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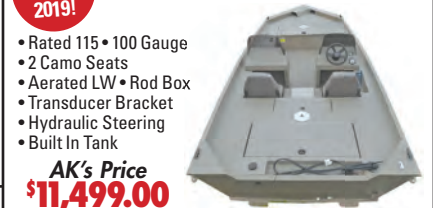
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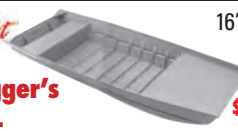
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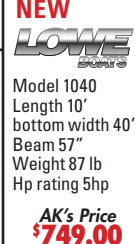
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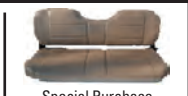
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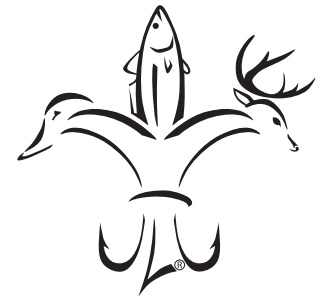




45 5 TIPS FOR CAROLINA TARPON



62 HOT TO THE FLY



Carolina SPORTSMAN
www.CarolinaSPORTSMAN.com

PUBLISHER: Tony Taylor, tonyt@lasmag.com

MANAGING EDITOR: Dan Kibler
336.416.9631/dank@carolinasportsman.com

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR: Jeff Caldwell

ASSISTANT PRODUCTION MANAGER:
Desiree P. Lewis

ART DIRECTOR: Kevin Orgeron

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS:
Jeff Cashio, Alissa Zeringue

CONTROLLER: Juanita Guidry

SALES DIRECTOR: Jay Forrest
225.278.0258/jayf@lasmag.com

NC ADVERTISING SALES REP: John Cain
919.601.6966, johnc@carolinasportsman.com

SC ADVERTISING SALES REP: Bret Holten
843.442.7250, breth@scsportsman.com

ADVERTISING SALES:
Asa Faulkner, Mark Boyd, Peter Church, Burton Angelle and Mark Hilzlm (National Sales)

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR:
Ricky Naquin 985.859.7744/ricken@lasmag.com

CIRCULATION FIELD MANAGER:
Mitch Eby 919.602.3862/mitchebync@gmail.com

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

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Deer are on many sportsman's minds this month as the season approaches, except maybe for those fishermen who have discovered that flooded roadbeds are the highway to fishing success. Bass photo by Brian Cope.

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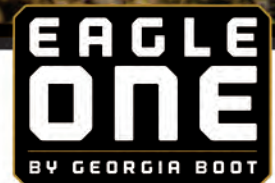
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SHOVEL SHANK

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Story is spot-on about Belews spots

Please, don't move fish between lakes

TO THE EDITOR:

I have fished Belews Lake for 25 years, and I read "Spotting a Big Bass Problem" in the June issue of *Carolina Sportsman*.

This is my home lake! I have been catching spotted bass since before 2014, and have seen largemouth bass in a constant decline ever since. The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission is hoping no spots show up in Lake Mayo and Hyco Lake. If spots get into them, the Commission said, "They can almost predict the demise of those lakes population of largemouth bass." I agree; I have seen it first-hand at Belews.

I do not understand how any sportsman does not know or

acknowledge that North Carolina spends millions (of dollars) to supply a great hunting and fishing environment to be used by all. The unauthorized stocking of spotted bass, the captivity of wild animals, not shooting protected birds, not transporting aquatic vegetation from one lake to another, not transporting deer from other states due to CWD — none of this is new information for sportsman. The Commission has fisheries biologists to care for this natural resource; they have forever been talking about the care of environment with do's and don'ts that make a difference in the outdoors. The information they collect has a look at the past and a eye to the future on how to care for all wildlife.

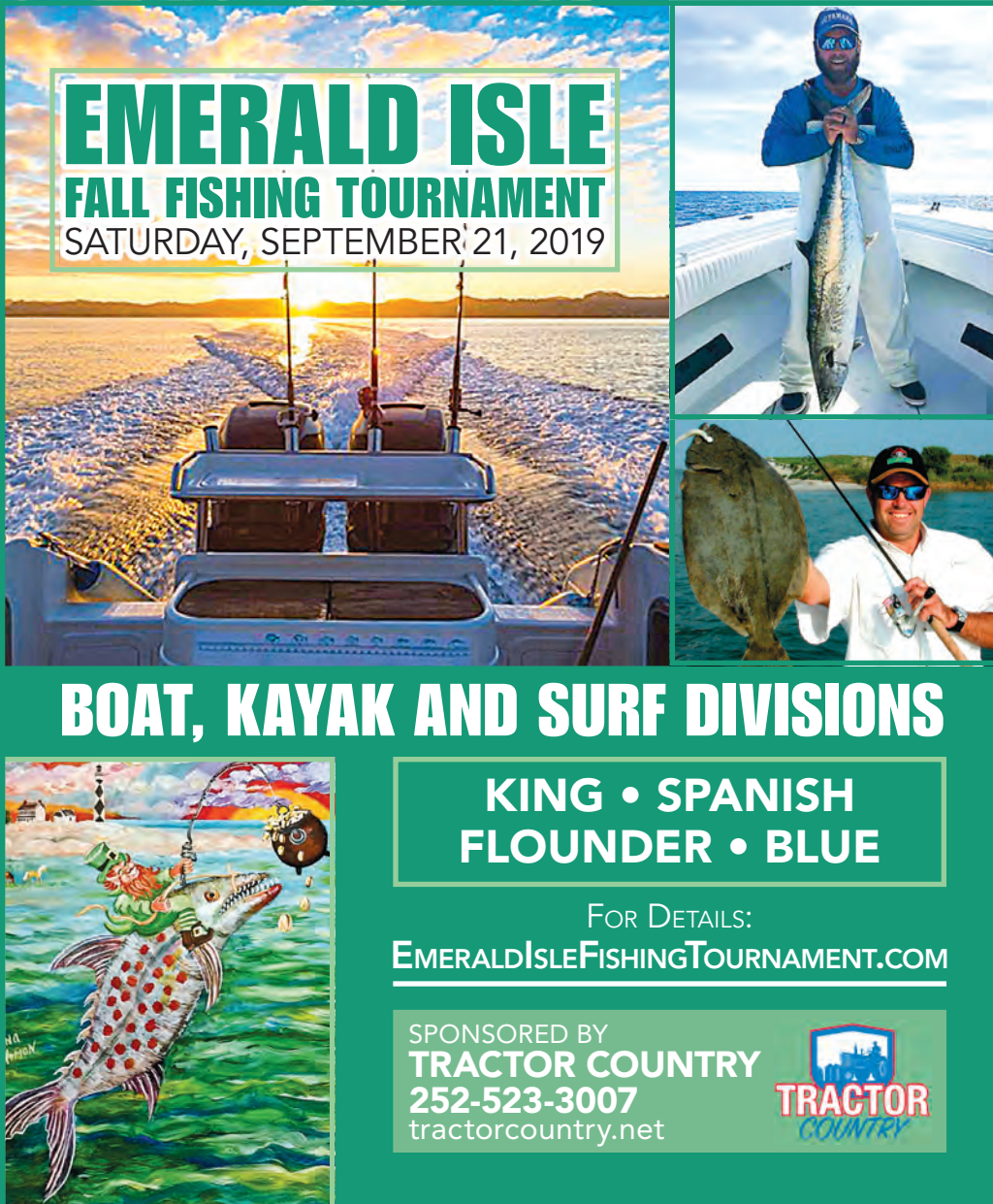
Is it ignorance or arrogance for a person or persons to transport an animal to a new location that they cannot control the area of transported animal? I have read in horror that very shortly Belews will have not largemouth bass — they are only one of every 12 caught now — and a lake full of 10- to 11-inch spots that live for three or four years. With that outlook, please eradicate Belews Lake now and start over with stockings by the Commission to produce great fishing. I know this is not a usual procedure, but this is not a usual issue problem/dilemma/situation.

This will hurt the folks who sell bait tackle and supplies in the area. Anglers will go to other lakes and spend dollars there. Who wants to go to a lake and know that 10- to 11-inch spots are the catch of the day/year/forever. It's hard to put a total cost of the unauthorized spotted bass stocking in Belews.

Who did this? Someone knows.

What is the fate of Belews Lake, this jewel in the Piedmont ?

MIKE MULFORD
Stokesdale, N.C.




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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 covered issues involving the outdoors since 1985.

Dan Kibler

SAY GOODBYE TO FLOUNDER, NC FISHERMEN FACING SEASON CLOSURE BECAUSE OF FISHERY'S PROBLEMS

If you are a North Carolina fisherman, and if you love to catch flounder, you'd better get everything you can in the next three weeks.

On Aug. 21-23, when the N.C. Marine Fisheries

Commission next meets, there's an awfully good possibility that your chances to catch or gig a flounder will disappear for about a year.

The Commission voted in a special meeting in early June to address the long-standing problem of overfishing in the southern flounder fishery by a reduction of harvest in both the commercial and recreational fisheries

that lasts between three and six weeks, depending on region, beginning Sept. 15, 2019. Then, their season will be closed until Sept. 15, 2020.

Commercial fishermen will still be able to fish in the ocean and catch summer and Gulf flounder, two other subspecies, as before. Recreational fishermen won't be able to take a flounder out of any North Carolina waters — inshore or ocean — until Aug. 16, 2020, when a six-week season opens, ending Sept. 30, 2020.

The recreational creel limit will remain at four fish, with a 15-inch size minimum.

These season closures are needed to end overfishing and overharvest in the flounder fishery, and they're as drastic as they are because, when it was dominated by commercial interests, the Commission voted against staff recommendations for harvest reductions a handful of times. And the commercials even filed suit to end proposed restrictions in 2015. So the situation has gotten far worse than it was 10 years ago, when stepping in would have involved restrictions that would be relatively painless compared to these.

How long will recreational fishermen be saddled with these restrictions? Depending on how successful the changes are, probably several years in inshore waters. There's a maximum window of 10 years to get the fishery back in good shape.

There's a possibility that the Commission can figure out why recreationals can't keep the two subspecies of flounder caught from the ocean and commercials can. That restriction could be lifted, which would thrill surf fishermen and the guys who jerk flounder off the bottom around nearshore reefs and wrecks.

So get your gigs and flounder rigs out, and use them while you still can. ■



Paisley Wolfe, 10, from Fort Lawn, S.C., caught this 61-pound blue catfish at Santee Cooper. Fishing with her father, guide Jeff Wolfe, she released the fish alive after boating it.

through 2020.

If the plan gets approval from the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality, it will go back to the Commission for a final vote at the Aug. 21-23 meeting.

The amount of the projected reduction, which is calculated over a two-year period, will require the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries to close the commercial season and recreational hook-and-line and giggering immediately after the meeting.

Commercial fishermen, who take 71.8% of flounder caught in North Carolina waters, will have a season

SC deer harvest up 5 percent over 2017 levels

South Carolina deer hunters did themselves proud during the 2018 season, according to a report from the S.C. Department of Natural Resources that indicated a 5% increase in the harvest over 2017 levels.

Hunters reported taking 194,986 deer — 109,208 bucks and 85,778 does — according to biologist Charles Ruth, the big-game project leader for the SCDNR.

Ruth said the increase was likely do to some remaining level of “carry-over” from 2015 and 2016, when flooding associated with Hurricane Joaquin and Hurricane Matthew forced temporary season closures in some affected counties and general access problems and decreased opportunity for hunters across much of South Carolina.

“That being the case, there were likely deer that would have otherwise been harvested during those years that were carried over and reproduced, thereby increasing the harvest in 2017 and 2018,” Ruth said.

The 2018 season was the second of the “all-deer” tagging system and statewide limit on antlered deer.

“Interestingly, the 13-percent increase in harvest since 2016 is primarily a result of an increase in doe harvest (18 percent) rather than an increase in the harvest of bucks (9.5 percent),” Ruth said. “Increases in harvest are normally the result of increases in the buck harvest or a more equal increase in buck and doe harvest. This disproportionate harvest may be indicative of the new buck limit having the desired effect of decreasing pressure on bucks. It will likely take a few years for this to become clearer.”

Orangeburg led South Carolina counties in total harvest with 11,771 deer, followed by Hampton with 7,958 and Colleton with 7,800. In terms of harvest per square mile, Berkeley was the state’s

SOUTH CAROLINA 2018 DEER HARVEST

County	Harvest
1. Orangeburg	11,771
2. Hampton	7,958
3. Colleton	7,800
4. Fairfield	6,638
5. Spartanburg	6,522
6. Bamberg	6,255
7. Williamsburg	5,896
8. Anderson	5,831
9. Newberry	5,675
10. Berkeley	5,229

SOUTH CAROLINA 2018 DEER HARVEST BY SQ. MI.

County	Harvest/SQM
1. Berkeley	20.4
2. Anderson	17.0
3. Spartanburg	15.7
4. Hampton	15.7
5. Orangeburg	14.9
6. Allendale	13.6
7. Calhoun	12.9
8. Union	12.5
9. York	12.0
10. Newberry	11.4

leader at 20.4 deer per square mile, followed by Anderson with 17.0 and Spartanburg and Hampton with 15.7 each.

More than 75% of deer taken in South Carolina last season were taken by hunters using rifles. Slightly more than 10% were taken with archery equipment, about 8% with shotguns and muzzle-loaders, crossbows and handguns accounting for less than 2%.

Ruth said the mail survey of 2018 hunters indicated that almost 23,000 coyotes were taken incidental to deer hunting, a 1% increase over 2017. Wild hog killings were up 4% to almost 40,000.

Hunters reported an overall success rate of 67 percent. ■

LEADER OF THE FLOCK

Quentin Turko of Kitty Hawk, N.C., speared this huge sheepshead out of Nags Head the first weekend in June. It weighed 16.8 pounds and is more than a pound heavier than the existing world spearfishing record.



SPORTSMAN ADDS CAIN TO AD SALES STAFF

John Cain of Raleigh, N.C., has joined the staff of *Carolina Sportsman* as its North Carolina advertising sales representative, replacing Ron Dorsey, who held that post for almost 14 years.



John Cain

Cain, 52, is a native of Sanford, N.C. and an avid fisherman who is thrilled to be working in an industry that serves his favorite sport.

“I am super excited to be working in a job related to one of my favorite things to do, and with a magazine that has been so influential during my life,” Cain said.

Tony Taylor, publisher of *Carolina Sportsman* and its associated website, www.CarolinaSportsman.com, said Cain is a perfect fit for the publication.

“John has a passion for hunting and fishing, like the rest of our staff,” he said. “He’s an original North Carolinian, and we’re very happy to have him in the fold.”

Dorsey, associate publisher of *Carolina Sportsman*, resigned in June to become a sales representative for the Derema Group, a Pennsylvania-based group that represents a number of marine and recreational vehicle manufacturers.

Cain can be reached at 919-601-6996 or johnc@carolinaspportsman.com.

more updates... >

COCAINE IS BIG DOLPHIN TALE

ANGLERS OUT OF CHARLESTON, S.C., BOAT PLENTY OF MAHIMAH, DRUGS

When offshore anglers are looking for dolphin, aka Mahimahi, they get really interested when they see weed lines or floating debris.

Any type of floating object attracts baitfish, especially in the vast, open ocean, and baitfish attract dolphin. Anglers need to pay attention to anything they find floating: a pallet, a cargo container, lumber, even part of a dock.

It could even be abandoned cocaine, as two unidentified anglers found out after catching numerous dolphin about 70 miles off the coast of Charleston, S.C., in late May.

The anglers noticed a suitcase-sized object floating and found dolphin under it, then caught fish for three hours.

"We trolled past it, and every time we passed it, we caught a fish," one of the anglers told WCSC in Charleston.

Before they returned to port, however, they decided to take a closer look at the piece of debris. They pulled the package aboard their boat, looked inside, and found what appeared to be 30 bricks of cocaine.

They immediately notified the U.S. Coast Guard, which instructed them to head to their marina, where they were met by officers from the North Charleston Police, who estimated the take to be between 30 and 50 kilos of cocaine valued at between \$750,000 and \$1 million.

Coast Guard Lt. J.G. Phillip VanderWeit said the anglers did the right thing by calling them.

"It definitely doesn't happen off the Charleston coast every day. It's a bit more common further south, whether in the Caribbean or the south Pacific," said VanderWeit. ■

— Brian Cope

NC PRO TIES BFL MARK

Bass pro Robert Walser of Lexington, N.C., has tied a FLW Bass Fishing League record by winning his 13th tournament, taking first place in a North Carolina Division event June 13 on his home lake, High Rock.

Walser's win tied him with Rick Shaffer for the most wins in events put on under the BFL banner and its predecessor, Red Man. Walser began fishing the tournament circuit in 1983.

At High Rock, his 5-fish limit weighed 21 pounds, 13 ounces, a half-pound more than runner-ups Dylan Fulk of Mount Pleasant, N.C., and Michael Stevens of Gastonia, N.C. Walser won \$4,141, plus a \$2,000 Ranger Cup bonus.


"I knew I was close to tying the record," said Walser. "I knew when I won in April, they said (I tied) for second for all-time wins.

"Over the period of the last 18 months, I have won five BFLs. I am kind of in shock. It took me 20 years to win eight of them and in 18 months I have added five more."

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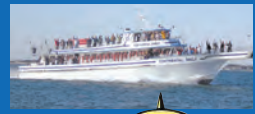
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SE counties lead NC's spring turkey harvest

Thirty years ago, when the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission was embarking on a program to fill the state with wild turkeys through restocking, the belief was that the best habitat was in the northern Piedmont and in the northwestern corner of the state, then in the mountains.

That's how the restocking program cranked up, with counties in those areas getting birds first that had been trapped elsewhere in North Carolina or brought in from other states.

Counties in the eastern part of the state were, essentially, last in line, because the habitat wasn't considered as suitable for turkeys.

My, how times have changed.

The Commission released harvest figures for the 2019 spring season, and the preponderance of birds killed came from the southeastern corner of the state: 4 of the top 10 counties. Northeastern counties took 3 of the top 10 spots.

"It shows we don't know as much as we thought we knew," said Chris Kreh, the biologist who leads the wild-turkey program for the Commission. "Those areas were stocked 10 or 15 years ago, and it took a while for turkeys to spread into all of them. I think we're just about at the tail end of it."

"There aren't many things not to like about this harvest."

The total harvest of 18,730 birds was the second-highest on record. Five of the six biggest harvests on record have been in the past five seasons. ■



Halifax County hunters tagged 479 turkeys during the 2019 spring season, the second-highest total by county. One was this fine gobbler taken by Leon Pruzen of Wilmington, the first of his hunting career.

TOP COUNTIES N.C. TURKEY HARVEST 2019 SEASON

County	Harvest
1. Duplin	497
2. Halifax	479
3. Rockingham	453
4. Columbus	443
5. Bertie	437
6. Bladen	432
7. Northampton	427
8. Franklin	390
9. Rutherford	382
10. Pender	370

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CONSERVATION BILL PASSES MUSTER IN NC HOUSE

The N.C. House of Representatives on June 26 passed HB 483 — better known as “Let Them Spawn” — in a bipartisan vote of 58-47.

The bill addresses problems obstructing management of marine fisheries in North Carolina by requiring that the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries establish minimum-size limits or slot limits for several recreational species that are in decline, at levels that will ensure that 75% of all juvenile fish reach a size at which they will spawn at least once before being harvested by recreational or commercial fishermen.

The bill must next be passed by the N.C. Senate and signed into law by Gov. Roy Cooper.

“This bill is all about resource conservation,” said Manley Fuller, vice president for conservation policy for the N.C. Wildlife Federation. “The species selected were based on scientific analysis that indicates these species are in trouble.... Whether (they) are tasty, valuable or used as bait is not a resource issue and was not considered.”

Species affected are: Atlantic croaker, kingfish, striped mullet, spot, bluefish and southern flounder.



BIG ROCK BLUE MARLIN TOURNAMENT

IN THE NICK OF TIME....

