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Carolina CONTENTS

Volume 26 | Number 9 | September 2019

30
EARLY SEASON BUCKS:
WHEN 'LESS IS MORE'

51
CASTING SHADOWS



FEATURES:

17 GOING PUBLIC cover story
Carolinas offer opportunities galore to hunt state lands.
>>>By Craig Holt and Terry Madewell

30 EARLY SEASON BUCKS: WHEN 'LESS IS MORE'
Once you pinpoint the buck you want to hunt when the season arrives, stay the heck out of the place where you expect to kill him.
>>>By Dan Kibler

46 FOR THE LOVE OF A DOVE
A good shoot can be as much of a social affair as a great kickoff for fall hunting seasons across the Carolinas. So break out that shell vest, that old shotgun and find a front-row seat.
>>>By Pete Rogers

51 CASTING SHADOWS
According to bass pro Bryan Thrift, the fall bass pattern in the Carolinas isn't what you might expect it to be. Here's how to make it work when September arrives.
>>>By Phillip Gentry

62 FLOAT UP A FLOUNDER
Float rigs are rarely used to target flatfish, but they're a great tactic when dragging baits across the structure that flounder love.
>>>By Jeff Burleson

FISHING HOTSPOTS:

60 Roanoke Rapids bass
61 Lake Tillery bass
76 Lake Wateree catfish
77 NC offshore wahoo
78 Oak Island redfish
79 Hilton Head lagoon
80 Little River drum
81 Clarks Hill stripers
82 Georgetown shrimp
83 Albemarle perch

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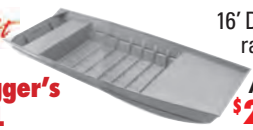
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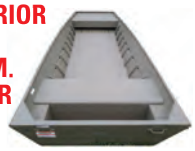


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46 FOR THE LOVE OF **A DOVE**

62 FLOAT UP A **FLOUNDER**

OUTDOOR UPDATE:

10 **SC OUTLAWS NATURAL DEER URINE PRODUCTS**

11 **BAG-A-BUCK CONTEST RETURNS TO SPORTSMAN**

PLUS

12 **NC BEAR IS NO. 1**

COLUMNS:

36 **STICKS & STRINGS** By Sammy Romano

38 **GREENER PASTURES** By Jeff Burleson

42 **COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE** By Capt. Jerry Dilsaver

56 **LUNKER LINES** By Davy Hite

58 **SANTEE STRINGER** By Terry Madewell

66 **SOUND & SEA** By Brian Cope

68 **SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY** By Phillip Gentry

72 **HEAD FOR THE MOUNTAINS** By Robert Satterwhite

74 **SPECKLED TRUTH** By Chris Bush

ON THE COVER:



North Carolina and South Carolina take care of their public-lands hunters with millions of acres offering great hunting, especially for early season deer. Photo by Rick Small.

DEPARTMENTS:

16 NC Hunting Regulations

16 SC Hunting Regulations

83 Astro Tables

84 Sportsman's Showcase

86 Hunting/Fishing Scrapbook

90 Classifieds

92 Advertiser Index

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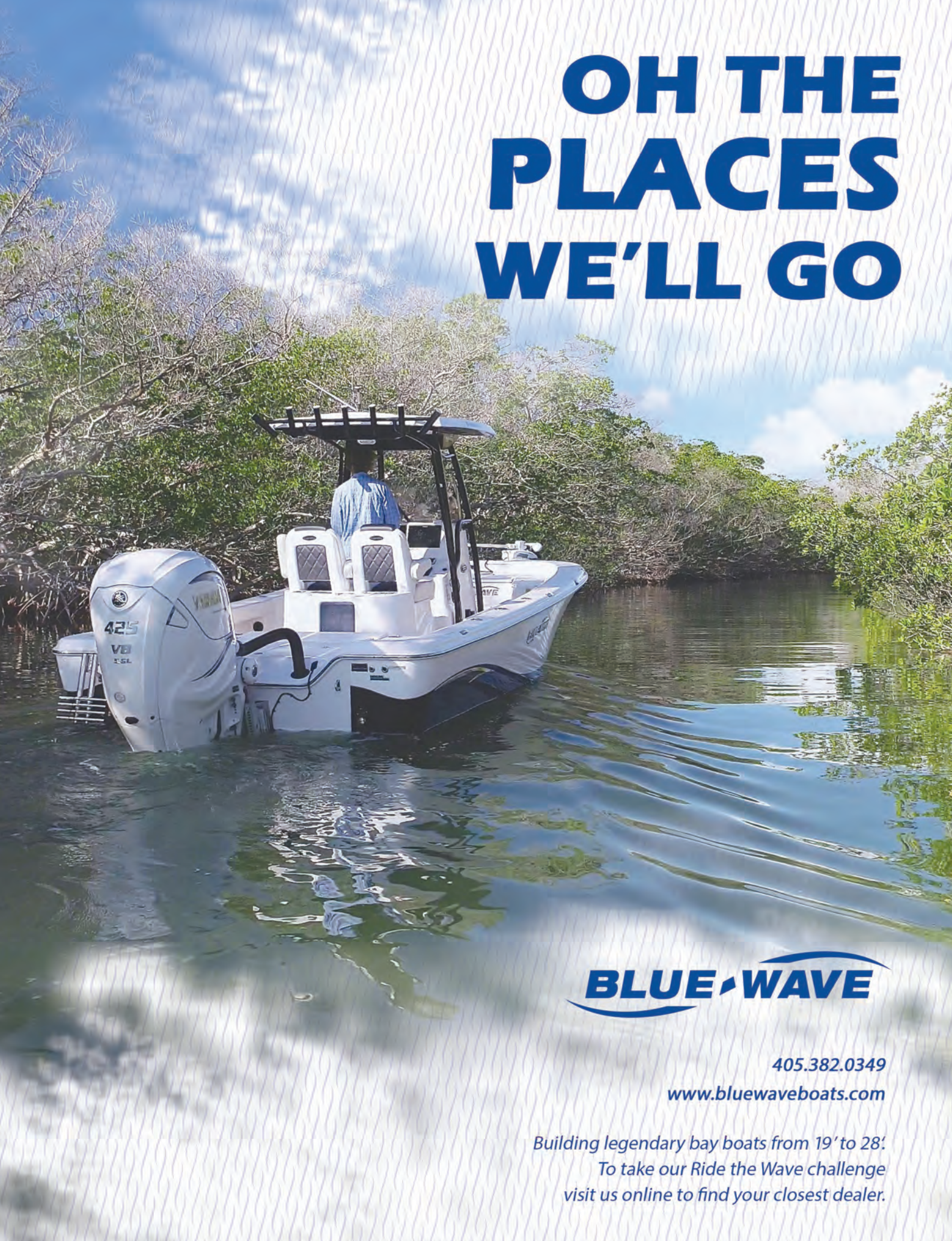
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Outdoor UPDATE with Dan Kibler



Natural attractants and scents have been banned in South Carolina; most come from deer farms, where CWD is commonly found.

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

SCDNR TAKES A BIG SHOT AT CWD

STATE BANS USE OF LURES, SCENT PRODUCTS COLLECTED FROM DEER

South Carolina has fired an early, warning shot over the bow at chronic wasting disease. In late July, the S.C. Department of Natural Resources Commission made it illegal to use natural attractants or scents in deer-hunting situations.



Randy Seay killed this 9-point buck on Nov. 10, 2018, in Alamance County, N.C., on a hunt arranged by Combat Warrior Inc.

SCDNR's announcement read: "It is illegal to possess or use, for the purpose of hunting or scouting any wild animal in South Carolina, any substance or material that contains or purports to contain any excretion collected from a cervid (deer) including urine, feces, blood, gland oil or other body fluid. This does not prohibit the use of synthetic products or substances collected by a hunter from deer legally harvested in South Carolina.

"The majority of natural deer lures and attractants are made with fluids and secretions collected from captive cervids. Chronic wasting disease, a transmissible or contagious, always fatal, neurological disease, has been documented in numerous captive cervid herds, therefore the potential exists for these products to be contaminated with CWD prions. Once introduced, the disease agent can remain viable in the environment, in the soil, for example, were local deer may become infected. There is no way to either test the products for CWD or destroy CWD-causing prions. With the high level of uncertainty surrounding the use of such products, the department is following the lead of other states in proactively prohibited the use of them in order to minimize the potential for CWD introduction into South Carolina."

As of March 2018, CWD has been identified in 26 states, three Canadian provinces, Korea (from an elk imported from Canada in 1997), Norway and Finland. Neither Carolina has ever reported a CWD-positive deer; Tennessee, West Virginia and Virginia are the closest states to the Carolinas with a CWD-positive deer report.

The infected proteins that transmit CWD, aka prions, have been found in the urine, feces and saliva of infected deer, and research has showed that cervids can be infected from exposure to those substances.

The majority of commercial scent produces are made from urine from captive deer or elk collected over a grate system. Urine products are frequently combined from multiple locations and distributed across the country. Many of the captive cervid facilities are in areas or states with CWD; according to SCDNR, deer in 40 facilities have tested positive for CWD since 2012.

Many scent products are now synthetics, replicated in laboratories to imitate natural cervid fluids. SCDNR's new regulation does not affect the synthetic products, and it does not affect products obtained from deer killed in South Carolina, such as tarsal glands or deer urine, since no CWD deer have ever been discovered in the state. ▪



C.J. Addison of Lancaster, S.C., was the grand-prize winner in last year's Bag-A-Buck contest.

BAG-A-BUCK RETURNS

The annual Bag-A-Buck contest has returned for another season, this time offering a grand prize with a lot of pull.

The contest, run through www.carolinasportsman.com, offers sportsmen and sportswomen a chance to post photos on the magazine's website of deer they killed during the 2019-20 season, with a short description of the hunt, for a chance at monthly prizes and a grand prize.

All subscribers to *Carolina Sportsman* are eligible for the contest, which is divided into four monthly contests (August-September, October, November and December) with prizes that include a $25 gift certificate to the online Sportsman's Store and a free, one-year subscription to the *Sportsman*. Monthly winners will be announced monthly in the *Sportsman* and on www.CarolinaSportsman.com.

The grand-prize winner, announced in March, will receive a prize-package including a two-day deer/hog combination hunt for two people at Cherokee Run Hunting Lodge in Chesterfield County, S.C., a $50 gift certificate to the online Sportsman's Store, a free, three-year subscription to *Carolina Sportsman* and an Energy Elite bow.

The rules are simple. Take a photo of yourself with a deer you kill during the 2019-20 season, upload the photo to the Bag-a-Buck contest forum on www.CarolinaSportsman.com, and write a short account of your hunt, including the date of the hunt, county of the kill, your name and hometown. You can enter multiple times, with multiple deer, as long as they are legal kills in your state of residence or in the Carolinas.

Monthly winners will be drawn at the end of each month, and the grand-prize winner will be drawn and announced in the March 2020 issue of *Carolina Sportsman*.

C.J. Addison of Lancaster, S.C., was the grand-prize winner in last year's Bag-a-Buck contest. He entered a 10-point buck he killed on Oct. 16, 2018. ▪



N.C. MOUNTAIN BEAR IS B&C'S NO. 1 BIGGEST

A Dobson, N.C., hunter has killed a black bear that may be the largest ever taken by a hunter under the Boone & Crockett Club's scoring system.

Eddie Barr took the big bear during the 2016 season in Surry County on a hound hunt. The bear weighed 595 pounds on uncertified scales, big for a mountain bear. But it was the size of the bear's skull that was most impressive.

The initial, official score of 23⅝ inches — the greatest length plus the greatest width of the skull — done by James Tomberlin and Chris Kreh, biologists with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and certified B&C scorers, makes it the third-largest bear ever scored and the biggest ever killed by a hunter. The Nos. 1 and 2 bears were found dead.

"I attribute all the success of the hunt to the houndsmen: Billy Cockeral, Kris Peters and the late Pappa George Hall," Barr said. "I was just in the right place at the right time. Those guys and the hounds did all the hard work."

Barr said he knew the bear was huge but had no idea its skull was world-class until a friend took it to a certified scorer for the Pope & Young Club, which keeps archery records. The scorer put his tape on the bear and said Barr needed to have it scored by a Boone & Crockett Club scorer because it was a world-class animal.

Barr then called Tomberlin, who asked Kreh to help him score the bear.

"As a Boone and Crockett scorer, it was an honor to get to score a world-class animal, something you wouldn't expect in North Carolina," Tomberlin said. "(It's) an incredible example of the successful comeback of the American black bear in North Carolina and testament to the North American model of wildlife conservation"

The skull went to Springfield, Mo., where it was scheduled to be scored and certified by a panel of Boone & Crockett scorers at the club's 30th North American Big Game awards banquet in early August. ▪

— Marty Shaffner



Eddie Barr (second from left) killed this huge, Surry County bear in 2016. It is the largest black bear taken by a hunter in terms of its Boone & Crockett Club skull score.





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HOYLE BACK AS CHAIMAN OF NCWRC

David Hoyle Jr. started his second go-round as chairman of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, elected on July 18 at a Commission meeting during which a handful of other appointees joined the agency's governing body.



David Hoyle Jr.

Hoyle, from Dallas, N.C., was appointed to an at-large seat in 2017 by Gov. Roy Cooper. He had an earlier 15-year stint on the Commission, two years of which he served as chairman.

Monty R. Crump, the commissioner for District 6, was elected vice chairman.

Cooper appointed to six-year terms Kelly Davis of Swan Quarter as District 1 commissioner and Stephen Windham of Winnabow as District 4 commissioner.

James Cogdell of Norwood was appointed to a two-year term as an at-large commissioner by Sen. Phil Berger, who re-appointed to two-year at-large terms Tom Berry and Mark Craig of Greensboro and Landon Zimmer of Wilmington.

Rep. Tim Moore re-appointed to two-year terms as at-large commissioners Ray Clifton Jr. of Clarkton, Thomas Fonville of Raleigh, John Stone of Jackson Springs and John T. Coley IV of Raleigh. ▪

SHRIMP, ALLIGATOR SEASONS OPEN IN SC IN SEPTEMBER

Two very special and popular seasons open this month in South Carolina: alligators and shrimp-baiting.

Palmetto State gator-getters can take to the waters in four coastal regions at noon on Sept. 14; they get four weeks before the season closes on Oct. 12.

The S.C. Department of Natural Resources has distributed 1,000 permits, 250 each for the Midlands, Middle Coast, Pee Dee and South Coastal regions, through a public-permit drawing. Each hunter who draws a permit is allowed to take one alligator at least 4 feet long.

Typical harvests for the past several seasons have been around 350 alligators, with the average animal taken measuring between 8 and 9 feet long.

Shrimp-baiting season opens for a 60-day season on Friday, Sept. 7, at noon. Fishermen who purchase a shrimp-baiting license are allowed to take 48 quarts (heads-on) or 29 quarts (heads-off) per day using cast nets with a minimum mesh size of ½-inch and bait balls around a series of 10 poles set in a 100-yard stretch in inshore waters. ▪

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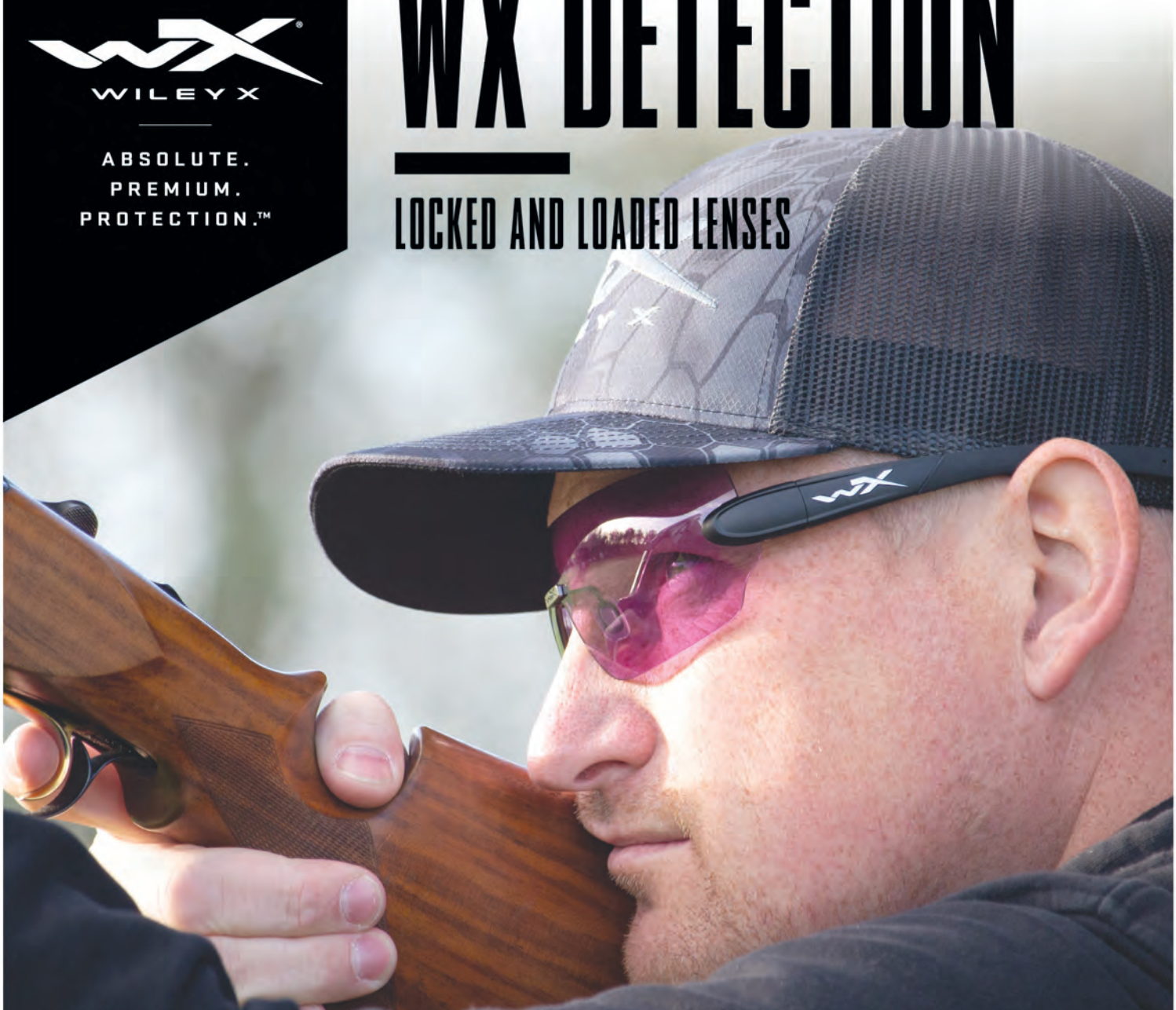
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2019-20 NORTH CAROLINA HUNTING REGULATIONS

Not an official document.
Refer to NCWRC's official hunting regulations pamphlet or www.ncwildlife.org.

HUNTING SEASONS

DEER

Western	Bowhunting	Sept. 7-29 Oct. 13-Nov. 24 Dec. 15-Jan. 1, 2020 (bucks only)
	Muzzleloader	Sept. 30-Oct. 13
	Gun	Nov. 25-Dec. 14
Northwestern	Bowhunting	Sept. 7-Nov. 8
	Muzzleloader	Nov. 9-22
	Gun	Nov. 23-Jan. 1, 2020
Central	Bowhunting	Sept. 7-Nov. 1
	Muzzleloader	Nov. 2-15
	Gun	Nov. 16-Jan. 1, 2020
Northeastern/ Southeastern	Bowhunting	Sept. 7-27
	Muzzleloader	Sept. 28-Oct.11
	Gun	Oct. 12-Jan. 1, 2020

BEAR

Oct. 14-Nov. 23 & Dec. 16-Jan. 1, 2020:	In and west of Surry, Wilkes, Caldwell, Burke and Cleveland counties
Nov. 16-Jan. 1, 2020:	Alamance, Anson, Cabarrus, Caswell, Chatham, Davidson, Durham, Granville, Guilford, Lee, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Orange, Person, Randolph, Rockingham, Rowan, Stanly, Union counties
Oct. 12-Jan. 1, 2020:	Franklin, Harnett, Hoke, Johnston, Moore, Richmond, Scotland, Vance, Warren, Wake counties
Nov. 23-Jan. 1, 2020:	Alexander, Catawba, Davie, Forsyth, Gaston, Iredell Lincoln, Stokes, Yadkin counties
Nov.12-Jan. 1, 2019:	Bladen, Brunswick, Carteret, Columbus, Cumberland, Duplin, New Hanover, Onslow, Pamlico, Pender, Robeson, Sampson counties
Nov. 9-24, Dec. 14-29:	Dare, Hyde, Tyrrell counties
Nov. 9-17, Dec. 14-29:	Camden, Chowan, Craven, Hertford, Jones, Martin, Washington counties
Nov. 17-Dec. 16:	Edgecombe, Greene, Halifax, Lenoir, Nash, Northampton, Pitt, Wayne, Wilson counties
Nov. 11-Jan. 1, 2020:	Edgecombe, Bladen, Carteret, Columbus, Cumberland, Duplin, New Hanover, Onslow, Pamlico, Pender, Roberson, Sampson counties

SQUIRREL	Oct. 14-Feb. 29, 2020 (gray & red) Oct. 14-Jan. 31, 2020 (fox) in Alleghany, Edgecombe, Moore, Scotland, Anson, Greene, New Hanover, Stokes, Ashe, Harnett, Onslow, Surry, Bladen, Hoke, Pender, Watauga, Brunswick, Johnston, Pitt, Wayne, Cumberland, Jones, Richmond, Wilkes, Duplin, Lenoir, Sampson
RABBIT	Oct. 14.-Feb. 28, 2020
QUAIL	Nov. 23, 2019-Feb. 29, 2020
GROUSE	Oct. 14-Feb. 29, 2020
RAILS	
(KING, SORA, VIRGINIA, CLAPPER)	Sept. 7-Nov. 27
(GALLINULES, MOORHENS)	Sept. 7-Nov. 27
CANADA GEESE	Resident zone, Oct. 2-12, Nov. 16-Dec. 7, Dec. 14-Feb. 8. Statewide: Sept. 2-30; NE Zone, Jan. 16-31, permit only
SNOW, BLUE, ROSS GEESE	Oct. 8-Feb. 8, 2020, Feb. 10-March 31, 2020 (permit)
DUCKS	Oct. 3-5, Nov. 16-Dec. 2 Dec. 14-Jan. 31, 2020
EARLY TEAL	Sept. 12-30 (east of US 17 only)
SEA DUCKS	Nov. 23-Jan. 31, 2020
BRANT	Dec. 28-Jan. 31, 2020
DOVE	Sept. 2-Oct. 5, Nov. 16-30, Dec. 9-Jan. 31, 2020
TUNDRA SWAN	Nov. 9-Jan. 31, 2020. Bag limit 1, by permit only.
RACCOON, OPOSSUM	Oct. 14-Feb. 29, 2020
WOODCOCK	Dec. 7-Jan. 28, 2020

2019-2020 SOUTH CAROLINA HUNTING REGULATIONS

Not an official document.
Please refer to SCDNR's Rules & Regulations Digest.

HUNTING SEASONS

SPECIES	SEASON DATES (PRIVATE LAND)	BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT
Doves	Sept. 2-7, Sept. 8-Oct. 12 Nov. 16-30, Dec. 28-Jan. 30, 2020	15	45
Crow	Nov. 1-March 1, 2020	No limits	
Quail	Nov. 20-March 1, 2020	12	36
Rabbit	Nov. 23-March 1, 2020	5	15
Squirrel	Oct. 1-March 1, 2020	10	30
Fox	Nov. 23-March 1, 2020	No limits	
Grouse	Nov. 23-March 1, 2020 (Game Zone 1 only)	3	9
Raccoon/	Sept. 15-March 15, 2020 (statewide)	3 raccoons per party	
Opossum	Sept. 15-March 15, 2020 (Game Zones 3, 6)	No limits	
Other	Nov. 26-March 1, 2020	No limits	
furbearers	(bobcat, otter, weasel, mink, muskrat, skunk)		
Bear	Oct. 17-23 (still hunting only)	1	
	(Game Zone 1 only)		
	Oct. 24-30 (dogs),	5 per party	
	(Game Zone 1 only)		
	Oct. 17-30		
	(Horry, Georgetown, Marion, WIlliamsburg counties)	1	
	(permit only)		
Rails	Sept. 27-Oct. 2,		
King & Clapper	Oct. 10-Dec. 12	15	45
Sora & Virginia		25	75
Gallinules		15	45
(common/purple)			
Snipe	Nov. 14 - Feb. 28, 2020	8	24
Woodcock	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31, 2020	3	9
Wild Turkey	March 22-April 30, 2020 (Game Zones 3&4)	3	
	April 1-May 10, 2020 (Game Zones 1&2)	3	

DEER SEASON

ZONE	ARCHERY	PRIM WEAPON	GUNS
1		Oct. 1-10	Oct. 11-Jan. 1, 2020
2	Sept. 15-30	Oct. 1-10	Oct. 11-Jan.1, 2020
3			Aug. 15-Jan. 1, 2020
4	Aug 15-31		Sept. 1-Jan. 1, 2020
Youth Day			Jan. 6, 2020

WATERFOWL SEASONS

SPECIES	DATES	BAG LIMIT
Duck	Teal only: Sept. 13-28	6
	Nov. 23-30, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2020	6
Canada geese	Sept. 1-30, Nov. 23-30,	15
	Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2020, Feb. 14-29, 2020	
Blue/snow (light) geese	Nov. 23-30, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2020,	25
	Feb. 14-29, 2020	
Brant	Jan. 2-31, 2020	2
Sea ducks	Nov. 23-30, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2020	6
Mergansers	Nov. 23-30, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2020	5 (1 hooded)
Coots	Nov. 23-30, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2020	15



GOING PUBLIC

CAROLINAS OFFER OPPORTUNITIES GALORE TO HUNT STATE LANDS

Not every hunter in North Carolina or South Carolina belongs to a club, leases land or has hunting access to acreage that belongs to family or friends.

