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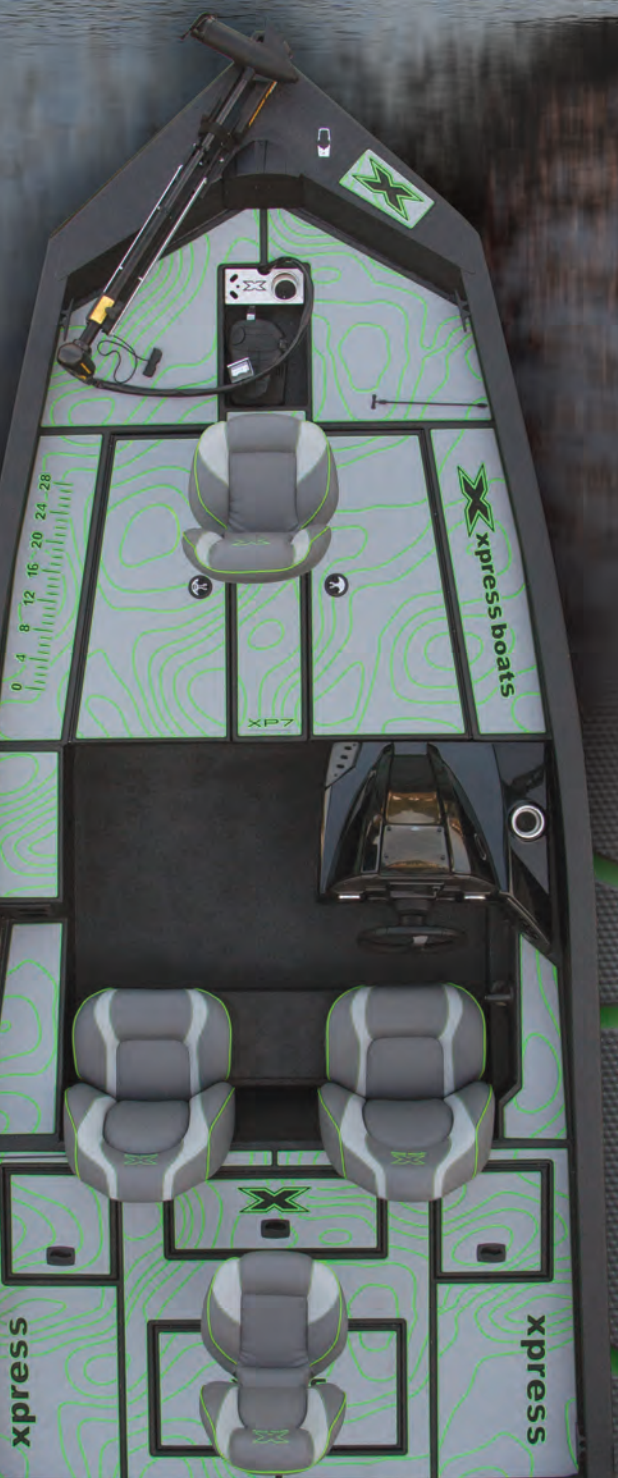
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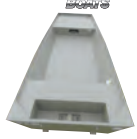
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It's time to start putting the hammer down on bucks across the Carolinas. This big boy from South Carolina's Clinton Plantation would be a nice start. Photo by Brian Carroll.

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TO THE EDITOR:

Currently, North Carolina's saltwater fisheries are in danger of falling into serious decline, far worse than the one we are experiencing. If we allow mismanagement to continue, the resource's future is uncertain, and the ability of future generations to enjoy its bounty is in jeopardy.

North Carolina is not the first state to experience a decline such as this; many have reformed their own systems with much success. The success of Louisiana as the "Sportsman's Paradise" is in part due to its unique ecology, but it also manages its resources in a way that maximizes their potential. North Carolina's ecology is similarly one of a kind; however, its potential is limited by its management and has been in decline.

Louisiana began reforms in the 1980s, with several of its fish stocks on the brink of collapse. Louisiana now has some of the strongest fisheries and healthiest commercial and recreational fishing economies in the country, a direct result of managing for conservation rather than exploiting the resource without regard for its future health.

Louisiana's red drum stocks beginning to crash in the late 1980s due to increased harvests was a catalyst for reform. The federal government and Louisiana banned the commercial harvest of redfish and severely restricted recreational harvests. Redfish were given gamefish status, effectively ending their commercial harvest and sale. Gill nets were banned, following Florida as one of the first states to do so. These reforms led to healthy fisheries without hindering the commercial economy.

While Louisiana has thrived, North Carolina has merely maintained the status quo. Seventeen important fish stocks are listed as depleted or of concern. Rather than conserving the resource, it is continuously depleted. Regulations permit fishing methods that are largely outdated. By-catch from inshore trawling and entanglement nets is destructive to the whole ecosystem. Gill nets have been banned in many states, but instead of focusing on preserving outdated methods at the expense of our resources, modernizing the commercial industry would have positive economic and ecological impacts.

In response to this problem, North Carolina Sound Economy was formed by a group of fishermen, to return North Carolina to ranking as one of the best places in the country to fish. It proposes modernizing our fisheries management by creating science-based solutions that benefit all parties and promote a healthy resource. We understand commercial fishing is a mainstay of the coastal economy. By approaching fisheries management with conservation principles, there will be a larger and healthier resource and a stronger economy. This may require short-term sacrifices, but these will be minimal compared to future sacrifices if we don't change now. NC Sound Economy wants to maximize our resources' economic potential, best done by restoring the resource to its former, sustainable health.

As a junior in high school I have been able to experience our coast's bounty. I want the opportunity to bring my children and grandchildren to the coast to experience the same things I did — impossible if nothing is done to preserve the resource.

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Outdoor UPDATE with Dan Kibler



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

THE PERILS OF POLITICAL BIOLOGY

MANAGEMENT TWISTS IN BOTH CAROLINAS SHOW THE GOOD AND BAD

Dan Kibler

Two attempts to regulate fisheries in the Carolinas — one each in North Carolina and South Carolina — are headed in starkly different directions.

In South Carolina, fisheries managers discovered, quite by accident, that a piece of legislation passed four years ago to change regulations managing blue catfish in the Santee Cooper system wasn't what it seemed. An amendment the S.C. Department of Natural Resources was not apprised of changed a key element, requiring the agency to submit a report on how management was working two years earlier than originally agreed upon.

So thinking they had until 2020 to produce the report, when the "surprise" June 2018 deadline passed, SCDNR was forced by terms of the legislation to revert to older creel and size limits that almost every stakeholder said needed to be replaced. Until a report can be written and the legislature can write and pass a new bill, there is no daily creel limit on blue catfish, and anglers can keep only one fish longer than 36 inches per day. The 2014 legislation, which took effect in 2015, put in place a 25-fish daily creel limit and allowed anglers to keep two fish longer than 32 inches per day. Pity enforcement officers who come upon a fisherman with two big blues in his boat and a regulations digest in his possession that says he can have them.

In North Carolina, the Marine Fisheries Commission voted in August to go forward with a plan to manage shrimp populations that essentially aims to reduce by-catch of finfish by changes in trawling regulations — a plan that was the result of efforts by the N.C. Wildlife Federation to protect declining finfish populations.

The way the plan was to be carried out was the focus of a suit by the commercial fishing industry to stop or delay any changes to the way North Carolina's shrimp trawlers — the only ones on the east coast that can still trawl inshore waters — operate. The



Brody Watson, 17, of Asheboro, N.C., a bone-marrow transplant patient who is battling Stage 4 Hodgkins lymphoma, caught his first-ever speckled trout this summer on a fishing trip to Sunset Beach, N.C.

August vote allows the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries to go forward immediately instead of waiting two years, as commercials had desired and filed suit over.

Also, the Commission now has recreational representatives in the chairman and vice chairman roles, plus a majority that seems to favor recreationals, which bodes well for needed reform. ▪

BIG SOUTH CAROLINA BUCKS SHINE IN EARLY SEASON

Two hunters really celebrated the opening weeks of deer season in South Carolina by tagging bucks that weighed 242 and 224 pounds and carried some impressive antlers in full velvet.

On Aug. 15, Zachary Dinkins of Gilbert, S.C., took a Lexington County buck that had been nicknamed "Swamp Donkey" — a 9-point, 22-inch wide, 224-pound brute that unofficially scored more than 140 inches.

On Aug. 23, Chip Veach, a charter captain from Key West, Fla., killed an even bigger buck in Bamberg County, an 11-point monster that weighed 242 pounds and was unofficially measured at 157⅞ inches, with a 21⅜-inch spread.

Both Dinkins and Veach were well acquainted with the bucks they killed; both had passed them up in past seasons.

"We have watched this buck grow for the past few years," Dinkins said. "We wanted him to get to his full potential before taking him out of the crowd."

According to field reporter Brian Carroll of Mount Pleasant, S.C., who reported the kill on www.CarolinaSportsman.com, Dinkins was sitting in a 16-foot ladder stand along the edge of a fire break the first afternoon of the season.

"The first day of the season is the best, because the deer simply don't have any pressure on them," said Dinkins, who passed up one 8-point buck before Swamp Donkey stepped out and headed to a corn pile 75 yards from his stand at 7:45 p.m.

Standing broadside and looking in the other direction, he presented Dinkins with a great opportunity.

"I knew it was him, and I decided to shoot" said Dinkins, who placed a bullet from his Ruger .270 perfectly behind the buck's shoulder, dropping it in his tracks.

Veach had passed on his buck in 2016, when nearly everybody hunting in his neck of the woods saw him plenty of times, in person and in trail-camera photos. But in 2017, the buck disappeared.

"We all let him walk in 2016, at least three of us," Veach said. "He looked like a 3½-year-old buck, but he had shorter tines. I didn't figure he'd ever be anything real good. Then, nobody saw him last year, in 2017. Nobody saw him; we had no pictures of him."

On Aug. 19, the buck showed up in a trail-camera photo near a stand that was set up as a bow stand.

"Now I've got to scramble, because I don't bowhunt, he's a monster and it was a daytime photo," Veach said. "I didn't recognize him right away, but I showed the photos to a buddy, and he sent me one of his pictures from 2016, and you could see it was him. You could tell from the curve of his beams."



Zachary Dinkins of Gilbert, S.C., killed this beautiful, 224-pound buck, in full velvet on Aug. 15.



Chip Veach of Key West, Fla., killed this monster Bamberg County buck on Aug. 23.

On Aug. 22, Veach set up a stand nearby, this time to take advantage of the prevailing north wind. He saw a big-bodied deer at 8:40 p.m., but it was too dark to get a good look, much less shoot.

A check of his trail cam the next day at 1:30 showed Veach that the big-bodied deer was the buck he wanted, but the wind had changed. He got another ladder stand and put it up on the other side of the wind at 2:30, left the area, then came back at 5:30.

"About 7:30, I had my binoculars up, scanning the woods, and BAM! There he his, standing there, not looking at me," Veach said. "I felt like I could thread the needle between two trees and I put it on him."

Beach's put a .270 bullet through the buck's neck; it dropped on the spot. ▪

BAG-A-BUCK Contest underway

Don't forget to post photos of your bucks in the Carolina Sportsman Bag-A-Buck Contest to be eligible to win monthly prizes of great Sportsman swag from the online Sportsman Store.

Log onto CarolinaSportsman.com and click on the Bag-A-Buck Contest link to enter.

more updates...

DON'T DISCARD SMALL ANTLERS

Deer hunters are often guilty of discarding items that are useful and may be used to create reminders of a special hunt.

Rather than discarding antlers from a buck that might not be worthy of mounting, consider making buttons for a coat, jacket or shirt from the antlers.

These buttons are as functional as they are decorative.



THESE EASY STEPS WILL OUTLINE HOW TO TURN DO THIS.

• Saw an antler into buttons of the desired thickness, making them as symmetrical as possible. A band saw is the easiest way to accomplish this.

• If you want a glossy button surface, coat them with epoxy, polyurethane or some other coating. This will also increase the buttons' durability. Epoxy may be mixed 50/50 with denatured alcohol to make it easier to apply

• Drill two holes in each button to prepare for attachment to garment.

• Measure and mark button spacing and button hole spacing; 3½ inches is a good starting point.

• Use an appropriate-sized needle and strong thread to attach the buttons to the garment.

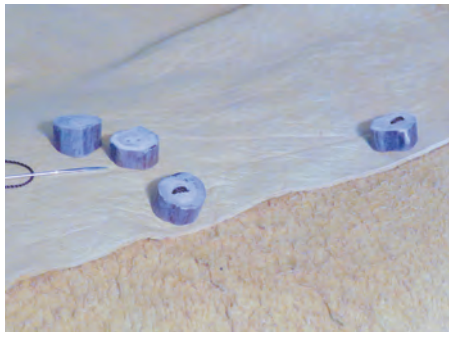
Antlers can also be sawed into toggle button sizes with appropriate holes drilled if you want to use them as secure attachments.

They can also be cut into sections of the appropriate length and used as knife handles, as can longer, straight bones.

— L. Woodrow Ross









Turn a discarded deer antler into decorative buttons, step by step (clockwise from top left): Pick out an antler of appropriate size, then saw it into thin sections. You have the option for a glossy finish by applying epoxy or a polyurethane finish, then drill two holes in each button and use thread to secure them to a piece of material: in this case, a piece of buckskin that may become a jacket. Thicker sections of antler or canon bones can be turned into knife handles (top).

DUCK NUMBERS DOWN

Data from the U.S. Fish and WIldlife Service is not pointing to a great 2018-2019 duck season.

The agency's annual report on duck breeding numbers was full of bad news: overall numbers down 13 percent over 2017 levels, and the drop was across the board; only widgeon showed an increase, and that was only 2 percent.

The report predicts 41.2 million breeding ducks, down from 47.3 million last year. Mallards were down 12 percent, gadwall down 31 percent, green-winged and blue-winged teal down 16 and 18 percent, respectively, shovelers down 3 percent, pintails down 18 percent, redheads down 10 percent, canvasbacks down 6 percent and scaup down 9 percent.

Ducks Unlimited, the conservation group dedicated to waterfowl, weighed in that a reduction in breeding grounds in the northern prairies of the United States and Canada was at the center of the lower numbers. A dry spring and summer reduced the number of prairie potholes that ducks need in order to breed. USFWS said the number of ponds was down 14 percent from 2017 levels.

Despite the drop from 2017 levels, duck numbers are generally still above what the USFWS refers to as the "long-term average." Among major species, only pintail numbers remained low: 40 percent below the long-term average. ▪

NC CROWNS NEW RECORDS FOR SNAPPER, GROUPER

North Carolina's Division of Marine Fisheries has certified new state-record fish: gray (mangrove) snapper and gag grouper, one caught in May and one in June.

Angler Mark Davis of Lexington, S.C. caught the gray snapper June 14 off Ocean Isle Beach. This fish weighed 12 pounds, 5 ounces.