The six-day Big Rock Blue Marlin, held annually in early June out of Morehead City, N.C., wasn't decided until literally the final hour, when the *Top Dog* out of Olney, Md., brought to the scales a tournament-record 914-pound blue. The winning boat took home \$793,188 from the Big Rock's record \$2,869,150 purse. Angler Todd Dickerson of Damascus, Md., fought the fish for more than five hours after Capt. Ryan Knapp of Ocean City, Md., hooked it just before the 2 p.m. cutoff on the final day. It took the crew another 90 minutes to get the huge fish into the 60-foot boat, followed by a long ridge back to port. *Wolverine*, from Beaufort, N.C., finished second with a 589-pound fish caught the first day of the tournament. The *Donna Mae* took third with a 569-pound fish. Another big winner was *Sweetums*, out of Dallas, Texas, which won \$531,250 for bringing to the scales the first blue marlin to weigh 500 pounds or better, a 545-pound fish caught the first day.



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The Outdoor Heritage Advisory Council (OHAC) is working to enable the next generation of passionate participants in North Carolina's outdoor heritage activities.

The OHAC provides leadership, guidance, and funding to partner organizations and programs throughout the state who are providing kids and teens with opportunities to encounter and experience the outdoors. We hope to help kids step away from the devices and discover those activities in the Carolina wilderness that have been enjoyed for generations, but are now seeing a decline in interest. That includes outdoor heritage activities like hiking, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, archery, canoeing, birding, and more.

The OHAC's long-term vision is to preserve the health, heritage, and environment of our great state by inspiring a new generation of outdoor adventurers. We think the best way to do that is by igniting a passion for the outdoors through the language that all kids speak fluently: fun.



NCWRC

IT'S ABOUT TIME....

A 36-year-old state record was broken on June 10 when Alphonso Jackson of Maxton, N.C., caught this 2-pound, 1-ounce redbreast sunfish from the Lumber River near Wagram, N.C. Caught on a live cricket, Jackson's big redbelly broke by 5 ounces the state-record set in 1983 by Ronald Stanley in Bladen County's Big Swamp.



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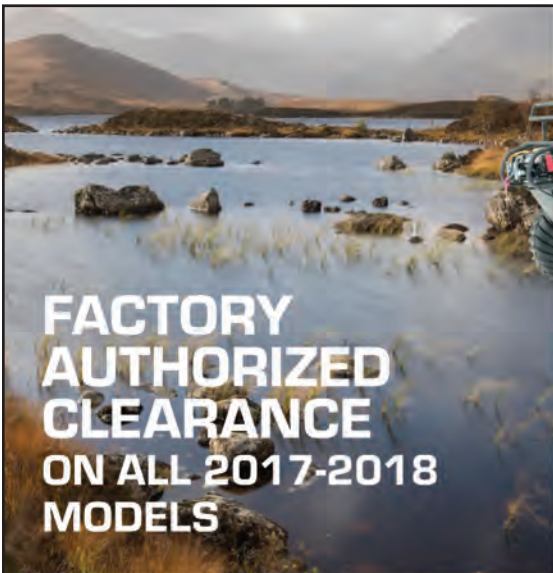
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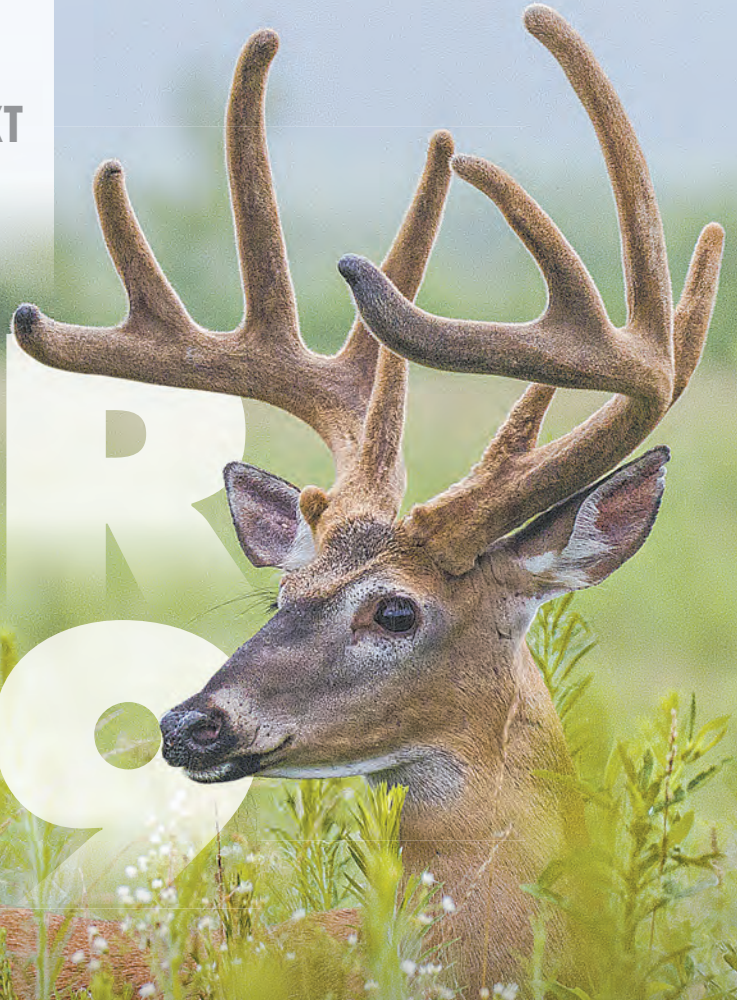
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**WHITETAIL HUNTERS CAN EXPECT
REASONABLY GOOD SEASONS
WHEN THEY TAKE TO THE WOODS
IN THE CAROLINAS OVER THE NEXT
3 TO 5 WEEKS. HERE'S WHY....**

By Dan Kibler

DEER 2019



Rick Small

What will the upcoming deer seasons hold in store for hunters in South Carolina and North Carolina?

If you listen to the biologists who head up deer management for the states' respective wildlife agencies, well, probably some pretty good hunting.

And one of the reasons, well, was what has happened the past couple of seasons.

Charles Ruth, the deer-project leader for the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, hopes a two-year trend of increased harvests will continue, thanks in part to deer who survived several extra seasons thanks to tremendous rain events that caused SCDNR to actually close the season in some flooded areas in past autumns.

Jon Shaw, the deer-project leader for the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, thinks hunters in his neck of the woods will have a much-better season than last year, in part because they'll be more used to new regulations that affected two-thirds of the state, and they likely won't lose as many days in the woods because of the bad weather.

Here's what they have to say:

SOUTH CAROLINA

Ruth believes hunters in the Palmetto State will have a good season, beginning Aug. 15 in the Lowcountry. The harvest was up 5% in 2018 over 2017 levels, and the 2017 harvest was better than the 2016 harvest.

"I have a sense that things are starting to creep back up a little bit," Ruth said. "I don't know how much, but in talking to folks, they say they're seeing more deer than they saw five or six years ago. Weather permitting, we should have a good season."

"We heard some noise because of 2015 and 2016, when we had floods and the hurricanes. I don't know if the harvest is coming back or it's just that the last two years have been up because of all the deer leftover from the storms, but I think we're starting a slight, upward trend."

Ruth said no specific areas in South Carolina have seen bigger harvest increases or significant decreases, with the exception of the Pee Dee counties, where most of the closures after huge rain events were located.



Some South Carolina deer have been "protected" the past two seasons because of flooding that actually closed some areas.

Rick Small

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The harvest seems to hop around some," he said. "We've had some closures the past couple of years, a lot of them in the Pee Dee, but I don't know what may pop out as far as increases or decreases. I wouldn't be surprised if the harvest goes up another 5% this fall."

Ruth said changes in deer-tagging regulations and season limits that have taken effect over the past two seasons may have had an impact on hunters' attitudes, and as such, on the harvest.

"I don't know if the season changes helped the deer, but our antler records were great this cycle," he said. "Was that because we're on an upswing, or because we've had so many of those bucks that were left over from the two seasons of rain?"

"What's interesting is that over the past two years, with new buck limits and required deer tagging, we've seen back-to-back increases that were mostly in terms of the doe harvest. Maybe we're taking some pressure off the bucks. That may support the increase in our record-book entries this past cycle."

NORTH CAROLINA UP NEXT ➤

SC DEER RECORD BOOK HAS BIG YEAR

The S.C. Department of Natural Resources released its report on the 2019 Deer Antler Records, and the 2018 season was apparently a good one for trophy hunters in the Palmetto State.

According to Charles Ruth, the big-game project manager for SCDNR, 242 deer — 232 typicals and 10 non-typical — qualified for the record book, with 198 of them taken last fall. That was an increase of 10 deer over the 2018 scoring sessions and 29 over the 2017 scoring sessions.

The top whitetail scored in scoring sessions held around the state in March was James Sims' Fairfield County buck, which scored 160 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches typical; it is the biggest typical ever killed in Fairfield County.

Sims had enough trail-camera photos of the buck since 2016 to be intimately acquainted with it; he nicknamed it "Waldo."



James Sims' 160 $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch Fairfield County buck was the biggest typical taken in South Carolina in 2018.

He finally killed the buck at dark on Dec. 7. His buck had a 5x6 typical frame with a sticker point and a split brow tine, plus a 19-inch inside spread and main beams that measured 28 $\frac{3}{8}$ and 27 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches.

Two 162 $\frac{7}{8}$ -inch bucks tied for the largest non-typical scored: Daniel Barnhill's Horry County buck and Joseph Hozey's Abbeville County buck.

Aiken County produced the most record-book bucks scored this past March: 21. Aiken is the No. 1 all-time county for record-book bucks with 529 out of the 7,469 that have qualified since the program's inception in 1974.

Horry and Laurens counties placed 13 bucks each in the record book this year, followed by Anderson County with 12 and Orangeburg County with 11. ■

SOUTH CAROLINA DEER SEASONS

- | | |
|--|--|
| Zone 1 Primitive Weapons:
Oct. 1-10; Gun: Oct.
11-Jan. 1, 2020 | Zone 3 All Weapons: Aug.
15-Jan. 1, 2020 |
| Zone 2 Archery: Sept. 15-30;
Primitive Weapons:
Oct. 1-10; Gun: Oct.
11-Jan. 1, 2020 | Zone 4 Archery: Aug. 15-13;
Gun: Sept. 1-Jan. 1,
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NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina hunters had a bit of a rough season in the fall of 2018, what with a hurricane, a tropical storm and an early December snowstorm contributing.

“It was a wet year,” biologist Shaw said. “It seemed like every time I had a chance to hunt, it was raining.

“There was a definite reduction in the amount of hunter effort in the first part of the season. There was probably some compensation at the end of the season, but I don’t know if it caught up. There’s a definite chance that it didn’t.”

But the biggest difference, and 15% drop in harvest, was more likely associated with regulation changes in the eastern half of North Carolina that cut in half the number of bucks a hunter could tag (to two) and cut back on the number of antlerless deer allowed.

“I did expect a (lower harvest) last season,” Shaw said. “We had some big differences in regulations, and I expect this year’s harvest to stabilize somewhat, maybe increase in some areas. That bodes well for this year.”

Shaw said that, early last season, before the big rain events, “We saw a lot of deer.” But the regulation changes in the eastern half of the state forced the harvest down quite a bit, even with the harvest in the western third of the state rising by about 7%.

“In the eastern half of the state, the buck harvest and doe harvest both dropped, but the buck harvest dropped at three times the rate of the doe harvest, and we saw a slight change in the

age structure of the harvest,” he said. “We were a little surprised at the decline in the button buck harvest. That could mean that, in addition to being more selective in the bucks we’re taking, we’ve become more selective in the does, too.”

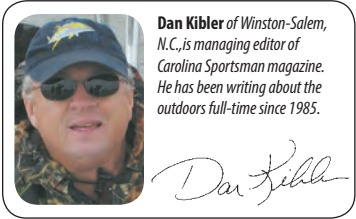
Shaw believes the herd in the western third of North Carolina is on a definite increase. Part of it may be attributed to better habitat — at least on private lands; don’t expect the U.S. Forest Service to do any timber thinning on national forests that would help wildlife and non-game animals alike — and part of it is just part of a cycle.

“We saw our deer populations recover in the east and then in the Piedmont and Foothills in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, and now western North Carolina is coming on,” he said. “Improved habitat may be part of it, but I think we’ve just got an emerging deer herd in that part of the state.”

Don’t underestimate the effect of moving limited antlerless days from the end of the region’s short gun season to the beginning.

Shaw said that the Commission’s Deer Hunter Observation Survey produced the biggest numbers of deer observations last fall since its inception in 2014.

“I expect that, if we don’t have any hemorrhagic disease, we’ll see better numbers this fall,” he said. ■



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

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GET STARTED EARLY FOR SEPTEMBER ARCHERY BUCKS

BELOW RIGHT: Dennis Lower's Lee County buck is North Carolina's all-time best non-typical taken by crossbow.

Several tips and tactics can help prepare hunters for North Carolina's archery season, which begins statewide on Sept. 8.

Hunters Devin Lane of Cameron, N.C., and Dennis Lower of Sanford, N.C., key on seven factors, including the presence of deer, scouting, food, wind, scent control, camouflage and weapons skills.

Both men prepare early.

"I check out as many as seven or eight (potential hunting sites) by setting up trail cameras, starting in early June," said Lane, who arrowed a main-frame 5x5 buck with 13 sticker points last September that scored 175% and is North Carolina's No. 2 all-time non-typical by bow.

"When I get a picture of a big deer, that's where I'll put out corn (in June). I set a ground blind or tree stand three weeks before the season starts. I don't 'glass' fields. Deer are just about everywhere now, and they will come to bait piles."

Lower, who also hunts from a ground blind, took a 5x5 main-frame buck with nine sticker points last October that's North Carolina's No. 1 all-time non-typical by crossbow. He estimated that he had 2,500 trail-camera photos of his big buck during the 4½ years he watched it mature until his bolt dropped the monster at a corn/sweet-meal bait site.

Lane won't hunt from a ground blind unless the wind blows from his bait pile toward him, but he still sprays his clothes and boots with scent-killer spray. He wears black clothes in his blind, including gloves and a face mask, and shoots through a 1½-foot triangular window.

Lower also hunts only favorable winds from a ground blind. He zips down his window just 3 inches because his Ravin crossbow requires such a small opening.

"I don't wear camo," Lower said.

FOOD SOURCES
UP NEXT ➤

"I hang my clothes outside on tree limbs to avoid human odor. I start carrying corn in May."

Lane places his stands and bait piles just inside woods lines.

"I learned if I found a good spot in the middle (of property), I bumped too many deer going in," he said. "So I avoid that now."

Both men practice shooting, although Lower doesn't need as many reps with his crossbow. Lane shoots 30 arrows per day with his Mathews Creed compound bow.

"I can hit a target's heart-lung area consistently at 40 yards, but I set up (blinds) 25 yards from my corn pile," Lane said.

Both hunters drilled their trophy bucks behind the left shoulders for pass-through shots, with Lower's crossbow bolt traveling 17 yards and Lane's arrow flying 25 yards. ■

— Craig Holt



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FIND, IDENTIFY EARLY SEASON FOOD SOURCES

Deer season is often classified in multiple categories, with the pre-rut and rut getting most of the attention. But the early and late seasons also offer excellent hunting opportunities and, right now, hunters are thinking early season deer in the Carolinas.

Veteran hunter Darrell Madden of Semora, N.C., who has targeted big deer for years, and starts the season understanding local food sources.

"For many hunters, it's easy to think generally in terms of food sources, but actually it's something that will change significantly during the season," he said. "But I've found understanding the seasonal food pattern is a key to producing the visual connection to deer."

Madden said a good thing in the early season is that deer haven't be hunted hard or shot at, but even so, scouting must be accomplished without pressuring deer.

"The lack of pressure improves hunting when early season food sources are identified," he said. "For example, when I see deer using a specific food source when I'm scouting, it's a strong likelihood that they'll consistently feed at that source.

Better yet, they usually do so at approximately the same time every day. Once pressured later in the season, that advantage is lost."

Madden said food sources vary a great deal across the Carolinas but scouting specifically for localized early season food sources is not difficult.

"For some hunters, large agriculture fields will provide easy access to an outstanding food source," he said. "Soybeans are an extremely good source that provides good nutrition for deer. A wide range of food exists on agriculture lands, with corn, peanuts and cotton among others.

"The key is once you identify a source, you'll need to pinpoint the best sites on the large fields for deer ingress and egress," he said.

Madden said many prime food sources may be small, with persimmons an excellent example.

"Depending on the specific type of oak, some acorns are ready to drop early and can provide outstanding hunting opportunities," he said. "Last season, we had acorns falling very early in my



Deer often use agricultural crops like these soybeans as cover as well as an early season food source.

Terry Madewell

area, during September, and deer were all over them.

"Finding these areas does require some research and scouting to identify mast trees with plenty of acorns, but also the trees where they fall early," he said. "Later, as other acorn trees produce, deer will usually move if another source is superior."

Learning to distinguish large, white oak trees from red oaks will help hunters pinpoint different sources as the season progresses.

Madden said hunters can perform some "self-help" by planting food plots with a blend that includes early season foods. Location is a key; you don't want to compete with soybeans right across the road. Situate a plot not far from bedding and watering areas, but away from crops.

"I've found no substitute to putting in the effort to hoof it and scout the land I plan to hunt to identify prime food sources," he said. "Even if not all the sources are used during early season, it helps me track deer movements as they transition among various food sources." ■

— Terry Madewell

LET TECHNOLOGY GIVE YOU A SCOUTING EDGE

Public land gets a bad rap across the Carolinas. Millions of acres of untouched land are available for hunters willing to put in the work.

Finding a good location takes a lot of effort and boot leather but is worth the effort. South Carolina's all-time No. 1 buck was killed on public land. But if you want a good buck, you have to be willing to go where other hunters won't.

Thankfully, in today's world of technology, we can hone in on specific places by doing some internet scouting. Before hitting the woods, visit Google Earth and/or use a smart phone app such as OnX Hunt to find places to start your scouting.

OnX Hunt shows property boundaries, landowner information and hunting-unit boundaries. By adding a layer of topography, you can find funnels, saddles, pinch points and other places deer will likely use for travel.

But as good as this is, it doesn't replace actual walking and scouting the land.

The old adage is true; most hunters will not travel more than a few hundred yards from where they park when hunting public land. If you are willing to, get as far back as possible, move in early and stay late. Bucks pattern hunters, and they know when the woods get busy and when they get empty.

One thing often written about is so true. Use other hunters to move deer past you. Most hunters only put in a few hours on stand, and then they get down and "scout" — and they're actually pushing deer all through the woods. By committing to staying on stand much longer, you increase the odds of someone pushing deer past you.