Thousands of hunters in the Carolinas rely on their state wildlife agencies to provide places to climb a tree and sit in a portable tree stand, to set out decoys on a backwater slough or deploy a brace of dogs to find rabbits, bears, squirrels or quail.

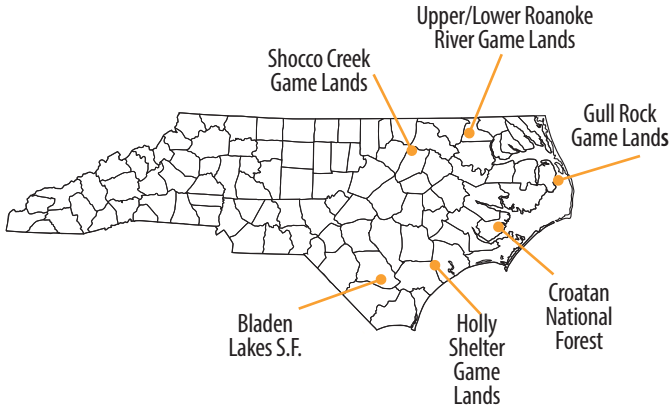
North Carolina has more than 2 million acres spread across almost 100 game lands in its public-hunting program. South Carolina has 1.1 million acres in 55 tracts in its Wildlife Management Area program.

The following is a look at some of the best public-hunting areas in both states, divided by region.

NC'S BEST IN THE EAST

By Craig Holt

COASTAL PLAIN HAS FANTASTIC DESTINATIONS



The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission manages the eastern third of the state in two regions, Northeast and Southeast. Here are three places to go for multi-species hunting opportunities.

UPPER/LOWER ROANOKE RIVER

The **Upper Roanoke River Wetlands Game Lands, Lower Roanoke River Wetlands Game Lands and National Wildlife Refuge** cover almost 42,000 acres and are managed as one system.



Gull Rock Game Lands has 250 acres of waterfowl impoundments.

Craig Holt

The **Upper Roanoke** (10,253 acres) is in Bertie, Halifax and Northampton counties. The Lower Roanoke (31,704 acres) is in Bertie and Martin counties. Both require hunting permits. Hunters should try on-line applications or "point-of-sale" (wildlife-cooperator agents) for permits. Some permits allow no-waiting access, while others enter sportsmen into lottery drawings.

"Deer are plentiful at the Upper Roanoke," said biologist Chris Baranski of the Commission. "No dog hunting is allowed. However, the Boone tract has underutilized (deer) blinds for youths and youth-adult hunts."

No bear hunting is allowed on either game land. Squirrels are plentiful in the bottomland hardwood forests, quail are scarce, but the lowlands hold woodcocks. The Garibaldi Tract in Northampton County has a popular, 200-acre dove field.

On the **Lower Roanoke**, the Devereaux Swamp — part of the Conoho Farms Tract — is a good spot for deer, biologist David Turner said. Waterfowl hunters may apply for Conoho Farms draw permits for its lone impoundment.

"Duck (success) is hit or miss, depending on the weather," Turner said. "You might see wood ducks, teal, mallards or a few ringnecks."

Conoho Farms' big draw is 40 acres of managed dove fields, which offer rabbit-hunting habitat around fields.

GULL ROCK GAME LANDS

A 28,600-acre, six-days-a-week game land in Hyde and Tyrrell counties, **Gull Rock** is partitioned into three sections, with the largest — the lower Outfalls Canal Tract south of Mattamuskeet Lake — sandwiched between Lake Mattamuskeet and Swan Quarter National Wildlife refuges. Outfalls Canal is a bear sanctuary area (no hunting allowed).

"But bear hunting is allowed at some of the Long Shoal Tract off NC 94," Turner said, "and dogs can be used."

For waterfowl, Gull Rock has a 250 acres of managed waterfowl impoundments, with no permits required.

"Besides ducks, it's also got potential if you draw a (tundra) swan permit," Turner said.

Gull Rock's main habitat is thick pocosin and swamps, which limits deer and small-game hunting.

SHOCCO CREEK GAME LANDS

This 8,109-acre game land has nine sections scattered across Franklin, Halifax, Nash and Warren counties between US 401 and NC 43.

"It's open six days per week and is a pretty popular game land, for deer," Baranski said.

Hunting permits aren't required, and the Commission allows

still- and deer-dog hunting on **Shocco Creek**.

Waterfowl hunters mainly see wood ducks at swamps and bottom lands.

An active forestry plan -- timber harvesting, thinning and controlled burns -- has created good quail habitat.



Shocco Creek Game Lands has a huntable population of bobwhite quail, thanks to timber harvesting and controlled burning.

Craig Holt

"Hunters won't find a dozen coveys a day, but there are birds," he said.

Squirrel and rabbits also live around wildlife openings and fields.

"(Habitat management) has allowed forbs and (cutover) areas to grow (for rabbit and quail)," Baranski said. "The squirrels are on steep hardwood ridges the former owner couldn't log."

CROATAN NATIONAL FOREST

With its 162, 217 acres spread across Carteret, Craven and Jones counties, the **Croatan National Forest** is North Carolina's third-largest game land.

The only required permits are for the Catfish Lake waterfowl impoundment's disabled-hunters blinds, the first two days of dove season at planted fields and bear- and deer-dog hunting.

"(It's) a popular place for deer and bear hunting," said biologist Richie Clark of the Commission

Croatan has thousands of posted bear-sanctuary acres, but still-hunters and

continues >>>



deer-dog hunters may hunt other sections.

"Habitat varies from mixed hardwoods to pocosin and tupelo swamps," he said. "Creeks, swamps and drainage forests around Catfish Lake draw waterfowl. Hunters see mostly mallards and gadwalls at creeks. "Other puddle ducks and ringnecks show up at Catfish Lake."

Six managed dove fields are between Maysville and Cape Carteret and at Brice's Creek near New Bern.

"Croatan has pockets of quail, mainly at fire-controlled areas and transition areas between ridges and swamps," Clark said.

Mixed hardwoods and pine forests contain gray squirrels and some fox squirrels.

"Right after deer season, we have tons of people hunting rabbits at dove fields and wildlife openings," he said. "There's a huge complex of old, abandoned agricultural fields with cottontails and a few swamp rabbits."

HOLLY SHELTER GAME LANDS

This 63,556-acre game land north of Wilmington contains a variety of game animals, including black bears and deer.

The Bear Garden Tract between NC 53 and Bear Garden Road in the northern section is known for its permitted bear hunting with dogs. Eight 3-day hunts are held in November and December, and in 2017, 33 bears were taken.

Holly Shelter is a six-days-a-week game land, but dog hunting for bear or deer only is allowed Mondays-Wednesdays-Saturdays, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day, with still-hunting on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

"Dog hunters like Holly Shelter because it's crisscrossed by (access) roads," Clark said.

Holly Shelter has a 206-acre, managed waterfowl impoundment, Lodge Road, and a smaller, greentree impoundment off Shaw Highway. Both were dry during the first six months of 2019 because Hurricane Florence destroyed dikes.

"We've been working with a contractor to get that fixed," he said.

Duck hunters run into mostly puddle ducks, including mallards and wood ducks. Waterfowling is allowed only on Tuesdays and Saturdays, plus Christmas, New Year's Day and MLK Jr. holidays.

Holly Shelter features 25 dove fields totaling 60 acres. Some quail live around those fields and at re-growing burns and transition areas between ridges and swamps.

"Field borders have rabbits," Clark said. "The game land also has gray and fox squirrels."

BLADEN LAKES STATE FOREST

The N.C. Forest Service owns this game land that's managed by the Commission and divided into two tracts.

"Deer and bear offer hunting opportunities," said biologist Chesley Ward of the Commission. "It's a three-day (Monday-Wednesday-Saturday) game land. Dog and still-hunting is allowed (at the main tract)."

"Deer densities aren't extremely high, but hunters are pretty



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.

successful," Ward said. "The Singletary Tract doesn't allow dog-hunting, so it's popular with still hunters. We plant fall oats, wheat and rye at Singletary for bears and deer and chufa for turkeys. Tons of agricultural fields border the (main) game land."

Duck hunters may try beaver-pond wetland systems, but they're scattered and small. Dove hunters can access two 7-acre fields and a 2-acre field in the middle of a pine forest.

Some quail and more rabbits are at dove fields and regenerating clear cuts.

"Bladen Lakes is a stronghold for fox squirrels because of scrub oak and longleaf pines," Ward said. "It's also has gray squirrels."

SC'S LOWCOUNTRY WMAS UP NEXT >



Looking to target a fox squirrel? Bladen Lakes State Forest may be the ticket.

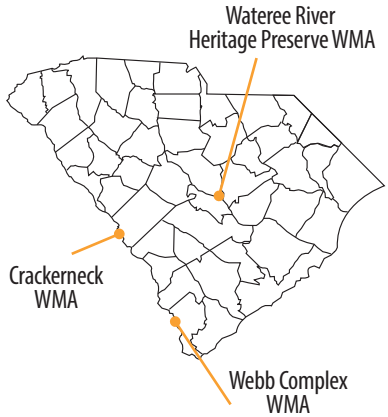
Craig Holt



The BEST OF SC'S LOWCOUNTRY WMAS

PERMIT-HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES MARK SOME OF SC'S BEST WMAS

By Terry Madewell



WEBB COMPLEX WMA

Charles Ruth, the big-game project leader for the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, said one of the top WMAs in South Carolina is the **Webb Center Complex** in Hampton County. The **Webb Complex** consists of a trio of terrific areas managed as a unit, including the **Webb Center WMA** as well as **Hamilton Ridge** and **Palachuacola WMAs**. Ruth said these three WMAs constitute some of the best deer hunting in the area, and hunters must be drawn for all still gun-hunting on these WMAs. Information is on the SCDNR website, www.dnr.sc.gov.

"All **Webb Center Complex** areas offer quality hunting, but the gun hunts at the **Webb Center** property in specific are unique in that hunters are taken out to the stands and picked up after the hunt, very similar to a quality commercial hunt" Ruth said. "Deer harvested will also be picked up for them. This is an extremely popular and highly productive hunt."

Bowhunting within a specific season guideline is open at **Hamilton Ridge** and **Palachuacola**, but antlered deer must have a minimum of 4 points on one side or a minimum 12-inch inside spread.

Other hunting opportunities at the **Webb Complex** include outstanding quail hunting, along with spring turkey hunting opportunities. Check regulations for specific quail hunting opportunities.

Prescribed fire is employed as a management tool, creating excellent turkey and quail habitat. Hog hunting, especially near the Savannah River and larger swamps, is excellent, and rabbit hunting is very good in areas with the proper habitat. Find the larger, old-age timber stands, and excellent squired hunting exists.

Ruth said the **Webb Complex** offer public waterfowl hunting as a Class II Waterfowl WMA, with good hunting near the Savannah River and backwater swamps.

CRACKERNECK WMA

The 10,600-acre **Crackerneck WMA** in Aiken County is owned by the U.S. Department of Energy and managed by SCDNR. It is open only during designated dates and times, and public access is tightly controlled.

"The **Crackerneck** area is another WMA with antler restrictions, thus offering a good age structure of bucks," Charles Ruth said. "The limited access in terms of hunting only on designated days does reduce pressure on all species, including deer. This does tend to make the hunting more productive. The site is also a Class II waterfowl area and has a 60-acre dove field."

Ruth said the small-game hunting is very good in areas where habitat is correct for the species being pursued.

Everyone utilizing **Crackerneck WMA** must sign in at the check station before entering the property and sign out before leaving. In addition to entering through the check station gate, individuals are also allowed to access Crackerneck from the Savannah River, but they must register before entering the river and return to sign out before leaving. SCDNR personnel will be present at all times to assist with registration, answer questions and provide maps.

WATEREE RIVER HERITAGE PRESERVE WMA



The Wateree River Heritage Preserve WMA is a bowhunter's paradise.

Biologist Charles Ruth said one WMA he's very high on is the **Wateree River Heritage Preserve WMA**, recently added to the WMA program. It is a 3,674-acre tract of land 17 miles east of Columbia on US 378 near the Eastover community in Richland County, borderded by the Wateree River. The property entrance is Goodwill Road on US 378, between Columbia and Sumter, just after you cross US 601 heading east.

"The geography of the area is unique in that it changes from the river bottom habitat along the Wateree River to a fairly high elevation," Ruth said. "The size of the property is very good, with 3,600 acres of land offering hunting for several game species."

Like the **Webb Center Complex**, the only gun-hunting for deer is by draw, but it's generally open for archery hunting, Ruth said.

Turkey hunting and waterfowl hunting opportunities are good, but they, too, are only available by draw, he said.

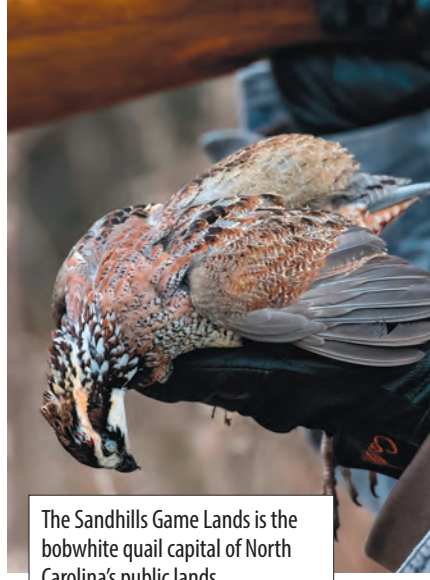
Small-game hunting opportunities are excellent, but check the regulations for specifics dates for small-game species.

For information on all the draw hunts check out the lottery hunting info at www.dnr.sc.gov.

NC'S TOP PIEDMONT GAME LANDS

By Craig Holt

NATIONAL FORESTS, SMALLER GAME LANDS ARE TOPS



The Sandhills Game Lands is the bobwhite quail capital of North Carolina's public lands.

BUTNER-FALLS/ JORDAN

Biologist Chris Baranski of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission classified **Butner-Falls of Neuse** and **Jordan Lake** as one game land — 30 miles apart — because of nearly identical habitats and sizes.

Both offer deer, small-game and waterfowl hunting.

Jordan and **Butner-Falls of the Neuse** have topped North Carolina in deer harvest on moderate-sized game lands for several years, with hunters taking better than 500 per season.

Waterfowl success at each central lake is "hit or miss depending on weather," he said. "Falls has seven planted-crop waterfowl impoundments (some require permits), while Jordan has seven impoundments (three planted-crop and four greentree impoundments)."

With seven, large managed fields totaling 200 acres, dove hunting draws sportsmen to **Butner-Falls**. **Jordan's** 65½ acres at nine dove fields also excite wing-shooters, the best around Mason Point.

Because of hardwood ridges at both game lands "hunters shouldn't have any problem finding squirrels," Baranski said.

The northern end of **Butner-Falls,** with its managed fields, also attracts rabbit hunters.

UWHARRIE N.F.

This national forest in Davidson, Montgomery and Randolph counties has multiple sections scattered across 51,849 acres. Part of the Uwharrie and Burkhead mountains, it features classic, Northern Piedmont habitat, including some steep hills covered by hardwood forests.

"Deer heavily populate the area," said biologist Chris Dawes of the Commission.

Whitetails with trophy racks live in **Uwharrie's** hills and hollows, but the region receives heavy hunting pressure from the Greensboro/Winston-Salem/High Point area, along with Charlotte.

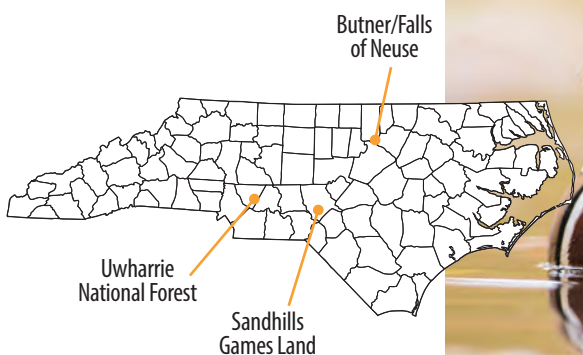
Camping and ATV riding is allowed.

"If you're after a big buck, you have to get away from the crowds and do your homework," Dawes said.

Vast, mast-producing hardwood forests also suit wild turkeys and small game.

"There's really good gray squirrel hunting," he said.

Although Dawes noted "five or six" dove fields totaling 40 acres, the U.S. Forest Service allows Commission biologists to plant and manage just two fields of 3 and 4 acres.





Waterfowl impoundments hold mostly wood ducks.

SANDHILLS GAME LANDS

With 64,862 acres in tracts of variable sizes dotting Hoke, Moore, Richmond and Scotland counties, the **Sandhills Game Lands** boasts fine whitetail and small-game hunting.

"Hunters mostly don't need permits for deer, but (hunts and seasons) follow local deer laws," Dawes said.

Because **Sandhills** spreads across so many counties, hunters should check regulations for rules. The Field Trial Area is closed to all hunting Oct. 22-March 31, and has special dates for archery, muzzle-loader and regular gun seasons, and permits are required for either-sex gun seasons.

Hunters may use dogs to hunt deer with visible antlers in tracts in Richmond and Scotland counties.

"Still-hunting actually is tough because most of the habitat is open, long-leaf pine forests and wire grass, so deer hang out in drainages and stay hidden during daylight hours," Dawes said

Sandhills is open for hunting on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Non-permit, season-long dove hunts are allowed on 21 fields covering 145 total acres, except the Field Trials Area, where hunting is banned from the third Sunday in September to season's end.

"Fox squirrels draw a good number of folks," Dawes said. "Gray squirrels are at outlying stands of mast-producing hardwoods."

Rabbit hunters get fair results at dove-field edges, successional-plant areas, plum and briar thickets.

PEE DEE WMAS UP NEXT >

SC'S BEST WMAS IN THE PEE DEE

By Terry Madewell

WOODBURY WMA

Woodbury WMA has the attractive attribute of good size, totaling 25,668 acres in Marion County. The main entrance to **Woodbury WMA** is about 2.8 miles southeast of Daviston, S.C., off of US 378.

Biologist Charles Ruth of the S.C. Department of Natural Resoures said **Woodbury** is prone to flooding and has been closed at times for extended periods.

"But the potential here to enjoy excellent hunting is very high, with very good deer-hunting opportunities, along with excellent hog hunting," he said. "Also, small-game opportunities are available when the specific habitat required for the game hunted is located. **Woodbury** is also a Class II Waterfowl Management area."

An extensive road network provides good access throughout the WMA, and boat access to the area from the Great Pee Dee and Little Pee Dee rivers exists via numerous boat landings.

LITTLE PEE DEE HERITAGE WMA

Ruth said the **Little Pee Dee Heritage WMA** offers a wide diversity of hunting opportunities, and the size and habitat make it potentially highly productive.

"This WMA lies along the Little Pee Dee River and is a complex of multiple properties adjacent to the river," he said.

Ruth said excellent deer-hunting opportunity exists, and some of the habitat is remote and not easily accessed.

"For those willing to go to the effort, the potential for excellent public-land deer hunting is available," he said.

Ruth said bear hunting is another opportunity. Also, by locating the proper habitat, good small-game hunting exists, and the area is designated as a Class II Waterfowl

SOUTH CAROLINA'S NATIONAL FORESTS

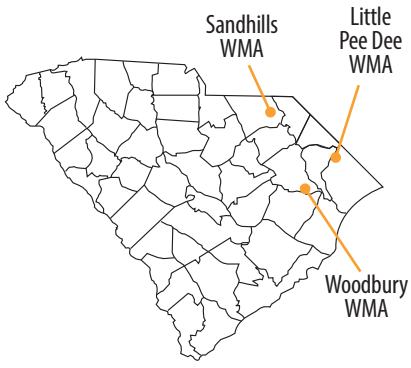
The Sumter National Forest and the Francis Marion National Forest both have extensive public lands designated as WMAs throughout South Carolina. The Sumter National Forest has properties in Game Zones 1 (Upstate) and 2 (Midlands), while the Francis Marion has a quarter-million acres in Game Zone 3 (Lowcountry). Combined, more than 630,000 acres of national forest land are included in South Carolina's WMA network.

Hunters can target smaller segments of land where they wish to hunt and obtain maps and specific rules and regulations for specific areas. Visit www.dnr.sc.gov/wma/maps.html



South Carolina's national forests combine to cover more than a 630,000 acres, many of them filled with white-tailed deer.

Craig Holt



hunting area.

"While a lot of opportunity is available, it's critical to know this area is subject to flooding, and we've had years when it was not accessible for long periods," he said. "But otherwise, it provides excellent opportunities for sportsmen."

Little Pee Dee WMA can be accessed by going from Mullins, S.C. Travel southeast on SC 917 for 5 miles and after crossing the Little Pee Dee River Bridge, turn left at the first entrance road. Maps are very useful for this area.

SANDHILLS WMA

The **Sandhills State Forest WMA**, which covers more than 46,000 acres of lands near Patrick, S.C., in Chesterfield County, offers good hunting opportunities for several game species.

Ruth said the terrain is primarily sandhills, as the name accurately suggests, but the habitat diversity is good enough to have a respectable population of deer, turkey and various small game species.

"Typical for larger areas, including WMAs, some hotspots exist for different species where the habitat is best for that specific species," he said. "But with any managed large tract of land, hunters need to scout the area annually because timber harvests, thinning, prescribed fire and other management practices can change the habitat annually. But with scouting prior to hunting, some excellent opportunities exist."

Sandhills State Forest WMA is north of Lake Robinson in southern Chesterfield and northern Darlington counties and east of the Lynches River in Kershaw County. Access is available at numerous places along US 1.

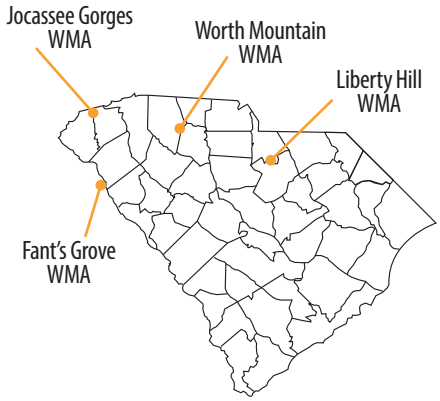
SC'S UPSTATE WMAS UP NEXT >



The BEST OF SC'S UPSTATE WMAS

HERE ARE SEVERAL CHANCES TO GET AWAY FROM THE CROWDS

By Terry Madewell



JOCASSEE GORGES WMA

The **Jocassee Gorges** tract, owned primarily by the S.C. Department of Natural Resources contains 43,500 acres in Pickens and Oconee counties, in the rugged mountains of the Upstate.

Access on the property via a paved road system is extremely limited. SC 178 and Cleo Chapman Road (County Road 143), are the only paved roads that access the property. Paved roads at three adjoining state parks provide access to the boundaries of **Jocassee Gorges**. Approximately 138 miles of "dirt" roads provide access thru the property.

Biologist Charles Ruth of the SDCNR said the **Jocassee Gorges** area is unique for South Carolina.

"The **Jocassee Gorges WMA** offers a unique opportunity for sportsmen to truly get as close to a wilderness hunt as you can in South Carolina," he said. "But the terrain is rugged, and lots of legwork is required to access some of the areas. It's not the ideal type hunt for everybody, but for those who do, it's awesome."

Ruth said the area has a fairly low density of deer, but that translates into an opportunity to harvest trophy bucks. In addition it's one of a few places in the state where deer, turkey and bear can be hunted during the appropriate seasons.

"The squirrel hunting opportunities are outstanding, and good grouse hunting is available," he said. "Because of the use of prescribed fire and timber thinning, some good small-game hunting exists in localized areas.

"Except for waterfowl, this WMA offers opportunities for most of the major game species in our state," Ruth said.



The Jocassee Gorges WMA offers huntres a chance to square off with white-tailed deer in a true, backwoods environment.

FANTS GROVE WMA

Fant's Grove offers a great diversity of hunting opportunities and is highly accessible. The majority of the 8,540-acrea area lies in Anderson County, with smaller portions in Oconee and Pickens counties.