North Carolina had not previously certified a state record for gray snapper, but an NCDMF committee determined the fish was exceptionally large for North Carolina waters — the world record is an 18-pound, 10-ounce fish caught in Louisiana in 2015 — and made the 28.94-inch fish, caught on a live menhaden, the state record.

Louis Guzman of Clayton, N.C., caught a 48-pound gag grouper on May 24 out of Morehead City. It was slightly more than a half-pound larger than the previous state record, a 47.4-pound fish caught off Carolina Beach in 2017.

Guzman's fish was 45¼ inches long and had a 29.62-inch girth. It was caught on live bait.

The all-tackle world record gag grouper is an 80-pound, 6-ounce fish caught off Florida in 1993. ▪



Louis Guzman's 48-pound gag grouper is North Carolina's new state record for that species.

NCDMF

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Mark Davis' 12-pound, 5-ounce gray (mangrove) snapper is North Carolina's first-ever state-record gray snapper.

NCDMF



Don't fall



BELOW: Randy Potts arrowed this 147-inch Anson County 8-pointer from a stand triangulated between three food sources. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Mark Martin sat against a tree and used a 50-caliber muzzle-loader to pop this Laurens County 10-pointer.

into a rut

By Craig Holt

The peak of whitetails' breeding season in the Carolinas varies greatly by location. Your best chances before bucks set aside their innate caution involve locating productive food sources, buck sign and does.

Deer hunters, especially in the Carolinas, understand that the peak of the mating season, aka the rut, can be an important factor in putting venison on the table or impressive antlers on the wall.

But marking calendars to sit in trees or ground blinds and partake in the perceived peak of the rut isn't always a formula for success. Knowing where to position stands to take advantage of bucks using certain food sources — and when to move them — is more important, along with shadowing does.

Common knowledge says the peak of the rut — three to five days each fall — is when normally super-wary "boss of the woods" bucks pursue female whitetails with reckless abandon. Others think the peak signals the best chance to get any antlered deer within archery or firearms range.

But it is actually two to three weeks before the peak, the pre-rut, when hunters should be in the woods. That's when bucks chase receptive does around the clock, and it always precedes the much-ballyhooed peak.

Does' birth dates — not buck biology — actually frames the rut. The majority of doe fawns are born in May and June, which determines their first estrous cycles 18 months later. With most deer in the Carolinas born in late spring, November should be the marked month for bucks chasing mature does, but it can happen much earlier or later.

Because whitetails' gestation period is 6½ months, deer born in March were conceived the previous September, and the fact that it sometimes happens along that time line can skew hunters' concepts of when the rut actually kicks in.

For instance, Mack Martin, 22, of Clinton, S.C., killed a 10-point, 6½-year-old, 215-pound wall-hanger in Laurens County last Oct. 1, but he was stunned to have seen bucks chasing does two weeks earlier.

"In September bow season, I saw bucks running does," he said. "It's hard to tell when the rut happens."

Martin crawled to an open oak forest that day and sat against a thick tree trunk.

"The wind was right, so I sneaked in through some pines before daylight and sat down against an oak. I could see 200 yards," said Martin, who was hunting with a muzzleloader. "My dad, who has several deer in the (South Carolina) record book, always hunts from the ground. I use tree stands only if I have to now."

Just 70 miles to Martin's northwest in Cleveland



County, N.C., Eddie Callahan, 49, was hunting in early September when he dropped the biggest buck taken in North Carolina last season with a crossbow, a 10-pointer who scored 157⅞ gross and 153 net inches. Hunting in early September, he hid in a blind he set up in five minutes near one end of a shooting lane in the woods off a gas line that was planted in crops. His trail-camera had captured images of the buck walking the gas line "like clockwork."

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After nailing the 220-pounder behind its right shoulder, "the buck spun around two or three times and tried to stand," Callahan said.

By then, the hunter had reloaded a bolt. He aimed again, fired and heard a loud pop.

"He went straight down and never kicked," he said. "But I couldn't find any signs of the second arrow. When I grabbed his antlers to drag him, I cut my hand on the second broadhead sticking in his right main beam (above the G1 tine). The (bolt) must have shattered when the broadhead hit his antler, knocked him out, and he bled out before while I walked to him."

Randy Potts of Stanly County, N.C., a 34-year-old forklift driver, identified food sources to locate a tree-stand site "between a food plot, 80 yards from another hunter's corn pile and 20 yards from my own automatic feeder that put out (persimmon-scented) corn."

He wound up popping a pre-rut September swamp donkey, a 147-inch, Anson County Pope & Young 8-pointer that weighed 215 pounds.

Doe-watching early in the 2017 season gave Adrian Whitson of Burnsville, N.C., a better idea for stand placement in Yancey County for a hunt on Thanksgiving Day, which well before the peak of the rut in North Carolina's western mountains.

"I kept seeing bucks and does 200 yards above my stand," said Whitson, 37. "So I moved an old Summit tree stand nearer the top of a 4,000-foot elevation mountain."

He left corn on the ground near his old bow perch 60 yards below his new spot, but he sprayed Tink's 69 deer scent into the air. The area's dominant buck apparently detected the aroma and walked straight to Whitson, who dropped it with a single shot from a Ruger .223 rifle.

"It's a kid's gun, but I can put it in my backpack, so it's easy to carry in the mountains," Whitson said.

The buck's almost perfect 5x5 rack taped 171⅝ gross and 165⅛ net inches and was the biggest typical buck taken by gun entered in the big-buck contest at the Dixie Deer Classic in Raleigh this past March. ▪

WHEN IS RUT PEAK? UP NEXT >



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When is rut peak?
It's complicated

Conventional wisdom aside, when a dominant buck corrals an estrous doe, he quits chasing for a while. That's why wall-hanger bucks may disappear during the peak of the rut, making a hunter's best-laid plans often go awry.

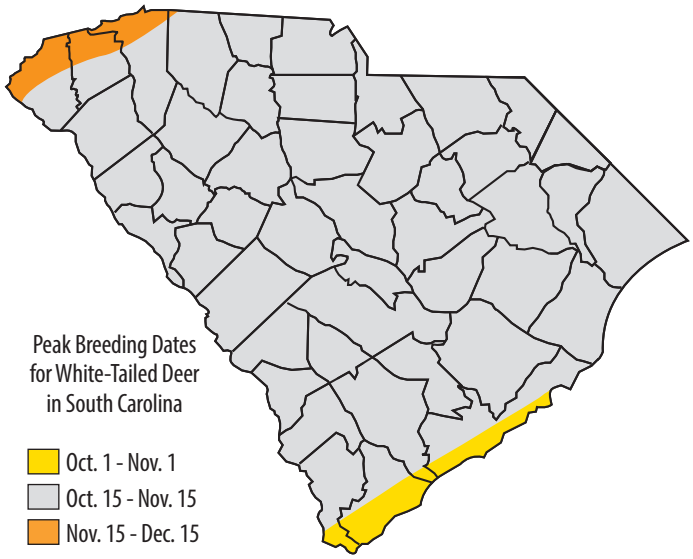
Then again, understanding the rut is crucial in deciding where to place a stand.

"Breeding activity studies chart the rut as a bell curve," said Scott Osborne, former deer biologist with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. "Some mating activity starts in August and can go into December."

Charles Ruth, South Carolina's deer-project leader, agreed. "Historic reproductive data collected ... indicates approximately 83 percent of females are bred Oct. 6 to Nov. 15" he said. "The majority of bucks (74 percent) entered into our records program are taken during October and November."

In 39 of the Palmetto State's 46 central counties, SCDNR studies show Oct. 15-Nov. 15 peak rut dates. They're sandwiched by two small regions with different dates: the eastern halves of coastal counties Charleston, Colleton, Beaufort and Jasper (Oct. 1-Nov. 1) and western halves of four Upstate counties, Spartanburg, Pickens, Greenville and Oconee (Nov. 15-Dec. 15).

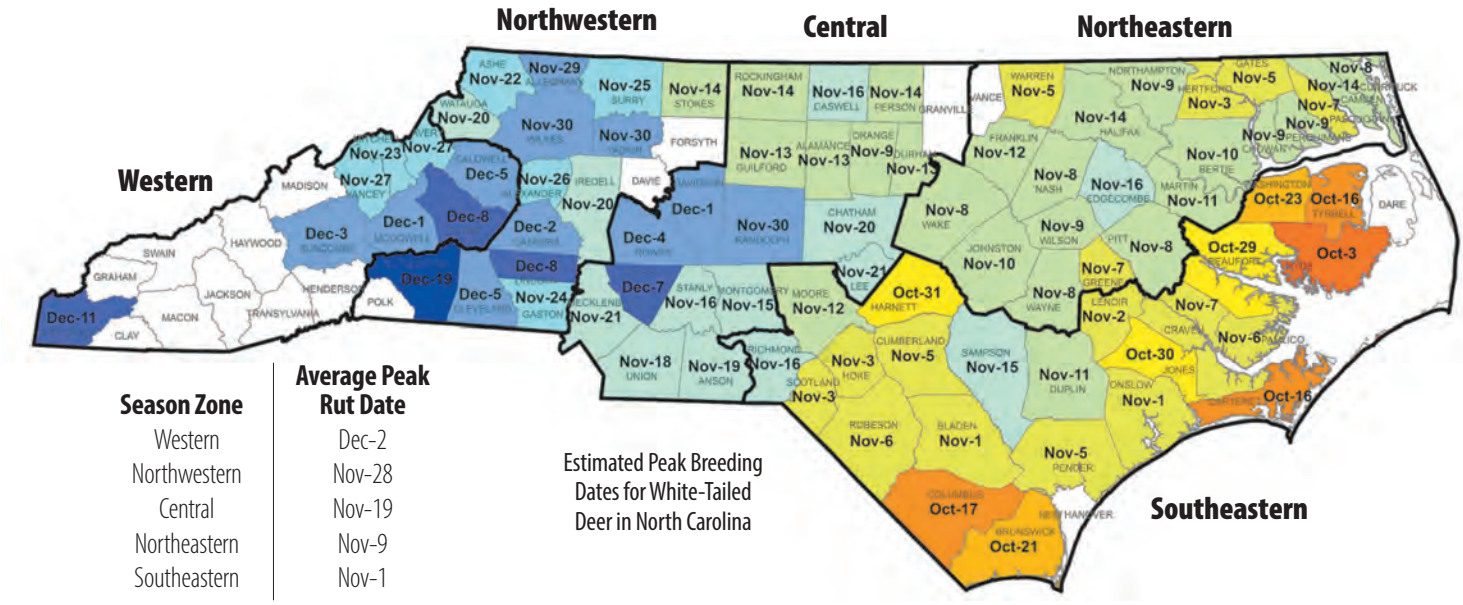
Deer mating dates vary more widely in North Carolina. The average peak rut is Nov. 1 in the Commission's Southeastern region (the earliest Oct. 3 in Hyde County and the latest Nov. 15 in Sampson County) while in the Northeastern region it's Nov. 9. In the Central region, it's Nov. 19, Nov. 28 in the Northwestern corner and Dec. 2 at the Western region.



But in both states, seeing does, food sources, trails and buck sign should determine pre-rut stand sights. Baiting deer also is legal at both states. ■



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



Season Zone	Average Peak Rut Date
Western	Dec-2
Northwestern	Nov-28
Central	Nov-19
Northeastern	Nov-9
Southeastern	Nov-1


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THE CATS'

Anglers from across the Carolinas make an annual trek to the Santee Cooper lakes in search of trophy catfish, and these enormous cats make it worth the trouble with explosive bites and drag-screaming surges. These pole-bending monsters are caught throughout the year, but October through December is prime time for hooking these fat and feisty whiskered fish from Lake Moultrie and Lake Marion.

And experts say the excellent fishing has actually been on an upsurge recently.

Bob Winters of Cross, S.C., has guided for catfish and striped bass on the Santee Cooper lakes for nearly 40 years and has watched them morph into a world-class fishery for blues and flatheads. Like other anglers, Winters suffered when the fishery declined for several years, likely from over exploitation.

"But that's in the rear-view now, because the big cats are back and are here in terrific numbers," Winters said. "We had a few years when big catfish became scarce, but in recent years, the trend has completely reversed. Now, 40-pound catfish are a reasonable goal, and 20- to 35-pound fish are very frequently caught. We can't guarantee big fish every day, but the fishing is so good now that I'm disappointed if we don't catch them."

Winters said catching trophy catfish begins with having them available in good numbers and using the right techniques at the right time of the year.

Kevin Davis, owner of Blacks Camp, has also monitored the comeback of big catfish for many years. He said big cats are caught throughout the year, with spring and fall best for sustained success on trophy fish.

"Right now, I'd say a 40-pound catfish is the trophy standard for most, but make no mistake, we see numerous 50- to 70-pound catfish, and fish over 80 pounds are occasionally weighed," Davis said. "A new state record was caught on rod and reel in Lake Moultrie last year, weighing 113 pounds. The trophy catfish fishery is great and I think is on the upswing right now."

Davis said the key to catching big catfish is pinpointing a specific target that is a bit different from the surrounding underwater topography.

"Big catfish, like big bass and other species, have learned to gravitate to these areas," he said. "Another important aspect is patience. Trophy catfish often require patience, the same patience a deer hunter needs when sitting in a stand for hours waiting on a big buck. I'll fish a specific spot hard if I think the odds are good for a big catfish. Moving around can occasionally help a person find scattered, smaller fish, but trophy catfish usually require an investment of time."

>

meow

October kicks off the best fishing of the year for trophy blue catfish on the Santee Cooper lakes. It's prime time to take advantage of these bruisers.

By Terry Madewell



Tournament fishermen have learned how to target big catfish, because most major tournaments limit the number of fish to be weighed.

Benji Brown, a seasoned tournament fisherman from Spartanburg, S.C., said Santee Cooper is a great trophy fish destination, one he enjoys fishing year-round.

"In most catfish tournaments, we can only weigh three or five fish, depending on the specific event," he said. "Tournament fishing has taught me to focus my efforts on tactics likely to generate bites from really big catfish, not strictly numbers of fish. At Santee Cooper, these tactics include finding forage, working specific locations and using the right technique for each specific target."

Brown's tournament partner is his 17-year-old son, Riley, who said specific, big-fish tactics change throughout the year while the generic pattern remains the same. He said he and his father focus on ditches, ledges and humps and will use lake maps to identify potential areas and confirm specific locations with electronics.

"Ditches are highways for big catfish at Santee Cooper," Benji Brown said. "I focus on areas that have different depths of water in the same vicinity, and while big catfish may be caught in deep or shallow water, they are usually close to changing water depths. Big catfish move to and from different depths along specific, identifiable routes. Find these routes, and you've got a good start."

Brown said the next phase is to use electronics, not only to find these areas but to find forage and often big fish marked on or near the bottom. When he locates a potential target with both forage and big fish on his graph, he determines the best fishing technique to use.