On a hunt a few years ago, I watched a buck stand up in a cut-over and saw a hunter walk past him at 20 yards. The buck stood statue-still for 40 minutes staring into the direction the hunter walked. Then, he finally moved, just enough for me to get a shot. ■

— Pete Rogers

Pete Rogers



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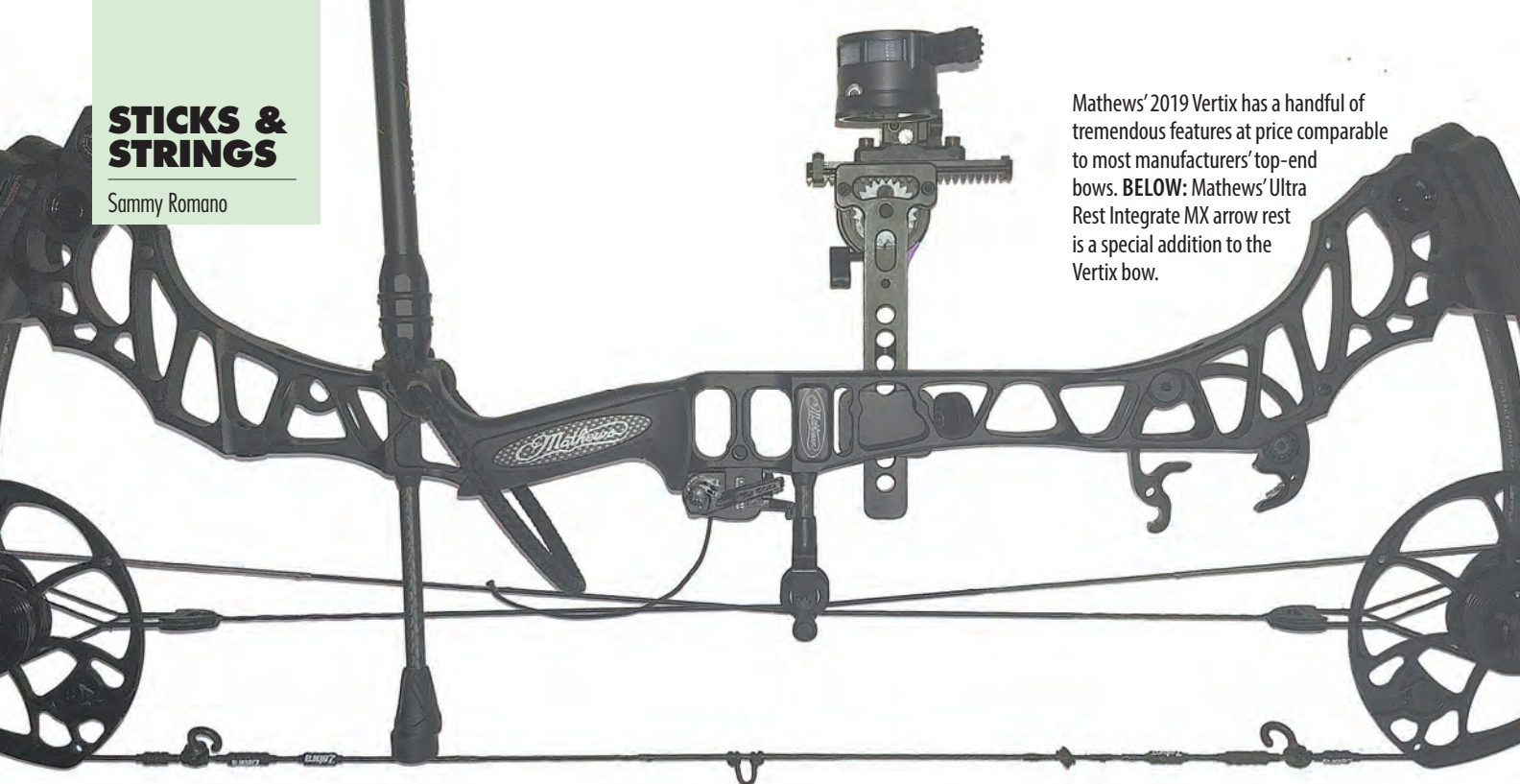
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STICKS & STRINGS

Sammy Romano

Mathews' 2019 Vertex has a handful of tremendous features at price comparable to most manufacturers' top-end bows. **BELOW:** Mathews' Ultra Rest Integrate MX arrow rest is a special addition to the Vertex bow.



MATHEWS' VERTIX IS A BOW TO CHERISH

TOP-DRAWER FEATURES MAKE THIS 2019-MODEL BOW A PLEASURE TO SHOOT

Mathews archery is responsible for many innovations found throughout the archery industry, such as roller-cable guards, harmonic damping, perimeter weighted cams, and longer, short-limb designs.

For 2019 they continue this tradition of innovation. While Mathews always brings a strong offering to the marketplace, this year they really pulled out the stops. The new Mathews Vertex offers several features never seen before, including Switchweight technology, and an integrated arrow-rest mounting system — all on a frame that is extremely fast, quiet, smooth and with extreme shootability. This bow is a perfect blend of all of these features and offers something for almost any hunting application.

Given the price of today's bows, most archers only own one, making it more important than ever for that bow to fill many roles. With a 30-inch axle-to-axle length, the Vertex bow is an ideal length for any type of hunting. It is short enough to be extremely maneuverable in a tree stand or ground blind, yet, due to its long

riser length, it is extremely forgiving. This bow will be equally at home hunting white-tailed deer in Eastern hardwoods, or on a spot-and-stalk Western big-game hunt in more open terrain. With a brace height of 6 inches, it offers blistering arrow speeds of up to 343 fps (IBO) but is still forgiving of mistakes.

The heart and soul of any modern compound bow is its cam system. When designing the 2019 Vertex, Mathews used its proven Crosscentric cam system, but with the addition of new Switchweight technology for a slam dunk. This revolutionary new technology allows the shooter to change peak draw weight to 60, 65, 70 or 75 pounds without using a bow press by simply changing the cam modules. By contrast, other compound bows on the market require a new set of limbs and the use of a bow press, making this both difficult and expensive. Draw length and let-off can also be changed by changing modules, all without affecting efficiency. In theory — since I have noticed most Vertex bows run approximately 5 pounds over on draw weight — this gives the shooter the ability to



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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ALL ROADS LEAD TO BASS



Roadways are the lifblood of our nation. They enable us to get from here to there, while providing rest stops and with places to eat along the way.

Roadways inundated when man-made reservoirs were impounded function similarly. They're transformed into underwater structures that serve as routes for fish and forage, giving them gathering places and dining areas to meet their piscatorial needs.

To anglers, they become coveted hot spots for catching fish, especially largemouth bass.

Fishermen locate these flooded highways by examining contour maps or gazing at their sonar units. Occasionally, old roads can be seen entering the water from the bank.

Irregularities along those submerged roadways, such as rubble, ditches, high spots or places the roads once crossed creeks or rivers, attract the most fish and can be pinpointed with side-scan units. Unfortunately, fishermen with old depth finders limited to cone-shaped views will have to endure more time-consuming searches to find these places.



JORDAN LAKE OFFERS ANGLERS AN UNUSUAL NUMBER OF SUBMERGED ROADBEDS FOR GREAT SUMMER FISHING OPPORTUNITIES. HERE'S HOW TO FIND AND USE THEM.

■ By Tony Garitta

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SOME RESERVOIRS ARE BLESSED WITH PLENTY OF UNDERWATER, FISH-ATTRACTING ROADWAYS.

JORDAN LAKE SOUTH OF RALEIGH AND DURHAM IS ONE OF THEM.

Joel Munday of Outdoor Expeditions Guide Service has been taking advantage of those roadways for bass for years.

“Bass can be caught from roadbeds almost year-round, but roadbeds are at their best in the summer; they’re also good in the fall,” Munday said. “I keep looking at my (depth finder) for bass and forage along a roadbed. Effective use of your electronics is necessary for successful roadbed fishing.”

Here’s a sampling of the roadbeds Munday targets in the summer at Jordan. Depths cited are approximate and with the lake at normal pool. Drawdowns may make larger segments of a roadbed fishable.

- **Johnson’s Bridge (North Pea Ridge Rd.).** This roadbed enters the lake near the Vista Point boat landing and transverses the lake to Johnson’s Bridge and beyond. Munday said it consists of rock and rubble and bridge remnants with depths from 12 to 25 feet.

In the morning, the roadbed attracts schooling fish that can be caught with topwater baits like Pop-Rs. At times, bass can be seen chasing shad. During the day, Munday said he fishes the edges and high spots along the roadbed.

- **US 64 roadbed.** The old U.S. 64 roadbed runs parallel and north of the US 64 causeway, entering the lake at Parker’s Creek and running until it passes a water intake where a deep channel cuts through it, then ends on the opposite bank near the Crosswinds boat ramp. An abandoned railway cuts through it as well.

During lake construction, excavation workers dug up some areas and dumped rock when constructing US 64, creating roadbed-like formations.

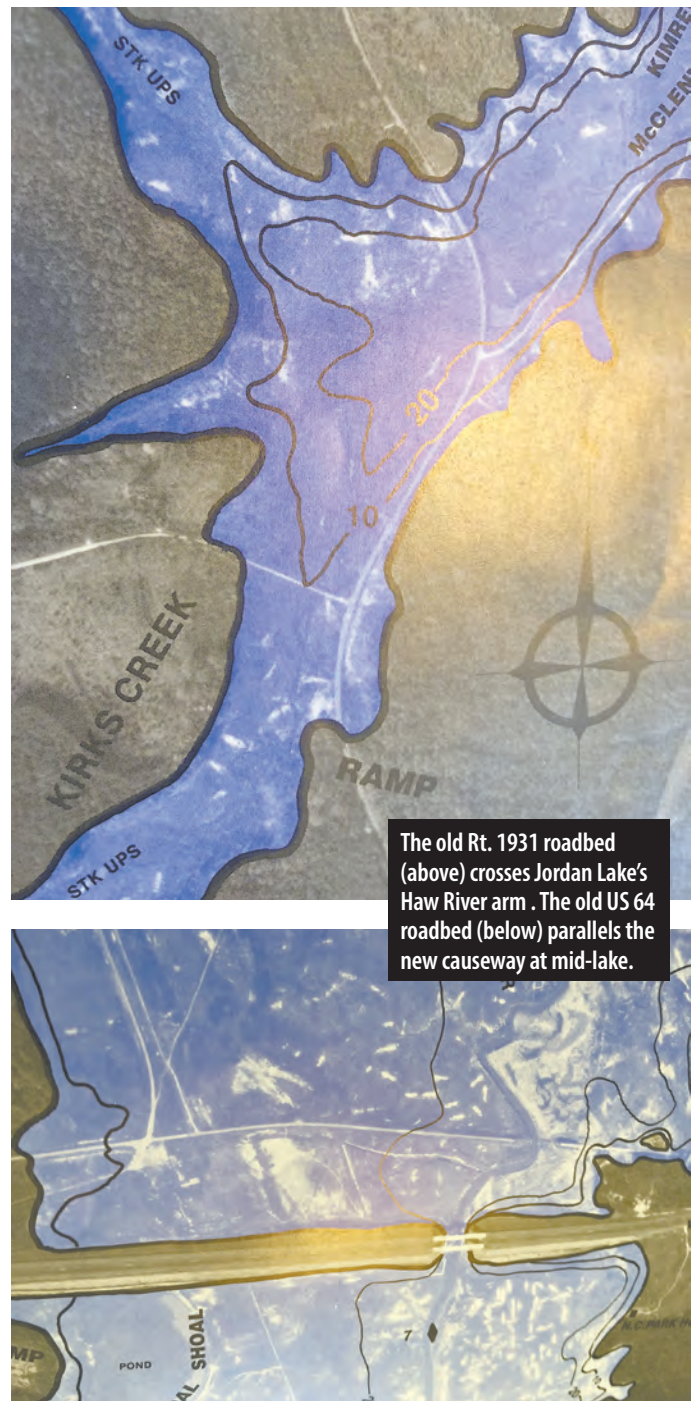
Munday said bass congregate on the high spots along the roadbed in water 8 to 14 feet deep. They consist of rubble and pavement.

During the mid-1980s, shortly after Jordan was opened to fishing, Lexington’s Jerry Lohr wore the bass out on those roadbed-like formations and high spots with crankbaits. Lohr often told his buddies before a tournament he was going to win at those spots, then he would make good on his prediction.

Lohr’s honey hole has become a fairly well-known hot spot for bass, so it’s not as loaded with fish as it once was, but it’s still a good place for catching quality bass.

- **Kirk’s Creek (Rt. 1931):** The roadbed enters the lake at the back of Kirk’s Creek near Poe’s Ridge Landing on the Haw River end of the lake. It runs along the right bank before it splits, with one section cutting across the creek while the other continues along the shore. The depth along the roadbed varies from 5 to 14 feet.

Munday said the roadbed is “as rough as a cob,” which explains its attraction for bass.



The old Rt. 1931 roadbed (above) crosses Jordan Lake’s Haw River arm. The old US 64 roadbed (below) parallels the new causeway at mid-lake.

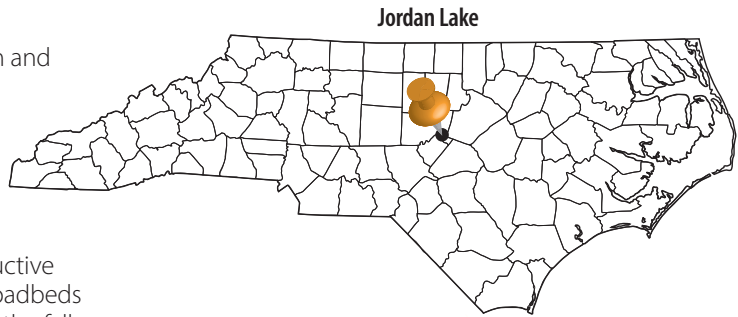
DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE — Jordan Lake, south of Durham and southwest of Raleigh, has great access from US 64, which crosses the lake east-west approximately at mid-lake. Public ramps include Farrington Point and Crosswinds off Farrington Road, Ebenezer Church off Beaver Creek Road and Seaforth off US 64.

WHEN TO GO — Submerged roadbeds are very productive for summer and early fall bass fishing. Go with deeper roadbeds during the summer and move to shallower roadbeds in the fall.

BEST TECHNIQUES — Probe irregularities on offshore, submerged roadbeds with Carolina rigs, large shaky head jigs tipped with 8- to 10-inch worms, deep-diving crankbaits and ½- to ¾-ounce jigs. Shallow- to medium-diving crankbaits and ¼-ounce jigs take over in the fall.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — Jowl Munday, Outdoor Expeditions Guide Service, 919-669-2959, www.outdoorexpeditionsusa.com; Jeffrey Thomas, Carolina Outdoors Guide Service, www.carolinaoutdoors.net. See also Guides & Charters in Classifieds.



ACCOMMODATIONS — Holiday Inn Express, Apex-Raleigh 800-307-2083; Budget Inn, Sanford, 919-775-2814; Hampton Inn & Suites, Chapel Hill, 919-403-8700; Comfort Inn, Apex, 919-387-4600. Campgrounds at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area, Apex, 919-362-0586.

MAPS — GMCO Maps, 888-420-6277, www.gmcomaps.com; Kingfisher Maps, 800-326-0257, www.kfmaps.com; FHS Maps, Jordan Lake, 800-ALL-MAPS, www.fishinghotsports.com.

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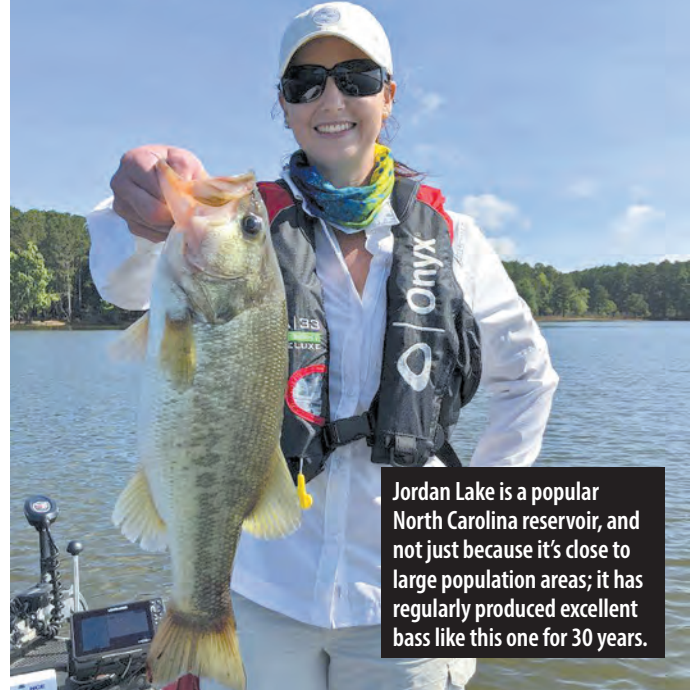
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- **Ebenezer Landing roadbed:** A roadbed runs roughly parallel behind the Beaver Creek Road bridge at the Ebenezer Landing. The roadbed is in 12 to 14 feet of water, and its rocky features lure quality bass. An early morning bite is possible near the bridge. Later in the day, anglers make their move to the roadbed.



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Munday plucks bass from these roadbeds, basically using five baits: shaky head jigs, football jigs, Carolina rigs, Texas rigs and deep-diving crankbaits. Most of the fish come from 12 to 14 feet of water at high spots, drops and edges along the roadbeds.

He said the key to fishing roadbeds with crankbaits is to make long casts, so the deep-diving baits have enough time to reach their maximum depths, while covering as much of the productive part of the roadbed as possible. He usually retrieves them from shallow to deep. Crankbaits work best when the bass are active.

To make long casts, Munday uses a medium-action, 7-foot-3 13 Fishing baitcasting rod and reel spooled with 12-pound Seaguar fluorocarbon. For crankbaits, he favors Rapala's DT Series in natural shad patterns with a touch of chartreuse.

"The baits have a steep bill that forces them down in a hurry," he said. "Effective crankbaits bounce and bang along the rocky structure that comprises most roadbeds without hanging up too much."

Munday's Texas and Carolina rigs, used for slowly probing structure, feature soft-plastic baits in green pumpkin, junebug and red shad colors. He likes fishing light, shaky head jigs on shallower portions of rocky roadbeds because they're less likely

to hang. He fishes deeper waters for sluggish bass with football jigs in blue/black or peanut butter and jelly colors. He fishes a 7-foot-3, medium-heavy 13 Fishing rod and 15-pound fluorocarbon leader for shaky heads, Texas rigs and Carolina rigs.

Jordan Lake houses many other roadbeds within its 13, 940 acres. Fishermen utilizing topographical maps and/or their electronics rarely are at a loss for bass when they fish these underwater routes. ■

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THE RAILROAD THAT NEVER WAS

When New Hope Dam was completed in 1982, creating Jordan Lake, numerous homes and communities were inundated by the lake's waters, including the remnants of a railroad intended to connect Durham and the town of Duncan in southern Wake County.

The original rails were abandoned when a plan to construct a flood-control lake, originally named New Hope Lake but renamed B. Everett Jordan Lake in memory of the N.C. Senator, became inevitable as recorded in *Durham to Duncan*.

The historical record reads:

"In April 1969, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers entered into a relocation agreement with the D&S (Durham and South Carolina Railroad) and the Norfolk Railway, as a third party, to move the rail line from the New Hope Valley river basin to higher ground in preparation for the building of the New Hope Dam and Reservoir Jordan Lake."

The abandoned railroad, depicted on topographical maps and at www.abandonedrails.com, offers fishermen a flooded road of another kind that serves as a magnet for fish.

Its covered remains cross the upper end of New Hope Little Creek near two islands and high-tension Duke Energy lines before re-entering the lake at Morgan Creek, crossing the creek, then re-entering the lake near Farrington Point, crossing Bush Creek, then hugging the shoreline until it reaches the N.C. Division of Forest Resources regional headquarters, then moving past Parkers Creek to the Shoal Buoy near the US 64 bridge at mid-lake and going to the opposite shore, crossing the mouth of Beaver Creek and continuing into Little Beaver Creek before exiting the lake after passing Covington's Reef.

"While most of the old railroad bed is too deep for summer bass fishing because of thermoclines, those sections in 14 to 16 feet of water or less where it enters Morgan Creek, exits Little Beaver Creek and runs close to Farrington Point can be excellent for fishing," said guide Joel Munday. ■



A proposed railway from Durham to Duncan (left) was abandoned when Jordan Lake was being planned, and an alternative (right) was eventually abandoned due to railroad mergers.



Tony Garitta of Lexington, N.C., is a retired English instructor and avid bass fisherman. He writes a weekly fishing column for the *Lexington Dispatch*. In his spare time, he can be found catching bass at Tuckertown and High Rock lakes; he holds the lake record at High Rock.

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FLAT IS WHERE IT'S AT

BERKLEY'S NEW FLAT-SIDED CRANKBAIT MET FRITTS' GOALS

Back in 1993, one of the baits I used in my Bassmaster Classic win on Alabama's Lake Logan Martin was a "homemade" flat-sided crankbait made by a guy named Steve Blazer. They were similar to baits that came from the late Ronnie Tapp, a great bass fishermen from South Carolina.

A couple of years ago, the people at Berkley told me they wanted to build a flat-sided bait that was better than the one I won the Classic with. It took them a year-and-a-half, and a lot of work and testing, but they got it done.

About a week ago, at the annual ICAST show in Orlando, Fla., Berkley debuted the new, flat-sided baits that carry my name. Frittsides.

These are flat-sided baits that come in three sizes: 2¼ inches that dives to 5 feet, 2½ inches that dives to 7 feet, and 3 inches that dives to 9 feet.

