catching flathead catfish with jigging spoons.

Justin Goodson now targets Lake Norman's flatheads, which grow to 50 pounds, with live bait during the summer's heat when many anglers seek refuge in their air-conditioned homes.

"The summer months are some of the best times to catch big flatheads," said Goodson (828-461-2007). "Catfish can tolerate heat, unlike many other species."

While some flatheads move deep in search of cooler water, others find comfortable holes within a long cast from the shore if there's cover that blocks the sunlight. Many a pier fisherman targeting crappie has unexpectedly encountered one of these whiskered brutes.

Shoreline haunts include rock holes, submerged trees and logs, deep-cut banks, bridge pilings and boat docks. Offshore, flatheads love deep channel bends, potholes, drops and rocky places with current.

Norman's 32,510 acres can be intimidating while conducting an offshore search for flatheads, even with today's side-scan sonar units. For that reason, Justin and other guides look for schools of white perch busting forage at the surface. The

continued >

Norman flatheads continued >

rampaging perch leave scraps of baitfish behind that attract flatheads to dine on the leftovers. If a fisherman lowers a live perch into the area where flatheads are feeding, he should prepare himself for a tug of war. The same scenario may ensue if he drops a silver or gold jigging spoon among the scraps of baitfish.

When he can't find feeding perch, Goodson slow-trolls or drifts using a Carolina rig consisting of a 1-ounce sinker, an 18-inch, 20-pound fluorocarbon leader and a No. 3/0 J hook. Flatheads favor live bait, so live shad, herring, white perch, bream and goldfish are deadly choices.

Goodson also fishes at night, focusing on shallow points and flats. He positions his 24-foot john boat with anchors on the bow and the stern, to keep the craft steady, then sets out eight to 10 rods around his boat. He tight-lines using Ambassadeur C3 reels filled with 20-pound mono or braid in conjunction with medium-heavy, 7-foot, Ugly Stik rods. The reels are placed in free spool with their clickers on.

"While summer fishing can be difficult, it can also be fun and rewarding," he said. ▪

— Tony Garitta

GASTON'S PERCH

are more than top-drawer catfish bait

Boiling summer temperatures can wreak havoc on an angler's favorite fishery, but at Lake Gaston on the North Carolina-Virginia border, one species unscathed by the scalding water is white perch, which have taken up residence and taken off in numbers.

Guide Zakk Royce of Gasburg, Va., targets this panfish for light-tackle fun and excellent table fair. Although he usually targets perch as one of his favorite summer catfish baits, he admits that catching baiting is more than just a chore — it's a good time.

While the typical white perch runs about the size of a bluegill or crappie, it's most closely related to the striped bass and just as spunky. Boating more than 100 in a day's fishing is fairly normal at Gaston, and fish that run from 1 to 2 pounds are not uncommon.

An angler only needs to know where to look.

"During an average July, without high water, perch will be moved out of the shallows and in big schools on the main lake and in the mouths of the creeks," said Royce (252-398-7192), who runs Blues Brothers Catfish Guide Service. "The depth will be relative. On the upper end, which is shallower, they'll be in 10 to 15 feet of water. On the lower end, you'll find them in 20 to 30 feet.

"Humps off the main channel are going to be the best bets, but they'll also be on main-lake points and points in the mouths of the creeks."

The trick is that perch will often hug the bottom so tightly that they are difficult to pick up on a sonar return. Royce recommends studying a lake map before fishing to find areas to target.

"A lot of times, I'll start out with a blank screen on my sonar, but after I catch a few, it'll light up," Royce said. "They're a very competitive species, and sometimes leaving a hooked fish on the line will bring in more.

"I use a bottom rig with a 1- to 2-ounce bell sinker tied to the bottom with one or two dropper loops tied above it to No. 4 panfish hooks," said Royce, "or a Sabiki rig. I like to cut night crawlers into small pieces and thread them onto the hooks, but you can use red wigglers or minnows. Perch aren't too picky."



Guide Zakk Royce loves white perch, especially when he's catching them to eat and not feed catfish as bait.