This WMA has been under quality deer management regulations since 2000 and offers archery-only hunting for deer. Ruth said shotguns are allowed for turkey hunting, and although the area receives considerable hunting pressure, the opportunities for excellent deer and turkey hunting exist.

"Some remote areas are not easily accessible, so hunters willing to put in the effort can get away from most of the pressure," Ruth said.

Small-game hunting opportunities are very good within the specific seasons for this WMA. The key is locating the right habitat for the specific species hunted.

Waterfowl hunting is another popular opportunity at **Fant's Grove**. Draw hunts are available at the Clemson Waterfowl Management Area. For information call the Clemson SCDNR office at 864-654-1671.

Ruth said additional waterfowl hunting is available at **Fant's Grove** on Class II sites.

"Class II waterfowl sites are not draw hunts," Ruth said. "These are very good waterfowl-hunting opportunities as a rule. While planting success and water control at these sites will impact hunting success, if DNR has it classified as at Class II, hunters do have a chance for good waterfowl hunting."

LIBERTY HILL WMA



Liberty Hill WMA offers public-land hunters some excellent turkey hunting.

Liberty Hill is an 8,000-acre property straddling Kershaw and Lancaster counties that offers excellent deer hunting.

Ruth said the area generally goes by Game Zone 2 hunting regulations, although some of the WMA crosses into Game Zone 4. The habitat and opportunities remain the same, but he said to be sure to check the regulations guide for specific details.

"**Liberty Hill WMA** does have antler restrictions for deer hunting; however, this increases the opportunity to take good bucks," he said. "Plenty of deer are found on this beautiful tract of land.

"A great diversity of habitat exists here, because the **Liberty Hill WMA** borders 17 miles of the northeastern shore of Lake Wateree and the Catawba River. A lot of topographic relief typical of the piedmont area ensures plenty of hardwoods mixed with pines are available," he said. "Turkey hunting is very good in this area, and like many WMAs, if you hoof it to remote areas, your potential for success increases."

Ruth said the diverse habitat affords good hunting for small game when the right habitat is found.

Access is easy via SC 97, Singleton Creek Road and Wildlife Road.

Worth Mountain WMA has a dove field that is managed by the SCDNR.



WORTH MOUNTAIN WMA

Worth Mountain WMA in York County consists of 1,643 acres, providing excellent deer-hunting opportunities. Ruth said antler restrictions apply, and this tract was privately owned and managed for quality deer hunting before SCDNR acquired the land.

"What we've done is continue the quality deer management practices already in place," he said. ""Hunters do have to check in and out when hunting at **Worth Mountain**.

"Part of the property boarders the Broad River, creating more diversity in habitat types, and in addition to deer hunting good small-game hunting exists.

A dove field is maintained by the SCDNR that typically offers excellent dove hunting on specified dates and times.

SC 211 near Hickory Grove provides access to this property.

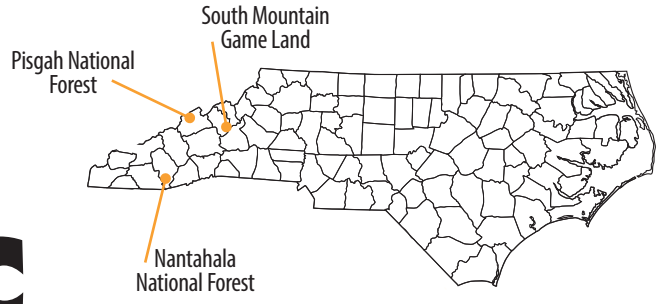
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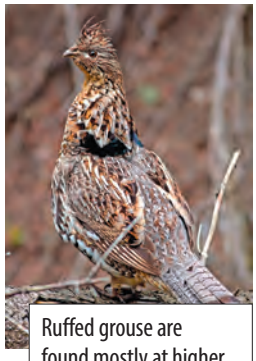
Time to HEAD FOR THE NC MOUNTAINS

By Craig Holt

PISGAH NATIONAL FOREST

Deer and black bears are the two main big-game animals for hunters in the **Pisgah National Forest,** which spans 508,847 acres of the Appalachian Mountains' central-to-northern section.

Its sheer size makes big-game hunting a daunting task.



Ruffed grouse are found mostly at higher elevations in the Pisgiah National Forest.

"People need to do their homework, especially bear hunters," said David Stewart, a biologist with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. "They need to go to (www.ncwildlife.org), locate bear sanctuaries, go to a county's website, pull up GIS maps and overlays, plus read the regulations digest."

Hunters harvest 70 percent of mountain bears with the aid of dogs. Some counties only allow dog-hunting by permit at Mount Mitchell and Daniel Boone bear sanctuaries.

Deer numbers have grown on western game lands.

"Hunters take a lot of nice bucks," Stewart said, "but you have to scout, based on (acorn) crops. If it's a good year, deer tend to stay in the woods."

Grouse hunters can find birds at higher elevations or at lower areas near US 64.

Hardwood forests hold "plenty of gray squirrels with red squirrels at higher elevations," Stewart said.

Rabbits favor wildlife openings, plus "a big series of fields off NC 281," he said.

SOUTH MOUNTAINS GAME LANDS

Paul Thompson, management biologist for the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission on the 21,760-acre property in Burke, Cleveland, McDowell and Rutherford counties, said it has a stable deer population.

"I've found some big sheds (antlers) in the past, but hunters have got to be willing to do their homework," he said. "Remote places often aren't explored."

Some black bears use this game land, although Thompson said "it's not a big hunting destination."

Food sources for deer and bear include acorn-producing oak trees.

As for small game, **South Mountains** has natural habitat and planted fields.

"(The Commission) has done a lot of active management, including timber harvests and burns, plus a lot of mowing," Thompson said. "It has a good component of early successional habitat."

Nine dove fields have a mix of corn, millet and sunflowers.

"Hardwood ridges are good for finding gray squirrels," Thompson said. "South Mountains has habitat around fields for rabbits."



Craig Holt

Fields on South Mountains Game Land provide rabbit hunters with mountain-hunting opportunities.

NANTAHALA NATIONAL FOREST

Macon County is the jewel of this national forest in North Carolina's southwestern corner, according to biologist Stewart, who oversees the **Nantahala's** 533,190 acres in Swain, Jackson, Transylvania, Clay, Cherokee, Graham and Macon counties.



The Nantahala National Forest in western North Cadrolina is full of black bears.

"The Macon Ranger District has more wildlife openings than any other ranger district," he said. "It's got more (logging roads) and regular openings at higher and lower elevations, sanctuaries and wilderness areas. Macon has a little of everything."

Black bears are plentiful.

"Like Pisgah, it's got three bear sanctuaries (Wayah, Standing Indian, Fires Creek) and is hunted by Tennessee dog hunters," Stewart said. "Most bear hunters know where the sanctuaries are because they've been hunting for years. There's also a lot of still-hunting.

"Cherokee and Macon counties also are hot spots for whitetails. I'm starting to hear of nice bucks being taken."

The national forest areas in Macon County have a few fields and openings that attract doves and rabbits.

"Grouse hunting is good," he said. "Hardcore Grouse Society guys around Franklin hunt them at old logging roads and cutovers."

Gray squirrels are plentiful at hardwood stands, while red squirrels are at higher elevations.

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Early Season Bucks: WHEN 'LESS IS MORE'

Once you pinpoint the buck you want to hunt when the season arrives, stay the heck out of the place where you expect to kill him.

By Dan Kibler

Rick Small

English teachers call them oxymorons — the joining of two words or phrases that would seem to be contradictions.

LIKE, FOR INSTANCE, "JUMBO SHRIMP."

Heath Rayfield's approach to early season deer hunting would seem to be an oxymoron.

"Less is more."

But it might just be a key for deer hunters in the Carolinas who want to put a big buck in their sights as soon as their season opens — be it a mid-August gun season in South Carolina's Lowcountry or North Carolina's statewide bow season one week into September.

"What I mean is, the less intrusive you are in an area you're planning to hunt, the better off you are when it comes time to try and kill him," said Rayfield, who guides hunters at Buchanan Shoals Sportsman's Preserve (704-695-2810) outside of Morven, N.C., a tiny community in the southern part of Anson County. "The first time you sit in your stand, that's the best chance you're going to have to kill him."

Rayfield relies on trail cameras set up in areas where he's feeding corn, or where he's got a good food plot in the ground, to figure out what kinds of bucks are at home on the piece of property he's watching.

"If I have the opportunity to sit for an hour or two and glass a big beanfield, yeah, I'll do that, and you'll have a chance to kill the bucks you see. But most of the time, we're hunting in the woods or around food plots.

"I don't check my trail cameras until Aug. 1, then I sneak in, pull the SD cards when I'm putting out corn, and sneak back out," he said. "After about Aug. 15, I'll check my cameras every two weeks, and if I can't check them between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the wind is right, I'll wait until a day when I can.

"If I get some good bucks on a trail camera where I don't have a stand, I'll wait and go in and hang it in the middle of the day, unless I know he's going to a big field at night, and he's going to stay all night; then, I'll go in and hang it at night, close to his bedding area, so I've got a better chance of getting in and out without bumping him."

continues >>>

ADMIRE FROM AFAR

Veteran hunter Will McElveen of Andrews, S.C., uses typical scouting techniques employed by many hunters, but he also does a few things differently.

"Bucks are very wary all the time, so I use great care when scouting," he said. "I'll slip into the swamps during mid-day to look for sign in funnels along thickets and the edge of creeks and swamp runs. I'll use trail cameras, as well, but I only check them occasionally to ensure I don't intrude too much. When I find what I want, I'll pick my stand site and stay out until I hunt that spot."

But he has another technique that helps him target bucks in the areas he hunts.

"I'm fortunate to hunt in an area with a lot of fields, as well as thickets and swamps," McElveen said. "While bucks won't always come out until dark, often they do, especially in the early season.

"I do drive-bys in my truck, looking for bucks in soybean and peanut fields. They'll be in corn fields, but you can't see them until those fields are cut. But I am very careful and methodical about this tactic. As I drive down a paved road or a dirt road that winds though the fields, I look into the far-off corners and edges in the late afternoon and frequently use binoculars. My target is to see a nice buck several hundred yards away. When I do, I mark where I see him, then I leave without spooking him. I'll come back mid-day the next day and slip in to the spot where I saw him. I wear rubber boots and no-scent clothing, and usually it's pretty easy to see where they are exiting the woods and walking into a the field to feed.

"I pick a stand site and will be back with my climber when the wind is right. I'll get there early, climb high and often will see the buck or sometimes several bucks.

"That's when the hard work pays off." ■

— Terry Madewell



Will McElveen looks for bucks in fields just before dark, then decides about hanging a stand.

Heath Rayfield staked out this 142-inch, double drop-tine buck, and killed him the first day he sat in his stand.



Rayfield has two perfect examples of how his strategy works. The first was a big buck he killed several years ago in Missouri; the second was a big buck with double drop tines he had on a trail camera on a 33-acre piece of property in Chesterfield County, S.C., consistently coming to one area.

"I had a five-day hunt in Missouri, and I spent the first two days just glassing," he said. "I gave up the first two days of hunting to glass, but I saw him, and I saw the right tree, and on the third day, at 11 a.m., I went in and hung my stand. I was back out in the stand at 3:30, and I killed him that afternoon.

"The big buck with the drop tines, I had him on camera the 22nd, 23rd and 25th (of August), and I never went back to the stand where I wanted to kill him until a few days before (Sept. 5)," he said. "I rode in on a tractor, and a dumped corn and a bag of 4S Draw out of the bucket, and I left without setting foot on the ground.

"I waited until the wind was right for that stand, and when I came back and sat the first time (Sept. 8), I killed him."

Rayfield said hunters can count on bucks, especially those operating in a bachelor group, to keep doing the same things, at the same times, from about Aug. 1 until the time when they rub the velvet from their antlers and go their own way — unless they're disturbed by a hunter tromping around in their territory.

"He's not gonna change his pattern until he loses his velvet. From Aug. 15 to Sept. 15, those bucks are 100% in bachelor groups and on a food pattern. If a big buck is in a bachelor group, you are hunting that group. They won't break up until they shed their velvet. They will bed together and travel together as a group."

"Once I get them on camera, I go to the house and put a game plan together, and I stay out of the place where I want to kill him."

continues >>>

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In sweltering, late-summer temperatures, a water hole can be a great place to set up on a nice buck.

KEEP AN EYE ON THE WATER

Even though fall arrives in September, the thermometer tells a different story. Average daily temperatures remain on the hot side for most of the month, and wildlife are still hovering near one of their most vital assets, water.

Hunters can target stable water sources early in deer season. They'll find them being routinely used by all types of wildlife, including groups of bachelor bucks.

Water holes can be everything from a winding creek, river, lake or swamp to something man-made like a ditch, a relic mining operation or a secluded farm pond. When it's hot, deer and other wildlife make a daily visit to water sources, without exception. When water availability is limited, it will bring in wildlife better than a prime food source.

T.J. Hallman, who manages a commercial hunting operation in South Carolina's Midlands area, believes water sources are critical for deer late in the summer when the weather is sweltering hot.

"Heat coincides with the early season, and water is a huge factor when it comes to a deer's health. Food, water and cover are the three essentials — water being the most important during those hot summer months," said Hallman, who likes to hunt near or over water sources when it's hot.

"It's a tactic that helps ease those buck-fever feelings because you typically see a lot of wildlife, but it can pay off big dividends with an unsuspecting trophy shows up traveling with his other bachelor pals."

The best water sources are places adjacent to bedding sites and feeding areas. Deer cannot visit a water source without leaving a trace of some kind in terms of tracks and trails. Hallman not only monitors water sources, he investigates the trails leading to and from them to identify places to set up.

"We have lots of drainages that creates natural travel avenues to the water's edge," Hallman said. "We travel the (Saluda) river time and time again, marking trails that come down to the water, follow the trail back to find where it originates, and set up to and from that frequent water source visitation." ▪

— Jeff Burleson

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Early Season Bucks
WHEN 'LESS IS MORE'

Set up trail cameras on food plots and sites where you've got supplemental feed out to see your bucks.

Ben Lecroy



Rayfield, who owns Thompson's Creek Deer Processing in Chesterfield, S.C., said one thing many hunters fail to understand when looking for a place to set up along the route an early season buck takes from his bedding area to his feeding area is that, in most parts of the Carolinas, he won't bed in the usual thick cover where you find him the rest of the season.

"Early in the season, a big buck would rather lay down on a big, wide open hardwood ridge than in a thicket," he said. "He'll get on top of a ridge, where he can see everything and has plenty of escape routes, where he can get in the shade, and where it's cooler than in a thicket, where there's no wind stirring. A bachelor group will roost on an open, hardwood ridge.

"Sometimes, you'll find a big buck laying down in the middle of a big beanfield, because he's hidden and he can get a good breeze." ▪



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

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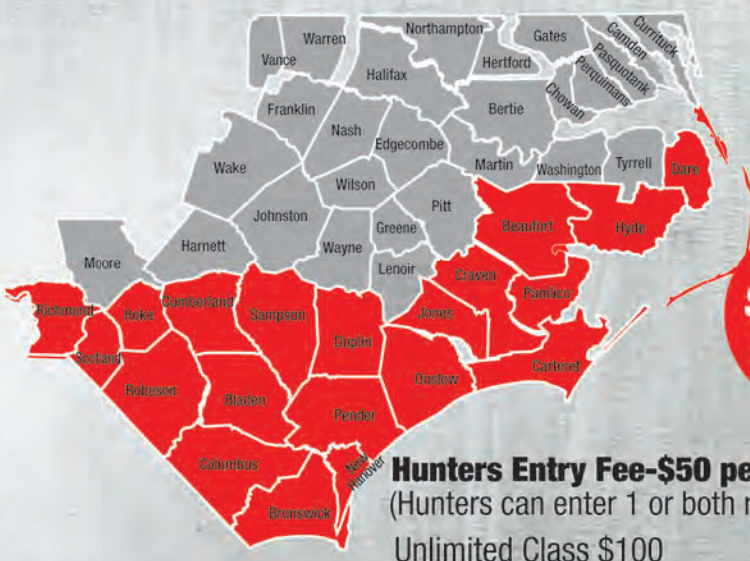
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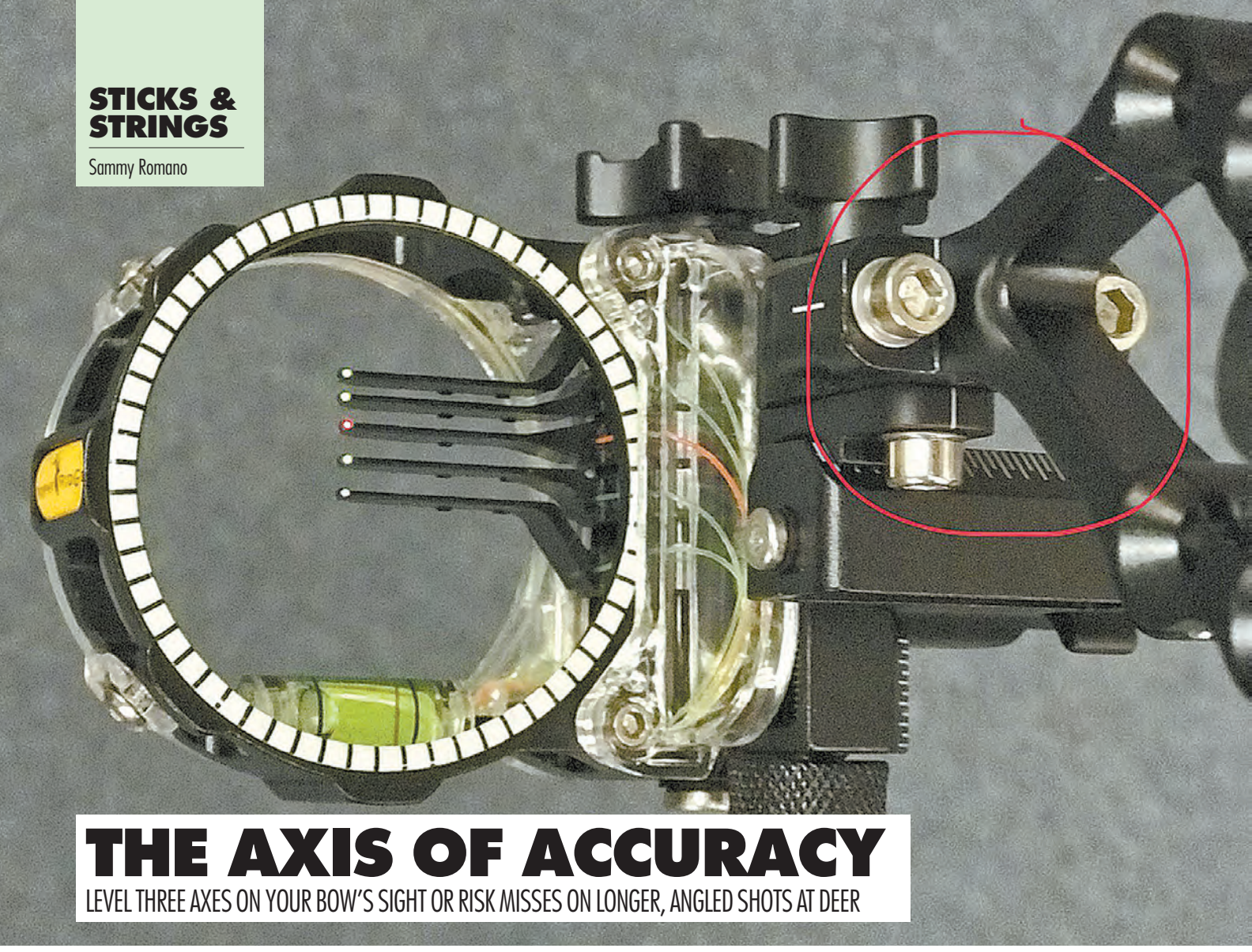
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Sammy Romano



THE AXIS OF ACCURACY

LEVEL THREE AXES ON YOUR BOW'S SIGHT OR RISK MISSES ON LONGER, ANGLED SHOTS AT DEER

Properly setting up a modern compound bow is a detail-oriented and often-tedious process. In order to obtain maximum accuracy, many hours of setup and tweaking are required.

While today's archers are much more knowledgeable when it comes to tuning their bow for perfect arrow flight, many still don't realize how critical it is to properly level all three axes of their bow's sight. Failure to do so can result in severe misses, especially when shooting at longer distances or at steep angles uphill or downhill.

An axis is an imaginary line around which an object rotates. A compound bow's sight has three axes. It is critical that all three are leveled to obtain the most accuracy possible.

THE FIRST AXIS

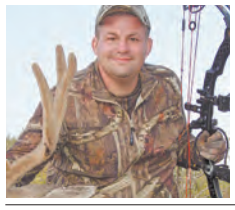
The first axis is best described as a line parallel to the ground running from left to right in front of the bow This is the least-important axis. This axis is set from the factory on many sights; however, sights that use a scope aperture mounted on a sliding or threaded rod will require this axis to be leveled. Rotate the scope aperture towards or away from you until its face is parallel to the bow's string.

THE SECOND AXIS

The second axis refers to the level of the sight head and the pins. The simplest explanation of this axis is that it runs through the archer's line of sight and rotates like the hands of a clock. This is the axis archers spend the most time leveling, and is definitely the most important. Failure to properly set the second axis will cause the archer to cant the bow when leveling the sight level. This will cause the pins to run diagonally, which will cause arrows to hit left or right of the target at longer distances. This problem will worsen progressively as the distance of the shot increases. Most of today's better sights offer some type of second axis adjustability. Even if your bow's sight doesn't have an adjustment for the second axis, this can be adjusted by shimming the sight mounting bracket itself.

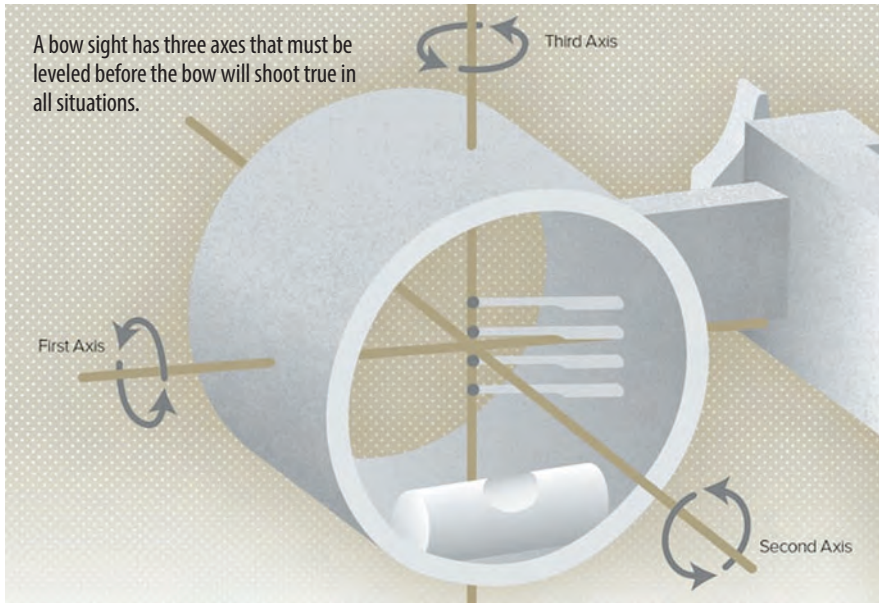
THE THIRD AXIS

The most-misunderstood and overlooked axis is the third axis. This axis runs top to bottom through the head of the sight, perpendicular to the ground. Picturing the sight head as a door hinge, opening and closing away from and towards the archer, provides the best analogy for the rotation along the third



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.*

OPPOSITE PAGE: The red circle indicates the adjustment screws used to adjust the second and third axes on your bow's sight.



A bow sight has three axes that must be leveled before the bow will shoot true in all situations.

axis. When taking uphill or downhill shots at angles of 45 degrees or greater and distances longer than 20 yards, this adjustment is absolutely critical to avoid left or right misses. This can make a difference of nearly a foot in windage at 50 yards or a steep angle. Most high-end sights offer third axis adjustability, and I wouldn't purchase one that doesn't.

To properly level the sight's third axis, make sure to level the second axis beforehand. The bow should then be placed in a bow vise. Next, install a temporary level on the bow's riser and level it to match the sight's level. The bow should then be rotated forward while keeping the temporary riser level's bubble centered. If the third axis is not properly adjusted, the sight's level bubble will run off to one side as the angle increases. Adjust the third axis until both the sight level and riser level are centered all the way until the bow's riser is parallel to the ground. Achieving this usually requires trial and error and several adjustments.

Once your bow is properly tuned and all three axes of your sight are properly leveled, the bow is ready to be sighted in. Many times, properly tuned bows that inexplicably shoot to the left or right have sights that weren't properly leveled to begin with.