"I like to drift-fish with a Santee rig as my go-to technique, and that often works great at Marion or Moultrie because we'll often find fish scattered all over a specific hump or ledge with scattered clouds of baitfish present," he said. "Drift-fishing enables me to cover a larger area effectively in that situation. When I find a place that's loaded with catfish in a very specific area, then an anchor setup may work best. I'll use flat-line rigs around the boat to target that catfish-rich environment. The only hard and fast rule here is that no single rule exists. I employ the technique that gives me access to more big fish."

Brown said trophy catfish have a strong affinity for fresh bait; he changes baits on every rod at least hourly. He said Santee Cooper is also unique among the lakes he's fished, because he frequently catches huge catfish on small baits.

"I'm not sure the specific reason, but it's not an occasional occurrence, it's a pattern here," he said. "Big baits produce great here as well, so I use both."

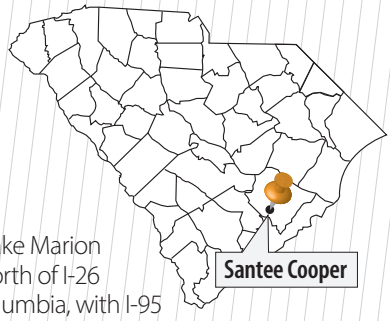
Brown said that at Santee Cooper, fishermen must go one step further on bait selection when targeting trophy catfish.

"Gizzard shad, threadfin shad and white perch are certainly prime natural baits, but these lakes have an influx of several different forage species big catfish will eat," he said. "The best bait at a given time is a moving target because the forage situation changes.



Terry Madewell

Terry Madewell



DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE — Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie are just north of I-26 between Charleston and Columbia, with I-95 crossing Lake Marion, providing access to fishing camps on both sides of the lakes. The Diversion Canal connects the two lakes and is a prime area for fishing either lake with numerous fishing camps available for lodging, boat access and tackle supplies. For complete details visit www.santeecoopercountry.org.

WHEN TO GO — Spring and fall are the rime times for trophy catfish action, but October through December typically produces some of the most-consistent trophy fish action of the year.

BEST TECHNIQUES — Use fresh live or cut bait on heavy tackle along ditches, humps or ledges in the two lakes. Fish may be very shallow or deep, but water less than 15 feet deep has the potential to produce year-round. Use electronics to find underwater ledges, forage and catfish.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — Kevin Davis, 843-312-3080; Dave Hilton, 843-870-4734; Bob Winters, 843-700-0626; Santee Cooper Country, 800-227-8510, www.santeecoopercountry.org. See also Guides & Charters in Classifieds.

ACCOMMODATIONS — Blacks Camp, 843-753-2231; Santee Cooper Country, 800-227-8510, www.santeecoopercountry.org.

MAPS — Fishing Hotspots, 800-338-5957; Kingfisher Maps, 800-326-0257, www.kfmaps.com; DeLorme's South Carolina Atlas & Gazetteer, 207-846-7000, www.delorme.com.

Brown said during the course of the year, shad, river herring, menhaden and mullet all enter the system via the St. Stephens Fish Lift and the locks at the Pinopolis Dam on the Cooper River.

"When these seasonal forage flood into the lakes, they typically become the main chow for big catfish," Brown said. "Big cats are at the top of the food chain and will eat what they want and what's most readily available.

"If you don't use the right bait at the right time of the year, you'll slash the odds of trophy fish success. Traditional baits will still produce but often are not as effective as the seasonal smorgasbord available."

Brown's final recommendation for trophy cats at Santee Cooper is to use planer boards for catfish. He said using planer boards definitely produceS most of his big-fish bites.

"I think getting the bait away from the boat makes a difference," he said. "Perhaps the passing of the boat overhead and the pinging of the sonar impacts fish. We certainly catch large catfish on rods being drifted directly behind the boat, but I've done the math, and we catch way more big fish using planer boards."

OPPOSITE PAGE: Big blue catfish use ditches as travel routes in the Santee Cooper lakes.

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Davis said a shallow-water connection for big catfish is overlooked by many for big fish.

"This past summer, when the water temperature was high and weather hot, a lot of big catfish were caught in shallow water," he said. "I'm not saying to fish skinny water exclusively, but I think it's vastly underrated in terms of producing big catfish here. Our lakes have a tremendous amount of shallow water, and this shallow water often holds forage that big cats prefer during all seasons, not just during the spring as many think."

Brown said he and son often catch big catfish in skinny water during the extremes of winter and summer.

"We have places where we consistently catch huge catfish in less than 7 feet of water during January and February," he said. "Also, when fishing at night during mid-summer and fall, one common setup we prefer is to fish in 2 feet of water that's close to deeper water."

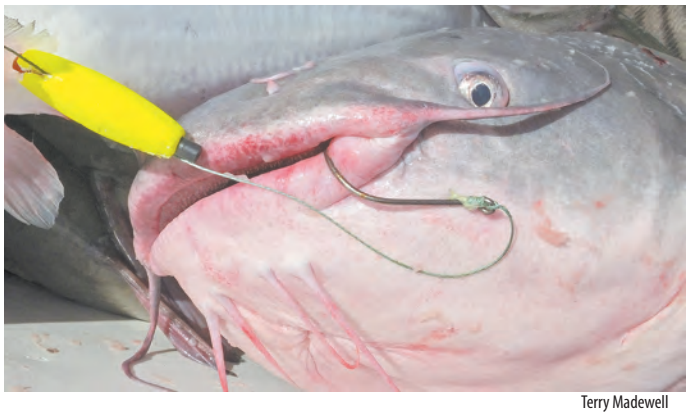
Davis said the big catfish factory is back in high production thanks in part to the regulations protecting the resource, as well anglers releasing big catfish.

"I am a firm believer that guides and many fishermen now performing CPR on catfish are helping the resource for the future," he said. "Specifically, that's Catch. Photograph and Release trophy (fish) while keep smaller fish for consumption. The numbers of smaller fish are high, so that won't hurt the resource. These big fish are one key to successful spawns and to the continued prosperity of this amazing trophy catfish-catching opportunity."

Davis said if anglers are targeting trophy catfish for the first time, they need to ensure they employ quality equipment and terminal tackle.

"With the standing and submerged timber, stumps, logs and other bottom debris, I recommend 7- to 8-foot, heavy action rods, quality reels spooled with line in the 30- to 50-pound class as a minimum," he said. "Big cats are occasionally caught with lighter tackle, but tackle not suited to taking trophy fish in heavy cover often ends in heartbreak for the angler. Most guides use 7/0 up to 9/0 circle hooks when targeting trophy catfish." ▪

TROPHY CATS UP NEXT >



Terry Madewell

ABOVE: Large circle hooks on the terminal end of a Santee drift rig are used by most Santee Cooper fishermen to target big catfish. **BELOW:** Many anglers spread out their baits using planer boards, feeling that the boat's hull or electronics spook them when they pass overhead.



Terry Madewell

A LONG-TIME *trophy fishery*



The Santee Cooper lakes have been producing trophy blue, channel and flathead catfish for more than 50 years.

Terry Madewell

A 58-pound channel catfish was caught from Lake Moultrie in 1964, setting state and world records that still stand. While the Santee Cooper lakes provide excellent fishing for numbers of channel catfish, the sizes are no longer extreme and are not typically considered trophy sized, even for channel catfish.

The big impact for trophy catfishing on Lake Marion, Lake Moultrie and the Diversion Canal took root more than 50 years ago when the S.C. Department of Natural Resources stocked catfish in the lakes, with now-legendary results.

After that stocking, the Santee Cooper system developed into a world-class fishery for both blue and flathead catfish, and at times, state records for both blue and flathead catfish have come from Santee Cooper. The current state-record blue, a 113.8-pound fish, was caught from Lake Moultrie in 2017. Santee Cooper flatheads have held state records several times in the past, with fish bigger than 70 pounds caught and certified. The two most recent state-record flatheads were caught in the Cooper River downstream of Pinopolis Dam, which impounds Lake Moultrie. ▪



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TROPHY CATS: *a biological perspective*



Kevin Davis has weighed in plenty of huge blue catfish on the scales at his business, Blacks Camp.

Chad Holbrook, a fisheries biologist for the S.C. Department of Natural Resources who oversees the Santee Cooper lakes, said biologists use winter gill-net sampling to assess blue catfish populations and, the data shows increasing catch rates from 2016 through 2018.

"The catch rate was due to catching higher numbers of blue catfish that were less than 20 inches long, more than we had seen in 15 years," he said. "This is a product of a couple years of good spawning success in 2014 and 2015 and corresponding favorable water conditions. A high number of 20- to 24-inch blue catfish are now in the system as well."

Holbrook said another key to the upsurge is likely the blue catfish regulation that went into effect in April 2015, replacing 2007 regulations that restricted anglers to keeping no more than one fish greater than 36 inches but included no creel limit. The 2015 regulations, recently repealed by an "undiscovered" sunset clause, restricted the daily limit to 25 per person, with only two catfish greater than 32 inches allowed to be kept.

From a big-fish perspective, Holbrook said the data also indicates an increasing trend in the number of fish longer than 32 inches in the lakes. Beyond that, he said, based on discussions with anglers, the number of 40-pound class fish seems to have increased in recent years.

"Prior to the regulation, we believe many trophy fish were in the lakes, but they were not as abundant as they currently are — but it is hard to equate this completely to the regulation enacted in 2015," he said. "Based on our age/growth data, on average, it takes 12 years for a blue catfish to reach 20 pounds and 18 years to reach 40 pounds A restrictive law, such as the 2015 law, would need to be in place longer to evaluate the impact to the increasing abundance of trophy fish. But the current increase in trophy catfish may also be impacted by the impact of the 2007 law." ▪



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.*

Santee catfish regs REVERT TO 2007

The S.C. Department of Natural Resources discovered in early August that its regulations managing blue catfish in the Santee Cooper system were no longer in effect because of a sunset clause in a piece of 2014 legislation.

According to Ross Self, chief of fisheries for the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, the package submitted to the legislature in 2014 called for a study and recommendation to be completed and submitted to the legislature by 2020.

"The bill was amended on the floor toward the end of the 2014 session," Self said. "That amendment added a section that called for the sunset of the new limits at the end of June 2018 unless action was taken to extend the limits. We failed to recognize this addition had been made. We were focused on the 2020 reporting requirement."

Self said that until new legislation is passed, regulations will be those from 2007. He said SCDNR's enforcement division has been made aware of the situation. ▪

5 DEER CALIBERS that can't be beat

By Pete Rogers

For whitetails in the Carolinas, it's difficult to come up with any better examples of ammo that will do the job.



The debate over the best rifle calibers for deer has been going on as long as hunters have been sitting around campfires. In the Carolinas, the array of calibers is as wide as the beaches along the coastlines of both states. Narrowing the list to five is, well, challenging.

How does one select the best caliber for Carolina whitetails? Began with a list of things to consider. First, leave out any caliber less than .27 and more than .35. Second, ask yourself, which of these are popular, and which would I use or already currently use? Another consideration is affordability. How much do the guns chambered for them cost? Availability of ammunition is another factor. If you run out or go out the door and forget your bullets, can you stop at almost any store that carries ammo and pick some up? Last is the accuracy and killing effectiveness of these calibers for the size of deer in the Carolinas.

>>>

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Arguably the most-popular deer caliber in America, it is also a favorite in the Carolinas. If not at the top, it is certainly in the top three. Available in a variety of bullet weights ranging from 90 to 220 grains, it is ideal for deer. For example, the factory loaded, 150-grain bullet carries a muzzle velocity of 2,910 feet per second, with a downrange velocity at 200 yards of 2,492. Equally impressive is the energy retention, at well over 2,298 foot pounds at 200 yards. That makes it one of the best, most-accurate rounds available.



.270 WINCHESTER

Legendary gun writer Jack O'Connor referred to the .270 Winchester as the finest all-around caliber available. Certainly, he forgot more about guns than most of us will ever know. The .270 has a love-hate relationship with Carolina deer hunters; there are those who swear by it, and others who scoff at it. Still, for the size deer in the Carolinas, it is hard to beat, given its flat trajectory, low recoil and effective killing power. When asked, — "How many deer have you killed with that .270?" — one of the Carolinas' most-prolific deer slayers answered plainly, "All of them."

Factory loaded 130-grain bullets leave a .270's muzzle at an effective 3,060 feet per second and are still travelling 2,627 feet per second at 200 yards. Equally effective is the energy retention, producing 2,702 foot pounds at the muzzle and a 1,991 food pounds at 200 yards downrange — more than enough energy for Carolina whitetails.





.7MM-08 REMINGTON

If there was ever a great marriage between the .270 Winchester and .30-caliber rounds, it is the .7mm-08 Remington. This combination of a .30-caliber case necked down to support a 7mm bullet could just be the best all-around cartridge for Carolina deer and other, similar-sized game.

The 140-grain Nosler bullet leaves the barrel at 2,860 feet per second and is still travelling 2,488 feet per second 200 yards downrange. Its energy is 2,543 foot pounds at the muzzle and 1,925 at 200 yards.

This is a caliber many parents use to introduce their children to hunting. The effective killing range and very low recoil make it comfortable for small-framed hunters to have confidence shooting it at controlled ranges.

CONTINUES >

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7MM REMINGTON MAGNUM

Admittedly, this is a behemoth of a round for whitetails. The size of the bullet and the extreme damage it does to deer seems like overkill. But in the words of legendary author Robert Ruark, "Use enough gun," and in choosing the 7mm Remington Magnum, you certainly have done that.

The 150-grain bullet leaves the muzzle at a blistering 3,110 feet per second, with 3,221 foot pounds of energy. At 200 yards downrange, it carries 2,751 feet per second velocity and 2,520 foot pounds of energy — more than enough to drop a deer in its tracks, even with marginal shot placement. Personal preference adheres to the old adage about the 7mm Remington Magnum: "It kills on one end and maims on the other."



6.5 CREEDMOOR

New to the list is a cartridge that is quickly gaining traction. Originally designed for long-range, bench-rest shooters, the 6.5 Creedmoor is an excellent cartridge for Carolina deer. It is perhaps the best cartridge ever developed for deer- and antelope-sized game. Like a lot of new cartridges, it has its "naysayers," but looking at the numbers, it is hard to beat a cartridge that dominates 1,000-yard rifle competitions for accuracy and still retains downrange killing energy. Couple this with the extremely light recoil, and what is not to like about this round?

More and more manufacturers are carrying the 6.5 Creedmoor, and it's showing up in more stores, which is why it made the list. Ammunition is around $25 per box, less expensive than the magnum rounds but a shade more than the old standards. To verify, let's look at the numbers.