These baits are made of plastic, but they feel like wood. It's very thick plastic, a solid feel, and there are disk weights at the very bottom of the baits, weights that you can see. I have added weights to hundreds and hundreds of baits, and baits have forever been weighted in the middle, but not these.

FLAT-SIDED FOOD

If you think about it, everything that a bass eats, except for a crawfish, has flat sides: a bream, a shad, a blueback herring. And those baitfish all have a natural action when they swim, a natural roll.

David Fritts said his Frittside crankbaits, flat-sided with belly weights and a slightly-curved coffin bill, are big-fish baits.



Flat-sided baits have always had that natural kind of action. Most other crankbaits don't, but flat-sides do because of the way they are designed and how the water flows over them.

Most of the flat-sided baits on the market have a coffin-type bill, a square bill, but these aren't exactly square bills. They have sort of half-moon or quarter-moon shaped bills on the corners where the other baits come to a point. The bills on

our baits will help keep you from hanging up as much, with the same action as a square-bill.

There's not really a bad time to use



David Fritts is a 62-year-old pro bass fisherman from Lexington, N.C. He won the 1993 Bassmasters Classic championship and the 1997 FLW Tour Championship, and he was the 1994 BASS Angler of the Year. He is sponsored by Ranger boats, Evinrude outboards, Lew's, Minnkota, Raymarine and Berkley.

square-billed baits, but you do need the fish to be in 10 feet of water or less. Obviously, spring, fall and winter, they're going to be great. When I won the Classic, I was fishing in open water in August, but the fish were less than 10 feet deep.

I think they should be great for any kind of river fishing, any kind of fishing with current where fish will be in shallower water. But in the summer, when some fish get back up in the creeks, in 10 feet of water or less, they will be a tool you need to have in your tackle box.

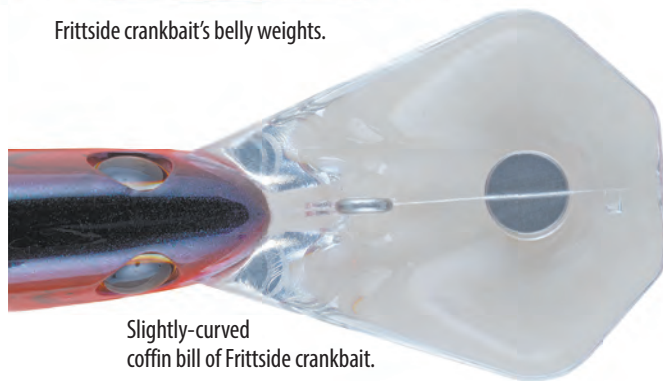
These are big-fish baits, too. Square-billed, flat-sided baits have always had that reputation, and it's deserved. I know when I was testing these baits this past spring, I caught seven fish over 8 pounds with them. They were one of the best big-fish baits I've ever tied on.

Berkley is coming out with the baits in 18 different colors, and they're all the good crankbait colors. You can go to the Berkley website (www.berkley-fishing.com) and see them all, and I've posted photos of them on my Facebook page. They should be available in tackle shops and stores sometime in September.

The nice thing about these baits is that they dive deep enough that you can fish them in open water, or you can cast them to targets, like shallow stumps or pier posts, run them along the edge of a grass bed, something like that. I would throw them on



Frittside crankbait's belly weights.



Slightly-curved coffin bill of Frittside crankbait.

a 6-foot-8 or 7-foot, medium-action Lew's David Fritts Perfect Crankbait rod. If you're throwing at a target, the 6-foot-8 will probably be a better choice — the 7-foot if you're throwing it in open water like a point or a ledge where the water drops off from 5 to 7 or 8 feet.

I'm excited about these baits, and not just because my name is on them. I really wanted to make a bait better than the flat-sided bait I used when I won the Classic, and I think we've got one. ■

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LIVEN UP THE SPOTS

Lake Russell spotted bass love live bait

Spotted bass are voracious feeders, but when the water in South Carolina's Lake Russell begins simmering in the August heat, even they can get a little finicky.

The key to catching them, according to guide Jerry Kotal, is live bait. It may be anathema to purists, but it puts fish in the boat.

"The bass will be down in the 20- to 30-foot range, mostly over brush piles and treetops," said Kotal (706-988-0860). You can sometimes catch some out over an open bottom, but most of the time they will be hanging around some structure.

"The hotter it gets, the deeper they go," he said. "Normally, you can catch them in that 20- to 30-foot range, especially early in the morning, but when it gets super hot, you have to go deeper."

You have to find the fish first, he said. That means riding slowly over the underwater structure, looking for fish on the sonar.

"That is the most important piece of equipment on the boat this time of year," he said. "If you locate them in the timber, stop and fish really slow until you find a school of fish. Usually, you will catch a good many together."

Kotal uses a Carolina rig when fishing minnows and 4- to 5-inch blueback herring for bait. He'll slide a sinker on, tie in a barrel swivel, then a 2-foot leader.

"Just drop the bait down to the fish. If he is there and he wants



Pat Robertson

Guide Jerry Kotal said that live bait will produce nice catches of Lake Russell spotted bass when artificial baits fall short in August's heat.

it, he is going to come get it," Kotal said. "If they are all the way down in the timber, you can only go to the top and try to get the fish come up out of the brush to get it. If you are using something like a drop shot, you can get all the way down into the timber, but it's hard to do that with live bait and an open hook."

August catches will be spots and an occasional largemouth, but with live bait, you can add white perch, catfish and sometimes even a striped bass, he said.

"I have also caught some crappie fishing this way, but we use a really big bait for crappie to take. I have caught some 2- and 3-pound crappie on that herring, but you have to let the fish eat it, let him bury the rod tip," said Kotal, who said anglers need sun-block, an umbrella and plenty of cold water on trips. ■

— Pat Robertson



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ALL GROWN UP: Randleman no longer new; bass still great

When Randleman Lake opened in 2010, the 3,007-acre reservoir in North Carolina's Piedmont was hailed by many as one of the hottest bass lakes in the South.

Like many new fisheries, Randleman experienced an early boom period that lived up to the hype; quality fish were everywhere. But like other bass factories, the fishing leveled with the passage of time.

Today, Randleman remains an excellent bass lake, as guide Joel Richardson (www.joelgrichardson.com) will attest. Only now, fishermen must know the lake to catch bass, especially in the summer, instead of scampering around the lake willy nilly.

"August fishing is the 'test of the best' at Randleman, just as it is on other bass lakes," said Richardson, who holds the official Randleman Lake record: a 10.22-pound lunker.

Despite the tougher fishing, fishermen have one significant aid that they didn't have in the early days, when the only maps available were non-contour maps or Google Earth aerial views of the lake. Today, maps revealing all of the lake's secrets can be purchased for wide-scan units and other electronics.

Richardson starts his summer search for bass on the main body with topwaters, such as buzzbaits, Pop-Rs and Zara Spooks the first thing in the morning.

"There are always shallow fish if you begin early," said Richardson, who is from Kernersville, N.C. "Topwater fishing is a quick and effective way to search an area for bass."

Throughout the day, Richardson targets points, roadbeds and drops in 10 to 20 feet of water with Carolina rigs, deep-diving crankbaits and 8- to 10-inch plastic worms, either as rig or jig trailers.

He's found little difference in the two major creek arms, Muddy Creek and the Deep River.

"One is as good as the other," said Richardson.

Bass pro Brad Staley of Asheboro, N.C., fishes Randleman's offshore structure with baits similar to Richardson.

"I like a ½-ounce football jig with a 10-inch Zoom Ol' Monster worm in dark grape or an 8-inch Dave's Tournament Tackle Magnum worm in green pumpkin or a standard ½-ounce jig," said Staley.

Staley rarely fishes structure deeper than 12 feet because of the thermocline.

"I focus on the thermocline, because deeper depths have little fish-supporting oxygen unless there are heavy rains," he said. "Randleman has an earthen/cement dam, so water may flow over it, but it's not pulled to produce current." ■

— Tony Garitta

Bass pro Brad Staley caught this Randleman Lake largemouth fishing offshore structure.

Tony Garitta



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DEEP MEANS DEEP? NOT!

Topwater action on Lake Hartwell bass may sound surprising for summer fishing, but fish can be coaxed to the surface, even on the hottest days.

By Pete Rogers

Pete Rogers

BLUEBACKS CHANGE BASS BEHAVIOR

Mid-day topwater action seems to go against everything we know about summer bass fishing, but that's just how things work on lakes that have strong populations of blueback herring, like 50,000-acre Lake Hartwell along the South Carolina-Georgia border.

Bass pro Chase Simmemon said that bass behavior changes when bluebacks are present, and since they like to be near the surface on bluebird days, bass won't be far behind.

Thankfully, LiveTarget makes a variety of baits for just this purpose. Brightly-colored lures like the Glass Minnow Bait-Ball walking bait, or their Yearling Bait-Ball jerkbait are excellent lures for bringing bass toward the surface from brush piles or tree tops, along with the Glass Minnow Bait-Ball Popper in silver smoke or silver blue.

"The water may be 30 feet deep, but the trees are standing, so the fish may be only 5 to 7 feet from the surface," Simmemon said.

Having good electronics is key to finding productive brush piles; Simmemon has several hundred marked on his graph.

"Busting brush is hopping from one to the other as fast as possible," he said. "Get a fish, move on to the next one, and fish it for 5 to 10 minutes and go to another." ■

August is never a fun time to be outdoors in South Carolina, that is, unless you really like offering yourself to the sun gods or the fish are biting on Lake Hartwell.

Contrary to many opinions, the dog days of summer can be ideal conditions for catching good limits of largemouth or spotted bass on Hartwell, especially if you know where to find them, which, as we all know, is 90% of catching fish any time of the year.

Chase Simmemon of Westminster, S.C., a competitive angler who fishes several tournament circuits, fishes Hartwell regularly and has developed a pattern of bringing big bass to the boat. One of his best tactics is targeting bass over deeper water that many anglers avoid.

"I'll fish right in the middle of the lake," he said. "I like to find brush piles in the deep water where no one else looks."

On a recent trip, he predicted, "We will be so far from the bank, you wouldn't be able to hit it with a .22 rifle. And we will catch fish on topwater."

"Finding brush piles is important, and often you can only get one or maybe two fish off these brush piles, but they are a great summer bite."

After first light, with the sun and temperature rising, he throws topwater plugs over brush piles in 30, 40, even 50 feet of water, moving from brush pile to brush pile.

continues >>>



LiveTarget Glass Minnow Baitball



LiveTarget Baitball Crankbait



LiveTarget Yearling Baitball Jerkbait

DEEP MEANS DEEP? NOT!

Afternoon finally came, and Simmemon switched to his bread-and-butter: a drop-shot rig. Drop-shots are nothing new to the fishing world, but few anglers are as consistent with it as is Simmemon. By lowering his bait into these brush piles, he is able to bring fish out of these deep-water holes.

“My rig is pretty simple,” Simmemon said. “I like either a 6-foot-6 or a 7-foot, medium-action spinning reel and a spinning reel with 15-pound braid with about 10 feet of 7-pound fluorocarbon. I like a straight-shank 1/0 hook.

“If I am in heavy brush, I’ll almost always Texas-rig my 4-inch worm. If the cover is not very thick, I like to expose the hook, with the hook through the nose of the worm.”

Simmemon starts with natural colors.

“Green, pumpkinseed and watermelon are always good places to start and go from there,” he said.

Another tactic that produces bits is retrieving hard baits very slowly across the tops of the brush piles. One class of baits that works is a spybait, a 3- to 5-inch hard bait with front and rear propellers that sinks about a foot per second. Cast it beyond the brush pile and allow it to sink, counting it down to the desired depth, then reel it back as slowly as you can.

“When you think you are reeling slow enough, slow down,” Simmemon said.

It’s not a difficult technique, even for a relatively inexperienced angler. Cast the bait, let it sink, retrieve. Fish suspended near the tops of brush pile are likely to give it a look as it slowly cruises over the brush. Jerkbait that will dive down 5 to 10 feet will also work.

Simmemon said that because blueback herring are a primary baitfish in Hartwell, you can throw out just about everything you know about bass fishing. When it’s hot, clear and still, bass will suspend over brush piles because of the way herring travel and feed. Bass will react to them and set up in different ways than they set up on lakes where shad are the primary baitfish.



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DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE — Lake Hartwell straddles the border between Georgia and South Carolina on the Savannah, Tugaloo and Seneca rivers. The best access is via I-85 to areas around Clemson and Anderson. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, local governments, South Carolina and Georgia maintain boating facilities around the lake. For information visit: <http://www.sas.usace.army.mil/About/Divisions-and-Offices/Operations-Division/Hartwell-Dam-and-Lake/Plan-A-Visit/Boating/>

WHEN TO GO — Bass head to deep water on Lake Hartwell shortly after the spring spawn. The deep-water, brush pile pattern cranks up in mid-summer when the weather and water really warm up. It will last until bass leave main-lake areas and follow baitfish back into creeks, typically in September.

BEST TECHNIQUES — Fish a variety of topwater baits over the top of deep brush piles to start the day, then move to drop-shot rigs with 4-inch worms and spybaits later in the day to pick fish off that are hanging around the brush.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — Lake Hartwell Fishing and Marine, 864-287-9782. See also Guides and Charters in Classifieds.

ACCOMMODATIONS — Lake Hartwell Country, www.crownofthecarolinas.org/where-to-stay; Anderson Convention and Visitors Bureau, www.visitanderson.com/Lake-Hartwell/

MAPS — Kingfisher Maps, 800-326-0257, www.kfmaps.com.

Plenty of anglers like to fish early and late, and the fishing is awesome during these times, but as Simmemon points out, “If it’s a sunny day, the higher the sun gets, the better the fishing. If I had to fish only four hours, I’d pick 10 (a.m.) to 2 (p.m.) for the best fishing.”

Deep-water bass will readily bite on most summer days on Hartwell. Finding the brush piles with herring and being willing to move from topwater to suspended bass will help you put fish in your boat. ■



Pete Rogers of Taylors is employed with the USDA Wildlife Services and has been a sporting writer and photographer for over a decade. He has a real passion for trapping and enjoys sharing his outdoors experiences with his wife and five children.



5 Tips for Carolina tarpon

By Phillip Gentry

Silver kings make long migrations to the Carolinas every summer. Here are the best ways to connect with one.

Hooking a tarpon on rod and reel is the closest thing to riding a rodeo bull that most anglers will experience. These massive, strong fish are often fickle in where they feed and what they'll eat, but once the hook is sunk in their jaws, all bets are off.

The downside to tarpon fishing in the Carolinas is that targeting these brutes is often difficult, because the numbers that enter our waters in the summer on the way north from Florida pales compared to the number of sharks, rays and redfish that feed in the same areas. Most anglers consider getting one bite from a tarpon — after wading through everything else that bites — to be a successful trip, and few guides will guarantee a tarpon — but they're willing to give it their best shot.

continues >>>


Tarpon make long runs up the East Coast each summer, making them a seasonal target for Carolina anglers.

Pat Person

5 Tips



Justin Carter



Justin Carter of Redfin Charters in Charleston, S.C., is one of these guides. Through networking and comparing notes with other captains who guide for Redfin, Carter has been able to put together a better-than-average, predictable pattern for finding and hooking tarpon.

Getting one to the boat is another matter altogether.

LOCATION

Like the retail business, tarpon fishing is all about location. Carter said inlets and areas like sandbars, dredge piles and surf lines close to the ocean are his top choices for finding tarpon. He's looking for areas that create choke points, forcing bait into smaller areas.

"Tarpon will sit on the edges of these areas and ambush prey as the wind, tide and waves push bait around," he said. "Most of the time, these areas will not be clear water, so you won't see these fish unless they are rolling in the surf or in the break lines."

Carter said many anglers have heard stories or even had experiences during the summer, with hooking a tarpon in a deep hole or back in a creek, but that has rarely been his experience.

"Most of my best tarpon spots are within sight of the open ocean, in water that is less than 15 feet deep," he said.

TIDES

Carter cannot point to a specific tide as being better than another when it comes to tarpon fishing. The fish simply relate to these areas differently based on the stage of the tide you're fishing. He said that the fish relate to an inlet or a sandbar or dredge pile based on where the bait is located, and that fish can be caught on any point of the tide if you are positioned correctly.

"On the outgoing tides, the fish often position themselves outside an inlet," he said. "If you have a sandbar with a chute running through it, they may run up and down that chute."

continues >>>



Nick Winch

ABOVE: Few guides will promise a tarpon at the end of the day, but most will do their best to get you a few bites. LEFT: Finding abundant signs of life near an inlet or other coastline structure will often preclude the presence of tarpon.

5 Tips

Conversely, he said, an incoming tide will often find tarpon holding along the inside edges of an inlet, again capitalizing on current rips that bring food their way. If wind, waves or crosscurrents pile up on one side of the inlet on the rising tide, he'll most likely pick that side.

"At dead-high or dead-low, these fish don't leave or shut down like some other species," he said. "Then, it all depends on the presence of bait. If bait is concentrated in the area, there's usually tarpon there too."

BAIT

The bait category covers three facets of tarpon fishing:

- What the angler is seeing in the area;
- What the fish are feeding on;
- What you've got on your hook.

Surprisingly, they aren't always the same thing.

"Big numbers of smaller mullet or smaller numbers of big mullet is a good sign," Carter said. "So is seeing big schools of menhaden. Tarpon definitely feed on all of those, but don't forget, these big fish will eat other fish that are feeding on much smaller bait."

Carter often uses a tower or poling platform and/or a pair of binoculars to look for active signs of life in an inlet or other nearshore area. Nearly every time he finds active bait, he'll also



Ethan Williams

Most Carolina tarpon tend to be larger specimens, making for a good fight on medium-heavy tackle.

catch glimpses of tarpon rolling.

Although he might be seeing mullet or menhaden in an area, that's probably not what he's going to use for bait.

"I want a bait that stands out in a crowd of baitfish, so I'm more likely to use a croaker, spot or pinfish, something that really shines and stands out to a feeding tarpon," he said.

Baits are always fished whole, regardless of the species, to prevent a lot of the by-catch that always accompanies a tarpon fishing trip.

continues >>>

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5 Tips

“There are so many sharks and rays using these areas, we don’t need to advertise by using a cut bait,” he said. “I’m not talking about small sharks, either; we catch a lot of big sharks while tarpon fishing.”

PRESENTATION

Carter will anchor his boat using an anchor, Power Pole or spot-lock trolling motor. Baits are all free-lined behind the boat, usually with no weight but sometimes with a ½-ounce sinker to keep the bait off the surface in heavy current.

“You don’t want a big weight near the nose of the fish when he’s hooked,” he said. “They shake their head on a jump and dislodge the hook.”

TACKLE

Carter’s choice of tackle is a 7½- to 8-foot, heavy action rod with a long taper. He’s partial to the St. Croix Tide Master paired with a 6500 Penn Slammer or other baitrunner style reel spooled with 60-pound braid, with a 20-foot leader of 80- to 100-pound Suffix Superior mono and 5/0 to 8/0 Gamakatsu circle hooks.

BONUS: ARTIFICIAL BAITS

While most tarpon in the Carolinas are caught on live bait, Carter said there are times and occasions when you can sight-fish for tarpon with artificial lures.

According to Carter, most of these artificial-bait opportunities come when scouting an area for tarpon and casting ahead of the fish as they roll or breach while feeding.

“I have had occasions where I had a small school of tarpon around the boat,” he said. “Generally, our water is too murky for sight-fishing, but not always. A good, incoming tide will be clear enough that you can see them.”

Like sight-fishing for any predator fish, Carter said it’s better to cast in front of the fish and let the current sweep the bait to it. This is much easier to do in a changing tide than on a dead tide.

“A bait charging at a predator is not natural and they’ll almost always pass it up,” he said. “You want to place the lure in the water and have the fish move to the lure or the current wash it to the fish.”

Carter’s preferences for artificial baits are a Z-Man HeroZ, a 10-inch bait, or a 6-inch SwimmerZ. He will rig them on a 7/0 to 10/0 swimbait hook.