I hope this explanation of why and how to level sight axes helps some archers who are struggling to dial in their bows. This can be a complicated and somewhat intimidating process, and if you aren't comfortable doing it yourself, as always I recommend bringing your bow to a pro shop that offers this service. Most pro shops offer sight-leveling for a reasonable fee, and they can save valuable time by doing it quickly and properly. Whether you're not sure if your sight is leveled, or if you know it isn't, have this done today to get the most from your bow setup. ▪

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Jeff Burleson



Mixing cereal grains and broadleaf plants in a food plot involves a seed mix that requires special attention in planting.

PLANT BLENDS OR PURE STANDS?

BOTH FOOD-PLOT STRATEGIES HAVE THEIR ADVANTAGES

Jeff Burleson

Planting season has arrived, and for most land managers, a planting plan is already in the works, and clovers, oats, peas, chicory, brassicas or other cool-season selections are in the hopper.

But are pure stands or blends more acceptable? Both can produce good results, but blends can produce some challenges that need to be considered before co-mingling seeds in the hopper.

The intent of any food plot is to provide a highly sought-after food source to encourage wildlife from all directions to incorporate it into their daily routine. Landowners can achieve this objective with pure stands and seed mixes. And there isn't one key to the decision. A pure stand can provide loads of food at the same time, and a mix can provide a variety of foods at different times.

For instance, most brassica seed varieties offer a food source at the end of its maturation period, whereas oats, rye and other cereal grains will offer tender food availability immediately after sprouting from the soil's surface. As these cereal grains mature, the stalks become less palatable and less attractive to wildlife. It just makes sense to plant these two seed varieties in a mix so that the food plot offers good nutrition from green-up of the grains all the way to the maturation period of the brassica variety. This mix can be beneficial for providing season-long food availability for any area in the country. However, planting specifics to include plant spacing and herbicide use can cause issues when planting these two seeds as companions.

DIFFERENT SCHEMES

To start of with, pure stands of any seed variety can be planted using the optimum method to produce the best results. Typically, blends incorporate a variety of seed types, seed sizes and growth characteristics that yield to a different grower's scheme.

One of the most-common mixtures involves mixing cereal grains with larger, late-maturing brassica species. Taxonomically, oats are a grass, and brassicas are broadleaf plants. Mixing grasses and broadleafs eliminates the ability to use selective herbicides in these plots. Most selective herbicides can be used to either target broadleaf weeds in grass plots or the opposite — target grass in broadleaf plots. Blends utilizing species represented in both plant families eliminate the ability to use pre-plant and post-plant herbicides. However, competition in cool-season plots is less of a problem than in warm-season plantings. As a



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TIME TILLAGE TO PLANTING:
The aroma of fresh-turned soil and diesel fuel is the smell of fall for many food-plot gurus. It's the beginning of the fall planting season, where hopefully, many deer will be coming out to play in the upcoming months. While many foot-plot growers plow their fields the day of actual planting, they should really plow several weeks before actually embedding the seed in the soil's surface. All the soon-to-be-dead plants that get turned up from tilling contain usable nutrients that should be encouraged to be used again. Landowners should delay planting immediately after tilling to allow the plants to die and for micro-organisms to regroup in order to decompose the dead matter into usable nutrients for the new plantings. Generally, two to three weeks is enough to wait after tilling for fall plantings.



Jeff Burleson

result, herbicides aren't typically used in the fall plantings, and these herbicide incompatibilities are likely not relevant.

SIZE AND DEPTH

The second important variable to consider when planting blends has to do with seed size and planting depth. Typically, cereal grains are very small seeds that require a very light covering of soil. When planted too deep, their success rate decreases dramatically. Additionally, they can be planted at a relatively high rate, as opposed to brassica and legume seeds that are usually much larger. Larger seeds need additional planting depth, and they generally produce larger plants that need more room to spread out.

As a result, planting these two seed sizes introduces a problem when machine planting. One alternative is to plant the larger seeds first at the proper depth and then top-broadcast the smaller cereal grains just before a big rain. The impact of the rainfall on the soft dirt can cover the small seeds just enough in order to allow germination.

Seeding rates should be reduced for both species in the mixture to allow enough area for each plant to grow sufficiently. Each companion plant requires adequate sunlight to facilitate energy synthesis, and they both need room to spread out

Wildlife will benefit from the use of pure stands of one species versus a blend of species with staggered availability. And from a maintenance perspective, it's better to use blends in the cool season as opposed to the warm season when weeds challenge any crop. When determining which planting regime to use, always consider the seed size and the expected coverage area of the plants when mature. ▪

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Using what you've learned from previous plantings, update your food-plot plans for the best results.



Jeff Burleson

LEARN FROM FOOD-PLOT SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

Every planting season, many property managers and hunters invest their blood, sweat and tears in a food-plot program. From new plots and new planting methodologies to new seed and fertilizer treatments, landowners are always trying to produce a bumper crop to feed their wildlife. When it works, repetition can be fruitful, but when it doesn't, the plan needs an adjustment.

To a new grower, planting food plots may seem very elemental. They see the farmer down the road plow up some fields, spread some fertilizer and plant some seeds. Seems easy, right? Sure, planting food plots can be an easy task, but there is a long list of variables that can quickly cripple a well thought-out plan.

The one thing the onlooker didn't see was how carefully planned out and precise the farmer was with his planting plans. Most large-scale, commercial farmers have an agriculture services company calculating exact application contents and rates that are crop- and location-specific. Planning and careful control of as many variables as possible is the key to success for growing any types of crops.

Of course, food-plot growers are not trying to earn next year's income with their 1½-acre Durana clover plot. But careful consideration of as many variables as possible is necessary to make the best shot at obtaining the desired results.

Analyzing prior history is an excellent way to improve results. Of course, when a plan comes together, repeating the same regiment in the next planting session makes sense. But this isn't usually the case for most amateur growers. The actual results from a previous season rarely parallel the desired results, especially for the first timers. If landowners want a better outcome, they should modify their methods to improve their results.

Albert Einstein once said, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results."

Develop a solid plan, experiment with different treatments, and record everything. After a few years of experimentation and in-the-woods experience, landowners will learn what works well on their properties and what doesn't. Let history dictate your future. ▪

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VENISON SAUSAGE ON A STICK

THIS MEAL WILL KICK DEER SEASON OFF WITH A BANG

While it's still very hot and humid, fall and hunting seasons are upon us. The calendar still shows several weeks of summer left, and Labor Day isn't far off, with fall officially beginning a few weeks after that.

But the Old Farmer's Almanac says that fall begins meteorologically on Sept 1. This corresponds much more closely to when fall begins in the minds of sportsmen throughout the Carolinas.

Many years, the September recipe in this column has featured doves, but there weren't any in the freezer this year. However, there was venison in the freezer, and with so many sportsmen looking forward to deer season and ready to punch their tags, it seemed like a worthy substitute.

This is a special recipe that features venison sausage prepared in a unique and fun way. It is done outside on the grill and makes a reasonably good substitute for the feast usually served on the opening day of dove season. It's also good for filling up young hunters after their first day on a deer stand and works equally well under large trees or on the porch of a hunting lodge or on your patio or deck at home. ▪

Jerry Dilsaver



if you don't have a jerky shooter, two plastic water bottles of slightly different sizes (top left) can be used to squeeze sausage into links (top right) and put on skewers (above).

VENISON SAUSAGE ON A STICK

This is a fun recipe any time, but I like it as a break from fish just as deer season is about to begin. Besides, it's a great time to polish off the remaining venison that's left in your freezer from last year. Hopefully, you've been eating a lot of fresh fish all summer, and this is a nice change. It's a win-win meal, as it tastes good and helps make space for this year's venison.

I don't have plain venison burger in my freezer. Call it all sausage if you like, but I have some with a few mild spices blended in for burgers, chili, meatloaf and such, and then I have some that really is sausage and is blended with hotter sausage spices for getting a day going right or for special times. I keep my burger and sausage loose ground rather than in links, as it is easier to mix or use small amounts. If you have link venison sausage, you can break the casing and reform it or simply put a skewer in it.

This recipe is one of those special times to use venison sausage. If you only have venison burger, you can spice it up with some cayenne pepper, chopped jalapenos, sage and more in one of many mixtures. This should have a little flavor explosion in your mouth and not merely be burger. Make it mild or wild to suit your personal tastes, but kick it up at least one notch.

I don't have a jerky shooter, which you can pack with the sausage mix and squeeze the handle to form links. This uses a plastic drinking water bottle to hold and form the sausage, with a slightly smaller-diameter, half-size water bottle as a pusher. Many enterprising folks use similar arrangements to form burger or sausage links, but they typically use plastic soft-drink bottles with a smaller opening, which makes a smaller link. I prefer a larger link and looked for a while until I found a Vitamin Water bottle with a larger neck and opening and an 8-ounce water bottle that would barely slide through it once the flat end was removed.

Once you make the first link, you'll be surprised how easy it is. Just load the larger bottle with the sausage mixture — the egg and bread crumbs help it bond together — insert a skewer and push. Be careful handling the skewers; they get hot and can burn. You'll have to handle metal skewers with a pot holder or glove.

For this particular version, I sliced a bell pepper and sweet onion to sauté on the grill and add to the mixture on a brat bun. Sometimes bell peppers can be strong, and the Cavender's seasoning helps tone this down.

I believe if you try this once, you'll have it again. It's a fun meal that is easy to prepare and tastes great. That makes it just right for serving on the patio or deck on a cool September evening. Enjoy! ▪

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound ground venison sausage

1 extra large egg

½ cup plain bread crumbs

1 large bell pepper

1 large sweet onion

Cavender's All Purpose Greek Seasoning

Black pepper

1 pack bratwurst buns

Sweet and spicy brown mustard

8 skewers

Buttery flavor, non-stick cooking spray

Jerky shooter or plastic bottle for forming sausage links.



Venison sausage and vegetables should cook on the grill for about the same length of time.

Jerry Dilsaver

PREPARATION:

Soak wooden skewers in water for at least 30 minutes. Slice the bell pepper and onion. Put the onion and pepper slices in a large pan, spray with non-stick cooking spray and sprinkle with Cavender's.

Mix the venison sausage, egg and bread crumbs. Load the sausage mixture into a jerky shooter or bottle. Insert a skewer into the bottle though the neck opening and push it through the sausage until about ¼-inch is protruding. Push the smaller bottle through larger bottle to form sausage dog on skewer. Repeat until all the sausage is formed into sausage links.

Spray a grill vegetable tray liberally with non-stick cooking spray. Preheat the grill to medium. Place the sausage links around the perimeter of the vegetable tray. Place the onion and pepper slices in the middle of the vegetable tray. Keep a close watch for hot spots and cook the sausage dogs until done.

Stir the onion and pepper slices occasionally while the sausage is cooking. Cook the sausage and vegetables for about 10 to 12 minutes, turning as needed. This will vary with the heat of the grill. The sausage and vegetables should be done at approximately the same time. Remove the sausage and vegetables from the grill and serve while warm.

The brat buns can be warmed on the grill or not — to personal preference. Serve the sausage links on the brat buns, with peppers, onions and sweet and spicy brown mustard. This can be served with a variety of vegetables. Corn on the cob and a fresh green salad or salad wedge are two good ways. Chocolate custard or a slice of Key Lime pie are excellent options for 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.*

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FOR THE Love OF A Dove

A good shoot can be as much of a social affair as a great kickoff for fall hunting seasons across the Carolinas. So break out that shell vest, that old shotgun and find a front-row seat.

By Pete Rogers

Unlike many other forms of hunting, a dove shoot is more of a social occasion; it is an opportunity to make new friends and renew old acquaintances, sharing in the opening of a new season.

Dust is brushed off gear stored from a long offseason. Faded hunting vests are draped over hunters in short sleeves with dove stools in hand as they wait for official shooting time to begin. It is an opportunity for an older generation to encourage boys and girls, sharing stories of days gone by, as the old Remington 1100s or Browning Sweet 16s ring through the countryside as birds make their way to the fields.

The dove shoot is just that: a shoot rather than a hunt. Months of planning have gone into preparing a field for opening day. The name itself hints at the different approach required for these little grey birds.

Good dove shoots begin with one thing: sunflowers. Everything else is secondary. The sunflower is filet mignon to the morning dove. Fields with big sunflowers will outperform all other crops. Mix in a little brown top millet or sorghum, and you have a good mixture.

Most hunters know doves do not like tall grass, so plowing between rows often helps. Four or five rows of sunflowers, then a 10-foot wide, plowed strip, followed by four or five rows of millet, another plowed area, repeated across a field, is often the best combination.

Early September days are scorching hot. Often, Labor Day weekend welcomes triple-digit temperatures. Hunters in North Carolina can open up at 30 minutes before sunrise, but South Carolina hunters are limited to afternoons-only the first six days of the season, when weather can be brutal. Drawing a stand in the shade is a premium.

As the day wears on, the doves start to come, as if they are compelled. First, a few at a time zoom into the field, then groups of four or five graduate to flocks of a dozen or more, wheeling as they come in at treetop level and dive into the field, then barrel back up over the trees on the far side of the field. Some doves will draw more than a dozen shots on their way across the field. Men yell one another's names to signal approaching birds or warn of birds flying too low for a safe shot. For hours, the ordinarily quiet countryside is filled with the distant popping of shotguns, panting of hot, dry-mouthed dogs and swearing of old men whose shooting is a tad rusty form a nine-month layoff.

continues >>>



Sunflowers are a prime grain for dove-field plantings by both state wildlife agencies in the Carolinas.

PUBLIC DOVE FIELDS ARE NUMEROUS

Public dove fields are readily accessible to most hunters in the Carolinas.

The S.C. Department of Natural Resources plants and maintains 41 public dove fields across the state; most are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Each field has its own specific regulations and hunting dates; some are open Wednesdays and Saturdays, while others are open on Saturday afternoons only. Check the regulations for fields and regulations in your area. (http://www.dnr.sc.gov/wildlife/dove/fields.html)

North Carolina has more than 90 fields to choose from, with different crops and different regulations in place. Visit www.ncwildlife.org/Hunting/Where-To-Hunt-Shoot/Public-Places/Game-Land-Dove-Fields/Dove-Fields-Map#below

Safety in fields is a big concern for many hunters. With hunters scattered across the field, it can be dangerous if hunters are not paying attention. Avoid shooting at low birds, to prevent accidental shooting of other hunters. If you are not shooting in an upward trajectory, the bird is too low. ▪



Dan Kibler

A good dove field, a good wing-shot and a good retriever are an equation that will wind up with a pile of doves to clean.

The dove shoot is the great equalizer in hunting. No much physical exertion is needed except for dealing with the heat. No gender, age or socio-economic barriers exist. A license, a shotgun, a vest full of shells and a penchant for camaraderie are all that are required.

Most hunters prefer a 12-gauge with No. 7½ shot, but these big guns are not necessary at all for doves. A good 20-gauge with No. 8 shot or even a 28-gauge loaded with No. 6 shot is a good choice. It is in the dove field where the 16-gauge is most-often seen. Once referred to as the gun that "carries like a 20 but shoots like a 12," the 16-gauge is the most-overlooked shotgun available today. No. 8 shot is an excellent choice for the 16-gauge, but if you can find it, get some No. 9 shot in any of these gauges and you will not be disappointed. The dove is not difficult to bring down, and the No. 9 shot gives you a lot more shot in the shell.

To all who participate, the dove shoot is an opportunity to get together and share the sport with people from all generations and walks of life. Marksmanship here is required for success, but is not as important as participation. Skill is not as desired as enthusiasm.

The dove shoot is one of the great southern traditions, an opportunity to go back to a time when a community of hunters gathered around a field to renew old friendships, tell stories of days long gone and to shoot doves. When the shooting stops everyone gathers around the trucks. Drinking Cokes and telling stories of our feast or famine in the field. This is the time when relationships are sealed, when generations unite in a common bond.

It is the pursuit of the dove that brings us here, but we are not connected by our rate of success, nor by the weapons we use, the pedigree of our dogs or the lifestyle we live. Here on the dove field, we share a love for nature of a small grey bird, and a lifestyle of hunting that begins a new season in the outdoors. ▪



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

GET AN EARLY LOOK IF YOU CAN

Many hunters head out on opening day of dove season having never seen the field being shot, maybe having received a last-minute invitation from a business connection, a friend at church or an acquaintance from the bleachers at a high school football field.

But if you have access to the field a few days before the season opens, it will be well worth your while to check the layout and watch how and where birds enter and leave. Try to watch at the same approximate time that the hunt will take place, as birds' flight patterns may vary over a day's time: a bird coming to the field from the roost at a certain time may arrive from one direction, while one coming from water may come from an entirely different direction.

It may be strange to equate doves with largemouth bass, but both will cuddle up to structure. For a bass, that might mean making its home next to a nice stump in the middle of a shallow flat. For a dove, however, structure might be a dead tree, a power line, a break in a tree line, even a high spot in a field. Birds like to enter or leave fields flying past such objects, so pick a stand within range of just such a spot. Birds especially like to light in big, lone trees along the edges of a field before diving in for the buffet line.

If strips of grain have been left in a field, they're great places to hide and get shots at doves that have broken the first line of hunters and crash in for a meal. ▪

— Dan Kibler



Take look at the dove field you're hunting and pick out a spot close to physical features that will attract doves. If you can get a look at the field a day or two ahead of time, even better.

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★★**3rd Place** Weatherby Vanguard 7mm rifle with scope.★★

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By Phillip Gentry

ACCORDING TO BASS PRO BRYAN THRIFT, THE FALL BASS PATTERN IN THE CAROLINAS ISN'T WHAT YOU MIGHT EXPECT IT TO BE. HERE'S HOW TO MAKE IT WORK WHEN SEPTEMBER ARRIVES.

CASTING SHADOWS

Phillip Gentry

Most descriptions of fall bass fishing start out talking about how changes in the weather will affect the bite.

This is not one of those stories.

In fact, according to bass pro Bryan Thrift of Shelby, N.C., it's often hard for Carolina anglers to tell when summer ends and when fall begins.

Thrift, who has fished both Carolinas extensively throughout his professional career — he's a two-time FLW Angler of the Year — said most years the weather just goes right on being hot and miserable into the fall pattern, yet every year he still sees and believes that bass transition into a "fall bite."

"The days start getting shorter," Thrift said. "I think this signals to both bass and bait that it's time for a season change, whether the weather cooperates or not."

Thrift's biggest indicator that bass are or should be moving into the fall pattern is seeing signs of life back in the shallows. For most of the summer, both bass and baitfish, the latter primarily threadfin shad, reside in deep, offshore waters, but they start making a definitive move into shallow water as August turns to September.

"The water can cool off a degree or two at night; that's all it takes, but I really believe that happens because the duration of sunlight is less now than it was a month ago," he said.

To test his theory, Thrift will motor to shallow areas, which might be near the mouth of a tributary or further back in one, then cut off his outboard motor and spend five or 10 minutes observing the area around his boat.

"I'll just sit quiet; I'm really not even watching the graph, just looking at the surface of the water, watching for a couple of shad to flip or to see some of that nervous water that indicates a school of bait is just below the surface," he said.

Once he's convinced the baitfish migration has begun, he will approach it with three patterns in mind: two shallow and one offshore.

The first is a topwater bite, and he comes armed with a buzzbait and a walking bait, both of which allow him to cover a lot of water. His preference is a Damiki Rambler walking bait and a Damiki MTB Noisy buzzbait.

"I'm going to use a white buzzbait and a shad-colored walking bait," he said. "I'm targeting schooling bass, the first ones that are reacting to the bait moving up.

He typical starts in shallow water near the mouth of a tributary creek and works his way back. He said the bass he catches on the topwater lures are often fickle fish, but also bigger fish.

His other shallow-water strategy is a subsurface presentation. He's still targeting shallow water near the bank, except he's going to target bass that are holding on structure, like a laydown or a boat dock.

>



When September arrives, bass pro Bryan Thrift starts checking out shallow water for the presence of baitfish and bass.

Phillip Gentry


[CAN'T STOP FISHING]
[CONTROL FREAK]
[STEP UP]
[CAN'T STOP]
SLX DC
• RIGID ALUMINUM FRAME
• COMPACT SIZE
• LIGHT WEIGHT
• DIGITAL CONTROL (DC) BRAKING TO MAXIMIZE DISTANCE AND MINIMIZE BACKLASH
SLX XT
• RIGID ALUMINUM FRAME
• COMPACT SIZE
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SLX
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Baitfish, especially threadfin shad, will change areas in a reservoir when daylight hours begin to shrink as fall approaches.

"I believe these are the same fish that are following the baitfish to the bank," he said. "Maybe they're just resting or waiting for the baitfish to wander past them, but they're usually about the same size bass as what I'd expect to catch on top."

Thrift's sub-surface arsenal includes a shallow-diving, square billed crankbait and a jig with a crawfish trailer. He looking to pick up a few more bites from structure-oriented fish in the same area where he's seeing baitfish on the surface but where bass are not actively chasing bait.

Thrift will stick with a natural/baitfish paint job on the crankbait, but he picks the jig/trailer combo based on the color of the water. If the water is dirty, he'll pick a high visibility chartreuse trailer. In clear water, he'll stick with white or pearl.

His third strategy relies on offshore fish. Thrift makes the distinction here between shallow water on the bank and shallow water away from the bank.

"It's not necessarily deep water, it's just away from the bank," he said. "It's not that I think all the bass have moved shallow yet. I know they haven't, but in deep water, you've got issues wondering if the water is turning over or if the fish have moved up or stayed down in the water column."

"The shallow-water bite is more predictable. No turnover, no guessing at depth. Not all the bass are going to move to the bank; that's why I call this an offshore pattern rather than a deep-water pattern," he said.

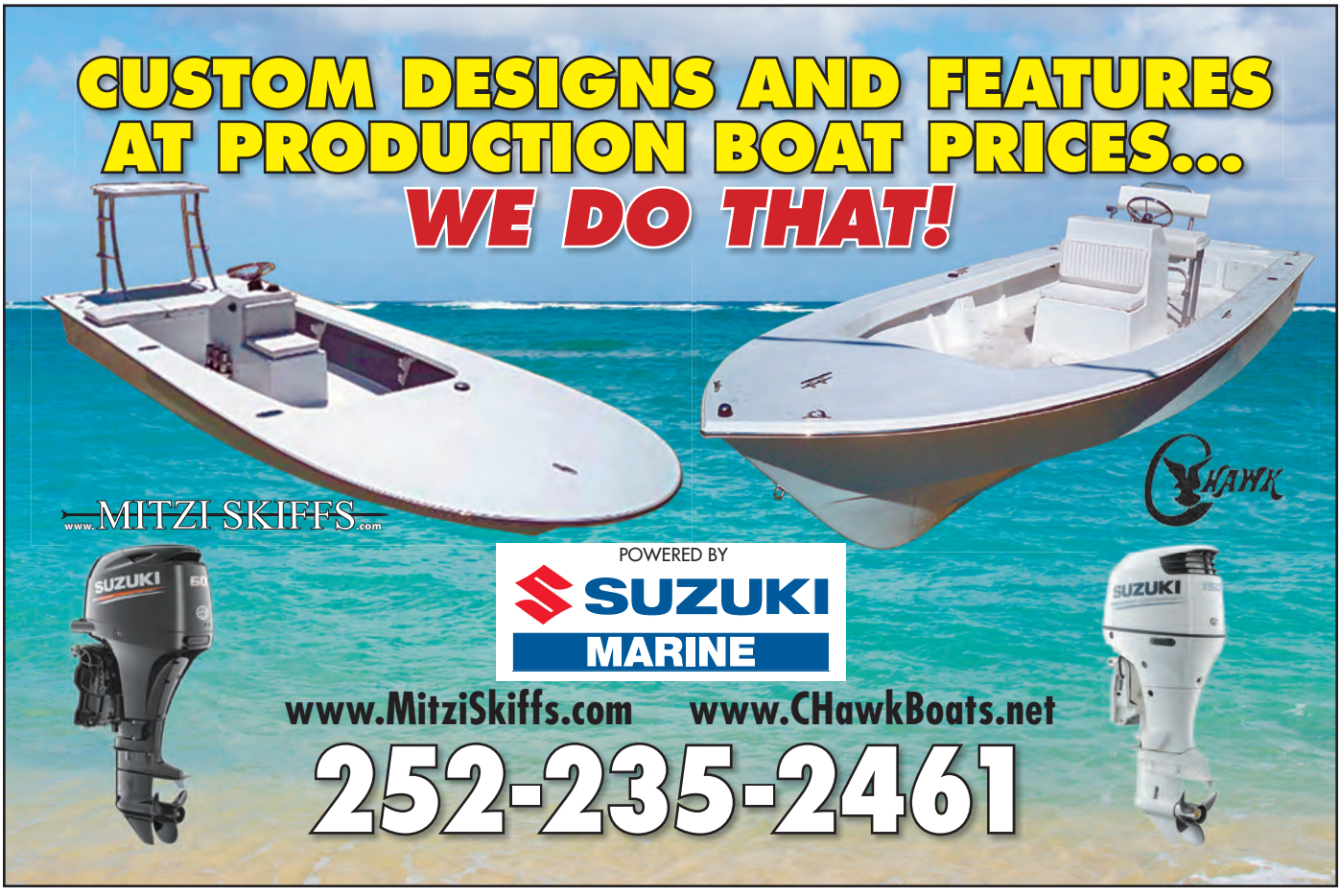


Phillip Gentry

Baits are the same as his subsurface pattern. He's going to look for stumps, brush piles or even ditches that are away from the bank — and most likely toward the back of a creek — that are holding bass. ▪



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.*





When it comes to fishing topwater lures like buzzbaits, bass pro Bryan Thrift is all-in for using mono over braid.