Most deer hunters use the 129-grain bullets, but it also comes in 120- and 140-grain rounds. The 129-grain Hornady load pushes 2,950 feet per second at the muzzle with 2,492 foot pounds of energy. Out at the terminal range of 200 yards, this little bullet retains 2,570 feet per second of velocity and a deliberate 1,892 foot pounds of energy. Not bad for a small bullet screaming through the air.

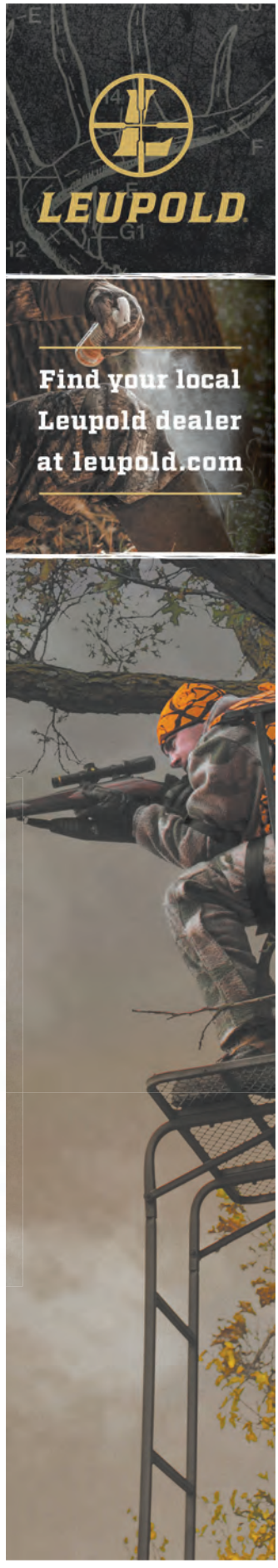


CONCLUSION

There are a host of popular calibers not included here — the .30-30, .308, .243, .35 Remington, .300 Winchester Magnum, and so on — not because they are not excellent rounds, but simply due to space limitations. Narrowing the list to five is difficult, to say the least. Still, any of these listed are excellent rounds for your fall hunt for Carolina deer. ▪



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













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FALL FLOUNDER FLING

By Phillip Gentry

Cooling weather sends flatfish out of backwaters toward big waters around Charleston. Here's how to intercept them on their migration.

>>>



Phillip Gentry

Autumn is largely the favorite season for many die-hard saltwater anglers. Summer crowds have mostly vacated the coast, and baitfish begin making their seasonal migrations out of estuaries and into more open water.

While many anglers dream of double armloads of adult redfish or 100-trout days, the lowly flounder tends to get overlooked. But like reds and trout, flounder also find themselves on the move in response to cooler water and baitfish migrations.

Guide John Boy Koonce of Shoal Bandit Charters warns anglers not to make the mistake of thinking the mullet run is just for redfish and shrimp migrations are only for trout.

"He might not be swimming around the same way as a redfish or trout, but ol' Mr. Flounder's down there wanting to eat just like everybody else," said Koonce, whose go-to baits for fall flounder are finger mullet and mud minnows, the latter because Charleston bait and tackle shops usually carry plenty.

"I prefer a lightweight Carolina rig," he said. "I'll go with a ¼-ounce weight on a foot-and-a-half leader.

Koonce's favorite spots for October flounder are live oyster points in the bigger, wider creeks in the Charleston area. He prefers live oyster shell, what he describes as "darker" shell, over points that are covered with dead shell that have been sun-bleached to a near white.

"I look for gaps in the live oyster shell, someplace that flounder can get in between the shell and lay up," Koonce said. "I don't like mud bottom, either that or areas where you find the black grass. Flounder don't like either one of those, but they love the live oyster shell and will even lay on top of it sometimes."

Koonce approaches the structure so he's parallel to it, wanting to cast along the edge of the shell where it meets the bottom. He prefers to fish the bottom two hours of a falling tide and the first two hours of a rising tide.

"I want to get him out in the open, away from the grass and away from the docks, and get him out where there's still some live shell in the water," he said. "I think they like that better, too, because the baitfish have nowhere to hide. A flounder can lay in a foot-and-a-half of water and eat all he wants."

Koonce's other favorite spots are along sea walls or an area where a homeowner has brought in riprap to line his property. Both make for good, hard, edges, and flounder love position themselves along the edge.

Koonce said Bass Creek around Kiawah Island, Hobcaw Creek off the Wando River, Yellowhouse Creek off the Cooper River, and James Island Creek on the back of James Island are good floundering spots.

"You have to be real careful with the Carolina rig, because it'll hang up pretty easy," he said. "If I'm fishing a good area, I might even rig a slip float so the bait is set just above the structure. You end up catching more mixed bags that way, but you'll find your share of flounder with a cork, too."

continues on page 42 >>>



Guide John Boy Koonce prefers to fish the edge of live oyster shell on low water. Flounder will lay in the side along the edge or even on top of the shell.

Phillip Gentry



Although Carolina rigs are preferred, guide John Boy Koonce will suspend a live bait under a cork if he knows there's structure on the bottom.

Phillip Gentry

IT'S AN ALL-NIGHT GIG

It is not often that a recreational trip to procure fish begins well after dark. However, guide Allen Jernigan met a friend, Tony Rhodes, at a ramp in Sneads Ferry, N.C., at 9:30 p.m.

"We have been having some good nights," said Jernigan, 37, who operates Breadman Ventures Guide Service. "Most nights, we can gig a recreational limit for three fishermen. It might take 90 minutes, but it could also take all night long."

When he was younger, Jernigan gigged flounder by wading along, sticking them and tossing them into a floating washtub. His modern gigging rig is a 17-foot aluminum john boat with a 60-horsepower outboard. He built an aluminum rack on the bow that holds four 65-watt lights juiced by a generator. With that arrangement of lights, he sees flounder resting on the bottom as deep as water clarity allows. He uses 10-foot and 12-foot Sea Striker gigs with metal shafts and stainless steel points as he motors along on his trolling motor.

"I am glad the wind calmed down," Jernigan said. "If there is one thing that hurts a gigging trip, it is wind. It stirs up the water and makes it too dark to see the fish."

Jernigan (910-467-1482) headed to a bank that was protected from the breezy southwest winds that had blown all afternoon. He shut off the outboard and set down the trolling motor. The water was clear enough for the flounder hunter to see the bottom and just deep enough that propeller would not dig into the sand. He used the gig point to point out outline of a flounder in the sand.

"There's a flounder print," he said. "It shows where a fish was lying. When the tide is falling or it is low, flounder head to the deeper holes and the river channel. When it is rising, they move up onto the flats to feed."

Rhodes also pointed out flounder prints. Eventually, they rounded a point where the water was too cloudy for them to see the bottom any longer.

"It takes experience to know where flounder go based on wind direction," Jernigan said. "Certain banks are eroded by wind, making the water dark. The sandier banks are the best places when it has been windy.

They passed up several undersized flounder before the boat slid right over one that looked like it was big enough to stick before they could stop. They backed up the boat by pushing against the bottom with their gigs until the fish visible again. Rhodes struck the first flounder what would become a banner night. ▪

— Mike Marsh



Tony Rhodes gigged this flounder in the New River near Sneads Ferry, N.C.

Mike Marsh

DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE — Charleston is best accessed from US 17 and I-26. Convenient public boat ramps are Remley's Point on the Wando River in Mount Pleasant, just north of US 17, Shem Creek off SC 703 in Mount Pleasant, and Wappoo Cut on Wappoo Creek between West Ashley and James Island off SC 171.

WHEN TO GO — September and October are prime months to catch flounder in the waters around Charleston, with the action lasting into November if mild weather persists.

BEST TECHNIQUES — As fall arrives, flounder will follow baitfish out from shallow creeks and head in the general direction of the ocean. Look for flounder around channel and marsh edges. Flounder have a hard time hiding in mud but will lie next to a mud line in sand or shell and wait for prey to pass by. An area where live oyster shell meets sand is also a likely flounder holding spot. For deeper areas, look for drop-offs and fish the down slope with the current in the fish's face. Favorite baits are finger mullet or larger mud minnows fished on a Carolina rig.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — John Koonce, Shoal Bandit Charters, 843-425-2939, www.shoalbandit.com; WIlson Hanna, Redfin Charters, 843-277-5255, www.inshorefishingcharters.com, 843- 277-5255. See also Guides & Charters in Classifieds.

ACCOMMODATIONS — Best Western Patriots Point, Mount Pleasant, 843-971-7070; Town and Country Inn & Conference Center, Charleston, 800-334-6660; La Quinta Inn & Suites, Charleston, 843-556-5200.

MAPS — Maps Unique, 910-458-9923, www.mapsunique.com; Sealake Fishing Guides, 800-411-0185, www.thegoodspots.com.

WADE FOR FLOUNDER

If you Google "Wade fishing for flounder," you'll get a bunch of YouTube videos from Texas, Louisiana and other spots along the Gulf Coast. On the East coast, wading is much more of a personal preference than an advantage, especially in South Carolina, because of the amount of water that ebbs and flows between tide cycles and that sticky stuff that's been rumored to hold the world together: plough mud.

In practice, wading for flounder is a more-than-productive endeavor as long as you focus on areas with more of a sandy or shell bottom.

Areas like North Carolina's Pamlico and Albemarle sounds offer ample opportunities for wading, as do the northern areas of South Carolina's coast. While people are accustomed to covering more ground in a boat, wading allows you to slow down and thoroughly work an area that might hold multiple flounder.

Flounder, like many other fish species, of tend to "school" together by size. Finding an area that's attractive to one fish more often than not means multiple fish will be drawn to that area by something, usually food. Be on the lookout for a drain, ditch or other bottom contour that funnels food into an ambush area.

Live baits tend to get the nod when targeting flounder from a boat, but wading will relegate an angler to picking a handful of artificial baits to cast to areas holding flounder. During the fall, soft-plastic lures that imitate both shrimp and baitfish will catch flounder, but some of the more-overlooked and productive lures for flounder are hard-plastic stickbaits.

The appeal of the hard stickbait, or any crankbait used for flounder, is that waiting to set the hook is a non-issue. Working a crankbait with a bill that digs through the sandy bottom is akin to ringing the dinner bell for flounder. Just be sure that when the fish grabs the bait, you stick a treble hook in him. ▪



Targeting flounder while wading allowed the author to concentrate on a good-looking area and catch this fish.

Phillip Gentry





HOW TO HOOK A FLOUNDER

Flounder are gregarious fish. If they bit like redfish, you'd regularly see a lot more flounder in magazines and on social media.

The problem with flounder is the way they attack prey by latching on to the bait and then turning or positioning it to go down its throat. That makes them more difficult to hook and often leads novice anglers to believe that flounder won't take large baits. Nothing could be further from the truth.

"It takes patience to consistently hook flounder," said guide Wilson Hanna. "My rule of thumb is, the larger the bait, the longer the wait."

Hanna said for the average, shallow-water, legal-sized flounder he is targeting with a 2- to 3-inch mud minnow, he will start counting as soon as he feels the bite and wait anywhere form 10 to 30 seconds before setting the hook.

If he's fishing a deeper drop-off for doormats, he's more inclined to use a 5- to 6-inch bait like mullet or other baitfish. Under those circumstances, he's going to wait anywhere from a minute to two.

"After the initial bite, I'll bring the rod tip up just to make sure there's still something live on the end of the line," he said. "I don't want to aggravate the fish, just confirm he's still down there chewing."

Two things tell him when it's time to set the hook. The first is the fish turning and starting to swim away. The second is reaching the appointed time.

"I don't really set the hook in a conventional sense," he said. "The Kahle hooks I prefer act sort of like a circle hook, and to set the hook, I just start cranking the reel handle and let the hook sink in."

Hanna said setting the hook when fishing artificials is totally different..

"The bite on an artificial is a reaction bite, like a bass," he said. "The fish on the other end is not going to hold on, so you set the hook and hope the hook finds it's mark." ▪



Phillip Gentry

Giving a flounder time to grab a bait and get it ready to slide down its throat will usually result in a good hookset.



continued from page 39

If guide Wilson Hanna of Redfin Charters had nothing but a hook to fish with for fall flounder, he'd want to make double sure it was a gold hook. He swears by gold Kahle hooks in sizes 3/0 to 5/0 for flatfish, and even though he's never caught a flounder on a bare hook, his catch rates are substantially better when the gold hook is paired with a finger mullet or large mud minnow.

"If I'm fishing shallow water, 2 to 4 feet, I'm fishing smaller baits, and if I'm fishing deeper water, 10 to 25 feet deep, I'm using bigger baits," Hanna said. "Either way, I'm going with a gold hook."

Hanna likes to hit different spots and cast a baited Carolina rig to flounder, and like Koonce, he loves edges. He said that flounder don't care for the plough mud that's so prevalent around Charleston, but anywhere there's a change from mud to sand or sand to shell is a good place to look for flounder.

"Flounder can't bury themselves well in mud, but sand or loose shell is different," he said. "Look for edges where you can see them on the bank or look for drop-offs where the water is too deep to see."

In deeper water, Hanna looks for drop-offs in the back of a creek. Mud flats generally don't slope, so if he finds a good slope, chances are excellent it's either hard sand, rock, livebottom or something besides mud. With the right electronics, an angler can pick up the different bottom, but for the average guy out in a creek in a small boat, just look for steep slopes or drop-offs on your screen.

"If you want to check out an area in advance, go back there on a negative tide and scout the area when there's no water on it," said Hanna. "Makes some notes and come back and fish it when the water is right."

For shallow water, he may use a simple split-shot rig, using the biggest split shot he can find, usually a No. 2 or No. 3 on 10- to 12-pound line. For fishing ledges, he'll go with up to a ¾-ounce egg sinker ahead of a 30-pound leader with a 3/0 hook.

Hanna prefers an incoming tide because it's bringing fresh water — either cooler or warmer, depending on the season — and that attracts flounder. In the fall, the incoming tides really produce after the first, good cold front and starts moving flounder out of the backs of creeks and towards open water.

Hanna said he's also fond of keeping logs on his flounder catches.

"Most people around Charleston catch flounder by accident," he said. "But there's a reason you caught that fish. There's a trend in there somewhere. Either your bait crossed a transition area or a little drain that was deeper than the surrounding area and free of mud, or something that fish liked."

"Figure that out, and your percentages of catching flounder will go way up." ▪



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

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MADE TO WADE

By Dusty Wilson

Pull on your waders and get to trout and redfish that other anglers miss in the waters around Beaufort, N.C. You won't regret it.



Although many anglers may think of wade-fishing as something you do to cut your teeth before getting your "big boy boat," those leaving it behind are missing out on some great opportunities, especially for speckled trout and redfish.

When the north winds usher in October and water temperatures dive below 80 degrees, many trout and reds head upriver from their saltier summer homes to haunt the bridge crossings in brackish water creeks and feast on bait, and these are the perfect places to slip in off the highway for a hookup. Whether you lack a boat or the time to splash it, don't like rough weather or simply want your feet on the ground, wading in October only requires a handful of baits, a decent pair of waders and a destination.