He’ll sight-cast to tarpon using an 8-foot, medium-heavy St. Croix Avid spinning rod paired with a 5500 Penn reel spooled with 50-pound braid. He shortens his leader to a 4- to 6-foot length of 50-pound mono. ■



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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Tarpon give Lowcountry anglers plenty of chances around baitfish schools

August is tarpon time in the waters of South Carolina's Lowcountry. The fish are plentiful this time of year, and as long as you can find the bait, you'll stay on the tarpon.

Rob Bennett of Lowcountry Inshore Charters in Charleston, S.C., said Deveaux Bank and St. Helena Sound are hotspots for the silver kings in August.

"The menhaden schools are thick and easy to spot, and if you are too far away to see the schools from the boat, just keep a lookout for the tarpon rolling in them," said Bennett (843-367-3777). "When the wind is right, you can drift right alongside those schools of menhaden and put four lines out. I like to have two baits on the surface and two lines on the bottom. The tarpon stay with those schools. So if you just stay on them, too, you'll be in the right place."

Matching the hatch is always a good choice for anglers, and Bennett said that's especially true when tarpon fishing, especially when anglers are fishing around baitfish. He uses live menhaden fresh from those big schools. Since they are so plentiful and easy to catch, he said anglers should make sure their bait stays lively.

If you can't find the big menhaden schools, or if you just prefer anchoring down, Bennett said you'll find plenty of tarpon on sandbars in those same areas.

"Those shallow sandbars will have tarpon, even in water as shallow as 3 to 6 feet deep," he said. "The trick to anchoring for tarpon is to keep a constant stream of chum out. Keep it fresh. Just use chunks of herring or menhaden."

One downside to this kind of fishing, at least in some anglers' minds, is that you'll have to weed through some sharks to hook up with a

Guide Rob Bennett said August is THE month to find tarpon in inshore waters off the Lowcountry coastline.



Lowcountry Inshore Charters

tarpon; Bennett said that can be just as exciting to many folks. He suggests using a buoy on your anchor rope so once you hook up with either a tarpon or a shark, you can leave your anchor behind while chasing the fish. That allows you to quickly find your anchor once the fight is over.

For tackle, Bennett uses stout rods paired with 6500 series spinning reels, 100-pound braided line, and a 6-foot leader of 100-pound fluorocarbon. He finishes it off with an 8/0 circle hook. He said as long as the tide is moving in either direction, tarpon will be active, but he finds a little more success on the incoming tide. ■

— Brian Cope



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Wylie's WHISKERED GOLD

By Terry Madewell

After-dark catfish action can heat up even the most-swelting summer night — if you know how to find and catch them.

Lake Wylie provides a diverse, year-round catfishing resource for North Carolina and South Carolina anglers; all three of the major species — channels, blues and flatheads — are found in good numbers.

But summer has historically been a prime time for great catfishing opportunities, and with the right gameplan, anglers can beat the summer doldrums 24 hours a day.

Jeff Manning and Michael Paciocco, both of Gastonia, N.C., are fishing buddies and partners in catfish tournaments who make Lake Wylie and its 13,400 acres on the Catawba River their home waters.

Manning said August fishing is excellent, but he's found that targeting catfish at the right time and in specific places will enhance odds of success.

continues >>>

Michael Paciocco with a 48-pound flathead caught on Lake Wylie last summer.



"All three species can be taken day or night, but to improve my odds of hooking quality fish, I often fish at night during the summer," Manning said. "I have multiple reasons, including a much-more comfortable temperature, far fewer pleasure boaters on the lake and generally, the big catfish are more active in shallower water."

Manning said targeting big blues and flatheads at night makes a good gameplan because they can often be found on the same types of bottom topography, and the same baits work for both.

Paciocco said live baits are celebrated as a prime offering for flatheads, but these big-headed brutes are also frequently hooked on fresh cut bait.

"We catch a lot of big flatheads on cut bait, but typically it needs to be very fresh, so we catch and keep bait alive in our bait tank until we're ready to hook it up, whether live or cut," he said. "We've also learned live bait will trigger plenty of big blues as well as flatheads. A big, blue catfish is not going shy away from a live, wiggling 8-inch white perch."

Paciocco said Lake Wylie has a strong flathead population, and it's not just a summer fishery. He and Manning have won big tournaments in cold weather at Wylie, weighing in only flatheads, but overall, the hours after dark are the most dependable of the year for big, summer flatheads.

"For blues and flatheads at night, we'll target shallower-water features, but we'll have deep water nearby," he said. "We primarily anchor-fish at night because the targets are quite specific, and with the right setup, we can cover them better from an anchored position."

He said top places include high spots or humps adjacent to the main-river channel, points and ledges that drop into the channel and large flats adjacent to deep water where baitfish congregate at night.

In addition, not all catfish roam the shallows at night.

"We'll also anchor in shallow water and fish deeper holes in the river and large tributaries," he said.

Manning said proper anchoring is crucial for success, day or night. He locates a target on his graph and figures any wind and current into his anchor setup to ensure his bait presentation is correct.

"Never anchor on the spot you target for fishing," he said. "I'll factor in wind and current and anchor so I can cast baits to those places using any current or wind to enhance bait presentation. I want the baits to be downwind or downcurrent as much as possible. I anchor the boat with a long rope from one end (and) use a very heavy anchor off the other

continues >>>





When fishing Lake Wylie at night it's a good idea to have a really big landing net.

Catching bait a fun part of the process

Veteran anglers Jeff Manning and Michael Paciocco not only enjoy catching big catfish during the summer, they enjoy the process of catching bait.

Manning uses a double- or triple-hook rig and searches late in the afternoon the back of creeks and coves where perch are often feasting on schools of young-of-the-year shad.



Terry Madewell

Jeff Manning almost has as much fun catching bait, two or three white perch at a time, as he does targeting big Lake Wylie blue and flathead catfish.

"Fishing around shad minnows is the key to catching bait for catfish," he said. "Using my graph, I'll spot shad schools with perch marked under and around them, but we'll often see shad dimpling the water, and that's a prime target, too. I keep things simple in most of my fishing, so I just get a box or two of red worms and put a small sinker on the bottom of a light-tackle rig and two or three No. 6 hooks spaced about a foot apart up the line."

Manning uses his electric motor to move around flats in depths typically ranging from 8 to 15 feet until he finds a concentration of perch. When he does, most everyone will be hooking multiple fish on each drop, and it doesn't take long to have plenty of bait. Using red worms as bait usually means some bream will be caught as well, so along with any gizzard shad, he brings he'll have an excellent selection of bait.

"As a bonus, white perch are excellent-eating fish, and occasionally 'keeper' white perch are caught," he said. "If the big catfish don't eat them, the larger ones make the trip home at the end of the night and join us for dinner one evening. Sometimes, I'm accused of lingering too long catching bait perch because I enjoy it. The fast action is so much fun, I almost hate to quit."

As the sun begins to set, he said someone in the boat typically reminds him it's time to trade up from perch for 40-pound flatheads and blue catfish. But he will try to hook one last "double" before he winds up the perch rig. ■

Jeff Manning said big catfish are caught round the clock at Lake Wylie during August.



to hold the boat steady. Then, I can cast in multiple directions without lines crossing and effectively cover a lot of water.”

Manning said baits are a personal choice, but white perch is a favorite because they’re found in Lake Wylie in huge numbers and are favored forage for both blues and flatheads. But gizzard shad, bream and other live baits will produce plenty of catfish. On any given trip, day or night, he’ll mix in both live and cut-bait offerings of perch, bream and shad.

“Size of bait can make a difference, so I use all sizes,” he said. “I’ve caught huge blues and flatheads on tiny and huge baits, so I don’t try to pre-determine what they’ll prefer, I’ll just give

them a smorgasbord. If we observe a specific pattern on a given night, we’ll certainly go with that.”

Manning said they’ll often catch channel catfish using the smaller baits, and it’s not unusual to catch the “catfish slam” all in one summer evening on Wylie.

“The lake has a good population of channel catfish, and they can be targeted in similar areas using smaller rigs and bait sizes,” he said. “Michael and I usually prefer to target big cats.”

Paciocco said they’ll give a spot an hour or more to produce before changing locations, but they won’t stay more than 90 minutes without some action.

“We’ve found several places over the years that are reasonably dependable, but nothing is a given on any trip,” he said. “We’ll move if the action is slow, because we know somewhere, and at some time, the fish are going get on a strong bite, so moving is just part of the fish-finding process.”

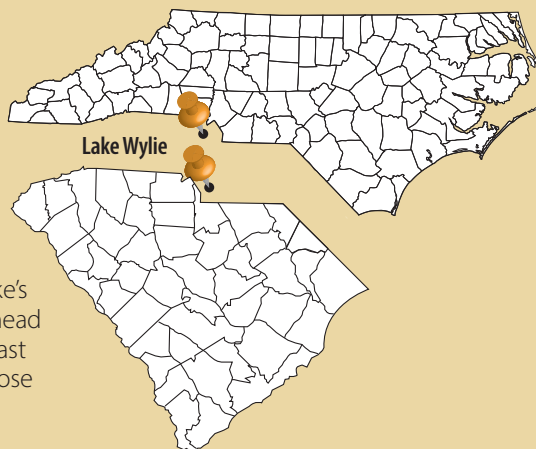
Manning said daytime fishing is very similar in terms of anchoring up, except that setups are usually on deeper targets, such as the base of drops and on the deeper side of humps. But the anchoring and bait-selection process remain the same.

He said drift-fishing is also very popular and is effective by day or night, but most fishermen seem to prefer drift-fishing during the day.

“During the summer, some recreational boating traffic still occurs at night, so that’s one consideration for me not to drift,” he said. “But during the day, the fish are also more likely to be scattered over larger areas, and drift-fishing can be a prime way to effectively cover more water. I tend to be partial to anchoring, but most fishermen will drift-fish with a Santee rig (a Carolina rig with a small float between the swivel and hook), and it produces excellent results.” ■

DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE — Lake Wylie lies roughly between Charlotte, N.C., and Rock Hill, S.C. Three interstates — I-77, I-85 and I-485 — provide good access to the lake. The Buster Boyd Access Area on the west end of the NC 49 bridge is popular with anglers and offers a four-lane ramp and plenty of parking at the lake’s midpoint, close to food and fuel. Copperhead Access Area offers three ramps near the east side of the bridge. Closer to the dam, choose from public access sites in Big Allison and Nivens creeks.



WHEN TO GO — Hit the lake in the afternoon, giving yourself plenty of time to catch bream, white perch and shad for bait. Start targeting catfish after dark. The best after-dark action begins in July and will run through September.

BEST TECHNIQUES — Anchor up and present live and fresh cut bait to catfish around depth changes on the main lake and main creek channels.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — Jerry Neeley, Carolinas Fishing Guide Service, 704-678-1034, www.carolinasfishing.com; Rodger Taylor, Catfish On Guide Service,

803 517-7828, www.catfishon.com. See also Guides & Charters in Classifieds.

ACCOMMODATIONS — Accommodations are plentiful in any direction from the lake. Visit www.charlottesgotalot.com; www.visitgaston.org; www.yorkcounty.gov/tourism.

MAPS — Fishing Hot Spot, 800-All-MAPS, www.fishinghotspots.com; Kingfisher Maps, 800-326-0257, www.kfmaps.com; Duke Energy, www.duke-energy.com/pdfs/wylie.pdf.



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.

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SANTEE STRINGER

Terry Madewell

Bill Geddings with some of the fish he caught on a short morning trip fishing stinkbait in shallow water off a point.

TARGETING SANTEE'S 'OTHER' CATFISH

FISHERY FOR CHANNELS IS STILL TOP-DRAWER, ESPECIALLY IN SUMMER'S HOTTEST WEATHER



Terry Madewell

Long before blue and flathead catfish arrived on the Santee Cooper fishing scene, the two lakes were teeming with big channel catfish. The system's fertile waters allowed these fish to grow to gargantuan sizes; the world-record channel catfish, 58 pounds from Lake Moultrie in 1964, still stands.

When blues and flatheads were introduced in the mid-1960s the baseline for a shift in catfish dynamics was set in motion.

Fast-forward two decades, and the Santee Cooper system were consistently producing huge blues and flatheads, and they were available in vast numbers.

The majority of catfish anglers thought bigger was better, and the channel catfish slid into relative obscurity for many.

OVERLOOKED?

Chad Holbrook, a fisheries biologist for the S.C. Department of Natural Resources who oversees the Santee

Cooper lakes, said it's totally understandable that blues and flatheads became immensely popular.

"The fast growth and top-end size of blues and flatheads, along with the channel catfish record, demonstrate the system is apparently ideal for growing big catfish," Holbrook said.

Biological data dates to 1985, he said, and it verifies what many anglers know, the channel catfish was, and still is, a thriving fishery.

"I'd classify the population as very healthy, with basically the same channel catfish population now as in 1985," he said. "But the top-end size seems to have diminished, likely because of competition with blue catfish."

Holbrook said blues have the genetic potential to grow much larger than channels, and big blues apparently out-compete channels for top-end catfish forage.

"But the channel catfish fishery is excellent, and while many fish caught are

in the 2- to 5-pound class, our netting samples indicate 10- to 12- pound channel catfish are doing well. We know the occasional 20-pound channel catfish is caught. The channel catfish population could actually handle more fishing pressure than currently receiving."

CHANNELING HEAT

A core group of channel catfish enthusiasts utilize this fishery during the hot-weather months.

One is Bill Geddings, a veteran angler from Lane, S.C. Geddings, 67, grew up fishing Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie and targeting channel catfish long before blues and flatheads were introduced.



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.

"I love to catch big catfish, just like anyone," Geddings said, "but in the summer, the channel catfishing is exceptional. I've found the key to consistent success is a combination of the right bait and place to fish."

Geddings said one productive spot in August is the Diversion Canal. With good current flow excellent, fishing for channel cats is great in the 7-mile-long canal that connects the two lakes.

"The popular method is drift-fishing, and most fishermen bounce a weight on the bottom with a leader line, hook and bait about a foot above it," he said. "Many baits produce good results, including night crawlers, minnows, catalpa worms and small chunks of cut bait."

Geddings prefers another method that catches even more fish.

STINKY ALTERNATIVE

"Fishing stinkbait is a killer technique for hooking lots of channel cats," he said. "It's my favorite technique; we'll often have multiple fish hooked. Even with three people fishing eight rigs, sometimes we can't keep up with the bites. It's not unusual to have all the rigs lying in

the boat with catfish flopping all over the floor when the bite is on.

"That's one problem I like," he said. "We'll unhook fish, bait the rigs and get them back in action," he said. "When the action is this good, I don't put all the rigs back out. Managing one can be a challenge; two just creates chaos."

The aptly named stinkbaits excel at attracting channel catfish, whose celebrated sense of smell lures them to the gooey concoction slathered on a treble hook or extra-long shank single hook. A long list of stinkbaits is available, but Geddings' favorite is Doc's Catfish Getter Dip Bait.

Commercial rigs to hold stinkbait are available; a small piece of sponge with a hook embedded will soak in and hold the goo.

"I find channel catfish on shallow flats, points or humps in 4 to 8 feet of water," he said. "But deeper water nearby is a key, and I prefer a firm bottom, with sand or gravel, over soft or muddy. Channel catfish tend to forage in shallow water during low-light times, and in the mid-day sun, they often retreat to nearby deeper water."



Terry Madewell

DO A LITTLE DIP:

Dip or stinkbaits are popular among fishermen targeting channel catfish because their odor attracts fish from long distances. They can be applied to special rigs that are made to hold the gooey substances.

Geddings said a side benefit is blue catfish in the 3- to 7-pound class often bite the stinkbait, adding to the catfish tally at day's end.

"On light or medium tackle, channel catfish provide a great fight and are prime size for eating," he said. "For fast action throughout the summer, I love Santee Cooper channel catfish. And be sure to take plenty of bait and a big cooler." ■

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KERR CATS ON FEED

as thermocline sets up the buffet line

When summer heat hits its peak, every angler could use a break to put his catch together, regardless of where it comes from.

That's what guide Austin Sartin of Burlington, N.C., has found at Kerr Lake on the North Carolina-Virginia border. While many lament the thermocline and the dead water below it, Sartin uses it to tell him where blue catfish aren't, and then he puts a bull's eye on where they are.

"In August, we have a strong thermocline that sets up anywhere between 24 and 32 feet deep," said Sartin (336-687-0519), who works for Blue's Brothers Catfish Guide Service. "That concentrates the fish in a tight band where the highest oxygen level meets the coolest water. We find out where that depth intersects the banks and points, and the catfish will be real close. That's where the bait is; they'll use those areas as ambush points."

Sartin focuses on main-lake points outside of coves and creek mouths close to the main channel. He prefers the middle to lower end of the lake in August, from Grassy Creek to Eastland Creek. After using his sonar to find the thermocline — which can

be seen as a thin line that can be amplified by increasing sensitivity — Sartin sets up to begin his troll.

"I run 10 rods at a ½ to 1 mile per hour," said Sartin, "eight on the bottom and two slip corks with 30-pound monofilament mainline and leader. On the Santee rigs that run on the bottom, I use a 1½-ounce drift weight. I try to run the slip corks right in the middle of the thermocline, so if I go out into deeper water, they'll still have a good chance to get bit. We bait up with cut shad, white perch or bream and usually keep a couple of perch rods out with Sabiki rigs tied on to catch them at the same time."

Sartin said that a consistent pattern since last fall has been the potential for torrential downpours that can raise water levels up to 2 feet overnight. In these instances, he finds that fish will leave the main lake to stage in the backs of creeks and sample the buffet line that washes in. All bets are off in terms of water depth in this scenario as fish go super skinny to get dibs on a free meal. ■

— Dusty Wilson

A distinct thermocline sets up Kerr Lake fishermen for good action on nice blue catfish in August.



Austin Sartin

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HOT TO THE FLY

Take these tips for catching summer redfish on fly-fishing tackle; the Georgetown, S.C., area is a great place to put them into practice.

By Jeff Burleson

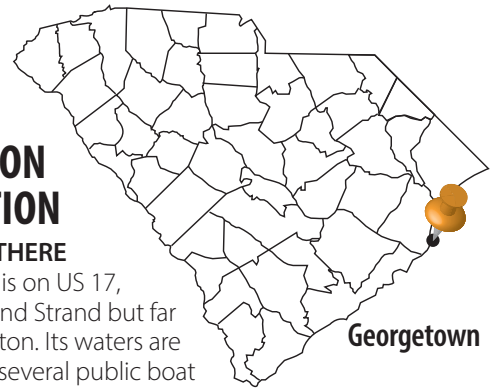


Redfish will eat just about anything that swims, and a well-placed fly that's stripped through the right spots will work just fine.

DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE

— Georgetown is on US 17, south of the Grand Strand but far north of Charleston. Its waters are accessible from several public boat ramps: South Island Ferry southeast of town, the East Bay Park landing in downtown Georgetown, and the Campbell Marine Complex on the south end of the US 17 bridge across the Sampit River.



Georgetown

WHERE TO GO — Redfish make a living in the waters around Georgetown year-round, from North Inlet to Cape Romaine and Bulls Bay. Weather and water conditions steer anglers to the best summer spots. During periods of excessive rainfall, the North Inlet area and other areas near the ocean with little freshwater input are tops. During dry spells, fish are likely to be in the bays off Winyah Bay closer to the rivers, the Santee Delta and the Cape Romaine/Bulls Bay area. Look for tailing flats adjacent to areas that hold fish on low tide. When it's hot, look at collection zones near deep waters over the shallow, tidal flats in the extreme backs of creeks with grass and oysters. Baitfish will congregate in the lower ends of creeks when the weather is cooler.

BEST TECHNIQUES — Redfish can be duped by a wide variety of fly offerings. Poppers and gurglers are ideal in low-light conditions, because reds are keying on large finger mullet. Retrieve gurglers faster than poppers. After the topwater bite ends, an large baitfish pattern that pushes a lot of water will work, with an Enrico Puglisi Rattle Mullet being a favorite, retrieved in long, slow, steady strips. Best colors are black/purple and purple/gold. The mouth of deeper creeks are good spots to dredge with heavy Clouser minnows in white, chartreuse and pink. Use 9- to 10-foot fly rods in 8- to 10-weight with weight-forward, floating line and tapered leaders between 7½ and 9 feet. For deeper water, go with an intermediate sinking line with a 4- to 5-foot leader. Leaders should be in the 20- to 25-pound class.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — Jeff Lattig, Living Waters Guide Service, 843-997-4655, www.livingwaterguide.com. See also Guides & Charters in Classifieds.