Zakk Royce

When Royce has difficulty finding perch, he'll come off anchor and troll the area. Bandit 200 and 300 crankbaits in shad color are his first choice, but he'll also use Beetle Spins. Two miles per hour is a reasonable speed to cover a ton of water. Although this isn't the best technique for numbers of fish, it will often yield the biggest. ▪

— Dusty Wilson

LAKE JAMES' PERCH

make for great summer fishing action

Guide Colt Bass has been fishing North Carolina's Lake James for most of his 37 years, and for as long as he can remember, white perch have been part of the fishery. He believes their numbers have increased in the past 10 years.

"Some anglers after other species consider them a nuisance fish; others love them because they're willing strikers and feisty battlers for their size," said Bass, who runs Colt Bass Fishing (coltbassfishing.com). "Most rarely get bigger than your hand; they're probably the most under fished species in the lake."

Bass said catching white perch is frequently an all-or-nothing proposition.

"Lots of days I leave the lake with 30 to 50 fish, and lots of days I leave with five to 10," he said.

White perch have often been described as the perfect fish for family trips because they can be caught a variety of ways with a variety of baits by anglers with limited skills.

"For lures, I use anything in the boat," he said. "There's literally nothing they won't hit."

When Bass trolls, his bait spread include spoons, Shad Raps, Rebels, Rooster Tails and other small lures. Fishing under floats or with Sabiki rigs, he uses minnows, crickets or night crawlers.

Of these techniques, Bass prefers trolling because that's the technique he grew up using to target the lake's walleye.

"I just feel like you cover so much more ground that way," he said. "It's also preferred if my party consists of youngsters or others with limited casting skills."

During the spring, Bass looks for schools of white perch on points, ledges and dropoffs in 5 to 15 feet of water. During summer, he trolls the same structure, moving deeper and deeper as the weather warms.

"By the end of the summer, I'll catch perch as deep as 50 feet around old roadbeds and river channels," Bass said. "If I can't find them there, I'll randomly troll open water because they often school up, and structure isn't a factor. I'll find the schools with my sonar, note the depth and troll through them."

Once fish are located, Bass said the four baits he has out often draw strikes all at once.

His trolling gear employs lead-core line and a clear leader of 4- to 6-pound monofilament. He also gets baits deep using downriggers with spinning tackle and clear, 4-pound mono.

Bass said white perch may favor a particular bait in his spread on certain days, and a few strikes tell which is the hot one. ■

— Tony Garitta


Colt Bass

White perch are a big part of Lake James' summer fishery.



ASTRO TABLES

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).

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LUNAR PERIODS — TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED

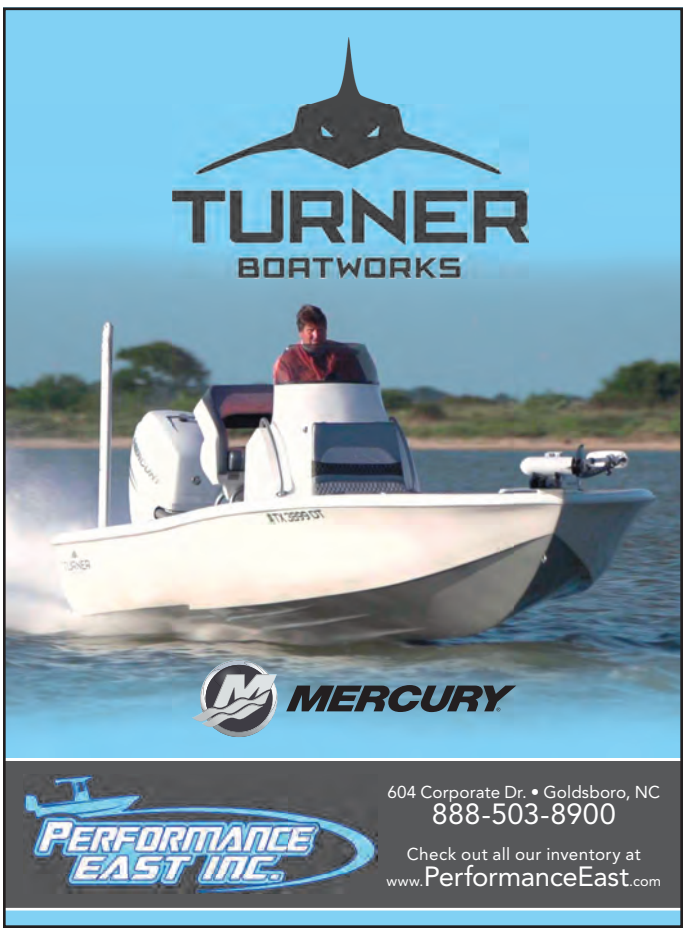
	BEST DAYS VALUE	MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
Mon 1	92	4:56 am	10:31 am - 1:57 pm	7:35 pm	10:56 pm - 2:22 am	
Tue 2	97	5:50 am	11:28 am - 2:58 pm	8:38 pm	11:53 pm - Midnight	NEW
Wed 3	88	6:51 am	12:32 pm - 3:58 pm	9:35 pm	Midnight - 3:23 am	HIGH
Thu 4	78	7:58 am	1:35 pm - 4:55 pm	10:26 pm	12:57 am - 4:23 am	Perigee
Fri 5	65	9:08 am	2:41 pm - 5:47 pm	11:12 pm	2:00 am - 5:20 am	
Sat 6	56	10:19 am	3:43 pm - 6:35 pm	11:51 pm	3:06 am - 6:12 am	
Sun 7	52	11:27 am	4:46 pm - 7:18 pm		4:08 am - 7:00 am	
Mon 8	54	12:35 pm	5:44 pm - 8:00 pm	12:28 am	5:11 am - 7:43 am	
Tue 9	60	1:40 pm	6:44 pm - 8:40 pm	1:02 am	6:09 am - 8:25 am	HALF
Wed 10	45	2:45 pm	7:42 pm - 9:20 pm	1:36 am	7:09 am - 9:05 am	
Thu 11	37	3:48 pm	8:37 pm - 10:03 pm	2:10 am	8:07 am - 9:45 am	
Fri 12	34	4:51 pm	9:35 pm - 10:47 pm	2:47 am	9:02 am - 10:28 am	
Sat 13	42	5:51 pm	10:31 pm - 11:33 pm	3:26 am	10:00 am - 11:12 am	
Sun 14	50	6:49 pm	11:25 pm - 12:23 am	4:10 am	10:56 am - 11:58 am	
Mon 15	59	7:43 pm	12:17 am - Midnight	4:58 am	11:50 am - 12:48 pm	LOW
Tue 16	63	8:32 pm	Midnight - 1:15 am	5:49 am	12:42 pm - 1:40 pm	FULL
Wed 17	53	9:15 pm	1:06 am - 2:08 am	6:44 am	1:31 pm - 2:33 pm	
Thu 18	43	9:53 pm	1:52 am - 3:00 am	7:40 am	2:17 pm - 3:25 pm	
Fri 19	34	10:27 pm	2:34 am - 3:50 am	8:36 am	2:59 pm - 4:15 pm	
Sat 20	31	10:58 pm	3:13 am - 4:41 am	9:31 am	3:38 pm - 5:06 pm	Apogee
Sun 21	34	11:27 pm	3:48 am - 5:30 am	10:26 am	4:13 pm - 5:55 pm	
Mon 22	37	11:56 pm	4:22 am - 6:20 am	11:21 am	4:47 pm - 6:45 pm	
Tue 23	45		4:56 am - 7:08 am	12:16 pm	5:21 pm - 7:33 pm	
Wed 24	59	12:24 am	5:29 am - 7:59 am	1:12 pm	5:54 pm - 8:24 pm	HALF
Thu 25	52	12:54 am	6:05 am - 8:51 am	2:10 pm	6:30 pm - 9:16 pm	
Fri 26	49	1:26 am	6:44 am - 9:44 am	3:09 pm	7:09 pm - 10:09 pm	
Sat 27	53	2:02 am	7:28 am - 10:40 am	4:12 pm	7:53 pm - 11:05 pm	
Sun 28	65	2:44 am	8:16 am - 11:38 am	5:15 pm	8:41 pm - 12:03 am	
Mon 29	77	3:34 am	9:10 am - 12:40 pm	6:19 pm	9:35 pm - 1:05 am	
Tue 30	88	4:32 am	10:11 am - 1:41 pm	7:19 pm	10:36 pm - 2:06 am	HIGH
Wed 31	93	5:37 am	11:17 am - 2:39 pm	8:14 pm	11:42 pm - Midnight	NEW

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Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



Ashley Speights of Fayetteville, N.C., caught these two nice flounder out of Swanquarter on Aug. 18, 2018.