Will Jones of Bounty Hunter Guide Service in Beaufort, N.C., runs charters in from Cape Lookout to the Neuse River, but he still has an affinity for taking a short hike to catch fish. Bridge crossings are his most-common targets due to ease of access. An aerial view can reveal plenty, but a productive area will have to meet a certain criteria.

"What you're looking for is deep water adjacent to a shallow flat," said Jones. "You need that shallow area adjacent so you can wade to where the current is going to carry all the shrimp and bait. The places I wade aren't a secret; it's just a matter of hitting them at the right time of year and the right stage of the tide. The best time to fish these spots is a couple hours after low tide when the water starts moving in hard. When you have more flow, there'll be more bait, and the fish will be feeding heavier. At low tide, there's not enough water to hold trout."

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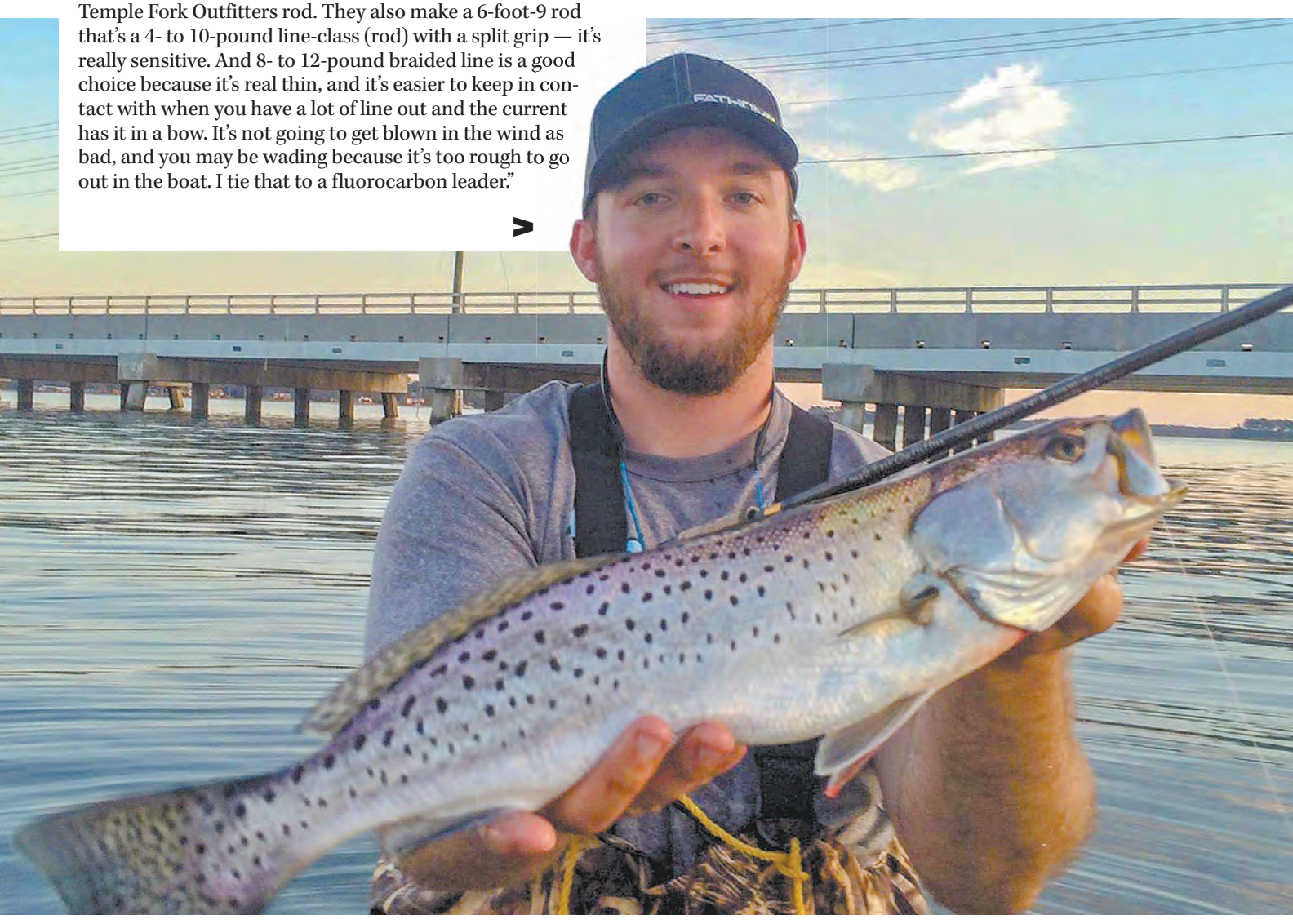
This is where things can get a little tricky. Most tide tables only provide information on inlets and heavily traveled inshore areas; waters well inshore can differ by hours, but Jones credits apps like OutCast and sites like Tides4Fishing for covering more remote areas. If a particular area is not listed, you can estimate tidal stages by information provided for areas up and/or downriver. When in doubt, getting there early never hurts.

Once on location, a simple pair of nylon waders is all you need. Insulated or neoprene styles are not necessary nor recommended for water temperatures in the 70s, but fishing into November and December will require more padding. Chest waders are best, especially if water depths are uncertain, but waist-high or hip waders will do if fishable water can be reached from knee-deep depths. Rod and line setup will be a determining factor in the fish you can reach out and touch and the ability the sense the bite.

"You're going to want to be able to make a long cast," said Jones, "and if I'm fishing a light jig or a MirrOlure, I want to be able to keep in contact with them. I like a 7-foot, light-action Temple Fork Outfitters rod. They also make a 6-foot-9 rod that's a 4- to 10-pound line-class (rod) with a split grip — it's really sensitive. And 8- to 12-pound braided line is a good choice because it's real thin, and it's easier to keep in contact with when you have a lot of line out and the current has it in a bow. It's not going to get blown in the wind as bad, and you may be wading because it's too rough to go out in the boat. I tie that to a fluorocarbon leader."



ABOVE: Redfish often feed shallow enough to be within easy casting range of fishermen wading the shallows in October. **BELOW:** Speckled trout love the current that deeper channels narrowed by things like bridge crossings often provide.





DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE — Beaufort is a tiny fishing village near the eastern end of US 70. That's the main access from almost anywhere in North Carolina. Public boat ramps are at Grayden Paul Park and Fisherman's Park, both on Front Street.

WHEN TO GO — October is an excellent month to wade-fish for most inshore species.

BEST TECHNIQUES —Fish shallow, wadable flats that are close to deep water. Work baits in the deeper water, making long casts and allowing the current to move the bait. Soft-plastic shrimp are productive, along with other soft plastic imitations and hard-plastic baits such as MirrOlures. Long rods allow for longer casts, which are often needed.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — Will Jones, Bounty Hunter Guide Service, 919-218-8551, www.bountyhunterguidenc.com; Chasin' Tails Outdoors, Atlantic Beach, 252-240-3474; Cape Lookout Fly Shop, Atlantic Beach, 252-240-1427; Town Creek Marina, Beaufort, 252-728-6111. See also Guides & Charters in Classifieds.

ACCOMMODATIONS — Carteret County Chamber of Commerce, 252-726-6350, www.nccoastchamber.com

MAPS — Capt. Segull's Nautical Charts, 888-473-4855,www.captainsegull-charts.com; Sealake Fishing; Guides, 800-411-0185, www.thegoodspots.com; GMCO's Chartbook of North Carolina, 888-420-6277, www.gmco-maps.com.

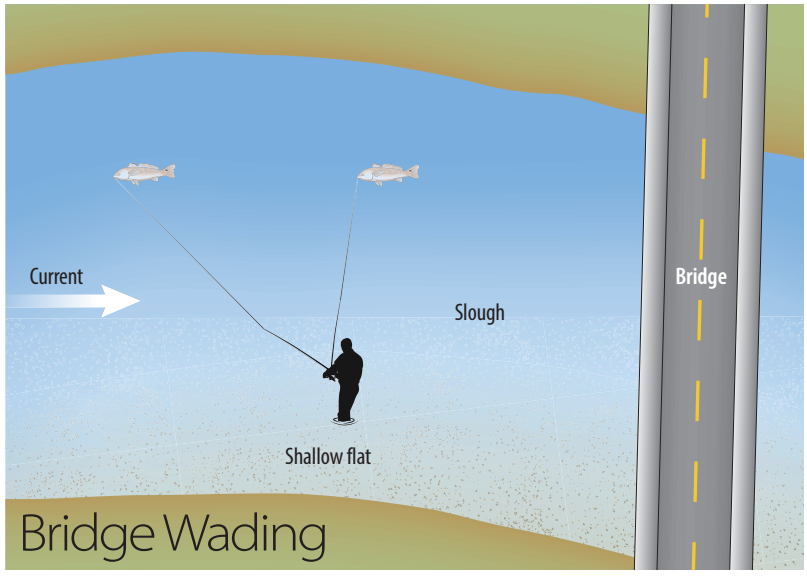
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On the business end of the line, Jones alternates between hard and soft baits, depending on the situation. In early October, when shrimp are plentiful, the 4-inch D.O.A. shrimp and the Storm WildEye shrimp are standouts among the multitude of options on the market. Ranging from ⅛- to a ½-ounce, Jones chooses the lighter variety for slow-moving, shallow water and the heavier versions for deeper water and swift current. The Betts Halo Shad is another soft-plastic winner. Chartreuse, pink and bone are solid inshore color choices.

Hard baits like a MirrOdine 17MR are go-to lures for Jones, especially in late October and November when shrimp have thinned out and trout are feeding opportunistically. His favorite colors are Mardi Gras and the legendary 808: black top, orange belly and silver sides. Hard baits also excel in windy conditions and when long casts are crucial.

"Most of these bridge crossings will have a shallow flat that runs perpendicular to the bridge," said Jones. "You'll be casting from this flat across the tide or upcurrent and letting the current give the action on the bait. Just let it roll and barely turn the handle enough to keep line contact and twitch it a little — like swinging a fly in a mountain stream. You're basically fishing the middle of the water column and varying the speed until you find out what the fish want. I cover the area by casting shorter or longer and walking up and down the flat. The flats are usually knee to waist deep with the sloughs running 4 to 6 feet deep." ▪





Dusty Wilson *of Raleigh, N.C., is a lifelong outdoorsman. He is the manager of Tarheel Nursery in Angier, N.C., and can be followed on his blog at InsideNCFishing.com.*



Wading opportunities **near Beaufort**



Plenty of brackish-water creeks are easily located along the coast of both Carolinas, and any bridge crossings in areas where water salinity is right for speckled trout and redfish are subject to hold them in October.

But guide Will Jones favors those close to his home in Beaufort, N.C. A relatively short ride on US 70 will take you over some of his best spots.

"The North River bridge is a good place, said Jones. "Trout will really stack up in an area like this, but it is an open area and can be hard to wade if the wind is making waves and they're hitting you in the stomach. Sometimes, you'll have to cover more water to find the reds, but if you get away from the access point and find a spartina grass flat that floods on a flood tide, that would be your best wade-fishing for them."

Heading east on US 70, the next stop is only a few miles away at the bridge across Ward's Creek. From here, it's 10 miles east to the bridge across Williston Creek and only a few miles more to the bridge over Smyrna Creek. In mostly protected areas, these are perfect areas to wade. Only minutes apart via US 70, running between spots in a boat would be time-consuming and impractical.

The bridge from the mainland to Harkers Island can be reached by taking Harkers Island Road south from US 70. Jones said that there is a flat on the north side that's suitable for wading and reasonably protected from the predominantly north wind. This is a popular area where fishermen are often anchored in boats, and wading anglers should arrive early to stake out a spot.

Jones offer two more nearby places of interest: rock jetties at Radio Island on US 70 between Morehead City and Beaufort and Fort Macon on the eastern tip of Atlantic Beach. Fishing styles are similar, despite deeper water and strong currents. Heavier, weighted soft plastics kept in contact with the rocks are recommended. ■



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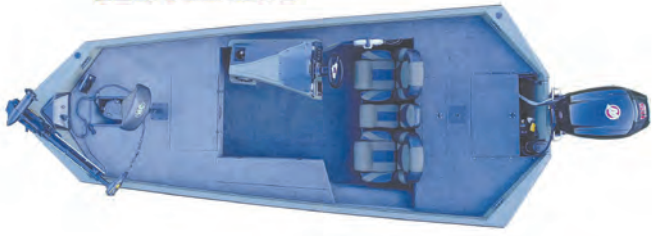
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By Jeff Burleson

HUNTING THE FLOOD



If fall's big rain events arrive, they'll cause a huge move from deer and wildlife to spots that are high and dry. Hunters who are ready can take advantage of the water-borne migrations.

Hunting season arrives annually, just when cooler weather begins to make its mark, but it also shows up during the peak of hurricane season in the Carolinas.

Many people associate hurricanes with destructive winds and high ocean surges, and while the wind shear can wipe out homes and even communities directly in the storm's path, the more-widespread results will be the destructive flooding that follows typically epic rainfall associated with a storm of that size.

Not only does flooding push people from low-lying areas, wildlife gets flushed to high ground, and it affects the habitat and food availability in both low and highland areas. While deer hunters can be displaced — just as the deer do — it can be a good time to pick off a buck on a piece of high, dry land.

>

Statistically, major hurricane landfalls aren't really that common in the Carolinas. The N.C. State Climatology Office reports that a tropical cyclone makes landfall along the state's coastline once every four years. But a storm doesn't have to make landfall to make a major impact to both coastal and inland areas. The dozens of tropical storms that sweep through the region, dumping 8 or more inches of rain at a time, will directly affect wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Grier Copeland, the huntmaster of White Oak Hunting Club in Williamsburg County, S.C., said flooding can have a dramatic impact on deer hunting in both low-lying areas and on high ground.

"Deer typically love water, and they will commonly retreat to swamps when hunting pressure rises," he said. "But when the waters rise fast from a tropical storm or from a period of real heavy rain, the deer head to high ground. It's their natural instinct."

In early October 2016, Hurricane Matthew pounded the Carolinas, bringing record-breaking rainfall and extreme flooding. Some of the two states' best deer habitat rapidly turned into a lake, and that forced all terrestrial life to flee to safety. Major drainages, including the Black, Pee Dee, Waccamaw and Lumber rivers experienced widespread flooding at a historical levels.

The sense of urgency triggered the S.C. Department of Natural Resources to take action, temporarily closing hunting seasons in select drainages for deer and several other game species.

"The flooding has created potential for exploitation of game species that are deprived of their normal escape routes and confined to small areas of high ground," an SCDNR report said.

While floods of that nature are rare, it's not unusual to get enough rainfall across a drainage basin to re-route wildlife to higher ground. Deer hunters can enact a high-ground strategy on their properties and get a chance to take a bruiser buck.