ACCOMMODATIONS — Hampton Inn, Georgetown, 843-545-5000; Georgetown Area Visitors Center, www.visitgeorgetown.com; Myrtle Beach Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, www.mbchamber.com.

MAPS — Navionics, 800-848-5896, www.navionics.com; Capt. Segull's Nautical Charts, 888-473-4855, www.captain-segullcharts.com; Delorme S.C. Atlas and Gazetteer, 800-561-5105, www.delorme.com.

South Carolina is a southern jewel that permits anglers to chase their passion 365 days per year, from freezing Februarys to sizzling summer days. It's those hot, August days that green-light anglers to target redfish around Georgetown, S.C., not only with traditional spinning and casting outfits, but also with fly rods and flies crafted from exotic materials.

Reds adjust to summer's heat, changing their daily routines to meet their needs, and anglers who can decipher those changes and find fish are a step ahead of the game.

Jeff Lattig of Living Water Guide Service in Pawleys Island, S.C., keeps close tabs on these fish all year, and as one of only a few licensed fly-fishing guides in the area endorsed by Orvis, he is an expert at targeting redfish with flies.

Weather and water conditions push Lattig to different areas in the waters around Georgetown, which stretch from North Inlet to Cape Romaine and Bulls Bay well to the south. The reason? redfish and baitfish respond to changes in salinity.

continues >>>

HOT TO THE FLY

After making an accurate cast, drop the tip of your fly rod and retrieve your fly with strips of various lengths and speeds.

Jeff Burleson

“Rain is a big factor in summer,” Lattig said. “When we are receiving heavy rains, we will fish closer to the inlets where less freshwater is present, and during periods of dry weather, we will fish back in the bays more.”

Redfish also battle the summer’s heat by leaving the most-extreme, shallow waters for deeper, cooler waters in the same basic areas. So instead of heading well up in tidal creeks, he’ll short-stop his travels to intercept reds in summer pinch points.

“They come out of shallow creeks when it gets hot and hold at creek mouths on an oyster point or grassy point,” Lattig said. “They can still escape dolphins but get access to cooler water. Deeper creeks and moving water typically offer cooler conditions.”

Fish will move on a dime when conditions change. Changes of just a degree or two in water temperature can make a big difference.

“We traditionally get an early start in the summer and fish at first light. The water is a little cooler in the mornings, and the fish will turn on to feed at first light,” he said.

Lattig begins his day with topwater offerings because the low light can set the stage for surface-feeding opportunities, especially when the tide is low and the fish are congregated around oyster bars close to creek mouths.

"Poppers and gurglers are the flies we begin with," he said. "We cast to fish on oyster points at the creek mouths and on the grass edges. We fish the poppers with a stop-and-go retrieve but will keep the gurglers moving a little more. They need it working more than a popper, but they will crush them just like a traditional Spook."

Lattig prefers to target reds around creek mouths on the low end of the tide, but he will venture back up the creeks as the tide begins to rise.

"On an incoming tide, you get a little temperature drop with some added clarity, too. These fish will work their way back up the creek following the bait and set up in the little, shallow ponds with broken grass," he said.

During this sequence, Lattig will switch to subsurface flies that imitate larger finger mullet.

"Reds are keyed on finger mullet," he said. "I like larger-patterned flies on 2/0 hooks with a large profile that push more water, like a kinky muddler or any type of baitfish profile with some bulk to it. Spun deer hair (flies) with

some bulk that move some water are my favorites.

"I tie a lot of my own patterns, but it's hard to beat Enrico Puglisi Rattle Mullet. It has EP fibers, glass rattles and is just a meaty fly that is just what you need in these shallow ponds," he said.

Lattig isn't immune to traditional dredging techniques, either. When fish congregate in deeper pools and creek mouths at low tide, he will switch to an intermediate, sinking line and dredge heavy Clouser minnows with big, dumbbell eyes, bouncing them off the shell bottoms to trigger a strike.

"I like to cast upcurrent and let it float or sink downstream, and then strip it back," he said "It's a fantastic technique to energize reds in these holes and can wake up a speckled trout as well," he said. ■

HANDLE SUMMER REDS WITH CARE

UP NEXT >



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.

SUMMER REDS: HANDLE WITH CARE

Summer can offer fantastic fishing along the coast, from inshore players to offshore giants, but the hot water adds a new variable to consider, especially inshore on favorites such as speckled trout and redfish. Fish are more susceptible to injury in summer waters, especially in South Carolina, where inshore water temperatures can approach 90 degrees.

As water temperatures climb, fish become less durable. Anglers can still participate in catch-and-release fishing, but fish need to be retrieved quickly and

returned swiftly to the water.

Guide Jeff Lattig of Living Water Guide Service in Pawleys Island, S.C., specializes in targeting redfish with fly tackle. And releasing healthy fish is a major part of his daily regimen.

"We practice catch-and-release fishing for redfish," Lattig said. "To start off with, we use stout gear to get them in quickly."

Lattig typically use an 8- or 9-weight rod for redfish and heavy, 20- to 25-pound, tapered leaders. The heavy tackle allows his anglers to make a good hookset and get the fish into the boat as quickly as possible.

Additionally, Lattig recommends wetting

your hands before handling a fish and getting the fish back in the water as soon as possible to reduce stress.

Overworking a fish on the end of the line and in the boat during hot conditions can be a death sentence more ways than one. Not only can the added stress lead to death, the stressed fish can be very susceptible to predation from sharks and porpoises, especially when these fish are caught in deeper pools and places where larger predators exist. A 22-inch redfish would be nothing less than prime rib for a bull shark. ■

Get a summer redfish into the boat quickly and back into the water just as quickly to insure successful catch-and-release.



Jeff Burleson

Black drum provide plenty of August action for anglers of all ages on North Carolina's New River.

DRUM UP SOME AUGUST ACTION

New River black drum are perfect targets for summer fun, especially for kids



Craig Holt

Many southern youths were introduced to fishing by a relative or older friend at farm ponds or small streams, usually at around 5 or 6 years of age. The kids used easy-to-handle cane poles with cork floats, bobbers and red wigglers on tiny hooks to catch feisty bluegills, shellcrackers or sunfish, an experience that left many hooked for a lifetime.

But what if, instead of weighing a pound or less, their catches had weighed 2, 5, 20, 30, even 50 pounds?

Welcome to Ricky Kellum's world, where he hooks kids on fishing by targeting black drum in North Carolina's New River.

While Kellum, a guide based in Jacksonville, N.C., is best known for putting his clients on big speckled trout, his biggest satisfaction comes from hooking up youngsters to juvenile black drum.

"Any bridge pilings hold 'em," said Kellum (910-330-2745). "Black drum go there because crabs like pilings. Actually, we catch as many sheepshead as we do black drum at bridges. But where I fish depends on the tide and water depth. If you hit one in the early morning on a tide change, you can really catch 'em."

Kellum said a falling tide is best and 15 feet of water is prime. Average black drum weigh from 2 to 15 pounds, but some behemoths are around.

Baits may be live — shrimp and fiddler crabs — or dead: sand fleas boiled 30 seconds then frozen for later use.

"I mostly use live, white shrimp because they're easy to catch and drum love 'em," Kellum said, "but I'd rather use fiddler crabs because little fish stay off 'em."

Kellum's tackle includes a 7-foot, medium-action spinning rod mated to a 4000 Series Daiwa reel spooled with 30-pound braid,

a 1½- to 2-ounce barrel weight, 2 feet of 40-pound monofilament leader and a No. 2 Owner Octopus hook.

"I want the weight to go to the bottom, no matter how strong the current is, then you just lift the weight barely off the bottom," said Kellum, who prefers fairly heavy tackle to keep drum from wrapping line around pilings or to handle a huge fish — like the state-record that Sanford's Charles Dycus caught around a dock near Southport in 1998: 100 pounds, 1 ounce.

But sometimes, black drum eschew structure because of meandering food sources.

"We have a lot of white shrimp in the river some years," Kellum said. "Once I saw a school pushing water on a flat and thought they were red drum, so I threw a topwater lure over there and they ignored it. So I put a live shrimp below a popping cork and cast to the school; it was on then, son."

Kellum had actually seen a school of black drum in shallow water attacking shrimp. When the bite is hot, these fish will slam a bait multiple times.

"You can catch a limit in just a little while," he said. "They're easy to catch like that."

North Carolina manages black drum with a 10-fish daily creel limit and a 15- to 25-inch slot limit, with only one fish longer than 25 inches allowed per day.

Fish weighing 5 to 6 pounds are best for the table, Kellum said, because bigger fish — normally those weighing more than 15 pounds — have parasitic saltwater worms in their meat. ■

— Craig Holt



Making your bait look like the predominant baitfish in an area — but just a little different — can result in much better catches of predators like this king mackerel.

MATCHING THE HATCH — SORT OF

HOW TO MAKE YOUR BAIT STAND OUT IN A CROWD



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.

If you've ever watched a fishing show, attended a fishing seminar, or watched a pro angler talk about winning a tournament, you've heard the term "match the hatch."

It simply means using lures or bait that resembles the baitfish by which your target species is currently surrounded. It makes sense, but it also begs the question, "How will my lure appeal to the fish if it looks just like all the natural bait around it?"

That's a good point, too. You want your lure to stand out. Otherwise, what will lead a fish to strike it over all the other baitfish around? Scott Parsons of King Mackerel Tackle in Raleigh, N.C., said it's possible to do both — match the hatch, and make your lure or bait stand out. He said it's all in how you present it.

Parsons does a lot of king mackerel fishing and makes custom tackle for himself and as part of his business. He usually fishes from a boat, but he got his start with kings while fishing from piers. Before long, he was "that guy" who was catching more kings than other anglers.

"You get out on the end of the pier when the king mackerel are running, and you're standing elbow to elbow with other guys using the same rigs and the same bait you're using," he said. "It's a lot of just hoping yours is the one the next king mackerel will happen to hit."

But Parsons quickly realized that if he could make his bait stand out, he'd

increase his chances. And he did that by doing just one thing different than the other anglers around him.

"If they were all fishing with heavy weights to keep their baits down, I'd fish my bait on the surface, or at least near it," he said. "If everyone else was fishing near the top, I'd fish on the bottom. If they were all fishing 40 feet off the pier, I'd cast 50 feet or 30 feet. I was doing pretty much everything everyone else was doing, but changing just one detail."

But everyone isn't fishing for king mackerel from a pier, and everyone doesn't have dozens of other anglers with whom to compare their setups. They can still, however, study the local baitfish and try to match it while still making their bait or lure more noticeable to predators.

DIFFERENT IS GOOD

If you're fishing for the inshore slam in a creek with live mud minnows, how deep are the baitfish holding? How close or far away from the shore are they staying? Are they moving at a certain speed? Making a subtle change in how you present your bait over what the local baitfish are doing will often trigger bites from fish that seem to pay little attention to a school of mud minnows swimming past.

Some anglers trim the tails on their baitfish before putting them in the water. This is especially helpful because it's matching the hatch and standing out as injured prey. It's the same baitfish that's

all around, but it's acting differently.

Using live bait or an artificial shrimp under a popping cork is another way to make your offering stand out, and it stands out in more than one way. First, that popping noise on the surface isn't happening with all the other baitfish around. And second, it's suspended and moving at a different pace than everything else that's swimming nearby.

Fishing with other anglers is helpful too, even if it's not dozens of anglers on the end of a pier. Even fishing with two or three others gives you a basis for comparison. If none of you are catching fish, then figure out what you can do different from the others. Or if you're all catching fish, but sparingly, try to determine what is triggering the strike, then do that one thing more often.

If your buddies are all using Carolina rigs, try your bait on a jighead instead. If they're all fishing on the bottom, try yours under a cork. And if all your buddies have their rods in rod holders, hold onto yours instead. The subtle action created in your hands just might trigger a strike when the fishing gets tough.

This is part of the beauty of fishing. It's more than just tossing out some bait and waiting for a strike. Matching the hatch while also standing out takes trial and error, and the answer might be different on every trip. Figure out that subtle difference that turns the bite on, and you'll catch more fish. ■

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Cellular trail cameras have changed the way hunters can approach deer season, and prices have finally come down.

CELLULAR TRAIL CAMS

HIGH-TECH DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN HIGH DOLLAR

Jeff Burleson

In today's world, technological advances are making leaps and bounds in every part of our lives. Not only is technology making everyday tasks easier and more fluid, it's becoming economical, so everyone has access to the latest.

This couldn't be any clearer than in the cellular trail-camera market, where hunters can have instant access to photos on their cell phones.

Trail cameras have revolutionized the way we deer hunt, but at a price. When they first entered the marketplace, they had a stout price tag, and the new tech was expensive to use in the form of batteries and photo finishing. Then, when cellular trail cameras arrived, the advance in technology was about as

good as it gets.

With a cellular model, hunters can set up a series of units across their hunting properties — on their food plots, trail crossings, water holes or on a hot scrape. Hunters can let them work without coming back to check them. One of the major issues with trail cameras is having to come back every week to download the images. It's an additional disturbance that has the potential to disrupt the natural movement of deer around a stand site, scrape line or food source.

The invention of the cellular system is ideal for all hunters, whether hunting behind their house or several states away. While most hunters hunt within 90 minutes of home, some hunters participate in land leases in the midwest or as

far north as Canada. The cellular system can enable hunters to get instant feedback with very little effort.

But cellular systems didn't come cheap on the front end or the back end. These cameras were not only the most-expensive units on the market, they are historically the most-expensive units to operate due to the necessity of a telephone plan for each camera or system of

continues on page 72



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.

FRESH SEED MAKES A DIFFERENCE:

Most agricultural products like fertilizer, herbicides and other soil amendments are packaged inert, so they have very long shelf lives. However, seed isn't like that at all. Seeds can be perishable and will have a much-higher germination ratio if fresh in their prime condition. All seeds can stay viable if packaged and stored for appropriately up to a year, and sometimes, certain seeds can remain viable for several years under the right conditions. The storage condition is the key. Most garden vegetables are stored in sealed packages for small-end, backyard growers. These seeds are stored in an air-tight condition and are often in controlled climate environments. They will generally stay viable well past the packaged date. On the other hand, most agriculture seeds are stored in much-larger quantities, usually in 20- to 30-pound bags that are usually not totally airtight and are stored in warehouses where the temperature and humidity is controlled by Mother Nature. Always check the date on the bag to see when the seed was packaged for the best outcome. Seed packaged after the last year's harvest will have the best germination ratio over seed several years old.



Jeff Burleson

Plant seed that's only been recently bagged; its germination rate is best when it's relatively new.

PREPARE FOR FALL PLANTING

The fall planting season is just around the corner. September through early October is when property managers begin breaking the ground and start setting the seed for their cool-season food plots. With only a few weeks left, they need to have their final plans in place, with supplies on the way.

Cool-season food plots can establish a supplemental food source for the herd, while creating a unique place to contribute to the year's harvest goals. Hunters are always looking for better places or more acreage to plant. Many have considered a list of alternatives to their current planting locations. It's time now to focus the plan, because reality is preparing to strike in a few weeks, and there's no reason to run around like a mad man at the last minute, when ample time is available long before its time to break the soil.

While many hunters own their own equipment, some don't, and it will take a little coordination to get the equipment they need when they need it. It also never hurts to do an equipment check to make sure the tractor is going to fire up when it's needed most. Engines of every kind run more effectively when used frequently. When tractors sit for several months without use, they can be fickle to get up and running.

Crank up the engine, check the PTO system for functionality and take a close look at every accessory to ensure they are in

continues on page 72



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cameras. Most monthly plans started at \$30 and went up from there. Cellular plans have always been expensive for a personal phone, and it took deep pockets to afford multiple phone plans to operate a series of cellular trail cameras — until now.

The newer models available today have the option of setting up a monthly plan service or a pay-as-you-use service. Spypoint is one of the premier cellular trail-camera companies, and it offers very inexpensive cameras and flexible monitoring rates that hunters of every economical background can afford.

Spypoint offers the most-flexible data plans imaginable, on a monthly or annual basis without any activation fees. In fact, for

100 photos per month, it is completely free. They have monthly plans at \$4 and \$7; the most expensive is \$15 when on month-to-month or \$10 per month for an annual contract.

In 2019, Spypoint came out with the Link-Micro, the smallest and most-affordable cellular trail-camera system currently on the market.

Not only have trail cameras drastically decreased in price, cellular systems are now very affordable and the perfect option for hunters hunting operating locally or a long way from home. ■

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PREPARE FOR FALL PLANTING CONTINUED

good working condition. If repairs or maintenance are required, it's better to work on these tasks today than on Oct. 1 when planting season is well underway.

Hunters can't plant food plots without seed and fertilizer. Develop a final seed and fertilizer budget and plan. Each food-plot site will need a prescribed amount of product, and it's time to figure out how much and how many bags of each product is needed to meet the goals of the plot plan.

Hunters should go ahead and procure their seed for fall plantings now to prevent any last-minute scavenging for certain seed mixes that are in high demand. Seeds don't always have extended shelf lives, and they will be available in select quantities over many other types of farming products.

Fertilizer is not normally as hard to acquire as some seeds. However, it would be sensible to locate a source for the fertilizer and maybe add a backup location in case the primary source sells out. ■

SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY

Phillip Gentry

Striped bass and hybrids are a couple of species that can be caught trolling from kayaks or other paddlecraft. **BELOW:** Placement of rod-holders around a kayak can spread out baits to be trolled.

PADDLE UP A TROLL

TIPS FOR PRESENTING MOVING BAITS FROM KAYAKS

Phillip Gentry

The sport of kayak fishing has grown by leaps and bounds over the last decade. The phenomenon covers beginning anglers, anglers moving from fiberglass or aluminum power boats to plastic, as well as anglers who just want to expand how and where they fish.

Overwhelmingly, most anglers fish with one rod at a time when kayak angling. These anglers may carry a dozen or more pre-rigged rods with them but switch from one rod to the other when fishing.

Multiple rod fishing tactics are more common in power boats, where there is plenty of room to affix rod holders around the boat and utilize an electric trolling motor to propel the boat, but multiple rod, trolling tactics from a kayak are not out of the question.

While it takes a little more advance planning and different skill set, trolling from a kayak is a growing trend among the plastic fleet of anglers. The advance planning is in the form of configuring rod holder set ups along the sides or less preferably in the rear of the boat. The

planning should also include allowing enough room for the paddle stroke if trolling is to be done from a paddle-propelled boat.

It is somewhat easier to troll from a pedal-propelled kayak as pedaling with the legs leaves both hands free for steering and setting/adjusting rods and reeling in fish and propels the boat from underneath. In either scenario, it is preferable to place trolling rods where the angler can at least view the rod tip without having to turn around in the boat. It is much simpler to use one rod on each side, but as confidence and skill increase, so can the number of rod holders and rods along the gunnels of the kayak.

The other option is to attach an electric trolling motor to your kayak and let the motor do the work of propelling the boat. Space and weight considerations have to be made for storing and transporting a battery in your planning and boat set up. Rod holder placement would remain relatively the same. ■

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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.

HOW TO KAYAK TROLL

Once you have your kayak set up for trolling, the technique isn't that difficult, just different. The entire boat becomes the retrieve, whereas, when casting, you impart action with only the rod.

Trolling artificial baits is easier than trolling live bait because you don't have to bait the hook. Start by putting the rods in the rod holders before the boat starts moving. If using more than one rod per side, position the front rods higher than the back so the lines are clear and the rods won't collide when a fish hits.

Longer rods in front and shorter rods in back is also a good idea, as this spreads the baits out.

Start moving the boat forward and gain momentum before putting the first line in the water. Vary the amount of line out between rods. If you are trolling the front rod 40 feet behind the boat, set the next rod(s) at 20-foot intervals. You'll have to let line out, paddle, then let line more line out between strokes.