MONO VS. BRAID FOR TOPWATER

Bass pro Bryan Thrift pays a lot of attention to bass-fishing trends — he wasn't BassFan's No. 1-ranked angler in the world in 2011 for no reason. But Thrift also trusts his own beliefs when it comes to bass fishing, even when they go against the tide of other anglers.

One such case in point is the use of braided line when fishing topwater lures like buzzbaits and walking baits.

"I guess the current thought is braid gives you instant feel to set the hook, and when you do set the hook, there's no stretch, so you get better hookups," he said. "I've fished both ways, and I still prefer to use mono when fishing topwater baits.

Here's why.

Thrift doesn't disagree that braid has more sensitivity than mono or that braid's no-stretch characteristics lead to faster hookups. In fact, he said those are the problems with using braid.

"Topwater fishing is such an exciting way to fish," he said. "Even as a pro, fishing pro tournaments, I get exciting seeing a bass blow up on a topwater bait."

In this excitement, many anglers — and Thrift includes himself in this group — tend to set the hook too quickly. With braid, the hookset is instantaneous, but it often leads to lip hooks rather than a jaw hook because there is no stretch.

"In the excitement of the moment, we all tend to set the hook hard, and on braided line, a hard hookset can tear holes in the fish's mouth," he said. "I just feel like the combination of these two things makes me lose too many fish that I would not have lost on mono."

Conversely, Thrift said, mono is a little more forgiving. It takes a little more time to transfer the hookset from the rod to the fish, and the result is more jaw hooks and softer hooksets — if that's actually a thing — when the angler reacts to a big, blow-up bite.

Thrift said his line of choice for topwater fishing is P-Line original. He likes 20-pound test for buzzbaits and 15-pound test for walking baits.

Thrift also debunks the thought that fish can't see the line when using braid for topwater.

"I've done a lot of testing in swimming pools, and you can see the shadow of the braid on the bottom, even if the line isn't in the water," he said. "Mono also casts a shadow, but it's not nearly as defined as braid. With a tournament on the line, I need all the bites I can get." ▪

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Davy Hite



Bass key on shad so much in the fall that you should have plenty of baits tied on that imitate them, like this baitfish-colored soft-plastic jerkbait.

NO. 1 FOR BASS: FIND THE BAIT

SEPTEMBER FISHING CAN BE EASY IF YOU GET IN THE RIGHT AREAS, PLACES BASS ARE FEEDING

I love it when September arrives, because the days start to get shorter, the nights get cooler, and there's deer season and college football. And early in the season, when the games are on Saturday nights, you can bass fish all day and still get to the game on time.

The problem with bass fishing in September is, it's not early spring. In February, March, April and May, we can all find fish and catch them. They're all in shallow water, and we don't have any problem finding them. Then, it gets tougher in July and August.

In spring, when 90% of the bass are in 3 feet of water or less, you can eliminate 90% of the water in a lake. In the fall, well, no. Fish are so scattered; they can be in a foot of water in the back of a creek, or they can be out chasing bait over 80 feet of water.

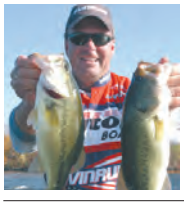
What happens is, nature kicks in. Bass are cold-blooded, and when the water temperature starts to fall, they know they need to feed up for the winter that's coming, and they start following bait. Getting them to bite isn't that difficult; it's finding them, because they're on the move. You can get them to bite if you can just get around them.

So, because bass are moving so much in September and early October, you need to find the baitfish that is the dominant forage in the lake you're fishing, whether that's gizzard shad, threadfin shad or blueback herring. You have to find the bait. Period.

VISUAL CLUES

The first thing you can look for are visual clues. You can see bait on the surface, usually early or late in the day. Second, you can pay attention to the birds of prey. Seagulls move back to our lakes in September and October, and they can show you where the baitfish are. The other thing is, one of the biggest changes in bass fishing lately is how good our electronics are. I can remember starting fishing on Lake Murray 30 years ago with a Humminbird Super Sixty, which was a flasher. Now, my Humminbird Helix 10 has got 2D sonar, side-imaging, down-imaging, 360-imaging. You can use all of it, and very effectively, to find bait.

These fish roam with the bait. If you're



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

a fishermen who only gets to fish on Saturdays, you may find them shallow one Saturday, then the next Saturday, they're not there. They move with those schools of bait. But in a week's time, they will probably not be more than a mile away.

When I talk about finding the bait, I don't mean you have to run from one end of the lake to the other. You can probably find the bait somewhere between the mouth and the back of a creek. Use the tools you've got, especially your electronics.

If fishing is tough for you this month, you're probably not around the right kind of bait. When you get around the bait and the fish, you can catch them. They'll be feeding. It isn't like trying to catch them in July and August.

If you try and try and still can't find bait, look for places where you can see some bream on the bank. Bream are going to be near the best shoreline cover in a lake, whether that's vegetation, riprap, stumps or dock pilings. That's an option.

DON'T OVERTHINK

This is one time when you need to make it as simple as possible. Sometimes, you can outthink yourself fishing for bass. You can take into account turnover, the barometric pressure, the weather, cloud cover, current, and really, all you've got to do is find the bait. It's like having something like $X+Y+Z+X^2$ = baitfish = bass. You can skip right to the answer, because all of the other things are just parts of the whole.

When I do my homework and find the bait and the fish, I like to fish baits that bass will react to. I love to topwater fish, and this is an opportunity. I'll have a walking bait tied on, something like a Chug Bug, and maybe a Skitter V or an X-Rap Pop — I'll probably have all three of those baits tied on, plus a soft-plastic jerkbait like a Yamamoto D-Shad. If I've found fish toward the back of a creek, say a flat creek with ditches where the bass will have some deep water close by, I like to fish crankbaits in those situations, so I'll have a square-billed bait and a regular diving bait tied on, maybe a BX Brat and a DT-6.

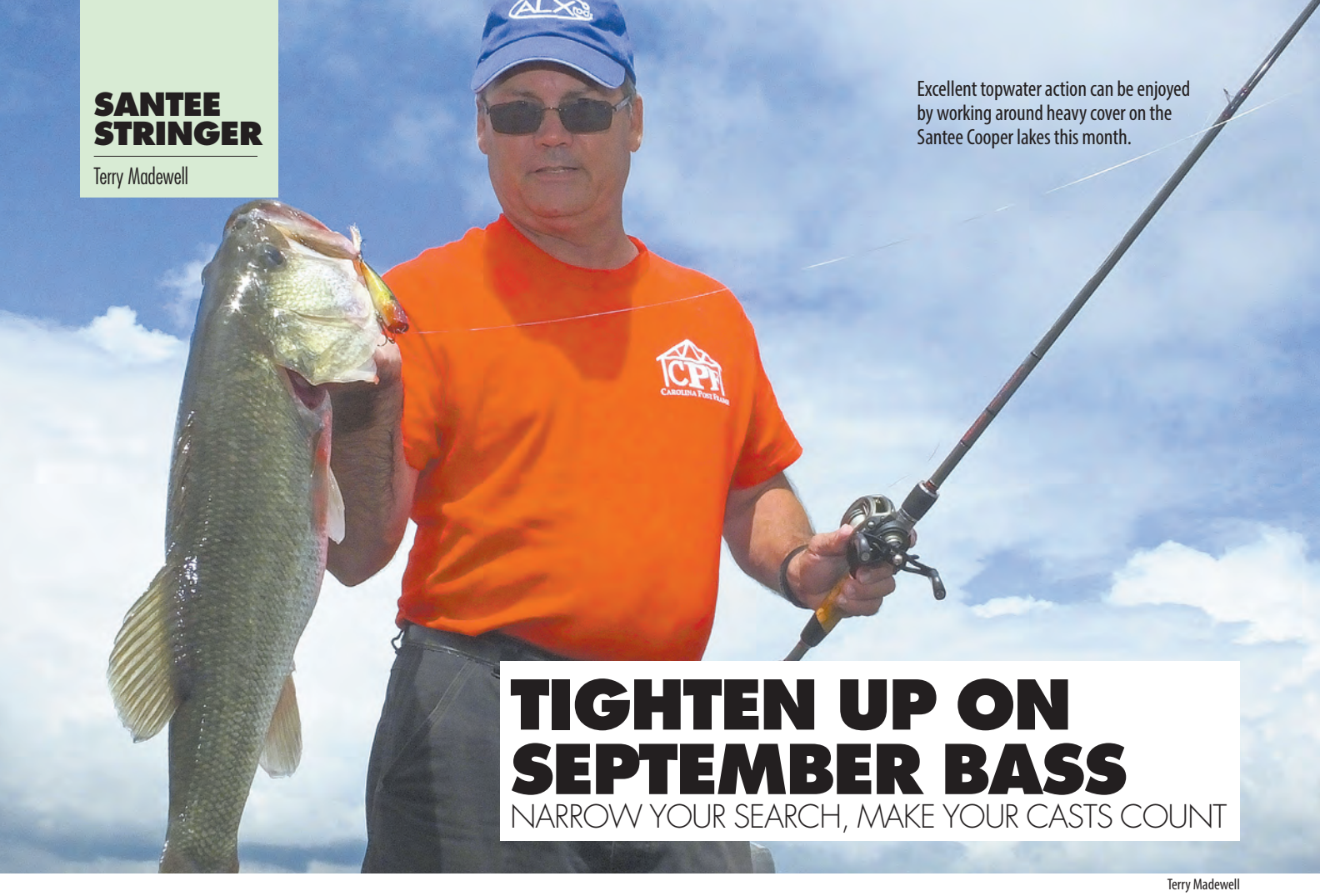
But everything is secondary to finding the bait, because when you finally get in the right spot, with the right bait, you're going to be able to get bass to bite. It's not going to be difficult, because they're hungry and looking to feed, and you put a bait in front of them, and it works.

And you can spend a few weeks on the lake, with less boat traffic. If you're like me and you don't get excited about deer hunting until it gets cooler, it's the perfect time to be on the lake.

Just find the bait. ▪







Excellent topwater action can be enjoyed by working around heavy cover on the Santee Cooper lakes this month.

TIGHTEN UP ON SEPTEMBER BASS

NARROW YOUR SEARCH, MAKE YOUR CASTS COUNT

Terry Madewell

September may not be the most-productive month for bass fishing, but for many anglers, it's a vastly overlooked opportunity.

Both Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie have scads of areas where prime conditions for excellent fishing exist, and the upper end of Lake Marion checks all the "must-have" boxes.

Guide Brett Mitchell said the word "tight" fits several of the requirements for a successful bass-fishing adventure during late August and September.

WHERE ARE THEY?

Mitchell said bass may be on multiple patterns for much of the year, and fishing heavy, vegetative cover in the upper end of Lake Marion is a strong pattern right now.

"Both lakes will have bass on this basic pattern, but the upper end of Lake Marion, from Pack's Flats down to Jack's Creek, has an abundance of quality habitat," Mitchell said. "Bass are going to be holding close, 'tight' if you will, to heavy cover in water from 3 to 7 feet deep. An abundance of cover exists, and while the enormous amount of eye-appealing territory is huge, anglers can eliminate much of the water."

Mitchell said he narrows his search to smaller targets within the big picture of acres of cover. Long stretches of weeds or solid growth on the surface are low-priority targets. He prefers isolated clumps of cover with open holes as well as points, pockets and any irregularities along the edges.

Other high-priority targets are places where different types of weeds or cover meet and mingle.

"Bass like opportunities where they can lie in wait and ambush prey, and these places are ideal situations for that to occur," he said.

Types of aquatic vegetation Mitchell fishes include lily pads, crested floating heart and isolated cypress trees.

"I've found bass move to different areas based on the daily weather," he said. "While the big picture target is still applicable, the small, tight-focus area for success may vary."

THE RIGHT LURES

Mitchell will employ topwater baits such as Pop Rs and Booyah frogs, plus soft plastics such as 5-inch trick worms in junebug color. Swimbaits are not well-suited for this type of fishing, except for having one ready when topwater schooling action occurs within casting range.

"Another thing I like about this time of year is I can experiment with multiple lures on any given day," he said. "Depending on the specific cover and depth, anything from topwater lures to bottom bumpers can be very effective."

Mitchell said frogs and similar baits worked through matted, dense cover and over open holes in matted grass are lethal at times.

"As September progresses, we'll see more and more surface activity," he said. "However, soft plastics fished into tight places are often my go-to baits because of their versatility."



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.*



Terry Madewell

ISOLATION THERAPY:
In lakes with an overabundance of visible cover, like Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie, try to locate pieces of cover that stand apart, either by location or type. Fall bass key in on these kinds of spots.

TIGHT CASTS CAN MAKE OR BREAK THE DAY

Mitchell said another crucial "tight" factor is casting ability. The window of opportunity for a bite from a big bass is often very small, and the ability to consistently place the lure on target is crucial.

"I've seen times when I consistently catch bass throughout the day with extremely accurate casts," he said. "But if the target is missed by even 6 inches, you'd never know an opportunity was missed.

"The difference between a productive trip to perhaps only hooking a couple bass is directly linked to casting accuracy," he said. "Big bass are still in play at this time of the year, and while not a lot of double-digit trophy bass are taken, the opportunity to catch multiple 5- to 7-pound bass is realistic. And Santee Cooper has the potential to produce a trophy bass any time of the year. "

Mitchell said his experience has shown accurate casts on the right targets trigger more bites from big fish than a near miss, and simply hooking more bass improves the odds of doing battle with bigger bass.

"Although the big picture of bass fishing at this time of the year is targeting large expanses of heavy cover, by focusing on small, specific targets you vastly improve your odds," he said. "Understand, bass patterns change daily with varying conditions, but when you find an area with bass, you've likely found a place worth investing time.

"Finally, even if you need to practice at home between trips, learn to cast the right lure precisely to your target," he said.

Tighten your big-picture search to target small windows of opportunity, understand bass prefer specific cover suited to daily weather and water conditions, and shrink your casting miscues from close to miniscule misses. ▪





TOPWATER ACTION
gives Roanoke Rapids anglers a thrill


Roanoke Raipds Lake's striped bass and largemouths can be caught in the Gaston Dam tailrace this month.

Tony Garitta

Guide Tim Biesecker of Roanoke Rapids, N.C., half-jokingly said that September is a good time to get the oil changed in your 4-stroke outboard engine and to get the bearings on your trailer wheels checked.

"It's a tough month for fishing, because the water at Roanoke Rapids Lake is typically very clear," said Biesecker (252-532-1846). "I look for bait, wind and water with some color. If I'm lucky, the day will be overcast with light rain."

On a gloomy day, Biesecker said largemouth bass and striped bass often bust shad below Lake Gaston Dam on Roanoke Rapids. If the lake's waters are being pulled and there's current, so much the better.

He casts ¾-ounce Zara Spooks and unweighted white Flukes and Senkos to generate explosive strikes from surface feeders. He may also opt for ½-ounce Rat-L-Traps in shad patterns. The stripers and bass will run 1 to 4 pounds.

Biesecker said there's one serious drawback to fishing near the dam. Its waters harbor huge rocks, often barely visible. Navigation is treacherous and best accomplished with a trolling motor.

"Not only is the dam area dangerous, the entire lake resembles Tuckertown Lake, with lots of shallow, stumpy places," Biesecker said. "If you stray from the main channel, it may result in some expensive repair bills."

On sunny days when schooling activity ceases, Biesecker targets largemouth bass by fishing the grass, the dominant cover on Roanoke Rapids. He fishes a clear Spook or Sammy along grass edges and in pockets.

"The clearer the water, the clearer the bait," said Biesecker, who also fishes belly weighted, shad-colored plastics through the grass mats. He also experiments with swimbaits around grass.

For the thickest mats, he fishes a white or black frog with stout tackle and line, early or late, to drag the bass out of the grass.

"I prefer non-popping frogs because of the clear water," said Biesecker.

Punching through the grass with a heavy jig can also be effective.

At places with little grass, around channel edges and ledges, he switches to jerkbaits, which he fishes unconventionally.

"Just remember to burn them; reel fast, with quick jerks," he said.

Biesecker's real love is crankbait fishing, but once Roanoke Raids became inundated with vegetation, his cranking opportunities became restricted to the few channels, ditches and drops relatively barren of grass. His go-to crankbaits consist of shallow- to medium-running square-bill models in citrus colors.

"Deep divers can be used downlake, but floating grass will worry you to death," he said. ▪

— Tony Garitta

TILLERY CREEK BACKS

are key to finding bass in September

Not many bass fishermen are fond of September, a transitional month with changes in the weather that puts fish on the move. Fall turnover doesn't help, either.

The fickleness of September doesn't phase bass fisherman Rusty Bowers of Albemarle, N.C.; it's one of his favorite months for bass fishing, especially at nearby Lake Tillery.

"When I began fishing bass tournaments at Tillery, I had most of my luck in September," said Bowers, who often motors to the backs of creeks to catch his fish.

He will go as far back in the creeks as he can, always looking for bait. Once he finds the back of a creek filled with forage, he knows the fish will be there.

"I catch most of my fish in 1 to 5 feet of water, mostly around wood," Bowers said. "The wood could be in the form of a stump, a pier post, a tree lap, a logjam or even a little twig. They would all attract fish."

Bower gets most of his strikes using a Texas rig with a ⅛-ounce sinker or an unweighted Super Fluke. His color choices include black and red shad.

If the water is dingy, he'll flip the baits to entice strikes; if the water is clear, he'll make long casts.

"The fish at Tillery can be really spooky in clear water this time of year," Bowers said. "You need to keep your distance."

Whatever the approach, Bowers has to fish slowly to get the bass to strike. The majority of fish will range from 1 to 3 pounds.

Tony Garitta



Veteran fisherman Rusty Bowers of Albemarle, N.C., targets bass in the backs of Lake Tillery's creeks this month.

Bowers' tackle consists of a 6-foot-10 baitcasting outfit. He'll spool his reel with 10- to 15-pound line, depending upon water clarity. In clear water, he goes to lighter line, usually 10-pound; in dingy water, he'll use heavier line.

Bowers said fishing the backs of creeks also negates the impact of turnover, which could take place as early as late August at Tillery.

Bowers offers a tip for catching large numbers of bass at Tillery with little effort. If the lake level falls 2 to 6 feet, a rare occurrence, plenty of fish can be caught, whenever that happens.

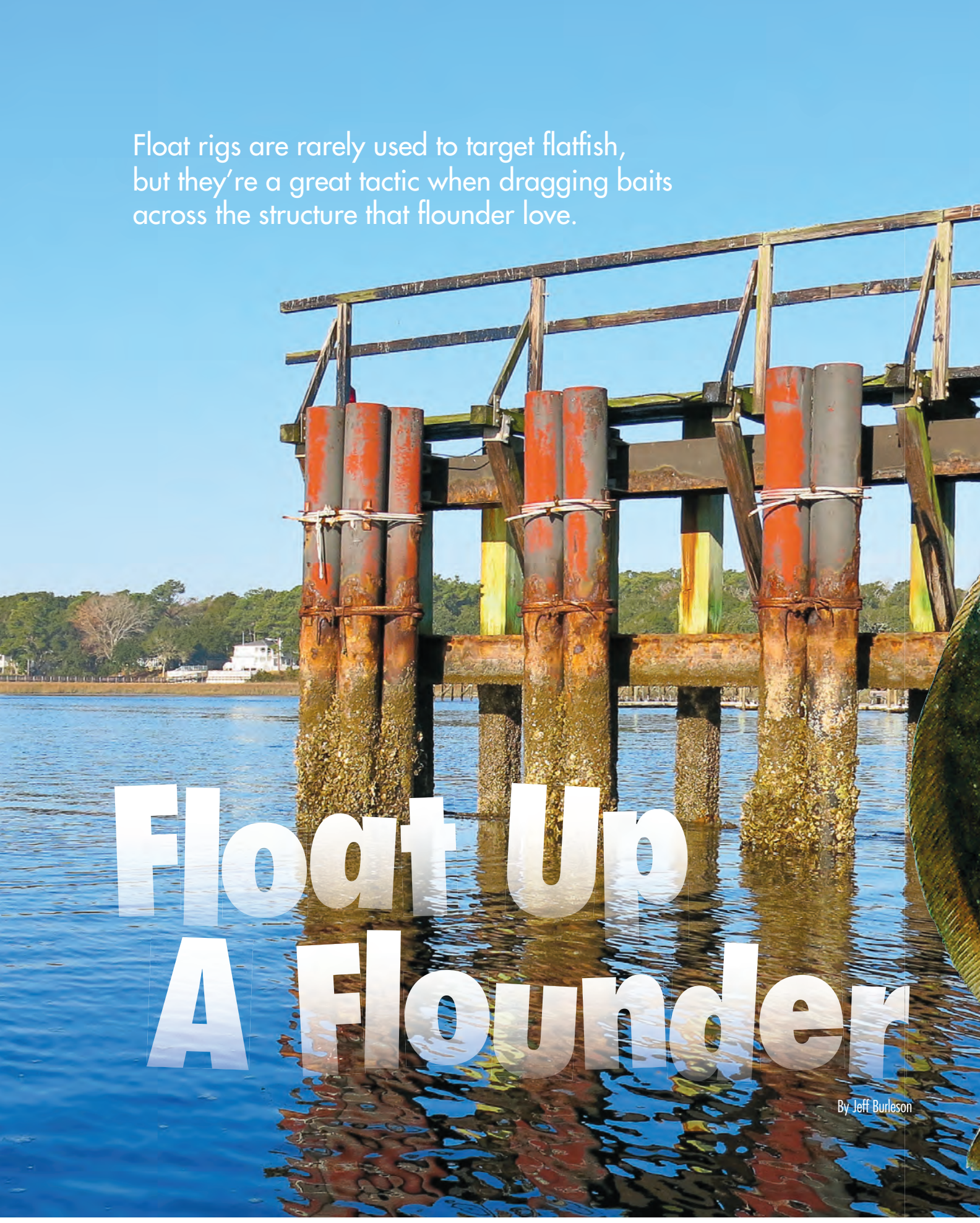
When the pros from Major League Fishing came to Tillery in 2018, the lake had been lowered 6 to 7 feet for infrastructure work. The pros caught fish everywhere.

"When Tillery is down, just throw a little crankbait and you'll catch fish," said Bowers. "There's nothing to it." ■

— Tony Garitta

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Float rigs are rarely used to target flatfish, but they're a great tactic when dragging baits across the structure that flounder love.



Float Up A Flounder

By Jeff Burleson



Jeff Burleson

Of all the fishes in the sea, flounder are the most-recognizable, along with being one of the most sought-after up and down the Atlantic coast, in both a recreational and commercial sense.

Not only are flounder excellent on the plate, they bring big thrills on hook and line. They live along the Carolinas' coastline in a wide variety of habitats, from offshore reefs out of Charleston Harbor to the brackish waters of North Carolina's historic Albemarle Sound, in a wide variety of environments, from clean, sandy bottoms to treacherous war zones along historic wharfs.

While most anglers avoid heavy structure, many of these places are teeming with doormat flounder. With the right setup, anglers can bring home a limit without donating $50 worth of terminal tackle to the concrete and steel sea monsters down below.

Flounder are structure-oriented fish; their morphological characteristics and dark colorings allow for perfect concealment. While some anglers fish the edges of structure-laden waters, much of the best fishing is in the heart of these habitats, and the right tackle setup is required to pluck these fish out of hiding.

One North Carolina captain, Jason Dail of Silver Spoon Charters out of Wilmington, has perfected an inshore technique, not typically used for flounder, to bring these doormats out of the fortress.

"Flounder congregate at the bottom of rockpiles, old bridge revetments, concrete rubble, pilings and other places heavy with structure," said Dail (910-540-0319). "A traditional Carolina rig or jighead will get hung up on the first drop, but a float rig is very effective and is rarely used for flounder."

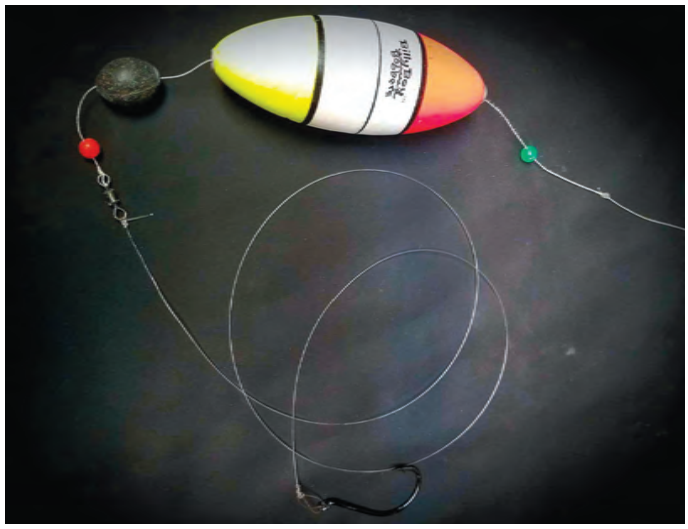
Dail fishes anywhere from the New River near Jacksonville to the mouth of the Cape Fear River near Southport, and wherever his boat is, he's likely near areas heavy with structure — just like the fish — places that offer a perfect set up for ambush feeders.