Copeland concentrates his hunters on more-elevated sections close to flooded areas of the club's leases.

"Deer head to high ground, and we keep our corn piles full," he said.

It also helps that the club's 4,500 acres are surrounded by active agriculture, including soybeans, corn and peanuts, much of it on higher ground. That keeps the deer herd's food cache well-stocked, even for refugees from the flood.

continues >>>





Jeff Burleson

Flooding of their normal haunts will put deer on the move, searching for areas where their food sources aren't underwater. **BELOW:** High water caused by heavy rains often turns high spots in low-lying areas into islands that will fill up with wildlife.

ISLAND DELIGHTS

Rivers and streams along the coastal plain and in the larger watersheds of the Piedmont and Midlands areas will have high hills within the river corridors, and these hills don't always flood when everything else in the area is inundated.

Deer will migrate to high ground when rivers surge, either islands in the swamp or a high hill adjacent to a river bend or oxbow. Hunters with a small john boat, kayak or canoe can encounter big bucks seeking refuge on these islands.

Rivers carve their way through the landscape, creating new channels and leaving old ones behind. When these channels get cut off from the main-river flow, oxbow lakes are created. Heavy current erodes soil, but it also causes soil to accumulate in other places where currents slow down, and pile up, creating islands and higher ground that remain high and dry, even during prolonging periods of flooding.

While a new flood can create and destroy islands, some high ground in the flood plain, created hundreds of years earlier, will have a well-established forest, providing deer with both food and cover. These islands can often be discovered from USGS Topography maps or identified on Google Earth.

Deer feel instinctively safe in and around water. Often, when hunting pressure increases rapidly in an area, they look for places they can hide out and get away from hunters. They will seek out heavy cover, and any high spots in the flood can be great places to find a mature buck. ■

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Planted pines above the water level during floods, and adjoining agricultural fields, will draw deer during the fall.

Jeff Burleson

"We killed some real nice deer right after the flood on the high hills that remained dry," he said.

While much of flooding creates a temporary wildlife evacuation, many game species remain in the higher acreage for the rest of the season, even after the flood waters recede. Prolonged flooding often flushes out both soft- and hard-mast bounty, as well as eliminating many of the other seasonal foods available in impacted bottomland areas for the rest of the season. Hunters can expect the new visitors to the highlands to stay around if the groceries are good and hunting pressure isn't too severe.

Not only does flooding negatively affect the lowlands, the dry hills can quickly become trampled and exploited by incoming animals. Deer may be running for their lives, but that will not take away from their nutritional needs. If anything, deer and other wildlife will show up after floods with a hearty appetite, ready to chow down on anything they can find. Hunters should keep their food plots fortified and their food troughs well-stocked before the refugees arrive.

During the 2016 flood, White Oak's neighboring agriculture fields held plenty of groceries for deer, and when club members could access club lands, they were able to add to corn piles and keep the deer fed.

Flooding is a major part of nature. In low-lying areas of the coastal plain, a period of heavy rain can swell creeks, rivers and floodplains, forcing animals to higher ground. Hunters with access to their hunting land to those areas can benefit from a little extra water, making their properties wildlife havens when it counts the most. ▪



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.

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BOUNCING BACK

By Phillip Gentry

Shrimp and speckled trout in South Carolina waters took a hard lick from cold weather last winter, but both are recovering nicely. Now, it's time to use one to catch the other.

Before 2018, anglers had become so accustomed to mild winters along the South Carolina coast — and the huge bonanza of speckled trout the good weather allowed — it was almost taken for granted. That entitlement changed almost overnight when a harsh winter storm arrived on Jan. 3, followed by nearly a week of below-freezing temperatures. The net effect was a marsh nearly frozen solid, followed by dire predictions of fish kills in the fragile estuaries of both Carolinas.

In the aftermath of the storm, through the spring and summer, Dr. Joey Ballenger, head of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources' inshore fisheries section, and his teams began surveying and cranked up trammel net studies to determine the exact extent of the damage. By March, fears were somewhat allayed as lower than average, but still acceptable, numbers of trout were showing up. Fortunately, the trend got stronger as the April/May breeding season arrived.

>

Phillip Gentry

"Given the severity of the winter, we were pleasantly surprised with the apparent state of the spotted seatrout resource based on the March catches," Ballenger said. "It doesn't seem to be as significant an event as we observed in 2000-2001 and 2010-2011, but because the picture's still incomplete, we're still exercising caution."

Based on these hopes, SCDNR asked coastal anglers to voluntarily release all trout caught until the end of September. Trout are prolific spawners, with mature females having demonstrated spawning activity two to three times a week through the summer.

"We're still seeing a wide range of spotted seatrout sizes," said Ballenger. "Our biggest fear was that the larger, adult-female population was severely impacted, but it appears there were enough females left to provide an adequate spawn this year."

Ballenger said the complete picture will not be finished until South Carolinas puts one or more winters in the rearview mirror.

"What we don't want to see is another winter-kill back-to-back with this one," he said. "It has happened before, and the net effect is it pushes the recovery back another year until things level out."

Along with speckled trout, the winter-kill took pretty good measure of the shrimp that overwintered in South Carolina waters. That delayed the opening of the commercial shrimping season a month, until June 19, to allow shrimp to spawn.

Ballenger said trout depend on shrimp as forage but said they eat a variety of aquatic species, including a mix of crustaceans and finfish.

"The trout are going to eat what's available," he said. "There's not a high correlation between trout numbers and shrimp numbers, but the white shrimp that have spawned will move back into the marsh and be available, and there's been a mix of brown shrimp as well."

Guide John Ward of Affinity Charters in Charleston admitted 2018 has been a less-than-desirable weather year, first with the harsh cold and then a lot of fronts and winds through the summer, followed by seemingly non-stop rainfall that has made water conditions murky and made trout tough to catch, regardless of the available population.

"The trout fishing has been good on the good-water days," he said. "I'm catching trout from 10 inches all the way up to 3 or 4 pounds."

continued >>>


Phillip Gentry

SHRIMP RIGS FOR TROUT

Like skinning a cat, there is more than one way to rig a live shrimp to catch speckled trout. The old standby is a length of leader beneath a stemmed popping cork, sometimes referred to as a rattling cork. Even with a popping cork, some anglers prefer to use a standard J-hook, while other may opt for a Kahle hook or circle hook and still others a jighead.

Two things to keep in mind when selecting a hook is that you want one that's going to hold the shrimp securely without ripping free after only two or three "pops" under the cork. Another consideration is the availability of live shrimp for bait. If local shrimp aren't available, this often relegates anglers to buying shrimp imported from Florida where the winter cold had little or no effect on the shrimp populations.

Another consideration is the cork itself. Some anglers become frustrated with stemmed corks because the wires frequently bend and don't cycle correctly, or the line gets wrapped around the stem of the cork.

Standard clip-on corks work well, but don't provide the noise associated with the rattling beads and weights incorporated with the stem.

Before rattling corks were made commercially, anglers used to make their own by taking big, round, plastic bobbers, drilling a small hole in the side of the cork and placing anywhere from 10 to 25 bird shot from a shotgun shell inside the hole. The tiny hole was then sealed up with silicone caulk. ▪



Phillip Gentry

Guide John Ward said his charters have been catching tout from 10 inches to several pounds, which supports SCDNR's trammel net sampling this year. **INSET**: Suspending a live shrimp beneath a popping cork is a tried-and-true trout-catching tactic.

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5 SHRIMP TRICKS TO TRY ON TROUT

Speckled trout eat shrimp throughout their life, starting as fry and continuing through the gator years; that's what makes it such a great bait to use, either live or imitation. Here are five shrimp-tastic tactics you need to try this month.

#1 FLOAT A POPPING CORK

A popping cork is, by definition, meant to make noise and attract attention to the bait dangling beneath, which can either be live or artificial. Most corks feature beads, balls or clackers to mimic the sound of shrimp "clicking" when the cork is popped. Guide John Ward suggests "popping" the cork more aggressively during the fall to mimic the sound of trout feeding.

#2 FREE-LINE LIVE SHRIMP

According to guide John Koonce of Johns Island, S.C., (843-425-2939) free-lining is the most natural, lifelike, realistic presentation of a shrimp you can get. Hook a live shrimp either through the tail or under the horn and lob the bait to the fish. This tactic shines when trout are in clear water, close conditions or are especially spooky. You can downsize hook and line to match these conditions. In areas with current, lob the bait upstream of the fish's holding area and follow the bait through the current on a semi-tight line.

#3 STAND-UP JIG

Guide Jay Baisch of Murrells Inlet, S.C., (843-902-0356) uses a stand-up jighead to hop artificial plastics across the bottom for flounder, but he said the tactic also works well for trout. The shape of the head keeps the hook riding high, free of obstacles as well as mimicking the movement of a shrimp when it is startled by hopping up of the bottom.



ERIN WEEKS/SCDNR

Along with speckled trout, white shrimp took a severe beating over the past winter when an ice and snow storm devastated the Carolina coasts..

#4 FREE-LINE D.O.A. SHRIMP

Guide Jeff Yates of Mount Pleasant, S.C., is a master at free-lining artificial D.O.A. Shrimp. The build of the bait helps it ride upright, while Yates (843-270-8956) merely casts upcurrent and follows the bait with his rod tip as it sinks slowly through the water column and moves along the bottom. Any deviation in the line is reason to set the hook.

#5 BUOYANT BAITS

Guide Justin Carter of Charleston (843-277-5255) got an idea for catching trout from watching redfish feed. It's much easier to sneak up on a redfish with its head down, feeding, so he uses a buoyant bait like the Z-Man ShrimpZ on a light jighead. He crawls the bait across the bottom like it's feeding, head-down, tail-up. When trout see this, they think they bait isn't paying attention, and it triggers a reaction strike. ■

continued >>>

Ward (843-693-2460) said it's been hard to tell if trout fishing has returned to normal because "normal" and "average" are hard to measure with a couple of substantial winter fish kills in the past 20 years, followed by really mild winters in the past five or six. He said South Carolina's trout fishery always seems to be on either a boom or bust cycle.

As a guide, Ward finds it easier to target trout for his clients with live shrimp. He said the trout in the Kiawah Island area where he does the majority of his fishing have moved to brown shrimp after the white shrimp were hard hit during the winter.

"Delaying the opening of the commercial shrimping season helped a lot," he said. "That gave the white shrimp a chance to bounce back. Likewise, I think most of the sportsmen heeded the voluntary release of trout this year, so they're rebounding as well."

This fall, Ward believes the local trout population will react as it has in most recent years. Because trout are mostly sight-feeders, he's going to look for the cleanest, clearest water he can find.

"I'm still going to key in on points and rip lines, anywhere there's a seam in the water that the fish can dart out and catch that shrimp or other food being swept by the current," he said. "The best way to get your bait in the right areas is usually to use a popping cork with a leader anywhere from 18 inches to 3 feet."

Ward prefers an incoming tide because of the cleaner water it brings. He also prefers the water to be on the higher end of the tide cycle, so there's water moving over the tops of oysters and sandbars to create more and better rips to fish.

"In the early morning, first thing, I might be throwing a topwater bait over those rips," he said, "but once the suns gets up, it's back to the cork and working the bait around the rip and popping that cork hard to get their attention."

Despite his preference for high-water trout fishing, he's also got a few tricks up his sleeve when fishing during low tide. He will move into a bend in a creek channel and concentrate his efforts on the outside bend where the water is deeper. When he's looking for the ideal low-water trout spot, he likes to find 8 to 10 feet of water in the bend with surrounding water around 3 to 4 feet deep. He warns that trout in these conditions can be spooky and urges anglers not to rush into these areas.

"You kind of have to feel your way through, because most of the time, that low water is not going to be clear like the incoming water," Ward said. "I like to fish a jig on a ¼-ounce head paired with a 3- to 4-inch soft plastic or throw a weighted D.O.A. shrimp and work it along that drop off in the channel bend. It may not be the best way to catch a lot of trout, but it's a good way to catch bigger sized fish." ▪



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.



Brian Cope



Speckled trout should be the first order of business on any October fishing trip, because they bite best when dark is turning to daylight, as the author learned.

SLAM THAT QUARTET

BY TARGETING TROUT, FLOUNDER, REDS, BLACK DRUM, YOU STAND A BETTER CHANCE OF CATCHING THEM ALL

Brian Cope

October is the month for trick-or-treating, but most inshore anglers are less focused on Kit Kats, Starlight mints, and bubble gum than they are on redfish, speckled trout and flounder. This is the best time of year to catch the "inshore slam," and with a little luck, anglers can make it a "grand slam" by adding a black drum to their day's catch.

The abundance of a variety of baits, including shrimp, mullet, crabs and mud minnows, mixes with the cooling water to put all three species that make up the inshore slam in a feeding mood that results in what many consider the hottest inshore bite of the year.

Many anglers fish all day doing the same thing — using a Carolina rig with a 1-ounce weight, a 12- to 18-inch leader of fluorocarbon, a 3/0 circle hook, and either a live shrimp or mullet. On a good day, they can catch specks, reds and flounder without changing a thing.

Or they can plan to catch all three species, much more rewarding once the task is complete. For most anglers, that means starting at daybreak targeting trout with topwater lures.

While the tide cycle has much to do with when trout feed, plenty of them will bite just as the dawn transitions from dark to light. Even then, the tide plays a role in the best place to catch them.

Angler Jonathan Blaine from Whiteville, N.C., said the best thing about fishing topwater lures for trout is that it doesn't matter how deep the water is.

"If it's 12 feet deep or 6 inches deep, trout will come up to get what they see as an easy meal," he said. "If it's high tide at daybreak, I'll have two different topwater lures tied on to two rods. One is the D.O.A. PT-7, which is a soft bodied lure with its single hook buried in the skin of the lure's back. This makes it weedless, and I will throw that around spartina grass, especially when there's pockets of open water in the middle of big patches of grass. This is great at high tide because trout and redfish will feed along those grass lines, and even deep in the grass if they have enough water to chase the baitfish in there.

"My other lure is a 3½-inch Super Spook Jr., which I cast over submerged oyster rakes in a variety of depths, depending on whether the tide is coming in or going out. On some days, you can catch trout above these oyster rakes



Look for flounder in the deepest holes in a creek or waterway and drop a live mud minnow or mullet minnow on its nose.



DRUM ON WOOD: To target black drum, cast small pieces of cut bait or shrimp close to submerged wooden structure, including dock pilings or laydown trees. These fish are notorious for hanging out around this kind of cover.

anywhere from half-a-foot deep to just about any depth, as long as you're keeping the lure above the oysters,."

Once he's got trout on his scorecard, Blaine switches to live shrimp and heads to dock pilings close to moving water.

"This is really effective if you anchor within casting range, with the end of the dock ahead of you on one side with some incoming water coming in on the other side," he said. "The redfish will hide under that dock and come out to swipe at baitfish getting swept into range by that incoming water. This time of year, it's often clear enough to watch the fish pick up your bait."