Floating/diving baits are easiest to troll as they will rise if/when the boat stops versus sinking. Trolling with rigs designed to be on the bottom, like a flounder or catfish rig, is also not bad because these rigs keep the hook off the bottom.

Don't expect your trolling speed to be consistent unless you are using a variable-speed electric trolling motor. You can monitor your paddle, pedal or trolling speed using a depthfinder/GPS combo that reads in tenths of a mph. Preferred live-bait trolling speeds are less than 1 mph, while artificial bait trolling speeds can be as much as 3 miles per hour.

If using human power to maintain that speed, you are definitely in for cardio exercise, so you want to make sure you are in proper physical condition before heading out on an extended trip trolling from a kayak. ■

BEST BETS

NORTH CAROLINA

WHAT — Flounder

WHERE — Swansboro

HOW — Ocean flounder will push into inlets around Swansboro when the water gets hot. Target these and other "resident" flounder by trolling large live baitfish —mullet, croaker, pinfish — on a flounder rig around structure on the incoming tide.

LAUNCH — Hammocks Beach State Park (910-326-4881) has a designated kayak launch.

INSIDER TIP — Setting the hook on trolled flounder is a whole different world in a kayak than in a powerboat. Usually by the time you think you have a bite, he's already hooked up.

SOUTH CAROLINA

WHAT — Striped bass, white perch

WHERE — Lake Wateree

HOW — These fish love to chase baitfish on the surface on late summer evenings. Trolling shallow- to medium-diving crankbaits is a great way to locate and catch them. Target the main lake or the mouths of major tributaries. You can't beat a white, silver or shad-colored Bandit 200/300 crankbait.

LAUNCH — Wateree State Park is centrally located with access to the main lake and several feeder creeks. Call 803-482-6401.

INSIDER TIP — Don't let an afternoon thunderstorm keep you off the lake. Hit the water as soon as the storm clears. The recreational traffic will be gone, and the passing front tends to activate surface feeding.



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SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY

continued

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The trolling motor comes with a 3-blade prop, balancing efficiency and power for optimal performance. The trolling motor is powered by a 12-volt, deep cycle or marine battery.

Made with zinc, aluminum, and stainless steel components, the trolling motor is dependable in saltwater. The composite shaft is guaranteed for life, is very strong and offers optimal depth range for most kayaks, canoes and more.

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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).

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

AVAILABLE PRODUCTS:

The 2019 PrimeTimes Wall Calendar. \$13.95 (plus \$4 s&h). Know the best days, best times, and their relative strengths for all of 2019 with this information-packed, full-color, 11-inch by 17-inch, graphic peaks

and-valleys forecaster. Includes rise and set times for the sun and moon, space to log your catches, "Timely Tips," plus fish and game symbols showing you each month's don't-miss periods. Also includes exclusive summary charts revealing the best and worst days of 2019, the year's best periods, a look ahead at 2020, and more. Comes with FREE 2019 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for \$8.95, plus \$3 s&h.

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

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2019 AUG	BEST DAYS				LUNAR PERIODS				MOON PHASE
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL. VALUE	MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
Thu 1	██	██	██	83	6:47 am	12:23 pm - 3:35 pm ☀	9:03 pm	Midnight - 3:04 am	☉
Fri 2	██	██	██	71	7:59 am	1:27 pm - 4:27 pm	9:47 pm	12:48 am - 4:00 am	☾ Perigee
Sat 3	██	██	██	57	9:11 am	2:32 pm - 5:14 pm	10:26 pm	1:52 am - 4:52 am	☾
Sun 4	██	██	██	48	10:22 am	3:35 pm - 5:57 pm	11:02 pm	2:57 am - 5:39 am	☾
Mon 5	██	██	██	44	11:30 am	4:36 pm - 6:38 pm	11:36 pm	4:00 am - 6:22 am	☾
Tue 6	██	██	██	45	12:36 pm	5:34 pm - 7:20 pm		5:01 am - 7:03 am ☀	☾
Wed 7	██	██	██	52	1:41 pm	6:33 pm - 8:01 pm	12:11 am	5:59 am - 7:45 am ☀	☾ HALF
Thu 8	██	██	██	39	2:45 pm	7:30 pm - 8:46 pm ☀	12:47 am	6:58 am - 8:26 am ☀	☾
Fri 9	██	██	██	31	3:46 pm	8:26 pm - 9:32 pm ☀	1:26 am	7:55 am - 9:11 am	☾
Sat 10	██	██	██	29	4:44 pm	9:21 pm - 10:19 pm	2:08 am	8:51 am - 9:57 am	☾
Sun 11	██	██	██	27	5:39 pm	10:13 pm - 11:11 pm	2:55 am	9:46 am - 10:44 am	☾ LOW
Mon 12	██	██	██	36	6:29 pm	11:04 pm - 12:02 am	3:45 am	10:38 am - 11:36 am	☾
Tue 13	██	██	██	46	7:13 pm	11:49 pm - Midnight	4:38 am	11:29 am - 12:27 pm	☾
Wed 14	██	██	██	55	7:53 pm	Midnight - 12:55 am	5:33 am	12:14 pm - 1:20 pm ☀	☾
Thu 15	██	██	██	60	8:28 pm	12:33 am - 1:45 am	6:29 am	12:58 pm - 2:10 pm	☾ FULL
Fri 16	██	██	██	52	9:00 pm	1:11 am - 2:37 am	7:25 am	1:36 pm - 3:02 pm	☾
Sat 17	██	██	██	44	9:30 pm	1:48 am - 3:26 am	8:20 am	2:13 pm - 3:51 pm	☾ Apogee
Sun 18	██	██	██	37	9:58 pm	2:23 am - 4:15 am	9:15 am	2:48 pm - 4:40 pm	☾
Mon 19	██	██	██	35	10:26 pm	2:56 am - 5:04 am	10:09 am	3:21 pm - 5:29 pm	☾
Tue 20	██	██	██	38	10:54 pm	3:31 am - 5:53 am	11:04 am	3:56 pm - 6:18 pm	☾
Wed 21	██	██	██	41	11:25 pm	4:04 am - 6:44 am	12:01 pm	4:29 pm - 7:09 pm	☾
Thu 22	██	██	██	50	11:59 pm	4:40 am - 7:36 am ☀	12:58 pm	5:05 pm - 8:01 pm	☾
Fri 23	██	██	██	63		5:22 am - 8:28 am ☀	1:58 pm	5:47 pm - 8:53 pm ☀	☾ HALF
Sat 24	██	██	██	56	12:37 am	6:05 am - 9:25 am ☀	2:59 pm	6:30 pm - 9:50 pm ☀	☾
Sun 25	██	██	██	53	1:22 am	6:57 am - 10:23 am	4:01 pm	7:22 pm - 10:48 pm	☾
Mon 26	██	██	██	54	2:14 am	7:53 am - 11:23 am	5:02 pm	8:18 pm - 11:48 pm	☾ HIGH
Tue 27	██	██	██	64	3:14 am	8:55 am - 12:21 pm	5:59 pm	9:20 pm - 12:46 pm	☾
Wed 28	██	██	██	74	4:22 am	9:59 am - 1:19 pm	6:50 pm	10:24 pm - 1:44 am	☾
Thu 29	██	██	██	83	5:33 am	11:06 am - 2:12 pm ☀	7:37 pm	11:31 pm - Midnight	☾
Fri 30	██	██	██	86	6:47 am	12:12 pm - 3:02 pm ☀	8:18 pm	Midnight - 2:37 am	☾ NEW & PERIGEE
Sat 31	██	██	██	72	8:00 am	1:17 pm - 3:49 pm	8:56 pm	12:37 am - 3:27 am	☾

25 50 75
AVERAGE

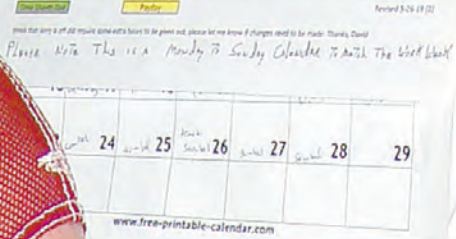
ANY LUNAR PERIOD IS ENHANCED WHEN IT OVERLAPS A KEY SOLAR PERIOD. THE BEST OF THESE OVERLAPS ARE DESIGNATED BY THE SUN SYMBOLS:
☀ = DAWN ☀ = HIGH NOON ☀ = DUSK
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COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver



FLOUNDER WITHOUT FRYING

THIS UNUSUAL RECIPE WILL HAVE YOU ASKING FOR MORE

August is the hottest month for sportsmen in the Carolinas. Fishing has been good all summer, but being smart rather than bold helps keep fishermen a bit cooler. Being the early bird is a good recipe for fishing success until a few cool mornings roll by in September and you can enjoy them in the shade or air conditioning once the day heats fully.

Meanwhile, hunters are stirring, and the whoosh of arrows splits the air in some places, while the boom of shotguns and acrid smell of gunpowder gets hunters fired up in others. South Carolina hunters get a bit of a head start as several hunting zones have an August start on deer season. Also, Palmetto State fishermen aren't expecting their flounder season to close in late August.

With North Carolina's archery season not starting until Sept. 7, sportsmen can spend lots of time stocking their freezer with flounder before the anticipated season closing. Because it's hot, they should appreciate this recipe that keeps them in the air conditioning.

This is a tasty and simple recipe for preparing flounder other than frying it. Some folks think flatfish should only be dredged through a bowl of seafood breader and dropped in a pan of 350-degree peanut oil, but this might change their minds. This recipe is about as simple as cooking gets and is a bit healthier than frying. It uses whole flounder, so they are easy to clean too. If you prefer simple recipes, this is one you should enjoy preparing



and eating.

Catching the guest of honor yourself is what makes this recipe special. In August, flounder are spread from the backs of creeks, across coastal bays to nearshore rocks, shipwrecks and artificial reefs. Flounder are chewing, too, especially later in the month after a couple of cool mornings and the finger mullet begin heading towards the ocean. One of those finger mullet pegged on a Carolina rig should attract a healthy flatfish. ■



Scoring a whole flounder with a knife allows the sauce to better penetrate the meat.
INSETS: Adding the mixture of butter, parmesan cheese, lemon juice and mayonnaise.

BROILED FLOUNDER WITH BUTTERY PARMESEAN SAUCE

I realize many folks consider me a little off-kilter since I freely admit that flounder aren't one of my favorite fish. They're okay, but I prefer fish with a more-robust flavor. Don't think I don't eat them; I do, but I look at things to add or bring out flavor and this is one of those recipes. It isn't strong or spicy, but steps up the mild flavor of flounder so even a old sea dog like me enjoys it.

I don't remember who gave me this recipe; it might have been one of our Alaskan friends offering a way to cook halibut without drying it out. It worked there, and the mixture has a good taste, so I began looking for other fish to use it on. Flounder look the most like halibut, just a whole lot smaller, and they have a similar mild taste, so they were the first we tried. It worked too.

Even small halibut fillets are thick, so we decided to try it with whole, pan-size flounder; It would probably also work well with fillets from a larger flounder. We score the flounder to give the sauce places to penetrate. My wife and I have different preferences for lemon in recipes, and we settled on two tablespoons as a medium flavor. You can add a little or use less to suit your personal tastes. Two tablespoons also happens to be about what you get from a fresh lemon. Warming the lemon for 20 to 25 seconds in a microwave helps get its juices flowing and makes it easier to get the juice.

PREPARATION:

Scale the flounder and remove internals, head and tail. Score the dark side of the flounder several times, both vertically and lengthwise. Score the white side of the flounder a couple of times vertically and horizontally.

Cover a baking or cookie pan with aluminum foil and spray with non stick spray. Preheat the oven to broil. Place the flounder on the foil in the pan, dark side up. Broil the flounder on a middle rack for 6 to 8 minutes until it is beginning to flake.

Remove flounder from oven. Spoon on and spread the buttery parmesan sauce well on the dark side of the flounder. Sprinkle or grind black pepper on the flounder. Return the flounder to the oven and broil for approximately 1 to 2 minutes, or until the buttery cheese sauce begins to brown.

Remove the flounder from the oven and allow to set for a couple of minutes. Serve the flounder while it is still warm and the buttery cheese sauce is soft.

This is a light summer meal that can easily be prepared inside, in the air conditioning, during the hottest part of the summer. It uses the mild flavor of flounder for its base

If you would prefer to add the pepper in the sauce, feel free to do it. Begin with a half teaspoon and add it slowly. I like to add it on top of the sauce so I can see how much I'm adding. I think it gives a better visual presentation this way too. I don't use any salt, but some folks don't eat without it. My suggestion is to try some sea salt or Himalayan salt in a grinder.

The cheese sauce is mild and can't be added until the flounder is almost cooked. It will brown quickly and scorch if left unchecked for very long. This is the only real diligent part of this recipe, and it passes quickly. Keep a close watch, and as soon as the sauce begins to brown, remove the flounder from the oven. It will go from browning to scorched very quickly, so pay attention for this step.

With the flounder out, give it a minute or two for its juices to stabilize and serve it while it's hot. Enjoy! ■

INGREDIENTS:

1 whole flounder (approximately 2-3 pounds)

¼ cup softened butter

½ cup grated parmesan cheese

3 tbsp mayonnaise

2 tbsp fresh squeezed lemon juice

Coarse ground black pepper

Buttery flavor, non-stick cooking spray

Aluminum foil



The finished flounder is a delight to behold and eat.

Jerry Dilsaver

and adds a little zip with the butter, lemon and pepper, but it does not approach spicy. This was served with some baked mushrooms and onions and a combination of fresh green beans and asparagus. Chilled rice pudding is an excellent dessert. ■



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

HEAD FOR THE MOUNTAINS

Robert Satterwhite

Fish backcountry streams during hot weather. Their shoreline shade will keep water temperatures as low as you will find.

TIPS FOR TROUT IN HOT WEATHER

GO EARLY, GO LATE, GET OFF THE BEATEN PATH AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SHADE

Bob Satterwhite

George Gershwin didn't write, "Summertime, and the fishing ain't easy," but he wasn't far off, and in August, usually the hottest month of the year, fishing conditions are far from ideal. Water temperatures are higher, trout are less active, and hatches are minimal.

A successful, hot-weather trout-fishing outing depends on three factors: when you fish, where you fish and how you fish.

Early morning from first light to 10 a.m. is the best time because the water has had adequate time to cool overnight. Streams heat up quickly when outside temperatures hover in the high 80s and low 90s, and when water temperatures reach the high 60s, trout seldom feed. Ideally, water temperatures should be in the mid- to high 50s. Carry a thermometer and check the water often.

Fish small, backcountry waters that have abundant cover. These streams usually have the lowest water temperatures, even during the hottest part of the day, and they can be fished all day. Save the large streams for late-evening fishing.

Cast close to banks, under low-hanging mountain laurel and rhododendron bushes. You'll lose a few flies and spend an inordinate amount of precious fishing

time getting line and flies out of bushes, but that's part of the experience.

FIND THE BUBBLY

Fish ripples, plunge pools and back eddies behind rocks. Oxygen levels are higher in places that have bubbly, white water, especially pools below ledges and waterfalls. Let a fly drop naturally into bubbly water or let it drift through riffles. Look for small tributaries that feed cooler water into the main stream. Think like a trout, and then fish the areas you'd prefer to be in the heat of the day.

Use long leaders, up to 9 feet, with 5X or 6X tippet. With long leaders, you can hit every spot you think that might hold a trout. Keep a low profile and fish upstream so that trout are less likely to see you coming. If you see a fish dart when you move in the water, forget about that particular stretch of water. No amount of coaxing will result in a strike. Learn your lesson and move on to the next stretch.

Hatches are limited in August, but sporadic hatches do occur, especially in late evening. Blue-Winged Olive, female or male Adams (winged or parachute), Light Cahill, Tan Caddis, and parachute Pheasant Tail in Nos. 18 to 16 are sug-

gested patterns. Gray, brown or black midges in Nos. 24 to 22 also are good summer patterns.

FISH NYMPHS DEEP

Nymphs can be used all day and are especially effective for deep pools. Suggested nymph patterns for this time of the year are Secret Weapon, Sheep Fly, Pheasant Tail (nymph or emerger), yellow Tellico and Stone Fly.

Use a weighted nymph and let it bump along the bottom of a pool where trout are likely holding. To better detect strikes, use a strike indicator. A piece of yarn or patch of cotton attached to the leader works just as well as a commercial strike indicator. Watch the indicator as it floats. If it hesitates or moves to one side or the other, raise the tip of your rod; you've likely had a strike.

Dry flies also make excellent strike indicators, especially a yellow Stimulator or similar attractor patterns. Occasionally,



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 Tuckasee River, Caney Fork, Moses Creek, and several other prime trout streams.

a trout will hit the dry fly instead of the nymph. When using a dry fly as a strike indicator, use a section of leader and tie the nymph onto the shank of the main hook. If the stream is shallow, the dropper should hang about six inches below the dry fly, 12 inches for deeper water. The nymph should be small enough so that it doesn't drag the dry fly down. If you're using a No. 14 or No. 16 nymph, for example, use a No. 12 or larger dry fly.



IF IT'S BROWN, IT'S DOWN:

Mark Hipp

Look for midsummer brown trout to be in deeper pools of well-oxygenated water, then fish a nymph or streamer and get it down to the bottom where the reclusive fish are holding.

**TERRESTRIALS
ROCK**

Terrestrials such as ants, beetles, crickets, grasshoppers, caterpillars, inch-worms and bees are a constant and substantial summer food source for trout. They can be used all day, and they can be fished either wet or dry.

Thunderstorms are a natural part of summer in the mountains. Usually, though, they come in fast and end quickly. If you hear thunder, move off the stream.

Water is no place to be when lightning is flashing. Also, water levels can rise to dangerous levels very quickly.

After the storm passes, water will be dingy for a short time, especially on high-gradient streams. This is an ideal time to switch to streamers: Woolly Buggers, Muddler Minnow, Dace and other patterns that imitate swimming aquatic life. Streamers also work very well in deep

pools, places where big brown trout are more likely to be. Strip streamers through the water or let them float in a current. Strikes are less frequent on streamers, but when you get a strike, it's usually a big fish.

Trout fishing is a year-round pursuit in the hot days of summer or in the dead of winter. Just as trout adapt to weather conditions, the trout fisher also must adapt. ■



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Don't Wait...Let Us Tune Up Your Bow Before The Rush!

SPECKLED TRUTH

Chris Bush

Logging in your catches will help determine which lure were your most productive, and under which circumstances.

TAKE INVENTORY OF SUCCESS, FAILURE

WHAT LURES WORKED FOR YOU AND WHEN? KEEP THEM AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Christopher Bush

Fishing is a cyclical process, and those who are consistently successful understand that process. What it often boils down to is figuring out the pattern, in a certain time of year, and dialing in presentation through lure selection. As I do most every year, I take off during the heat of the summer. What often ensues is a bit of preparation for the next winter's wading season, but also a time of reflection. During this time, I look at the lures in my wade boxes and consider why they were successful. Here is a summary of what I noticed to hopefully help you prepare for the latter months of the year.

• **MirrOlure MirrOdine (17 MR), MirrOdine XL (27 MR).** These baits consistently produced throughout the year. I've thrown them in all four seasons and they have easily become a confidence bait. January and February were really good months for me, then it slacked off, only to pick back up in the end of May and into June. The colors that were most successful were: greenback (18), pink/chartreuse speckled trout (C17MR-ECTR) and blue back/silver sides white belly (27MR-EB).

• **MirrOlure SoftDine, Custom Corky**

SoftDine XL. When searching for a slightly more-subtle presentation with less flash than a MirrOdine, I've found the SoftDine a fantastic alternative. Like the MirrOdine, this bait provides the capability to produce in all seasons and does so for me regularly. My top producing colors were: bayou/green back (49), pink/silver (08) and chartreuse/silver white belly (91). In addition, when searching for larger bites with larger bait present, primarily mullet, I'll throw the SoftDine XL. My confidence colors stay in line with the first three, except I love two custom colors in Custom Corkys: bay mistress and double bubble.