"With the exception of the offset, octopus-style hook I use for flounder; I use the same float rig that I use for speckled trout," he said "The float rig allows me to present live bait to flounder, speckled trout or redfish

continues >>>

Jason Dail

FLOAT UP A FLOUNDER



A float rig with a bobber stop and an octopus-style hook make up Jason Dail's flounder float rig.

in places that no other terminal tackle option would make it out unscathed. And the flounder can be stacked up in these places with heavy structure."

His float rig is fairly simple. Beginning with a bobber stopper, he threads on a Billy Bay Lowcountry Lightning Float, a small egg sinker, plastic bead and a two-way swivel. Below the swivel, he ties 12 to 24 inches of monofilament leader to an offset, 3/0 to 4/0, octopus-style hook. The bobber stopper enables him to adjust the depth he fishes.

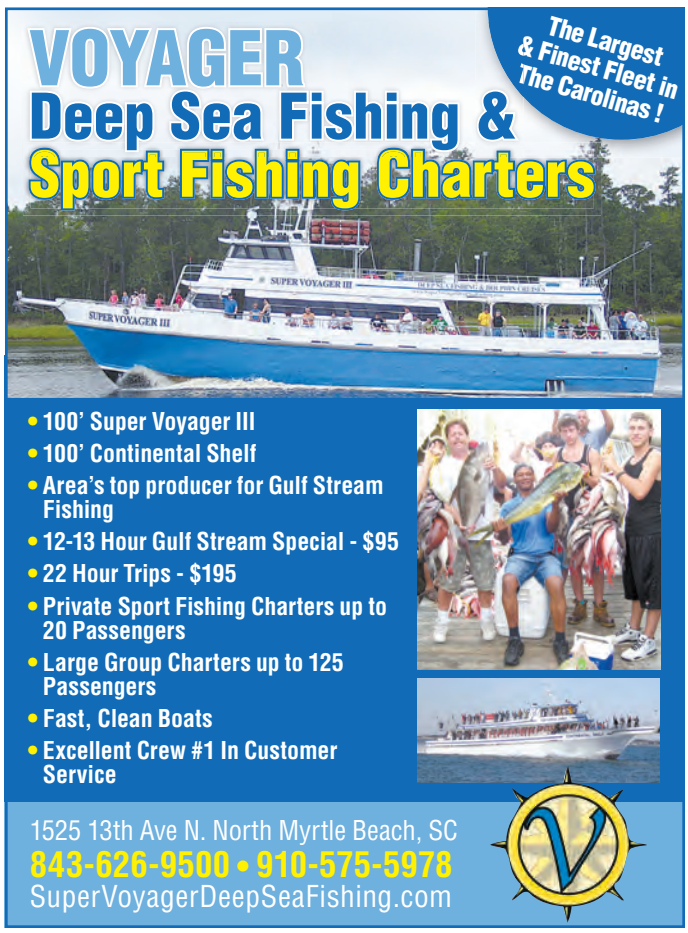
"Flounder are generally laying along the (bottom), waiting for food to come bay," Dail said. "As a result, I like to fish tight to the bottom or between 12 to 15 inches from the bottom, depending on water clarity. Unless I know exactly what the water depth is, I will start off deep until I get hung, and then I adjust shallower until I can ride right over the top of the structure."

Typically, Dail is rarely fishing anywhere without some sort of structure: oyster beds, rockpiles, pilings, submerged grass or concrete rubble. The float rig provides a mechanism to fish inside these areas of heavy cover and pluck the flounder out with ease.

"I will always have at least one float rig tied on in my boat wherever I am fishing and whatever I am fishing for flounder," he said.

In September, flounder eat a wide variety of foods, including

continues >>>



GO DEEP!

A flounder's morphology naturally prepares it to feed in super-shallow places, with only a few inches of water required, but it will pick the best places to feed at the right times — and that's not always in the shallows along the shoreline.

Flounder are structure-oriented fish for most of the year, and some of the best places to find flounder are around deep-water structure where bait and cover is plentiful.

Flounder are home around deep-water structure because they have everything they need for their daily chores, but in some areas, the structure is thick and treacherous along the bottom. These places are typically off-limits for traditional flounder anglers because most traditional rigging will quickly become permanent fixtures on the underwater obstructions.

The use of adjustable floats in these deep-water environments is an ideal solution that will produce big results.

Jason Dail of Silver Spoon Charters in Wilmington, N.C., is a fan of adjustable-depth float fishing, and he will quickly deploy a float rig in deep-water places littered with structure.

Dail spends a lot of his time in the lower Cape Fear River area, where historic ruins from the last century's shipping industry are plentiful. There are more shipping ruins below the waterline than above, offering plenty of places for flounder to feed.

"I like to target places with heavy structure in 10- to 15-foot water," Dail said. "You really can't use anything else without getting hung on the bottom. The float allows me to fish just above the structure in the strike zone."

Dail utilizes his sonar to pinpoint the collections of heavy structure and the depth of the top of these structures. He may not be able to see the flounder resting along the bottom, but he will surely be able to predict where to adjust his float to put his baits in spots where an unsuspecting flounder turns into prey and eventually into a flounder sandwich.

"The lower Cape Fear River is full of deep-water structure, and it is often full of big flounder. I have pulled some beasts out of areas like these using floats," he said. ▪



Flounder, especially keepers, will hang around any kind of obstruction on the bottom that can provide cover or an ambush spot.

shrimp, mullet, menhaden and any other small fish less than 6 inches long. Any of these bait choices presented just above the structure is bound to be quickly eaten by a flounder nestled inside; however, Dail prefers finger mullet in September. They are very abundant and one of a flounder's main forage sources in the early fall.

"In September, there are still plenty of scavengers stacked up on structure, and live shrimp will get pecked away as soon as it hits the water," he said. "Finger mullet are easy to catch this time of year and perfect baits to float over a rockpile,."

Using floats is far from a new technique for saltwater fishing. Floating baits and lures have been a productive technique for decades, but most anglers only utilize popping corks with short leaders in shallow water for speckled trout and redfish. Few anglers have floated baits over structure for flounder, and even fewer have used adjustable-depth floats to target flounder. Anglers shouldn't avoid the structure-laden fortresses for targeting flounder because these habitats are perfect places for flounder to set up to fill their grocery bags. ▪



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.*



Brian Cope



Bret Holten of *Carolina Sportsman* shows off a nice pompano caught in the surf. Pompano fishing peaks along Carolina beaches in September.

SEPTEMBER SURF

THE BEACHES ARE FAR LESS CROWDED THIS MONTH, BUT THIS SURF IS STILL FULL OF FISH

Within a week of Labor Day, most beaches in the Carolinas get a lot less crowded. Kids are back at school, family vacations are over, dove season is in. Even deer season has begun in some areas, and it's about to begin in others. So September is a great time for surf fishing.

Another change that is less apparent to anglers is that the water is already starting to cool. They may or may not notice a slight change in the air temperature, but the fish feel it in the water. That slight temperature change shifts their feeding habits into high gear.

This month, surf anglers can catch numerous species. Tossing a shrimp out with enough weight to keep it anchored, then retreating to a beach chair to eat a sandwich while watching for a bite is certainly a good option. But anglers can also walk the beaches with a Got-Cha plug tied on, casting long distances to schooling Spanish mackerel.

Even more adventurous anglers can paddle a kayak out with half of a stingray on a big hook, drop it beyond the breakers, then paddle back to shore where their rod is waiting in a sturdy rod holder for a big shark to pick a fight. Check local laws, as a few beaches have outlawed shark fishing.

SURF CORNUCOPIA

Anglers fishing in the surf this month can expect to catch anything from redfish, Spanish mackerel, croaker, speckled trout, whiting, black drum, bluefish and even king mackerel in some areas. Pompano and flounder are two of the hottest-biting surf species and also some of the easiest fish to catch from the surf.



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.*

Most anglers targeting flounder will use a Carolina rig with a 1-ounce egg sinker above a barrel swivel. They'll tie a leader of about 18 inches to that swivel and finish it off with a 3/0 hook. Mud minnows are always good bets as bait for flounder, but Gulp lures or other artificial soft plastics like grubs also work well. White is usually a good color.

Anglers fishing a beach with groins have a lot of success with flounder by slowly reeling their lure or bait parallel to the groin. Keeping the bait as tight to the wall as possible without it hanging up is usually productive, but anglers shouldn't ignore the areas as much as 20 feet away from the groin.

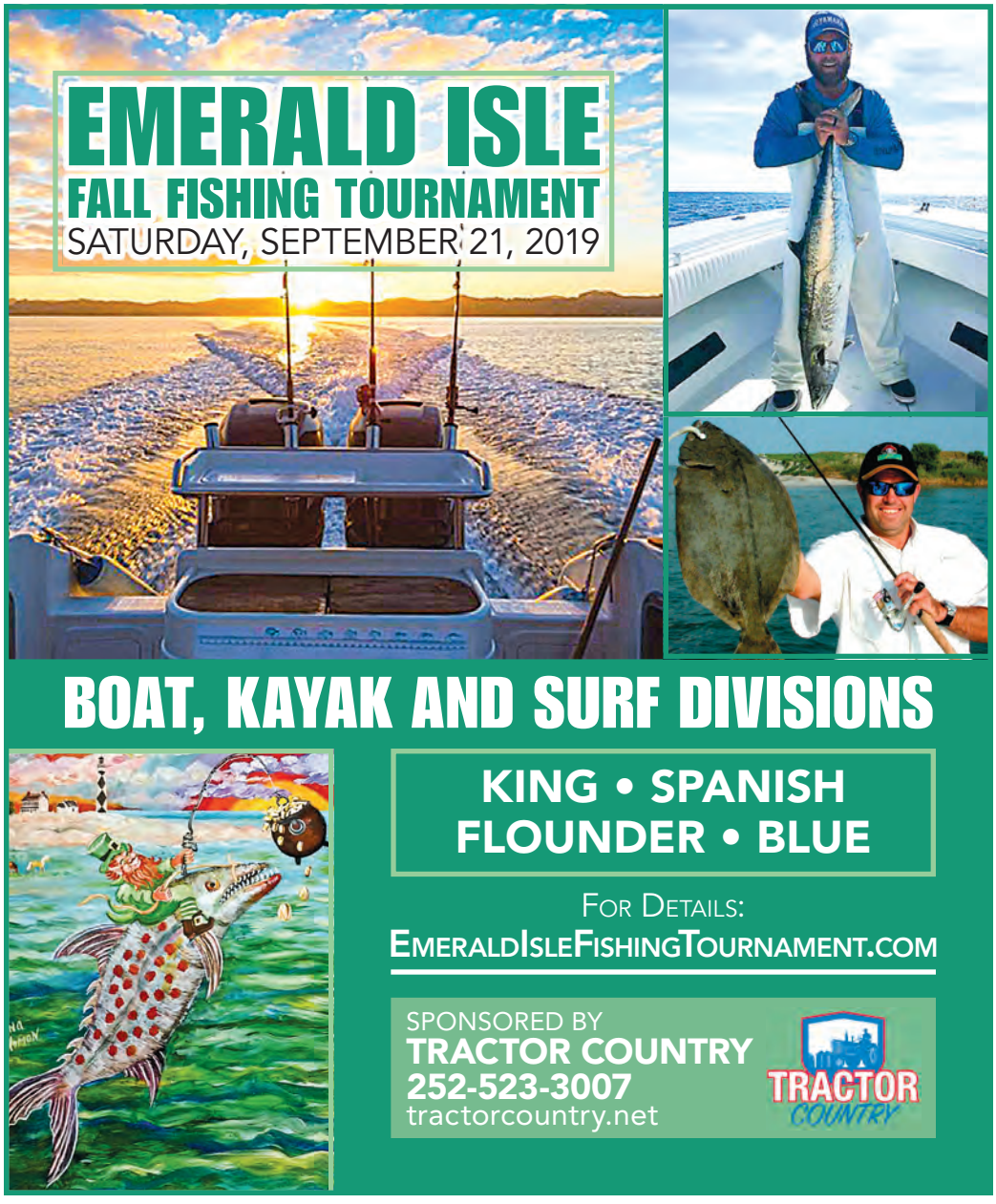
Another strategy some surf fishermen like is wading out and casting parallel to the shore instead of out toward the open ocean. This can be especially effective for anglers who scout out the beach at low tide when all the deeper pockets and humps are exposed. As the tide comes in, anglers can set up to the right or left of those low and high points, then cast and slowly work their lures or bait parallel to the beach and through those points, which flounder love to gather in and around.

POMPANO PRIZES

Pompano are one of the biggest draws for surf anglers this month. These fish show up during the summer and really hit their peak in September. They are hard fighters and make a nice meal in the evening after a day of fishing. And for anglers who will overlook the urge to cast as far as possible, pompano are probably the easiest fish to catch this month.

A basic two-hook surf rig is a good choice. The weight should be heavy enough to keep the rig in place once it's on the bottom. Almost any small pieces of cut bait will work, but many anglers opt for artificial baits like Fishbites, which are made from natural fish parts attached to a weave of material that makes them tough for fish to pull apart. These baits gradually dissolve, dispersing a scent trail that attracts fish. Anglers like them because they can stay in the water a long time, as opposed to cut shrimp, which get pulled off the hook quickly by bait thieves.

Pompano really like these baits, especially when cast right into the frothy surf close to shore. No need to cast beyond the breakers for these fish. They often bite when the bait is just a few feet away from the rod. Making a short cast, then setting the rod in a rod holder is a good move. And anglers shouldn't check their bait with every nibble. Pompano often pick at the bait numerous times before finally taking a full bite. When that happens, you'll have no doubt it's on the line. ▪



SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY

Phillip Gentry



Catfish force kayak anglers to face some interesting problems as far as tackle, bait and how to present it.

CATFISH TROLLING REQUIRES PLANNING

TACKLE, TECHNIQUES MOST BE CONSIDERED BEFORE LAUNCHING

Phillip Gentry

The challenges associated with species-specific fishing from a kayak vary depending on the species being targeted. Probably the easiest species to master from a kayak are those associated with single-rod casting: black bass, redfish, trout and the like.

While any species can be targeted with only one rod, including catfish, Ol' Whiskerface presents more of a challenge, because he and his cousins are not generally associated with artificial baits.

That's not to say that kayak anglers can't be immensely successful pursuing catfish. The go-anywhere yak grants you access to stretches of rivers and backwaters that rarely, if ever, get fished.

A few considerations come to mind for those who are new to fishing for cats from a kayak. Just like other species-specific gear, the catfish has its own requirements to make the kayak catfish angler successful.

• **Comfort.** Catfishing often involves soaking baits in one spot for a length of time, then moving to another spot. Sitting and waiting for a bite means you need to be seated comfortably, whichever boat you are paddling or peddling. Many manufacturers offer upgraded comfort seats, and for those that don't, there is a big aftermarket for replacement seats with added foam, support or other cushioning.

• **Rod holders.** Four to six rods is probably the most you'll need to cover a likely catfishing spot from a kayak. Again, the aftermarket is loaded with rod-holder options and mounting accessories that you can position and re-position around your boat to hold your rod steady while waiting for a bite.

• **Rods/Reels/Line/Hooks.** Catfish range from under a pound to more than 100 pounds in the Carolinas, so match your tackle with the size you're likely to catch. There's really nothing kayak-specific about tackle. Whatever powerboat anglers are using will work just as well from a kayak, and these days, the internet is full of tackle tips for catfish anglers.

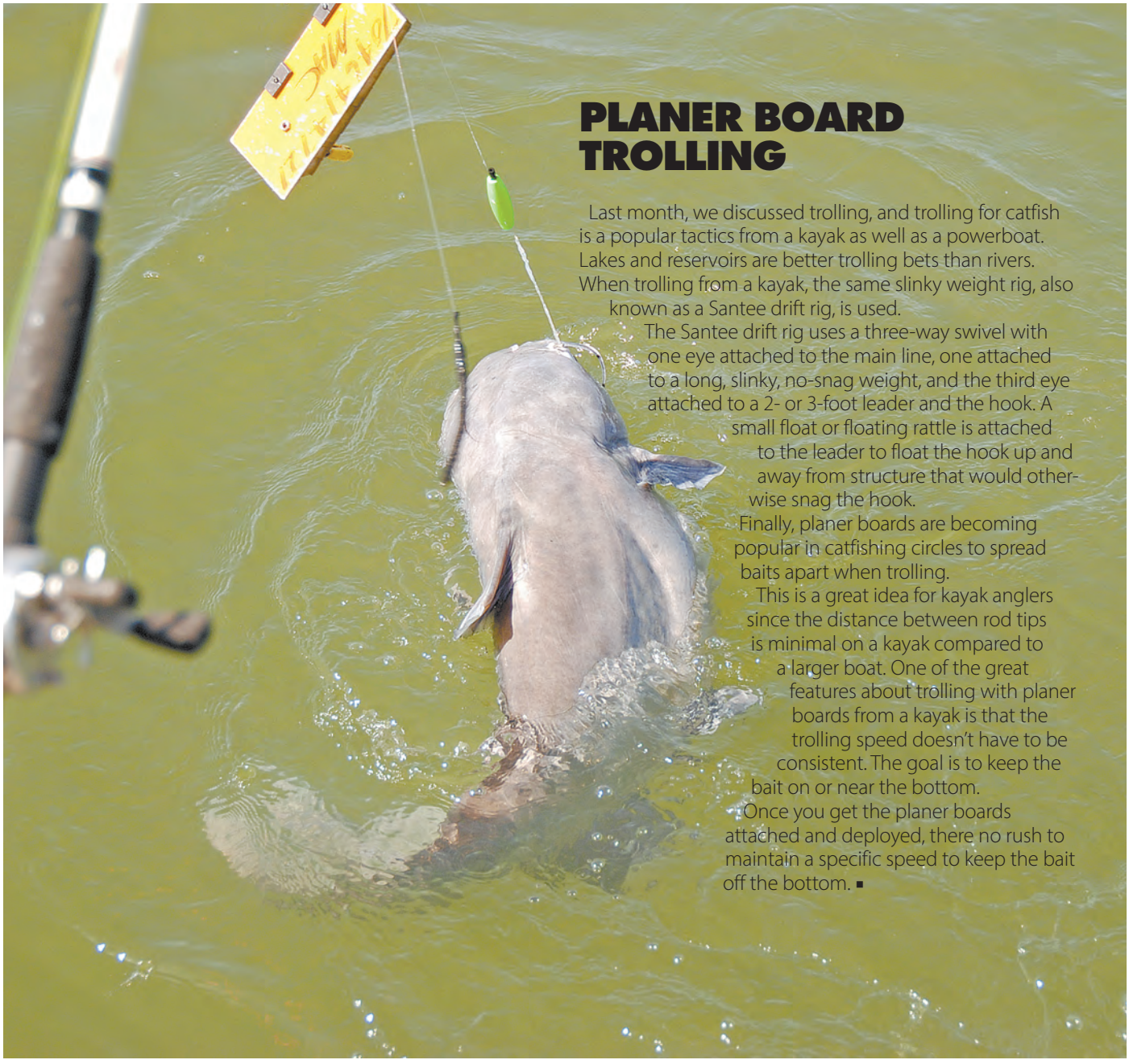
• **Boat positioning.** Trolling has become a thing for catfishing. If you're trolling, you won't need an anchor or stake-out pole — or any other boat-holding gear. However, most fisherman find anchoring and spot-fishing easier and more productive from a kayak, so all the above gear needs to be considered

• **Bait.** Flathead catfish are the No. 1 reason you'd want live bait on your kayak. Keeping bait alive requires some type of bait tank, and that means figuring out where to put one. Fresh cut bait in a cooler on ice is much easier to handle and will catch every species of catfish that swims in the Carolinas.

• **Fish storage.** Catch-photograph-release and kayak fishing go hand in hand. Catfish are probably the most sought-after food fish (next to crappie). Most catfisherman strongly urge releasing any catfish over 10 pounds and keeping a few small ones for the table. A stringer, which can be hung over the side of the boat, will suffice, then a collapsible cooler for the trip back to the truck works great. ▪



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



PLANER BOARD TROLLING

Last month, we discussed trolling, and trolling for catfish is a popular tactics from a kayak as well as a powerboat. Lakes and reservoirs are better trolling bets than rivers. When trolling from a kayak, the same slinky weight rig, also known as a Santee drift rig, is used.

The Santee drift rig uses a three-way swivel with one eye attached to the main line, one attached to a long, slinky, no-snag weight, and the third eye attached to a 2- or 3-foot leader and the hook. A small float or floating rattle is attached to the leader to float the hook up and away from structure that would otherwise snag the hook.

Finally, planer boards are becoming popular in catfishing circles to spread baits apart when trolling.

This is a great idea for kayak anglers since the distance between rod tips is minimal on a kayak compared to a larger boat. One of the great features about trolling with planer boards from a kayak is that the trolling speed doesn't have to be consistent. The goal is to keep the bait on or near the bottom.

Once you get the planer boards attached and deployed, there no rush to maintain a specific speed to keep the bait off the bottom. ▪

SEPTEMBER'S BEST BETS

NORTH CAROLINA

WHAT — Blue, flathead and channel catfsh

WHERE — High Rock Lake

HOW — Two methods to consider are trolling — dragging slinky weights baited with cut shad across mid-depth flats on the edge of the channel — and anchoring on those same flats and using live or cut bait like shad or perch.

LAUNCH — Buddle Creek and Southmont are both good access points

INSIDER TIP — It takes a bit of practice from a kayak, but using planer boards to troll the slinky or Santee drift rigs helps move the clutter away from the side of the boat so you can paddle. Put the rods in a vertical position so you can see the bite by the bend in the rod.

SOUTH CAROLINA

WHAT — Channel catfish

WHERE — Upstate rivers: Broad, Saluda, Pacolet, Enoree

HOW — Channel catfish become very active in late summer. Position the boat at an area where the fish will have a current break and cast two or three lines baited with catfish dip bait. Give each spot about 30 minutes before moving on down the river.

LAUNCH — Other than public road access areas on the rivers, you can also find a list of public ramps at www.upstateforever.org/blueway-mapping

INSIDER TIP — Instead of struggling with an anchor in current, bring a brush clamp, hook or some other way to quickly attach and release the boat from snags, over hanging brush, or other woody anchor points you'll find in the river.

continues >

SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY

continued



GTS PRO MOLDED FOAM SEAT

With kayak fishing gaining so much popularity these days, Surf to Summit decided to focus on building a seat just for the angler. The GTS Pro was developed primarily with the kayak fisherman in mind. Its enhanced features, like the oversized bottom pad, accommodate the larger seat wells that are common on many of the new fishing kayaks. The 2-inch, extra-thick thermoformed EVA foam padding added to the bottom section minimizes leg fatigue and helps the angler maintain comfort throughout a long day of fishing.

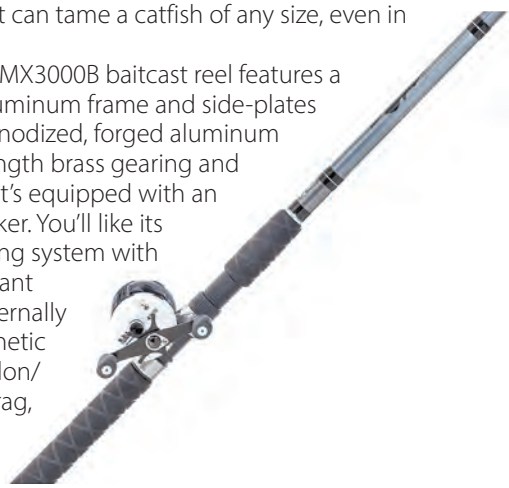
The thermoformed foam upper back-rest portion is a little shorter than the GTS Elite and the Air Wave without sacrificing any support, for the sole purpose enhancing the paddler's access to the rear of a kayak's tank well and hatch section. Surf to Summit enhanced the seat attachment system by spreading apart the rear webbing tie downs. Paddler piece of mind in knowing the rod is safe.

MSRP is $150.

Available at surftosummit.com

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Bass Pro Shops understands that catfishing is not for the faint of heart. You could hook into a monster at any time. That's why the CatMaxx Baitcast Combo is built like a tank, with a matching rod and reel that can tame a catfish of any size, even in swift current.



The CatMaxx CMX3000B baitcast reel features a rigid, 1-piece aluminum frame and side-plates with a double-anodized, forged aluminum spool, high-strength brass gearing and 5.2:1 gear ratio. It's equipped with an audible bait clicker. You'll like its smooth, 4-bearing system with Powerlock™ instant anti-reverse, externally adjustable magnetic brake, 6-disc Teflon/stainless steel drag, and heavy-duty aluminum handle. And of course, it's equipped with an audible bait clicker.