Once Blaine has caught trout and redfish, he targets flounder, which he finds to be less impacted by the tide cycle than trout or reds.

"Whether the tide is coming in, going out or slack, I can catch flounder with a live mullet or mud minnow on a jighead by finding the deepest holes in the shallowest creeks," he said. "I have a good feel for where these are from simply fishing the same areas for decades, but I will check my depthfinder in unfamiliar spots. If there is any current at all, I will cast upcurrent above the deeper holes, then reel the bait into the hole. Then, I reel painfully slow to keep the bait in the hole as long as possible. The baitfish is squirming around and making plenty of action, and the slower you reel, the better the chance at a flounder picking it up.

"Once I've caught the inshore slam, I target black drum by casting small pieces of cut bait tight to wooden structure. The closer you cast to submerged wood, the more likely your next bite will be a black drum," he said. ▪



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



David Fritts



A stump on a rocky bottom, next to a sharp drop. What more could a bass fisherman ask for in October?

DON'T MISS OCTOBER

BASS FISHING DOESN'T GET MUCH BETTER THAN A BUNCH OF HUNGRY FISH IN PREDICTABLE PLACES EATING MOVING BAITS

I have never been shy about how much I love bass fishing in October. For a guy who loves to tie a crankbait on the end of his line, I can't imagine a better time to be on a lake than the weeks leading up to Halloween.

For one thing, the lakes are starting to empty. Lots of fishermen are in deer stands. I can remember fishing at Buggs Island, and I'd hear dogs running and hear people shooting, and there was nobody fishing.

Bass are hungry, getting ready for winter, they're following baitfish back into creeks, and they're readily chasing moving baits. That's where the crankbait comes in, although swimming a jig and even fishing a topwater bait can be a great October tactic.

I'll be looking for three things when I put my trolling motor down this month: rocks, wooden cover and sharp drops. Bass really like to get on rocks and wood in October, and if you can find a combination of the two, you're in business. For years, when we put in brush piles at places like Buggs Island and High Rock, we'd look for hardbottom areas — you can see them on your depthfinder — and drop our brush there.

Two good examples of the kind of places you're looking for are the underwater railroad trestle in Abbotts Creek on High Rock. You've got rock on top, brush all over it, and at the end, there are wooden poles driven into the ground. The railroad trestle across Nutbush Creek at Buggs Island has the same characteristics, but it's in much deeper water.

In October, I've probably won more tournaments in 7 to 15 feet of water, but by the end of October, they'll all be up in 10 feet of water or less. There's really a big change through the month, at least 5 degrees in water temperature, and you'll have the lake turnover some time during the month, and the water will get milky for a week or so.

You will have some bass that live on the main lake all the time, but even they will go up in short creeks in the fall. I usually start halfway back in a creek and start looking for fish on sharp drops. Like March, this is a time when you'd love to be able to position your boat over 20 feet of water and throw into about 5 feet. Bass want to be able to move up and down quickly.

You want to know you're fishing around plenty of baitfish; they've already moved back, and they're on the move all the time. I can remember fishing Buggs Island a number of times, getting up in a creek with no sign of baitfish, then you go around a little corner and there's so much bait that you can't read your depthfinder. You'd think with that much bait, you'd never get a bite on your lure, but they will pick it out as something different.

One thing I have noticed is that there will be certain areas in a lake where the

fish will be biting the best, and you have to find it. At Buggs Island, you can generally divide the lake into three sections; they'll be biting best in one of those sections. I can remember Octobers when if you ever left Nutbush Creek, you were an idiot, and other Octobers, if you stayed in Nutbush, you were an idiot. At High Rock, you divide the lake left (west) and right (east). One side or other will have the best bite at any time. They'll be biting all over, but the best bite will be on one side or the other.

Once you've found the right rock and wood on a sharp drop, when you've gotten in an area with plenty of baitfish, it's just a matter of catching them. One thing that matters a lot to a crankbait fisherman is finding out whether the bass want a bait with a tight wobble or a wide wobble. In the spring, bass usually like a tight wobble like you get from a Berkley Dredger. In the fall, I usually start with a bait that really wobbles and pushes a lot of water like a Berkley Digger; it can be spectacular around aggressive fish, and you can fish it around stumps and brush piles because it's basically weedless.

In the fall, you can go with about three or four basic colors: Honey Shad, Oatmeal Cream Pie and Spicy Mustard are always good fall colors.

Because I often need to make really long casts, I'll fish crankbaits in October on a 7-foot or 7-foot-6 Lew's David Fritts Perfect Crankbait Rod, and I'll pair it with a Lew's BB1 reel with the 5-to-1 retrieve ratio. That's still the ideal wind-back reel; it gets back only 21 inches per turn of the handle.

One thing about October; you don't have to have light line to catch fish like you do in summer. You can stay with a 10-pound test diameter line like Sensation and start there, and you'll still get all the action you're supposed to get out of your bait. Another option is the new braid that Berkley has out, X9. It throws great, and you can fish the 30-pound test braid and still have the diameter of 10-pound mono.

If you're fishing around a lot of cover and don't feel comfortable fishing 10-pound test, you can move up to 12-pound in the fall and still get everything you want to out of your baits.

So if you love to fish for bass, October is for you. Even if you love to deer hunt, put your gun or bow down for a day or two and get out of the woods. Of course, if you could fish a different lake from the one I'm fishing, I'd appreciate it. I love to have all those hungry bass to myself. ▪



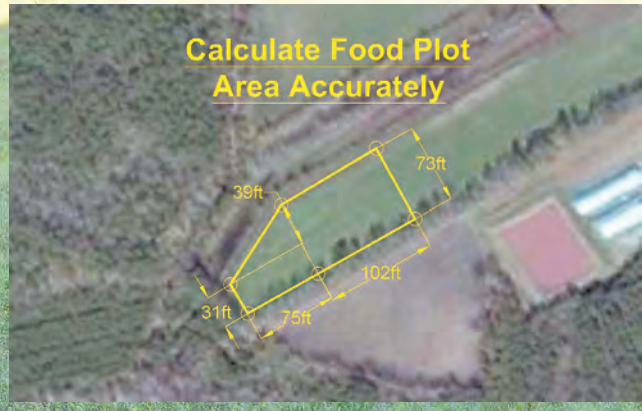
CRANKBAIT ACTION: TIGHT OR WIDE?
Crankbaits come in models that have a tight wobble, like Berkley's Digger (left), or a wide wobble, like Berkley's Dredger (right). There's apparently no rhyme or reason why bass in deep water like one over the other, and their preference can change on a daily basis. Trial-and-error is the only way to figure it out.



David Fritts *is a 61-year-old pro bass fisherman from Lexington, N.C. He won the 1993 Bassmasters Classic champion and the 1997 FLW Tour Championship, and he was the 1994 BASS Angler of the Year. He is sponsored by Ranger boats, Evinrude outboards, Lew's, Minnkota, and Berkley.*



Jeff Burleson



The first step to a lush food plot is to know the area your plot covers and planting and fertlizing for that area.

SIZE DOES MATTER! KNOW YOUR PLOT

INCORRECT SEED, FERTILIZER APPLICATIONS ARE EASY TO AVOID

Jeff Burleson

It's that time again: for cooler weather, changing colors and the approach of the whitetail rut. While some hunters get an early start in August and September to fulfill their food-plot dreams, the majority start tilling up the dirt in early October. It's a busy season for hunters looking to quickly establish a field of greens, because their prime hunting days are eminently approaching.

It's crunch time, and if hunters are going to have a food plot, there is no time to waste. You can have a lush fall plot, but it doesn't mean you should rush and make careless decisions.

One of the major planning mistakes is improper application rates of seed, fertilizer and herbicide. Most food plots are constructed in old woodlots, fields or anywhere there is some open ground. And quite often, food plot areas are a result of guesswork.

Becoming a food-plotter is much like farming, but on a much smaller scale. For farmers, the size of their fields is the most-important consideration for every activity during the production of their crops. In addition to the massive costs of fertilizer, lime, herbicide and the latest, engineered seed, farmers know the exact survey area of their crop fields, and they make sure that they prepare their field applications based on the finite area.

Every bag of seed, fertilizer and herbicide has recommended applications rates, all based on an area unit of measure, either per acre or per square foot. Many food plotters just guess their plot size and make applications based on their educated guess. And this can work fine if they make an accurate assessment of their food-plot area. However, a poor guess can destroy expectations of a lush plot where they hope to take a trophy buck later in the year.

Luckily, area and rate calculations don't require an advanced degree from a private, Ivy League college. Measuring area is simple math that is first taught to third- and fourth-graders, but math doesn't always come easy to everybody. Fortunately, there are only a few steps to follow to accurately calculate the area for a food plot of any shape.

First, the units of measure need to be explored to be able to compute distances over to usable areas. Since most measuring devices measure in feet, and application rates are based on acres, landowners should choose measuring devices with feet as their primary unit. Additionally, many measuring tapes come with inches or tenths between the foot measurements. For ease of computation, measuring tapes with tenths between foot measurements are preferred because it requires less calculation to reach a final product.

Area formulas can range from a very simple length-times-width calculation to a more complicated version, such as the area formula for a circle with a computation of its radius and a mathematical constant. But for almost all food plots, the area can be calculated by using the simple square and triangle formulas. The area of a rectangle is a simple length multiplied times the width. The formula for a triangle is basically the same as a rectangle, but since it only has three

corners versus four, you have to divide it by half. In other words, the formula for a triangle is the base times the height multiplied by .5.

When multiplying foot measurements, the result produces a square-foot measurement that can be easily converted to acres. Since 43,560 square feet comprise an acre, the square-foot product can be divided by 43,560 to produce the area.

Food plots should be sketched out on paper and then segregated into rectangles and triangles if needed. The lengths and widths of each smaller rectangle and triangle should be accurately measured on the ground, marked with a stake or flag, and recorded on the sketch. Then, the areas of each subordinate region should be calculated and added together to come up with an accurate and precise calculation for the entire food-plot area.

While physical measurement with a roll tape is the most accurate way to determine a food plot's area, areas can also be measured with a hand-held GPS or from web-based programs that have accurate aerial views like Google Earth or ESRI's ARC-GIS Explorer.

Food plots come in all shapes and sizes. Most landowners construct food plots with irregular shapes that can make measuring area a little longer process than just a standard rectangular shape. But, coming up with an accurate plot area will make product and seed applications more efficient and precise. ▪

continues on page 64



Jeff Burleson

INOCULATE? ABSOLUTELY!

During the fall planting season, legumes are a large part of planting systems. Vetches, alfalfa, beans, trefoil, peas and clovers are all legumes. White clover is one of the primary seed choices for food plots across the nation, and for good reason.

Clover can provide deer and other wildlife with a nutrient-packed food source year-round and can double as perfect kill plot. But legumes should be inoculated before planting if not already pre-inoculated in the bag. Inoculation is the process of introducing a nitrogen-fixating bacterium to the seed. Legumes take nitrogen from the air and convert it to usable nitrogen through nodules on the roots formed by rhizobia bacteria. The bacteria form a symbiotic relationship with the roots to produce usable nitrogen for the legume and other companion plants in a planting mix.

Inoculating legumes is a very easy task. The small packet of inoculate specific to the seed should be added to the seed before planting. Inoculating the seed will not only provide savings in nitrogen fertilizer, but it will boost growth of legume and companion plantings for the fall season.



IS MORE ALWAYS BETTER? NO WAY!

More food plots get planted in October than any other month, and one of the biggest misconceptions for planting food plots is that more of a good thing is always better. It couldn't be further from the truth. Plants and animals need food, water, and space, but too much of anything can be devastating to a food plot.

Plants need rich soils filled with nutrients, adequate moisture and abundant sunlight. A flood will drown out plants, and over-fertilizing plants can make the fertilizer essentially toxic and kill them. The most-common issue is for food-plotters to apply a higher rate of seed than recommended. The seed-planting rates have been developed from years of product testing to determine the best planting rate for maximum growth. Just like animals, plants have a carrying capacity based on nutrient availability and most importantly, space. Plants require sunlight to produce energy and space to functionally grow to maturity.

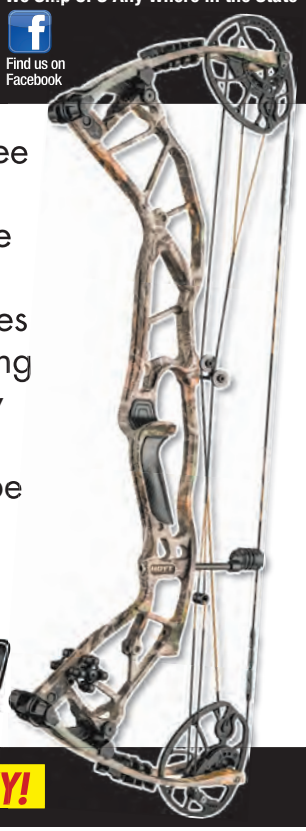
Fall food plots are often planted with pure stands of mixtures of cereal grains, legumes and brassicas. While rye grass can grow boisterously in a very small space, turnips and radishes need substantial room to grow efficiently, to produce large foliage above the ground and oversized tubers below the ground. Basically, plants need space to expand and optimize sunlight exposure for maximize photosynthesis to produce the most energy possible.

Another consideration to remember is that seed rates are generally prescribed based on a pure stand and not a mix of different types of cereal grains, legumes and brassicas. When mixing seed varieties, food-plotters should consider that some larger plants with a low stocking rate like brassicas will shade out companion plants, and this should be an accepted outcome. Yet the cereal grains and legumes growing between the large foliage of the brassicas can be expected to flourish very efficiently, providing wildlife with a much needed boost of energy.

On the other side of the coin, fertilizer treatments shouldn't be reduced, especially when the soil onsite falls within the target pH range. Too much of anything can be bad for a food plot, but not enough chemical supplementation can inhibit the maximum potential for a food plot.

For the best fall food plots, make sure to plant just enough seed and apply all fertilizer needed at all scheduled application periods and nothing more! ▪

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

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Phillip Gentry



Kayak-bound fishermen have a great opportunity in October to do battle with a number of inshore saltwater species.

OCTOBER OPPORTUNITIES HAVE FEW EQUALS

PADDLING ANGLERS CAN GET TIGHT TO A VARIETY OF INSHORE SPECIES

Phillilp Gentry

October is the season that inshore paddlers dream of. The same fish you've been chasing all summer — redfish, flounder and trout — suddenly seem to materialize and cooperate.

The most-likely reason is that cooler water starts to arrive, prompting baitfish to start moving from any number of small nooks and crannies in the marsh to more open water like tributary creeks and waters closer to the open ocean.

Once the mullet runs start in the Carolinas in earnest, you can target whatever fish you want, but there's no guarantee what will be on the end of the line when you feel that solid thump.