• **Rapala Shadow Rap Shad, Shadow Rap.** Similar in functionality and fishability, these two baits were incredibly effective on big fish from December to February. The long, exaggerated pause I would employ simply drove the big fish crazy during colder temperatures or days with a slight warming trend. As we moved into spring, these baits lost some of its effectiveness, but they have produced for me on a year-round basis. My favorite colors in both models are blueback herring, bone, haymaker and halloween.

SOFT PLASTICS

Last but not least, the unending versatility of having soft plastics in the box. Slowly but surely, I'm throwing larger profiles, but I haven't completely dismissed smaller (under 4 inches) soft plastics from my arsenal. For smaller profiles, I've found that a NED Rig (Owner Blockhead and ZMan Finesse TRD) can be super productive. For more traditional-style swimbaits, Matrix Shad, Down South Lures or the Slayer Inc. SST on a round or aspirin-style jighead produce year-round and simply produce bites. These can be great search baits; once you find the fish, upsize or switch techniques to entice the larger fish.

On the larger side of the soft-plastic spectrum, I've found that the KWigglers BTS (Ball Tail Shad) to also be super productive. Paired with a lighter jighead, this bait and profile gives a distinct glide



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*.



The author's favorites include Paul Brown Fat Boys (top), a variety of soft plastics (middle) and Mirrodines (above).

that allows you to fish shallower more efficiently. Another large, soft-plastic bait that perpetually produces is the 6-inch Flap'n Shad from Gambler. These can be effective on a traditional jighead or a leadbelly swimbait hook. The elongated profile and pliability allow you to present a bait with tremendous action. The only down side is they are softer, and as a result, they only last a few fish. My favorite colors of the KWigglers are laguna-flauge and mansfield margarita, and my favorite colors of Flap'n Shad are coolade and night train.

FANTASTIC FATBOYS

Wow, where do I begin?! Paul Brown Fatboys are my perennial favorites and yet another way to target bigger bites. Know that these are, without a doubt, my confidence baits when it comes to targeting one big bite. Attributes like a healthy profile and an exaggerated wobble descent allows me to really pick apart an area I feel is holding larger-than-normal fish. My color selection varies widely, especially given water conditions. However, I find that Texas chicken (98), black back/silver sides/pink belly (11) and black back/gold sides/orange belly (09) are what I gravitate to the most.

So as we gear up for another full fall fishing season, I encourage you to really reflect on what has and has not been productive. Simply learning from what works and when can bolster your consistency; it may lead to a lot more success in the future.

Tight lines, God bless and remember to take what you need and release the rest. ■

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SHARK WEEK? SHARK MONTH!

Hot weather means hot fishing for a variety of shark species off South Carolina's Grand Strand.

Jeff Burleson

South Carolina's Grand Strand offers anglers a virtual *Jaws* buffet in August

August kicks off with *Shark Week*, Discovery Channel's longest-running summer series, and there is no shortage of sharks along South Carolina's Grand Strand at the peak of the summer, when baitfish are super abundant.

Anglers can target a wide variety of shark species, from 3-foot bonnetheads in the estuaries to 800-pound tigers at the nearshore reefs. Regardless of which species is on the menu, the habitats are ideal to wrestle with one of these infamous fish.

Sharks get a bad reputation because of their starring roles in the *Jaws* movie series — and the occasional human encounter along the beachfront. But they are no different than bluefish, king mackerel, dolphin and any other predator fish in the ocean. Sharks feed on fish and anything they can find to eat in the ocean. While most gamefish look before they sink their teeth into a potential meal, sharks take a bite first and see how it tastes. And that makes them easy targets for anglers.

Sharks invade the coastal region of South

Carolina in the summer to take advantage of the area's abundant groceries. The coast serves as a nursery ground for a massive collection of fish, shrimp and other marine critters. And just like a lot of other marine predators, sharks slide up to the buffet to feast.

Tom Cushman of Captain Cush Calmwater Fishing Charters out of North Myrtle Beach catches a wide variety of shark species, from blacktips and spinners nearshore to huge tigers in the bluewater.

"The sharks will be concentrated in areas where the best feeding opportunities exist," said Cushman (843-997-5850). "Fishing behind shrimp boats is an excellent way to find a concentration of sharks. Blacknose, spinners and hammerheads follow shrimp boats, waiting for the cull catch to be released. We catch them behind shrimp boats all summer."

Sharks concentrate in areas where baitfish are abundant, and when the menhaden pods are thick along the beaches, sharks will be thick in these areas.

"We float live (menhaden) around the bait pods and catch sharpnose, blacktips, spinners, hammers and more," he said.

For a different experience, Cushman will take his clients further offshore to catch some of the oversized giants, like 10-foot-plus tiger sharks and some big hammerheads.

"The wrecks and ledges offshore will always have some big sharks on them, and it can be fun to battle some real beasts," he said.

Sharks have extremely sharp teeth, and stout terminal tackle is required. Cushman recommends using a 50- to 100-pound steel leader and a 5/0 circle hook.

Cushman practices catch-and-release fishing on his shark trips.

"They are a lot of fun to catch, but we take great care to release these great creatures. There is no reason to kill them," he said. ■

— Jeff Burleson

NC REEFS PROVIDE

a good, last-chance shot for big flounder

It appears that flounder fishing will close sometime after August 22, and many fishermen are making the best of the last few weeks in a year that has been a good one for flounder in the ocean off Cape Fear, maybe even an exceptional year considering how the past few played out.

The waters off North Carolina's southeastern coast has an abundance of near-shore artificial reefs and shipwrecks, plus a fair amount of rocky outcroppings. Most have been holding flounder this spring and summer, and some have been holding a lot of flounder. There has also been a higher percentage of keeper flounder than in recent years.

Yaupon Reef (AR 425) off Oak Island is one of the state's most-popular artificial reefs. It is about 5 miles from the mouth of the Cape Fear River, but only about 1½ miles off the beach. Tom McGlammer Reef (AR 420), 1½ miles farther offshore, and the Jim Knight Reef (AR 330), a few

miles west, complete the close-in reefs off Oak Island.

There are eight more nearshore artificial reefs from Wrightsville Beach to Ocean Isle Beach. The locations and layout of these reefs are available on the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries website, www.ncdmf.net. The Jim Caudle Reef is barely across the S.C. line out of Little River Inlet and is fished pretty heavily by fishermen from Ocean Isle and Sunset beaches.

This area was a hotbed of blockade-runner activity during the Civil War, and numerous blockade runner wrecks are scattered along the beaches and around shallow inlets. Along with a few, scattered rock outcroppings, some flounder prefer them to the man-made flounder habitat.

Fishermen target ocean flounder in two ways. One technique uses live baits fished on the bottom. The second is vertical jigging, pioneered by the late Jimmy Price, a longtime Southport guide. It involves using a bucktail jig and trailer that is



Jon Hall, an officer with the N.C. Marine Patrol, caught this 22-inch flounder around an artificial reef off Oak Island on one of his day-off fishing trips.

Jerry Dilsaver

jigged vertically a foot or so above the bottom and falls back to the bottom. This technique is productive, sometimes even more effective than using live baits.

The primary live-bait rig is a Carolina rig. Price made it heavier, with 30-pound mono or fluorocarbon instead of 20, to handle the abrasion from all the structure. He also used a short leader to prevent the bait from hiding in the structure. ■

— Jerry Dilsaver

MURRAY STRIPERS

go for cool, deep water in August's heat

South Carolina summers are famously hot, and by August, the thought of a cool dip in the lake can be little more than a dream. As a result, fishing can get tough, but fish can still be caught.

William Attaway's guide strategy for August stripers on South Carolina's Lake Murray includes this: fish early or late, fish deep and don't kill your bait.

"By August, it gets tough to catch stripers, but you can usually find them around main-lake humps and in the deep water next to the river channel," said Attaway (803-924-0857). "That way, they can run up on the humps and feed."

Attaway he will target underwater humps from 40 to 70 feet deep this month, fishing live blueback herring on down rods.

"You need to locate fish on the graph, but if you can't find them, it doesn't hurt to look for a good hump, then put the baits down and sit on it for a good 15 to 20 minutes," he said. "The fish are on the move all the time, and they could move up to feed. If nothing happens in 20 minutes or so, pull in the rods and go find another hump."

The key is getting the bait to the deeper level quickly, he said. "I like a 2-ounce weight, sometimes even a little bigger," he said. "Don't play around, and don't let the herring swim around on top of the water. The water on top is going to be almost 90 degrees, and it doesn't take long to kill a herring coming out of 60-degree



Guide William Attaway targets main-lake humps and channel drops for August stripers on Lake Murray.

Pat Robertson

water in your tank."

If the fish are not taking the herring, Attaway said he will usually tie on a spoon.

"Jig deep with a flutter spoon," he said. "In the heat, flutter spoons will often produce fish when they won't take live bait."

Attaway said the best times to fish are early morning until 10 a.m. and from 5 p.m. to dark.

"One thing about fishing late in the day is that sometimes the fish will come up schooling," he said. "You can throw about anything to them, bucktails or topwater like a Zara Spook, and catch them." ■

— Pat Robertson

COOL-DOWN COMING? High Rock striper anglers expect good bite

Jerry Hill of Triad Fishing and Guide Service in Lexington, N.C., said the striper fishing at High Rock Lake is pretty slow for most of August, but a slight cool-down near the end of the month often triggers the bite.

"During the last week of August, water temperatures cool down some, and the striper action picks up," said Hill (336-247-1265).

"Last year, the bite didn't really begin until early September, so fishermen need to keep checking for lower water temperatures."

Hill said High Rock's dingy water, caused in part by heavy rains, isn't as much of a problem as some fishermen think.

"We've had persistent rains again this season, and High Rock has been muddy most of the time," he said, "but stripers will hit in dirty water."

When the late August cool-down arrives, Hill said stripers will be suspended 12 to 16 feet down in water 24 to 28 feet deep. Likely hangouts include the mouths of Sailboat Neck and Second Creek and the main channel in Abbotts Creek. Anglers should check these places for fish and forage.

Hill slow-trolls at 2.3 to 2.5 mph with three colors of leadcore line out and downriggers set on 10 or 12, which makes his baits run 14 to 15 feet deep. He uses 30-pound line on the downriggers with a 20-pound fluorocarbon leader. His rigs employ 3/4- to



High Rock Lake is known for producing chunky striped bass from 8 to 12 pounds.

Tony Garitta

3/8-ounce green bucktail jigs with green plastic-worm trailers.

"Green on green has always worked best for me at High Rock, so why change?" Hill asked. "At times, I'll try white on white, but I mostly stay with green."

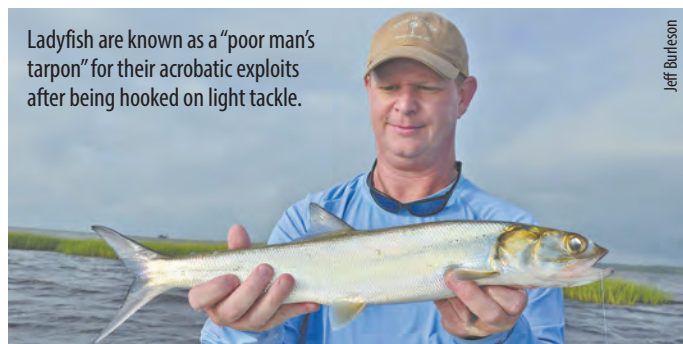
Hill said the fishing always improves when the lake is pulled and the water drops a couple of feet.

"I'd wish (they) would keep the water down so boats could always get under the bridges," he said. "The striper activity is always better when the lake is down and the water is moving."

Hill said stripers run from 8 to 12 pounds in the summer, though last year an unusual number of 5- to 8-pound fish were caught.

"For some crazy reason, not many small stripers are caught at High Rock," Hill said. "High Rock's not known for giving up numbers of stripers, but when you do catch one, you're often battling a fish that weighs close to 10 pounds." ■

— Tony Garitta



LADYFISH BONANZA Shell banks in Winyah Bay are prime areas

It's August in the Carolinas. It's hot, with daily temperatures often approaching the 100-degree mark. But the early morning hours are manageable and excellent times to be out on the water when the fish are feeding.

Anglers ready for some summer fun can have a barrel of excitement casting small lures to ladyfish, and the waters around Georgetown, S.C., are great waters to catch these energetic fish.

Spanish hogfish is the species' official name, but ladyfish is more recognized as one of the South's most-famous show fish, known for putting on a major production when hooked. Also known as "poor man's tarpon," they closely resemble the size, shape and behavior of a juvenile tarpon. They are well-known in the

Carolinas, showing up in estuarine waters in spring and summer to feed on the abundance of juvenile fish and shrimp.

Matt Bellamy at Captain Matt's Charters out of Pawley's Island, S.C., doesn't specifically target ladyfish unless he sees them busting up a school of bait in one of his speckled trout holes.

"We get in them all the time and have a ball at it," said Bellamy (843-568-8203). "I usually get into them when we are fishing for trout (and) see them destroying a school of bait on top."

Bellamy primarily fishes the Georgetown region and often finds schools of ladyfish around the shell islands in Winyah Bay, aka the "shell banks." They are found along the north side of the shipping channel across from Muddy Bay. They stretch for more than a mile and break up the current, providing excellent places for predator fish to ambush bait.

Birds are key to finding ladyfish in the morning. Gulls will dive to pick off the leftovers and can be seen from long distances.

Ladyfish have small mouths and are best caught on smaller lures and baits.

"I catch them on everything from grubs, MirOlures, D.O.A. shrimp, and small topwater plugs," Bellamy said. "We catch them on live bait, too."

Ladyfish can be caught throughout the day, but the best topwater bite is early in the morning before the sun takes over.

"In the morning, they are the easiest to find because they are usually busting bait on top, but we catch them throughout the day when fishing for trout," Bellamy said. "And as soon as you hook one, they start jumping all over the place. They can be a lot of fun and can also be good bait for redfish, too." ■

— Jeff Bureson



Travis Dellinger

Travis Dellinger of Oak Island, N.C., boated this citation-sized wahoo on Nov. 30, 2018, at the "Blackjack Hole" fishing on the *Outta Line*."



Trey Stewart

Trey Stewart boated this 8-pound, 13-ounce bass from Falls of Neuse Lake on Feb. 18, 2019.



Bubba & Bobby Bullock

Bradley (Bubba) Bullock, 9, and grandfather, Bobby Bullock caught this 62-pound catfish at Lake Gaston Jan. 5, 2019.



Tristan Lomax

Tristan Lomax of Monroe, N.C., caught this nice bass in Florida in the middle of January.



Phil Stahala

Phil Stahala of Charlotte, N.C., caught this catfish in the Santee Cooper Diversion Canal on a whole shad.



Mary-Lynn Hadley

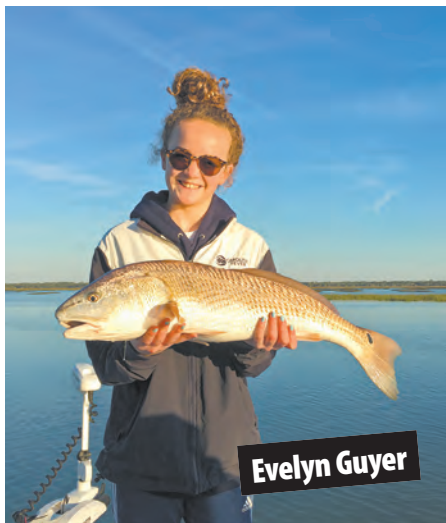
Mary-Lynn Hadley of Raleigh, N.C. landed this nice trout last Nov. 20.

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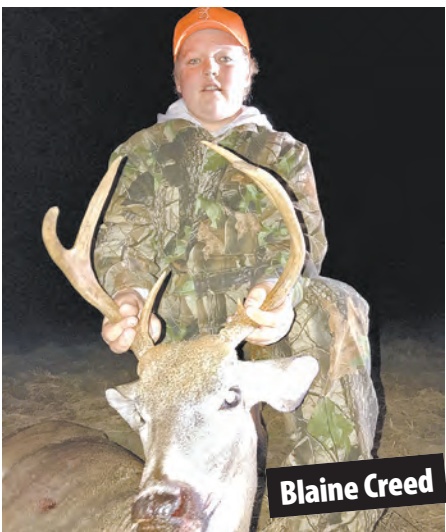
Evelyn Guyer

Evelyn Guyer caught her first redfish in the waters around Kiawah Island, S.C., in mid-March 2019.



Michael Apple

Michael Apple of Reidsville, N.C., killed this great buck, with split brow tines, last Nov. 11 in Rockingham County.



Blaine Creed

Blaine Creed, 14, killed his first buck last Nov. 10 in Scotland County, N.C., with a 7mm-08.



Austin Marshall

Austin Marshall killed this nice buck last Nov. 11 near Roxobel, N.C. with one shot from his .243 at 150 yards.



Jeff Stewart, Carl Montgomery

Jeff Stewart and Carl Montgomery had a great rabbit hunt on Jan. 30, 2019, in Lancaster County, S.C.

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Chasity Graham

Cold, January weather didn't stop Chasity Graham from catching her biggest striper ever, this 10-pounder.



Chris Small

Chris Small, a lifelong resident of New Hanover County, N.C., killed this great buck there on Nov. 17, 2018. It scored 129½ inches.



Kelsey Hicks

Kelsey Hicks of Charlotte, N.C., caught this 68-pound, 61-inch wahoo on April 17, 2019, fishing about 35 miles out of Hatteras Inlet on the Native Sun.



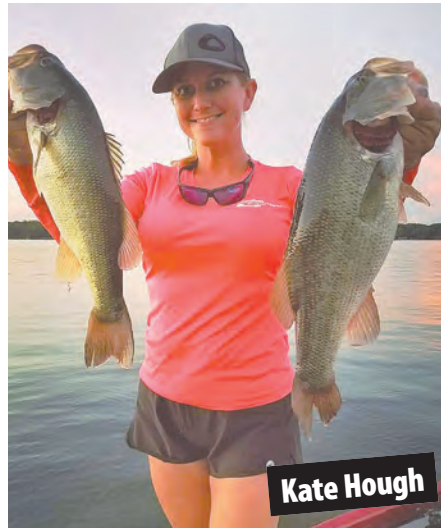
Robert Hof

Robert Hof killed his biggest buck, this 121-inch trophy, on Nov. 21, 2018, in Greene County, N.C.



Joshua Thomas

Josh Thomas killed this big gobbler on May 9, 2018, near Beaulaville, N.C. It had an 11-inch beard and 1¼-inch spurs.



Kate Hough

Kate Hough, a kindergarten teacher from Gilbert, S.C., caught these two nice bass, 4 and 6 pounds, from Lake Murray.



J.T. Coley

J.T. Coley of Holly Springs, N.C., killed this 18-inch, 8-point buck last fall.



Nicky Crouse

Nicky Crouse of Hendersonville, N.C., killed this 9-point buck on Nov. 10, 2017, in Laurens County, S.C.



Denny John

Denny John tagged this nice buck in Franklin County, N.C., on Nov. 8, 2018, at 25 yards with his Ruger .44.



Heather Hiott

Heather Hiott boated this 38-pound dophin fishing aboard the *Cluster* during the Bohicket Marina Billfish Invitational.



Walker Carr

Walker Carr of Mount Pleasant, S.C., caught this carp fishing near his home on May 19, 2019.



Zach Hofert

Zach Hofert caught these two crappie at North Carolina's Jordan Lake this past spring.

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Hayden Jordan

Hayden Jordan, 10, shows off the biggest of four bass and six bream he caught in a Monroe County, N.C. pond.



Tim Faucette

Tim Faucette caught this 17-inch crappie at John H. Kerr Reservoir this past spring.



Whit Strickland

Whit Strickland, 15, from Rock Hill, S.C., caught this 7-pound bass in mid-April on the Catawba River below Lake Wylie.



Theresa McCullough

Theresa McCullough caught this 1½-pound crappie, along with 10 more over a pound, on North Carolina's Fishing Creek.



Anna Jo Cole

Anna Jo Cole boated this nice, 43-pound blue catfish from North Carolina's Lake Tillery.

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:	12" TL	10/day in federal waters
Gray (mangrove), yellowtail, queen, cubera, dog, mahogony, schoolmaster		
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.gov.

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.

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, mahogony, 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 SCNDR'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 SCNDR'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.

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