The CatMaxx Casting Rod is the perfect complement. Its high-vis white blank is made of a blend of E-glass and carbon to withstand heavy abuse, and it's topped with structurally reinforced, snag-resistant Pac Bay DPL guides. Our EVA handle sports a crosshatched shrink-wrap grip, flared rubber butt, and an integrated cushioned reel seat for maximum stability.

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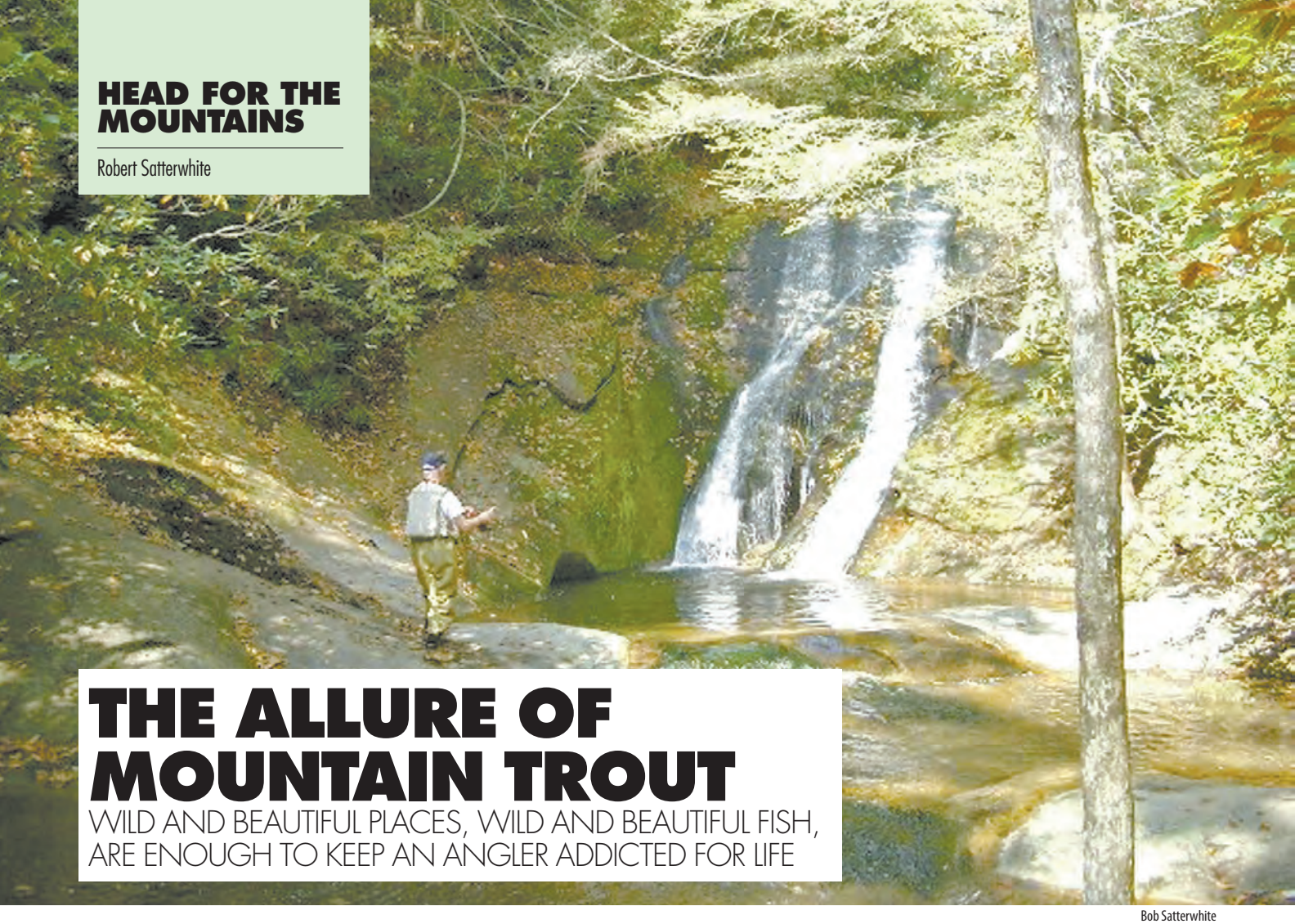
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Robert Satterwhite



THE ALLURE OF MOUNTAIN TROUT

WILD AND BEAUTIFUL PLACES, WILD AND BEAUTIFUL FISH, ARE ENOUGH TO KEEP AN ANGLER ADDICTED FOR LIFE

Bob Satterwhite

Why do I love trout fishing? Let me count the ways.

Trout fishing isn't just about catching trout. It's also about the places you go to fish for trout, places such as the Pisgah and Nantahala national forests in North Carolina, the Sumter National Forest in South Carolina, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Blue Ridge Parkway, state parks in North Carolina and South Carolina, the Jocassee Gorges and Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area in South Carolina.

Trout thrive in the wild and beautiful places.

A dedicated trout fisher could fish a different stream every week and never get to all the 4,000 miles of trout streams in western North Carolina, several hundred miles of trout streams in Upstate South Carolina and 700 miles of trout streams in the Great Smokies Park.

What a glorious quest that would be.

THE TROUT

The brook trout is the only true native trout in the Southern Appalachians. They've been here for at least 11,000 years, surviving the Ice Age, surviving the loggers, the developers, invasive species, pollution and a multitude of other man-created obstacles. They survive with only minimal help from man.

Rainbow trout from western states were stocked in streams in the Southern Appalachian and eastern United States in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Brown trout were brought from Germany and Scotland in the late 1800s. They provide a viable fishery, but they depend on the same resources as brook trout, and they are far more aggressive.

THE SCENERY

Trout fishing has no calendar restrictions, and each season brings its own palette. Hundreds of different wildflowers fill stream banks and roadsides in spring and summer, followed by the splendid colors of fall and, finally, the stark beauty of winter. Trout are always there, regardless of the season.

Rare is the mountain stream that doesn't have waterfalls, some quite spectacular, such as Whitewater Falls, which cascades 411 feet off a rocky cliff into Whitewater Creek in Transylvania County, N.C.; Rainbow Falls on the Davidson River, also in Transylvania County; Raven Cliff Falls, a 420-foot cascade in Caesars Head State Park, S.C.; and Twin Falls/Eastatoe Falls, side-by-side falls on Reedy Creek in Pickens County, S.C.

CATCHING TROUT

When I fish for the pure joy of trout fishing, I fly fish. Seeing a trout rise to a man-made concoction of thread, feathers, fur and steel, watching it leap from the stream and tail-dance, is a heart-thumping, adrenaline rush that never



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

OPPOSITE PAGE: Widow's Creek Falls in North Carolina's Stone Mountain State Park is a perfect example of the kind of beautiful scenery that draws trout fishers to mountain streams.

diminishes, no matter how often I fish.

But I'm not a purist. If the occasion calls for it, I use live bait without a twinge of guilt. Such outings are limited to hatchery-supported waters, and I fish for food. Hatchery trout are raised from eggs, and when big enough, they are stocked in streams throughout the Carolinas. As much as biologists try to emulate wild fish, stockers still are stockers.

EATING TROUT

I do love a good trout dinner, and a trout fried to golden perfection is a gustatory delight, even if it's a stocker.

A few years ago, I read a short work of fiction by novelist Amy Tan, in which she described eating cheek meat from fish, which is considered a delicacy among Asians. Cheek meet is a small, wafer-like piece of meat located behind a fish's eyes. Since reading Tan's story, I always eat the cheek meat first.

Trout fishing is one of those rare activities that gives so much pleasure and requires to little in return. ▪

Greg Dennis

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One advantage of rigging a soft-plastic jerkbait with a nose hook? Most fish are hooked solidly in the corner of the jaw.

NOSE-HOOKED SOFT JERKBAITS

TRY THIS DIFFERENT WAY TO RIG POPULAR BAITS WHEN FISHING GETS TOUGH

Christopher Bush

Chances are, wherever you are, you are fishing in the month synonymous with transition: September. Aside from fish being unpredictable, weather conditions provide a sneak preview of an imminent fall season.

In all honesty, trophy trout are hard to come by this month, but 30 days stand between you and, in my opinion, 90 days of the most-productive fishing of the year. To prepare for that time, I want to discuss a technique that may provide tremendous value when water temperatures begin their descent: nose-rigged soft-plastic jerkbaits.

About three years ago, I was introduced to this technique by a good friend and angler, Kyle Perry. Like me, Kyle is an officer in the U.S. Air Force and, as a result, fishes different parts of the United States. Right now, he's in northern California, where he regularly fishes the California Delta and Lake Berryessa for remarkably large bass. When he heard about this technique, he was quick to pass it on so I could discover its potential on the inshore side of things. Simply put, it didn't disappoint.

SO WHAT IS IT?

For all intent and purposes, it's a modernized Banjo Minnow — for those of you who remember the lure sold on TV several years ago. The rig consists of an small Owner CPS, a 1/0 Octopus or dropshot hook, a soft-plastic jerkbait of your choice and either a 1/32- or 1/16-ounce VMC or Eagle Claw nail weight as necessary.

Getting started, take the Owner CPS coil spring and screw it into the nose of the bait to the point where it is fully embedded in the plastic. Then, take the hook and thread it through the top loop on the CPS, catching some of the plastic with the hook point on entry and exit. What this gives you is an anchor point on the nose of the bait and secures your lure so it doesn't come off when casting or on the retrieve. The nail weights can be applied to provide the appropriate sink rate or help you out casting on windy days or fishing in heavy current.

WHAT DOES IT DO?

Again, drawing comparisons to the infamous Banjo Minnow, it presents an extremely erratic, side-to-side motion with a very subtle fall. This can be great in a number of situations, but I've found it to be more successful on highly pressured fish in clearer water. Also, it compliments a topwater bite extremely well when fish aren't fully committed. The rate of fall can be adjusted using the nail weights, but I've found that the lighter, the better. In other words, do not add weight if it can be avoided.

PROS AND CONS

Start with the ultimate pro: big fish like it. Fishing for years in Florida, I caught

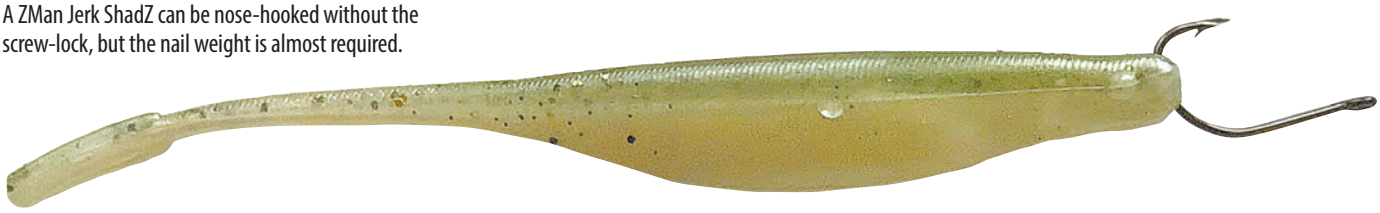


Chris Bush *is an Air Force officer and a licensed charter captain, husband and father. He spends his time targeting big speckled trout and sharing knowledge on his website, Speckled Truth.*

A nail weight, Owner CPS and 1/0 Octopus hook are the makings of a nose-hooked jerkbait rig.



A ZMan Jerk ShadZ can be nose-hooked without the screw-lock, but the nail weight is almost required.



more of my big trout on this rig than any other. The soft entry doesn't spook shallow fish, and the action is extremely natural. And, using an exposed hook in the nose of the bait allows you to get away with minimal terminal tackle. Said a different way, you can downsize your leader because you don't have to set the hook as forcefully. Also, going light with your terminal gear allows you to make extremely long casts, again increasing your stealth and minimizing your presence.

The main con to the rig is longevity. Expect a maximum of three to four fish on one soft-plastic bait, simply because when the fish commits, it's often a head shot. On the hookset, the lure often rides up the line, which mangles the nose of the bait, and for most soft-plastic brands, there generally isn't very much plastic there to begin with. This makes it difficult to reestablish an anchor point without compromising the action, so the best thing to do is swap out the soft-plastic bait, which can be time consuming because you have to remove the CPS and thread into a new tail.

WHICH SOFT PLASTICS?

Most companies have in their lineups a jerkbait of some kind, so really it's a matter of which brand you like to use. That said, I've established confidence in a few brands, mainly because of density, action and profile.

Slayer and Zoom make a myriad of different colors in traditional jerkbait styles. Slayer's Sinister Twitch Bait, or STB, and the Zoom Super Fluke are both 5 inches long and offer great action and color profiles, but giving weight to longevity, I prefer the STB.

The MirrOlure Provoker and Cajun Zydeco Shad have some similar, yet different qualities. Both are 5 inches long, but instead of the forked tail, they both have a single darter-style tail, with more action. The differences between the baits is the Zydeco Shad has more of a potbelly which causes more or a horizontal fall. The Provoker's fall is led by its nose, so it's more vertical. That said, the Provoker has more surface area around its nose, which makes it easier to insert the CPS.

Lastly, the 5- or 7-inch ZMan Jerk ShadZ or the 6-inch Mann's Hardnose provide great, larger profiles. I also like both because they offer unique qualities. The JerkshadZ is made of Elaztech, which allows you to skip using the CPS — making it quicker to change lures — and it offers a slower fall. That said, you have to use a nail weight with the ZMan because, without it, the lure will not sink.

The Hardnose is traditional plastic, but as the name suggests, the nose is hard. As a result, once the CPS is secured, it can last upwards of 10 fish because it doesn't tear up as easily as other soft plastics. Keeping that in mind, there is some rigidity to the bait, so the action isn't as good, but it still produces. Last, they are hard to find, and the colors are pretty limited, so if you can find and buy them, I suggest you do it in bulk.

PARTING SHOTS

This technique is great for wary fish, especially in clear water. That said, I've noticed a few other things I'd like to leave with you. First, always use a loop knot and always insert the tag end through the eyelet on the side of the hook opening. This will increase the rate at which you land fish exponentially, mainly because it deals with the hook rotation in the fish's mouth on the hookset. And always set the hook to the side instead of vertically. Again, this deals with the hook rotation in the fish's mouth; you'll find the hook in the corner of the mouth almost every time. And I always throw it on spinning tackle. I use a Shimano NASCI 3000 spooled with 20-pound/6-pound Suffix 832 on a 7-foot, medium-action Laguna Liquid rod. This allows me to make extremely long casts, provide the walk-the-dog action and set the hook once the fish commits.

Like anything in the fishing world, simplicity lends success. So I encourage you to try this simple technique when fishing gets tough or fish aren't responding to traditional offerings. It can be the difference between success and failure. ▪



Guide Rodger Taylor likes to drift for blue catfish on Lake Wateree in the fall, but he can anchor up and catch fish, too.

Pat Robertson

Sportsman

FISHING HOTSPOTS

STAY ON THE MOVE FOR WATEREE CATS

Big blues heading to middle, lower end of SC reservoir, guide says

As the weather transitions in late September from the last gasp of the hot, humid summer to the more moderate temperatures, the blue catfish in South Carolina's Lake Wateree also transition — to the middle and lower sections of the lake, according to veteran guide Rodger Taylor of Rock Hill, S.C.

"Catfish can be caught on Lake Wateree from Cedar Creek to the Wateree Dam any time of year, but drifting the middle to lower lake in fall usually produces better numbers, as well as good-sized fish," said Taylor (803-517-7828).

The right bait is a key element to catching Wateree blues, he said, and gizzard shad are plentiful and easily caught with a cast net.

"The perfect size bait is 4 to 5 inches long, and they are usually abundant in the major creeks," he said. "Look for bait early or late in the day when the water is still like glass. Gizzard shad can be seen popping across the water."

White perch and bluegills are also excellent baits, and they are easily caught with a light rod and reel, he said.

"White perch and bluegill heads seem to entice larger blue cats and should always be included when fishing for cats in the fall," Taylor said. "Shad is probably the best all-around bait on the Catawba chain of lakes, but a variety of baits seems to put more and bigger fish in the boat in September on Wateree."

Taylor said fish are often scattered this time of year, so drift-fishing, Santee-style, is the most-effective approach, as it allows the angler to present more baits to more fish by covering a great deal of area.

"Concentrate efforts by drifting across vertical changes in the bottom," he said. "Small humps or creek channels on large flats are magnets for catfish. The large flat at the mouth of June and Rochelle creeks is a great example. It is 20 to 22 feet deep, with numerous small humps and depressions. The flat usually holds large schools of gizzard shad, which bring the blues. Finding a sweet spot is obvious when more than one rod goes down while drifting."

Similar flats are located outside of Beaver Dam and Colonel creeks, he noted.

Anchoring and putting out baits will also produce, Taylor said, if you fish the same humps and hidden creek channels on flats.

"Humps sometimes contain mussel beds, and that is a definite plus," he said. "The river-channel ledge is also an excellent place to anchor. Fan-casting baits to different depths makes the percentages better for hooking a cat."

Taylor also noted that GPS electronic topo maps such as Navionics or CMAP are indispensable tools for finding good underwater structure to fish, whether drifting or anchoring.

"Expect to catch large numbers of blue cats in the 3- to 8-pound range, with an occasional large fish in the 20- to 40-pound range," he said. "Some days in September are definitely better than others. Passing fronts with rain fish exceptionally well while the front is moving through. Wind really helps the drift bite, concentrating bait and fish and may even eliminate the need for a trolling motor but you will need a drift sock." ▪

— Pat Robertson

NC BLUEWATER BITE

is great for September wahoo action



Bluewater fishermen out of Beaufort Inlet often limit out on big wahoo in September.

Craig Holt

Offshore anglers who fish bluewater out of Beaufort Inlet find loads of wahoo during September, and few captains have as much experience in finding and putting these tiger-striped, toothy torpedoes on the deck as Thomas Wood of the *Dancin' Outlaw* charterboat, which docks at the Morehead City (N.C.) Waterfront.

"September is a good month for wahoo down here," said Wood (252-241-8346). "They're one of the (few) fisheries on the rise the last 10 years. It's not unheard of to have a party catch a limit (12 fish) in one day."

However, it's a big ocean, and knowing where to fish is as important as getting there.

"I look for bottom (features) that holds baitfish," said Wood, who tries to find uneven features or ledges. "I look for truck-size rocks and wrecks. It doesn't take a lot of structure to hold baitfish with wahoo above them. Sometimes, they even hang out near blackfin tuna or beeliners (vermillion snappers). The surface (grass) lines will be gone by September. I'll also look for (temperature) breaks, and I study current."

While Wood speeds away from Beaufort Inlet, mate Eli Blake prepares terminal trolling tackle by tying a 5-foot length of No. 9 piano wire leader to a blue or blue/white Sea Witch skirt with a 7/0 hook sewn inside a medium-size ballyhoo. A wahoo's razor-like teeth can't sever heavy wire leaders.

Wahoo sizes vary from 20 to 60 pounds during September.

"We'll troll six lines (at) 12 to 13 knots on top and one downrigger that pulls a bait about 20 feet deep," Wood said. "The wahoos seem to like downrigger baits but will hit surface lures. Occasionally, we catch a blackfin, dolphin or a sailfish."

Sailfish that pop up in bait spreads are prone to joust with teasers, so Wood's mate keeps ready a "pitch-bait" rod.

"We'll keep trolling, and (the mate) will flip a ballyhoo on a circle hook at it," Wood said. "Sometimes, they come in a swarm, and your clients can have pitch-bait fun." ▪

— Craig Holt





Bull reds, turned on by mullet moving out of marshes into the ocean off Oak Island, N.C., are well within range of the beach for anglers fishing from kayaks, piers and small boats.

BIG OAK ISLAND REDS

make nearshore appearance this month

Things begin to change in the ocean in September, and one of the good changes is when schools of red drum, most of them quit a bit larger than the 18- to 27-inch slot limit, begin to show just off the beaches at North Carolina's Oak Island.

The bite has been occurring for about 10 years and has become a highly anticipated event. It appears to key on when the mullet begin abandoning the marshes and head through inlets to the nearshore ocean; it can be as early as late August, but it picks up steam in September and October, slowing in November.

These are the big, over-slot reds. There may be some in the 36- to 38-inch range, but most are at least 40 inches, and a few exceed 50 inches. Targeting them has become a passion for fishermen, either from boats, from kayaks launched from the beach, from piers, and sometimes they even wander into the surf.

These big drum were first discovered by flounder fishermen plying the nearshore artificial reefs and king mackerel fishermen slow-trolling live baits for nearshore smoker kings. Red drum this size are almost constantly feeding, and they have been caught on a wide variety of baits, from finger mullet to menhaden and pieces of menhaden and mullet. They also hit metal jigs and bucktails jigged off the bottom for flounder and gray trout, plus large soft plastics fished several feet below loud popping corks.

Mark Patterson, founder and president of the North Carolina Kayak Fishing Association, spends a lot of time chasing big reds in the fall. He fishes live bait, chunks of natural baits and lures, depending on the availability of fresh bait and water quality. Sometimes, flash is more important, and sometimes scent is more important. The big reds also respond to the sound of popping corks. One thing all fishermen agree on, regardless of the rig or bait, is to use large, non-offset circle hooks so the big fish won't be hooked deeply and the hook can be easily removed.

Yaupon Reef, AR 425, is a popular spot, but the big drum are also at other artificial reefs, old blockade-runner wrecks and a spot off Caswell Beach called the Hot Hole, where water that cools Duke Energy's nearby nuclear plant is released back into the ocean; it is usually a few degrees warmer than the water around it, which attracts baitfish.

This is a fun fishery, and when the big drum are schooled tight, fishermen may catch 10 or more in a half-day trip. Patterson urges fishermen to use good equipment and fight the fish aggressively to bring them to the boat quickly and release them in good condition for survival. ▪

— Jerry Dilsaver





Plenty of big redfish will thrill fishermen in the Hilton Head lagoon this month.

Palmetto Lagoon Charters

HILTON HEAD LAGOON'S FISH

can do plenty of damage to tackle in September

One of the hottest fishing spots in the Carolinas this month is also one of the most unique. The Hilton Head Island lagoon is a hotbed of fishing activity and a change of pace for most anglers.

Redfish — including some approaching 50 inches — are common catches here, along with speckled trout and flounder. All three are biting aggressively in the lagoon this month. And fishing is unique for more than one reason; it's the calmest water in which you'll ever catch any of those species. The 11-mile lagoon system is as calm as a pond; the only access points are rental homes on the lagoon,and one outfitter.

Palmetto Lagoon Charters (843-301-4634) has exclusive rights to guide on the lagoon, and guides use an electric motor-powered skiff that's perfect for scooting around these skinny waters. Anglers shouldn't let the calm water and small skiff fool them. Hooking a fish in the lagoon is a battle that most experienced anglers have never experienced.

Because the lagoon is so narrow, fish are always near cover. Downed pine trees and other debris are common along the banks, so when you hook a bull redfish, you can forget about letting your drag tire him out. A drag-pulling run here will result in a sure break-off.

"The gear we use here is totally different than what we use on inshore waters outside of the lagoon," said guide Stacy Garbett. "We use at least 50-pound braid, and we crank the drag down all the way tight. When you get a bite, whether it's a bull redfish, a big flounder or a gator trout, you've got to turn these fish away from any structure right away. Otherwise, they'll break you off right quick. Letting them pull drag is correct under most inshore-fishing situations. But it's a death sentence in here."

It's no surprise that the best place to find these fish is in the shadows of trees near all that line-wrecking debris.

"In the first second of realizing he's hooked, that fish is going to have his way," Garbett said. "You've got to turn him immediately. You've got to have quality equipment set up the right way, and you've got to put it to the test. You can't give any slack to a fish in here and expect to boat it."

While most anglers know of the lagoon's monster redfish, Garbett said it's also got huge flounder and speckled trout bigger than most anglers ever see.

"I've seen numerous trout in here that would break the state record," he said.

Garbett said live minnows caught in the lagoon are unbeatable as bait. For early-rising anglers, topwater lures can also result in some fast action that comes to a halt when the sun gets up. ▪

— Brian Cope





Black drum will provide anglers in the waters around Little River Inlet plenty of action in September.

BLACK DRUM BITE IS LITTLE RIVER STAPLE

Jeff Burleson

September's cooling weather rings the dinner bell in SC/NC border estuary

As cooler weather begins to arrive this month, the inshore bite picks up and along the North Carolina-South Carolina border near Little River, S.C. In that little estuary, the black drum bite is firing on all cylinders.

Greg Holmes of Fish Skinny Charters welcomes the black drum that inhabit his home waters around Little River.

"Black drum are one of our staple species. We catch plenty of them throughout the year," said Holmes (843-241-0594). "Along with flounder, trout, and redfish, the black drum bite is good in September due to the cooling water temperatures and the abundance of bait."