Jonathan Martin of Eureka, N.C., tagged this beautiful Wayne County 10-pointer.



Tim Hutchins took this nice 8-point buck on Oct. 15, 2018, in Spartanburg County, S.C.



Timmy Bracken caught this 38-pound flathead catfish in North Carolina's Yadkin River.



Mike Glowacz caught this nice Santee Cooper bass on a plastic worm in February 2019.

GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

Send us your photos, and you may appear on the pages of Carolina Sportsman magazine. Send clean, sharp shots of you with your fish, deer, ducks, rabbits, squirrels, doves, etc. to

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Tanner "Tank" Doss, 9, of Scotland Neck, N.C., killed this 6-point Nash County buck on Oct. 25, 2018.



Kenneth Lemaster killed his first buck, this 8-pointer, with a rifle last Thanskgiving Day near Currie, N.C.



Grace Hale, 9, caught this 48-inch red drum last August fishing in North Carolina's Pamlico Sound.



Bryan Buckner of Saluda, N.C., caught this 2-pound black crappie out of Lake Hartwell on March 15, 2018.



Matt Isley from Rockingham County, N.C., took this fine, 12-point buck on Nov. 8,2018.



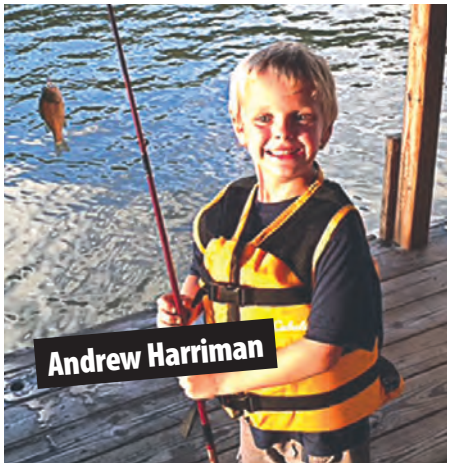
Dustin Jones of Oak Ridge, N.C., took this nice Guilford County buck on Nov. 17, 2018.



Tommy Pennell of Madison, N.C., killed this 150-inch Stokes County buck on Nov. 9, 2018, with a blackpowder gun.



Frank Welker of Julian, N.C., caught this 21-inch black drum on Ocracoke Island on Nov 21, 2018.



Andrew Harriman caught his first fish, this bluegill, from North Carolina's Lake Hickory.



Roddy Cross caught this 60-plus pound carp while bass fishing the Waccamaw River near Murrells Inlet, S.C.

Hunting/Fishing
SCRAPBOOK



David Langley of Pikeville, N.C., caught this striper in Wrights Creek last December.



Hunter Albea of Greensboro, N.C., caught this nice hickory shad in the Roanoke River near Weldon, N.C.



Camden Sweat, 3, boated this nice bass at Brushy Parsk near Hanahan, S.C.



Landon Toler from Farmville N.C., caught some very nice speckled trout in early December 2018.



Tully Martinez, 11, caught this 25-inch striper at Batchelor Bay in Bertie County, N.C., on Feb. 15, 2019.

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William Hayes, 4, caught these bream fishing with his grandfather, Justin Evans of Fork, S.C.



Morgan Cain decked her first citation triggerfish, on her first drop, on her first offshore fishing trip, aboard the *Sarah's Worry Too* out of Wrightsville Beach, N.C., with Capt. Lowell Mason.



Kyle Wilson of Greenville, S.C., caught this 15-pound striper from Lake Hartwell in late February 2019.



Jeremy Leath killed this nice Davidson County, N.C., buck on Nov. 15, 2018.



Scott Lassiter killed this fantastic buck with a muzzleloader on Nov. 11, 2018, in Gaston County, N.C.



Trask Cunningham of LIttle River, SC., caught this 90-pound wahoo on a winter offshore trip.



Anita Waller dropped this fine 9-point buck in Rowan County, N.C., with a bow.



Amanda Joseph tagged this big-bodied 8-point buck on Nov. 13, 2018, in Guilford County.



Eli Herman, 12, killed his first buck last season in North Carolina.



Jeff Stewart caught this 8-point bass in a watershed lake in Lancaster County, S.C.

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