Little River's estuary may be small, but it is teeming with a variety of the habitats that black drum call home, from the docks and marina structures along the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway to the creeks and bays covered in grass and oysters. And Little River's jetties are always packed with striped beasts eager to inhale a tasty morsel of shrimp or crab.

Black drum typically live in places heavy with structure, and that makes the waters around Little River ideal. Black drum will eat a wide variety of forage species, including small fish and crustaceans, but these fish are more likely to be caught by anglers on shrimp and fiddler crabs.

When targeting black drum, Holmes will use freshly caught shrimp. The chunks of fresh shrimp in the water is essentially a sensory explosion for black drum that detect their forage by using the barbels on their faces. In some cases, he will even toss out some chum made of oysters, crab and shrimp to attract the school of black drum to his boat.

In addition to cut shrimp, Holmes will often use live shrimp to encourage a bite from speckled trout. It doesn't get any fresher than a live shrimp, and speckled trout prefer live bait over dead bait.

"Both black drum and speckled trout will begin biting well in September in our waters, and a live shrimp under an adjustable-depth float is hard to beat," he said.

Holmes will either fish on the bottom with a Carolina rig or will drift bait above the bottom under a float, depending on the structure along the seafloor. Regardless, black drum are feeding and staged up along the bottom. If he is using either a bottom rig or the float rig, he will make sure the bait is located near the bottom.

While Holmes frequently catches black drum on all phases of the tide, he prefers the bottom end when water levels are at their lowest and the fish are congregated in the deeper places loaded with obstacles.

"Black drum are one of our staple species here in the Little River area, and they are not only hard pulling fish, they are fantastic to eat. And when the water starts cooling off, we often get on a strong showing of black drum in our catches," he said. ▪

— Jeff Burleson

CLARKS HILL STRIPERS

put on the feedbag as water cools off

September is the month that finally offers some relief from the long, hot summer. Whether advanced by seasonal tropical storms blowing up the coast or just the normal slow decline in temperatures, water temperatures in big impoundments begin to decline, which spurs a transition in the patterns of fish.

For striper and hybrid fishermen on South Carolina's Clarks Hill Lake, that means two things: the bite will be on most all day instead of primarily early and late, and the bigger fish will be roaming shallower water and chasing moving baits, according to guide Allen Icenhour of Trenton, S.C., who has fished the lake since he was a teenager.

"In September, when things start cooling down and the water temperature starts back down, the bite should get even hotter than it is now," Icenhour said in late July, when the water temperature was hovering around 88 degrees and he was catching limits for his Dixie Guide Service clients most mornings — sometimes by the time the sun had just begun its morning ascent.



Pat Robertson

Guide Allen Icenhour said anglers won't be limited to fishing around daylight to catch stripers and hybrids at Clarks Hill as water temperatures plummet in September.

"In September, we will still be fishing live blueback herring on down-rods, but chances are really good of catching a big hybrid or striper pulling planer boards in shallower water," he said. "You should be pulling planer boards with one side shallow and the other side deep: one side in 20 feet of water and the other in 30 feet."

As for bait, according to Icenhour (803-480-9472), "Fishermen always say the bigger the bait, the bigger the fish, but I have two 30-pound stripers on the wall that I caught pulling (small) blueback herring on planer boards."

Planer boards and free-lines come more into play starting in September, because when the water temperature starts cooling down, fish are more likely to chase a moving bait, he said.

"I like to pull planer boards and free-lines once the water temperature gets down into the 55- to 75-degree range," he said, "so by September, I will transition more to moving-bait action than just down-lines."

The moving-bait action will produce largemouth bass, spotted bass and even catfish in addition to stripers and hybrids, he said. This kind of action lasts right on through the end of the year and into the following spring, he added. ▪

— Pat Robertson



BIG BAYS ARE GREAT
as SC shrimp-baiting season opens Sept. 7

Shrimp are the most-popular seafood item across the planet, exceeding fish, crabs and any of other shellfish species. While most consumers buy shrimp at seafood markets or their favorite seafood restaurants, South Carolinians can participate in the recreational shrimp-baiting season that starts the Friday after Labor Day.

With a recreational shrimp-baiting license, a bucket of bait balls and a cast net, it can be a quick way to fill a 48-quart cooler with enough plump, juicy shrimp to bring life to all of Benjamin "Bubba" Blue's shrimp recipes in the movie *Forrest Gump*.

Recreational shrimpers can put out poles and bait balls in any of the many estuaries up and down the Palmetto State's salty shores. The Cape Romain and Bulls Bay areas south of Georgetown are the favorite estuaries for Stacy Atkinson of Low Country Wildlife TV to collect a limit of the finest decapod crustaceans.

McClellanville is the entry point for Atkinson, one of the best native South Carolinians at filling up a cooler with shrimp.

"Cape Romain and Bulls Bay are shallow overall but are always full of shrimp in the fall," said Atkinson. "I usually start near the ocean on high tide in places with shallow water and an available small channel."


Jeff Burleson

South Carolina's shrimp-baiting season fills a lot of coolers in the fall.

He prefers the falling tide because the retreating water naturally corrals everything into the deeper sections. Atkinson arranges his poles across the small channels, but he will re-arrange them if the best action is on one end or the other.

Plenty of different areas in the big bays will support healthy shrimp populations, but places where they held last fall might not be where they'll stay this fall. These waters are very dynamic, and the water depths and bottom contours will change frequently throughout the year especially after tropical storms.

"It can be a lot of work setting up poles and making bait patties to set up to shrimp," he said. "I like to idle through an area first before I make my set, and if there are any shrimp there, the boat's turbulence will cause them to jump out of the water in the wake."

If Atkinson makes a set and the poles aren't producing, he will pull them and move.

"They key to being successful at shrimping is to be adaptable. If you aren't getting many shrimp on each cast, pull the poles and move somewhere else," he said.

The shrimp season begins on Sept. 7 at noon and runs through Nov. 6 at noon. Cast nets used for taking shrimp over bait must have a minimum mesh size of ½-inch square. The daily limit pis 48 quarts heads-on or 29 quarts headed per day. ▪

— Jeff Burleson

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White perch are a fish that is heavily targeted in tributaries that feed North Carolina's Albemarle Sound.

WHITE PERCH MAKE
a big show in Albemarle Sound tributaries

With a white perch fishery popping up in most reservoirs across North Carolina, it's easy to forget the native waters where they have been a staple. The tributaries of the Albemarle Sound are loaded with perch, and the more-pleasant weather of September is perfect for filling up on them.

According to guide Jeff Onley of Hertford, N.C., they're not a hard fish to catch — if you know what you're doing.

"They can be found anywhere from the mouths on up into the rivers," said Onley (252-333-6524), who runs Albemarle Fishing Charters. "It just depends on which way the wind is blowing. If it blows north, they can be found closer to the sound. But if it blows southwest, they'll be further up the rivers."

Onley is partial to the Little River and North River for numbers of perch; the North usually produces bigger fish. He also likes the Perquimans, Chowan and Pasquatank rivers. Once he determines which direction to head, he looks for a familiar sight: cypress trees and cypress knees. Ringing the shorelines of the rivers in 2 to 3 feet of water, they attract perch, which hold tight to the cover to ambush baitfish. Points with wood are a plus, but it's all fair game. Mornings offer the best bite, as the fish will be more tolerant of the shallow water before the sun bears down on them.



Cassondra Ivey

"I like spinners for perch," Onley said. "An ⅛-ounce Johnson Beetle Spin or Betts Spin in white, yellow and green is a good choice. An ⅛-ounce Strike King Mini King is actually a bass lure, but the perch can eat it. My favorite is an Uncle Jesse's Lure made by Moore's Bait and Tackle. It's an all-silver lure with two in-line spinners.

" I tip all the baits with tidbits of fresh shrimp. It really ups the catches of perch, and if there are any reds or flounder around, it's good to have a little meat on it."

Onley prefers a 5½-foot ultralight spinning rod for the fun of light tackle and feisty fish, but he spools his reels with 20-pound Power Pro braid to be able to better handle the redfish and large-mouths bass that inevitably end up on the hook. In the murky water; no leader is necessary.

From a numbers perspective, 100-fish days are a real possibility. Ninety percent of the catch will be white perch, with the remainder bonus fish: redfish, bass, flounder and some yellow perch. ■

— Dusty Wilson

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.

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2019 SEP — BEST DAYS (POOR / FAIR / GOOD / EXCL / VALUE) — LUNAR PERIODS (TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED)

	VALUE	MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
Sun 1	58	9:11 am	2:20 pm - 4:32 pm	9:33 pm	1:42 am - 4:14 am	
Mon 2	44	10:21 am	3:23 pm - 5:15 pm	10:09 pm	2:45 am - 4:57 am	
Tue 3	35	11:29 am	4:24 pm - 5:56 pm	10:45 pm	3:48 am - 5:40 am	
Wed 4	36	12:35 pm	5:23 pm - 6:41 pm	11:24 pm	4:49 am - 6:21 am	
Thu 5	44	1:39 pm	6:20 pm - 7:28 pm		5:48 am - 7:06 am	HALF
Fri 6	31	2:39 pm	7:18 pm - 8:16 pm	12:06 am	6:45 am - 7:53 am	
Sat 7	25	3:36 pm	8:10 pm - 9:06 pm	12:52 am	7:43 am - 8:41 am	LOW
Sun 8	24	4:27 pm	9:00 pm - 9:58 pm	1:41 am	8:35 am - 9:31 am	
Mon 9	24	5:13 pm	9:48 pm - 10:50 pm	2:33 am	9:25 am - 10:23 am	
Tue 10	34	5:54 pm	10:33 pm - 11:41 pm	3:28 am	10:13 am - 11:15 am	
Wed 11	44	6:30 pm	11:11 pm - 12:33 am	4:23 am	10:58 am - 12:06 pm	
Thu 12	54	7:03 pm	11:50 pm - Midnight	5:19 am	11:36 am - 12:58 pm	
Fri 13	59	7:33 pm	Midnight - 1:22 am	6:14 am	12:15 pm - 1:47 pm	FULL & APOGEE
Sat 14	52	8:01 pm	12:24 am - 2:12 am	7:10 am	12:49 pm - 2:37 pm	
Sun 15	45	8:29 pm	12:58 am - 3:00 am	8:04 am	1:23 pm - 3:25 pm	
Mon 16	38	8:57 pm	1:32 am - 3:50 am	8:59 am	1:57 pm - 4:15 pm	
Tue 17	37	9:27 pm	2:05 am - 4:41 am	9:55 am	2:30 pm - 5:06 pm	
Wed 18	39	9:59 pm	2:41 am - 5:31 am	10:52 am	3:06 pm - 5:56 pm	
Thu 19	42	10:35 pm	3:20 am - 6:22 am	11:51 am	3:45 pm - 6:47 pm	
Fri 20	50	11:16 pm	4:02 am - 7:18 am	12:50 pm	4:27 pm - 7:43 pm	
Sat 21	63		4:48 am - 8:14 am	1:51 pm	5:13 pm - 8:39 pm	HALF
Sun 22	54	12:04 am	5:41 am - 9:11 am	2:50 pm	6:06 pm - 9:36 pm	HIGH
Mon 23	50	12:59 am	6:38 am - 10:08 am	3:46 pm	7:03 pm - 10:33 pm	Fall
Tue 24	51	2:01 am	7:39 am - 11:05 am	4:39 pm	8:04 pm - 11:30 pm	
Wed 25	59	3:09 am	8:45 am - 11:57 am	5:26 pm	9:10 pm - 12:22 am	
Thu 26	67	4:20 am	9:49 am - 12:49 pm	6:09 pm	10:14 pm - 1:14 am	
Fri 27	76	5:33 am	10:54 am - 1:36 pm	6:48 pm	11:19 pm - Midnight	Perigee
Sat 28	77	6:45 am	11:59 am - 2:21 pm	7:25 pm	Midnight - 2:01 am	NEW
Sun 29	63	7:57 am	1:03 pm - 3:05 pm	8:02 pm	12:24 am - 2:46 am	
Mon 30	49	9:08 am	2:06 pm - 3:48 pm	8:39 pm	1:28 am - 3:30 am	

25 50 75 AVERAGE

For more, visit primetimes2.com

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

WHILE THE LESSER **MOONRISE** AND -**SET** OVERLAPS (ABOUT 30 MIN. BEFORE AND AFTER THE LISTED TIME) ARE DESIGNATED BY **BOLD BLACK TYPE**.

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Finally, a product you can use to clean and protect not only your fishing tackle, but also your outboard motor and other metal features on your fishing vessel.

Clenzoil Marine & Tackle comes in a 12-ounce, aerosol can, and with as many things as it can be used to clean and protect, that might not last long.

Use it to clean, lubricate and protect reels, tools, engines and other equipment that is exposed to the environment. It can remove oils, dirt, old grease and leaves a thin, non-greasy coating that prevents rust and corrosion on engine blocks, hose clamps, locks, latches, hinges, down riggers and moving parts on trailers. Clenzoil Marine & Tackle will also preserve and protect wood accents on boats.

MSRP is $17.99

For more info, visit: www.clenzoil.com

FRABILL'S TROPHY NET HAUL SERIES



The first connection between fish and angler — the hook and knot — is tremendously important, and so, it seems, is the final connection: the net.

Frabill debuted its Trophy Haul Net series this spring, with several features that should thrill all fishermen: an oversized, triangle-shaped handle that won't slip or spin out of your hand, a big net bag constructed of Frabill's patented Conservation netting that will make it easier to control and land fish, and a net bag control ring that gives anglers complete control of the net during landing.

In addition, the Power Extend Trophy Haul Net has a three-stage LED light mounted under the yoke handle to provide illumination during low-light fishing situations.

The Standard and Power Extend nets come in three different net sizes: 18"x21", 21"x24" and 24"x27". The Standard net comes with a 48-inch handle; the Power Extend net has a telescopic handle that extends from 48 to 72 inches.

MSRP for the Standard net is $79.99, for the Power Extend, $129.99.

For more info, visit: www.frabill.com

SHIMANO'S SLX DC 150 BAITCASTING REEL



Shimano's line of baitcasting reels just got a lot more impressive at the ICAST trade show in early July with the introduction of its Digital Control (DC) braking system in a reel, the SLX DC 150, that's within reach of more anglers' budgets.

The reel features Shimano's SLX low-profile style with the same I-DC4 digital brake control system already featured on the Curado DC series, a system that flattens out the learning curve for anglers new to baitcasting reels, helping eliminate the backlashes so many experience.

The SLX 150 DC is offered in both right- and left-hand retrieves, and in three gear ratios: 6.2-to-1, 7.4-to-1 and 8.5-to-1.

MSRP is $189.99.

For more info, visit: fish.shimano.com

FISH LAB BIO MINNOW



Soft-plastic swimbaits are a big hit with freshwater and saltwater anglers. They work well, and almost every brand is the spitting image of all the rest.

But that's not true with the Fish Lab Bio Minnow. This weedless swimbait bucks the minimalist trend of a slender body with a big tail. This one has the action-producing tail, but it also has a dorsal fin, as well as all the other fins a real baitfish has. And they aren't just for looks. These fins shimmy and shiver at even the slowest retrieve speeds. The lure has big eyes, too, which are magnets for predatory gamefish.

This lure is at home in open water, but is just as effective when reeled through heavy cover, whether that's grass lines, cypress knees, or downed trees. When rigged with a screw-lock, weighted swimbait hook, it's great for skipping under docks or low-hanging tree limbs along banks. This lure comes in three sizes and four colors, so you can match the hatch at your favorite fishing hole.

The Fish Lab Bio Minnow ranges in price from $7.99 to $8.99 a pack.

For more info, visit: www.fishlabtackle.com

PLANO EDGE TACKLE STORAGE



Building on its popular 3600 and 3700 Stowaway tackle boxes, Plano Molding Systems has recently debuted a set of 10 different storage boxes that provide everything a fisherman could want in tackle storage.

The EDGE series boxes start with a cystal-clear lid so their contents can be identified quickly, without opening. They feature a Dri-Loc, waterproof seal, a moisture barrier that can't be beat. A third new feature is a single latch that allows the box to be opened with one hand, so the box can be opened quickly and easily.

Plano's new Rustrictor anti-corrosion compound is infused into the base of all EDGE boxes, preventing terminal tackle and bites from corroding. Water Wick provides further corrosion defense from a water-absorbing, desiccant divider. Vented dividers allow for air circulation within the box. Different models range in MSRP from $19.99 to $49.99.

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

STACKED LADDER CLIMBING STICKS



Some landowners frown on hunters putting anything metal in a tree trunk, like pegs or screw-in steps that are most-often used to help climb to a lock on-style stand well off the ground. The alternative used to be long, clunky metal ladder sections that were a real pain to tote into the woods, on your back or on the back of an ATV.

No longer. Earlier this summer, Louisiana's Stacked Outdoors debuted it's Stacked Ladder Climbing Sticks, a set of four lightweight ladder sticks that can be strapped to a tree trunk in sections, allowing hunters to climb up to 20 feet up on a solid set of steps.

The sticks are molded in single pieces, four of which come per set. They fit together like plastic stacking cups and come with a carry strap that allows hunters to easily haul them into the woods — especially since a set weighs less than 10 pounds. The step sections are 21 inches long, with 17 inches between steps, and each comes with a strap that fastens it to the tree trunk.

MSRP for a set is $149.

For more info, visit: www.stackedoutdoors.com



Mark Miller, of Irmo, S.C., caught and released this big barracuda on May 27, 2019, fishing out of Carolina Beach, NC.



Amber Butner caught this 22-inch brown trout on May 25, 2018, her 15th birthday, in Middle Fork Creek near Boone, N.C.



William Apel caught this nice bass on April 1, 2019, at Oak Hollow Lake in High Point, N.C.



Richard Thompson caught this big, blue catfish on North Carolina's Lake Norman in early January 2019.



Mary-Ellen Burnett caught this great brown trout fishing North Carolina's Tuckasegee River with guide Ken Hardwick.



Austin Burton killed this nice 8-point buck in Anderson County, S.C., on Dec. 22, 2018. It had a 19-inch spread.



Blake Phililps tagged this 19-inch, 9-point buck near Smithfield, N.C., on Nov. 21, 2018.



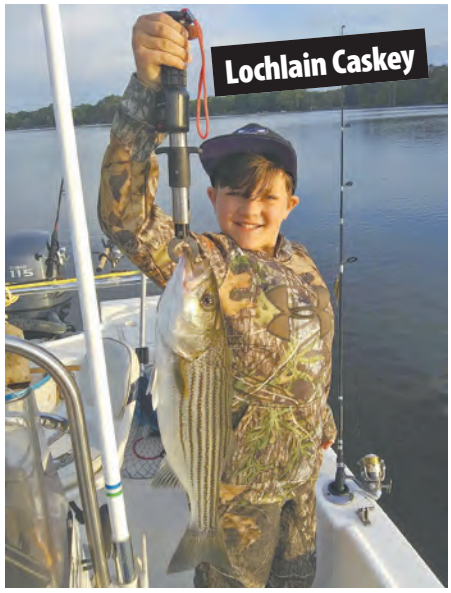
Kyle Saunders caught this 8-pound, 2-ounce bass out of a farm pond in Johnston County, N.C.



Mike Moseley tagged this 140-inch, 8-point buck in Halifax County, N.C., last Nov. 2 after targeting the deer for two seasons.



Ben Hough of Gilbert, S.C. caught this 27-inch, 7.16-pound Lake Murray stripe bass.



Lochlain Caskey of Waxhaw N.C. boated this 6-pound striped bass from South Carolina's Lake Murray.



Seth Stegall, 13, of Indian Trail, N.C. caught this 7-pound bass in his family's pond.



James Davenport of Washington, N.C., caught this 10-pound largemouth bass in a family pond in Beaufort County.



Carl McCain caught this 2-pound, 5-ounce bream at North Carolina's Baid Lake on May 3.

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Send us your photos, and you may appear on the pages of the most widely read outdoor magazine in the Tarheel State.Send clean, sharp shots of you with your deer, ducks, rabbits, squirrels, doves, etc. to

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433 Hollinswood Ave.,
Winston-Salem, N.C. 27103
or to images@carolinasportsman.com

But hang on to the negatives, because the photos cannot be returned.

Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



David Bright killed this big buck on the Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge in Richmond County, N.C. on Nov. 18, 2018.



Robert Garner of Robbins, N.C., dropped this 161-inch buck on Nov. 21, 2018.



Taylor Hammill put his tag on this 10-point, piebald buck near Gold Hill, N.C., on Nov. 29, 2018.



Wilson Spencer of Faison, N.C., boated this big speckled trout this past April 22, fishing out of Belhaven, N.C.



Tomasz Jozwik of Charlotte, N.C., caught this 1.59-pound crappie on March 18 at Lake Norman.

GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

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

Hunting/Fishing Scrapbook,
433 Hollinswood Ave.,
Winston-Salem, N.C. 27103
or to images@carolinasportsman.com

Digital images must be at least 200KB and in jpeg format. Print photos cannot be returned.



Abigail Davis of Ellerbe, N.C., tagged this 8-point, Moore County buck on Nov. 24, 2018.



Lisa and Austin Adams of Washington, N.C., had a great day duck hunting in Dare County this past January, taking limits of buffleheads.



Oliver McClelland of Chapin, S.C., boated this 38-pound cobia in nearshore water off Murrells Inlet, S.C.



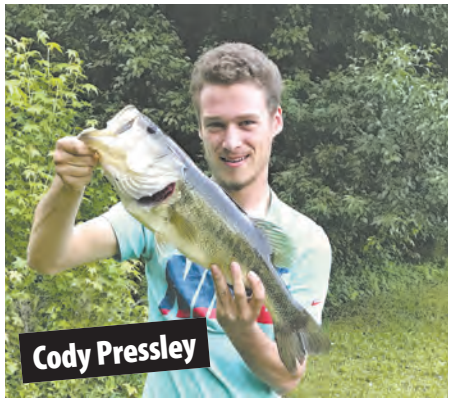
Steve Fisher caught this nice striped bass while fishing North Carolina's Lake Norman on Jan. 28.



John Wycoff of Durham, N.C., tagged this nice buck in Person County on Nov. 22, 2018.



Nick Apel caught this bass fishing Oak Hollow Lake in High Point, N.C., April 1, fishing with with granddad Stephen Coe.



Cody Pressley of Mint Hill, N.C., caught this nice bass in the summer of 2018.



Skyler Dean of Delco, N.C., killed this 10-point buck on Oct. 27, 2018, after targeting it for two seasons.



Heather Jordan boated this nice sheepshead off the Winyah Bay jetties near Georgetown, S.C., on June 16 on a sand flea.



Michael Ormond landed this nice black drum in the surf at Sunset Beach, N.C., near the mouth of Little River.

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A.K. MCCALLUM CO 7
AGRI SUPPLY COMPANY 19
BAREFOOT ARCHERY, INC. 25
BLACK'S CAMP 90
BLUE WAVE BOATS 9
BOB'S GUIDE SERVICE ENCHORE 90
BOST ARGO 21
BQ GRILLS 27
C HAWK BOATS 54
CAROLINA COMPOSITES, LLC 3
CARSWELL DISTRIBUTING CO. 93
CHATLEE BOAT AND MARINE 4, 92
CHEROKEE RUN HUNTING LODGE 90
COAST 70
COLLINS INC. 96
CROSS CREEK OUTDOOR SUPPLIES, LLC 12
CROSS TRAIL OUTFITTERS 49
CWP PROSERIES 73
DOSS MARINE 81
DOWN EAST GUIDE SERVICE 90
E.Z. BAIT AND TACKLE 55
EJW OUTDOORS 35
EMERALD ISLE FALL FISHING TOURNAMENT 67
H&H LURE COMPANY 50, 71
HIGHLANDER CHARTERS 90
ISLAND TACKLE AND HARDWARE 32
K2 MARINE 77
L & S BAIT COMPANY 78
LAKE HARTWELL COUNTRY 50
MARINE WAREHOUSE 79
NICHOLS STORE, INC. 37
NOAH'S ARK FISHING CHARTERS 90
PALMETTO STATE TRAINING 57
PERFORMANCE EAST INC. 41
PINEY ISLAND GUN CLUB 32
PRECISION MARINE, INC. 61, 73
REALTREE OUTDOOR PRODUCTS 95
ROCK OUTDOORS 13
ROCKY BRANDS 5
SANTEE COOPER COUNTRY 59
SEA ARK BOATS 65
SHIMANO AMERICAN CORP. 53
SOUTHSIDE OUTDOORS, LLC 71
SPORTSMAN'S WAREHOUSE 94
SPRO CORPORATION 57
SUMMERTON REVITALIZATION COMMISSON 33
SUZUKI MOTOR OF AMERICA, INC. 44, 45
THE ARCHERY SHOP 32
THE OUTDOOR HERITAGE ADVISORY COUNCIL 20
THE REEL OUTDOORS 73
UNDERWATER FISH LIGHT LLC 59
VOYAGER FISHING FLEET 64
WEYERHAEUSER COMPANY 29
WHITETAIL PROPERTIES 11
WILEY X 14, 15
WILSON MARINE 34
XPRESS BY ALUMA-WELD, INC. 2

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