Most paddling anglers opt for fishing with live bait. It's fairly easy to throw a cast net a few times around any small creek mouth or drainage ditch and not find something a predator fish might eat. Troll buckets more popular in days gone-by still work, but they also act as a parachute, not a good idea if you like to paddle in a straight line. To combat this, you can either pull the bucket into the kayak when you're paddling or use a bucket on either side of the boat to balance the drag.

Another great idea is to fill up the tank well of your kayak with one of today's modern, heavily insulated coolers. Add a battery-powered air pump and air stone to keep the water oxygenated, and you can transport enough live bait to last through an all-day paddling trip.

As for the tides, inshore fish love to move up toward grass lines as the tide rises and feed around the edge of the grass or up in the grass. As the water falls, they will move out to the edges of the oyster bars or the drop-offs.

Baitfish, shrimp and even crabs are on the move, and all of the major inshore species, plus a handful more, love to be around food. Working from a kayak, one of the best ways to find fish that the powerboats motor past is to look for baitfish along the edges of creek mouths.

If there are baitfish in an area, chances are high that something will soon be along, feeding during some phase of the tide. You have to work at catching fish by looking for the right combinations or baitfish, current, and structure.

Using a popping cork is a great way to distinguish your bait from the thousands of baitfish in that area. Rigging a hook anywhere from 1 to 3 feet below the cork, adding a split shot or two to keep the bait down below the cork, lets you cast up current, popping the bait to cause commotion and attract attention, and position the bait in the strike zone. ■



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.*

BEST OCTOBER BETS

NORTH CAROLINA

WHAT —Slot redfish, aka puppy drum.
WHERE — Atlantic Beach/Morehead City area — Haystacks (Newport River Marsh), Core Creek bays, Hoop Pole Creek, Middle Marsh, North River Marsh, ICW Docks and the Surf Zone.
HOW — It will be difficult to outfish all the live bait moving through the marshes without using live bait: shrimp, finger mullet and mud minnows. Fish these under a cork or on a split-shot rig around oyster bars, grass edges, grass points, sand flats, and drop-offs.
LAUNCH — Newport River boat ramps and pier on Radio Island, between Morehead City and Beaufort, 10th Street water access and boat ramp, Beaufort.
INSIDER TIP — North Carolina has a slot limit on redfish; fish have to measure within a slot of 18 to 27 inches long; you can keep only one fish per person, per day.

SOUTH CAROLINA

WHAT — Redfish, seatrout and flounder.
WHERE — Port Royal, Hilton Head Island.
HOW — Use spinning tackle, a popping cork and live shrimp or mud minnows. Fish around oyster rakes, grass edges and creek mouths. Leaving off the cork and fishing a mud minnow on the bottom will increase your chances at catching flounder.
LAUNCH — Marshland Road public ramp, C.C. Haigh, Jr. Landing, H. E. Trask, Sr. Landing.
INSIDER TIP — October is a great time to catch bull redfish around Hilton Head. Some are still in creeks, your best chances are fishing deeper channels, waiting for reds to move through.

continues on page 68

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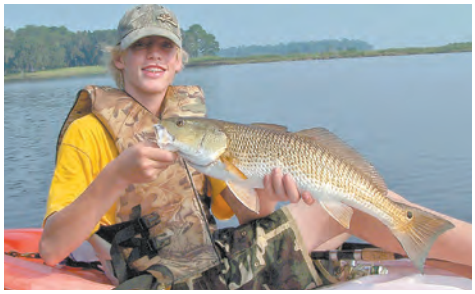
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FIRST KAYAK REDFISH

Most kids grow up fishing crickets or worms under a bobber for bream in a farm pond or off a dock at a lake somewhere. At some point they get surprised when something larger takes the bait and the cork zooms out of sight, bending the rod over in the process.



Phillip Gentry

Fortunately, these occurrences happen enough that when a youngster gets his first chance to paddle around in a borrowed kayak with one of his father's rods tucked under his leg, he knows what to do.

The mud minnow he's towing around is doing its job, just being bait. The 24-inch redfish that lived in the state-park pond was impressed enough with the bait's performance to eat it for breakfast. The snatch and grab mustered enough force to drive the point of the hook into the corner of the redfish's mouth.

Meanwhile, topside, there was reeling to do. Grabbing the bent rod and raising the tip into position allowed the rod to do it's job while the reel screamed in protest. Like a rodeo star trying to hang on for 8 seconds, the kid spun the kayak in three complete circles before the fish tired and came to the side of the boat.

That's how you catch your first kayak redfish. ▪

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Mustang PFDs have a great history, and the company's latest offering is a BASS Competition version of Mustang Survival's HIT PFD, an inflatable designed for serious users who want enhanced safety and minimal maintenance.



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Lightweight and comfortable, this PFD can be worn over a T-shirt on warm days or thicker garments in colder conditions.

There is a manual inflation handle that allows you to inflate the vest at any time, and it provides 38 pounds of buoyancy when inflated. The inflation cylinder is contained inside bladder to protect against corrosion

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MSRP is $249. More info at www.mustangsurvival.com.

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Accessories include built-in gear tracks that will accept mounts from most of today's better manufacturers, as well as built-in bottle openers on each corner. The capacity is 25.16 quarts, the weight is 21.5 pounds and dimensions are 16¾x20½x16¾ inches.

MSRP is $369. More info at www.orioncoolers.com.





COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver

VENNISON STEW MEATLOAF

THIS RECIPE MAKES A MEAL THAT GOES DOWN RIGHT THE FIRST, SECOND TIMES

Fall is the absolute best season in the Carolinas. It begins in September, lasts into December and brings some of the prettiest weather and nicest temperatures of the year. Sportsmen have multiple opportunities to fish or hunt and can even do both, with high expectations of success, in the same day.

Fall fishing is excellent, but deer seasons are open in both Carolinas, and there are many hunters who have been patiently waiting since January. In honor of these folks, this is going to be a recipe that uses venison.

If you have any ground venison remaining from the 2017 season, this is a good way to use it and make room for this year's deer. If you've already enjoyed all of last year's deer harvest, it also prepares well with freshly ground venison.

Meatloaf is a staple of most households. Some folks say it gets boring, and this is simply a way to give it a little more appeal. Venison has less fat than burger, so venison meatloaf fits the old saying of not only being good, but good for you too.

I like meatloaf, especially full-bodied and flavorful meatloaf, but my wife doesn't. If I make it mild enough, she will eat one meal with me, but any leftovers are mine. Sometimes, I save her pain and make it from the start with chilies, peppers and fun seasonings (use your imagination). However, this is the mild version and should be suitable for anyone. Those of you with more robust palates can add some red pepper, ground jalapeno or chipotle and hot sauce to bring it to your standards. ▪



Meatloaf is a hearty meal, especially when it's made with ground venison, and adding some sausage only helps add flavor. **INSET**: Cook meatloaf slowly, at 160 to 170 degrees, for best results.

Jerry Dilsaver

VENISON STEW MEATLOAF

Regular readers have probably already asked themselves, "What is he up to now?" You know I'm not afraid to experiment and mix two things I like into a single dish. Sometimes it turns out well, and you get to read about it.

This is one of the times my ideas worked. I don't remember exactly what brought me to combine stew and meatloaf, but it had to have been a flashes of brilliance while preparing hunting or fishing gear for the next adventure. While I like this and believe it tastes good enough on its own to merit serious consideration for a nice meal, there will be slices left over that can be used for sandwiches — and you can't do that with stew.

You can browse through the freezer section at the supermarket and find everything except the chopped sweet onions. In fact, this is where the peas came in. I was looking for chopped carrots and found a package of mixed chopped carrots and peas. I like peas and thought, "Why not?" and tried them. I like it with peas, but it can be made without them.

There is a Liquid Smoke in this, and I'll caution you to be careful with it; a little goes a long way. Some folks like its flavor; some don't.

Another option for making this is to mix the ground venison with venison sausage. If your family and friends eat venison sausage, they'll appreciate the flavor it will add to the meatloaf.

There are several reasons for lining the loaf pans. Cleanup comes to mind first, and it certainly helps there. It also helps lift the meatloaf out of the pan for cutting. I use a large enough piece of foil that once the loaf cools, I can wrap it or any leftovers for the fridge or freezing.

This recipe will make one regular meatloaf or two small ones.

I package my venison burger in 2-pound packs and usually double this recipe to make a couple since mixing it is the only real effort. The extra freezes well and can be grabbed for a quick thaw and meal as needed. I especially like making meatloaf sandwiches and sliders. Hopefully you will enjoy it, too!

Some readers may remember a Southwest-flavored meatloaf recipe several years back that was cooked in a deep cast iron pan on the grill. This can be done that way too, but with sautéing the vegetables first and a few more mixing steps, it is easier to cook in the oven. In addition, the loaf pans are just right for slices for sandwiches and I like meatloaf sandwiches. ▪

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound ground venison
2 eggs
1 small Vidalia onion
½ cup plain bread crumbs
1¼ cup frozen diced potatoes
1¼ cup frozen diced carrots and peas
½ pack brown gravy mix
5 drops Liquid Smoke
Salt and pepper (to taste)
1 splash cooking oil
Pam non-stick cooking spray
Aluminum foil

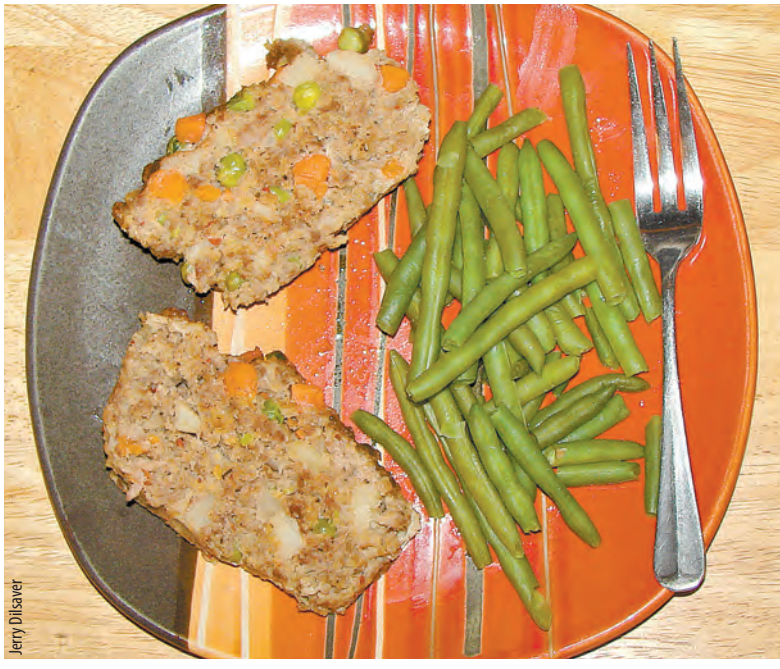
PREPARATION:

Chop the onion and sauté it lightly. Add diced potatoes, carrots and peas to onion and stir around a couple of minutes just to warm them. Beat the eggs. Mix the burger, eggs, vegetables, bread crumbs, and gravy packet. Add five drops Liquid Smoke, salt and pepper (to taste) and mix again.

Preheat oven to 350. Line the loaf pans with aluminum foil and spray the foil liberally with Pam. Put the mixture into loaf pans. Be sure to leave a half-inch or so at the rim of the pan. Cook the meatloaf approximately 45 to 55 minutes. The temperature in the middle should be 160 to 170 degrees. Remove meatloaf from heat and allow it to rest for 5 to 10 minutes.

Pour off any grease — there should be minimal or none depending on the fat blend in the venison. Serve.

Mashed potatoes or garlic mashed potatoes, with brown gravy, are the worldwide standard with meatloaf and will do well here, but there are already potatoes in the meatloaf. My suggestion is if you want more potatoes, to serve it with a baked sweet potato or mashed sweet potatoes. Green beans are a vegetable that isn't in the mix and serve well with it. I'm always up for a fresh green salad and a salad or a lettuce wedge is a great way to begin. ▪



Jerry Dilsaver



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.*

Sammy Romano



Thick early season cover such as these briars, leads to narrow shooting lanes and quick opportunities.

DRAW YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS

TIMING YOUR DRAW IS THE MOST-IMPORTANT THING YOU'LL DO WITH A DEER IN RANGE

Much of the allure of bowhunting is the challenge it presents. Many things have to go right for a bowhunter to successfully harvest game. First, the quarry has to be at close range and unaware of the hunter's presence. Then, the bow must be drawn without alerting the animal, and the shot has to be made accurately for a clean kill. Finally, the animal must be trailed for a successful recovery.

While each of these elements is vital to a successful outcome, one of the most important is drawing the bow unnoticed. This simple act will ultimately determine the outcome of the hunt.

TIMING IS CRUCIAL

Timing your draw is one of the hardest skills to learn. Think about this: a beginning bowhunter can hunt from a stand placed in the correct location by someone more experienced. After the shot, he or she can have someone else trail the animal and recover it. But at the moment of truth, when drawing the bow and making the shot, the outcome rests squarely on the bowhunter. Proper shooting form and accuracy can be learned and practiced, but learning to time your draw properly can only be practiced in real time from the stand while in the presence of game. No amount of coaching can replace experience and time in the stand when it comes to this skill.

Each species of game presents its own challenges and requires a slightly different strategy. Since a majority of bowhunters target deer, that is the focus. Whitetails are often hunted in thick cover, and shots often have to be timed to take advantage of narrow shooting lanes.

One mistake beginning bowhunters often make is drawing too early. I regularly hear about a hunter drawing his or her bow while the deer is "behind a tree" or just before it steps into a shooting lane. Often, the deer either catches movement or hears the draw and instinctively freezes, with its vitals obscured by brush or the tree trunk.

This rarely winds up well for the hunter. The deer has no schedule and often stands still for several minutes, while the hunter is holding the full weight of the bow, as well as the holding weight of the draw. Eventually, the frustrated hunter is forced to let the draw down, the motion often spooking the alerted deer.

A better option would be to wait until the animal's vitals are exposed and then slowly draw when it is looking away or has its head down feeding. This way, if it freezes, its vitals are fully exposed for a shot opportunity. Watching a deer's front feet will also help in this situation. Just before stepping forward into a clearing, the deer will lift its front foot. This will help you to be ready to draw and shoot before the deer crosses the lane.

Deer that are walking steadily present a different challenge. It is generally best to wait for the deer to stop before taking the shot, but bucks are often on a mission and therefore steadily walking. These deer can be stopped by bleating with your mouth; however, you need to be ready to release the arrow quickly, because their focus will shift to you.

Upon hearing the bleat, a deer will naturally tense its muscles, preparing to flee until it identified the source of the unknown noise, increasing the odds of string-jumping. A good trick is to bleat after you are already drawn and on target, and as the deer is stopping, release the shot. This way, the deer's momentum will prevent it from reacting.

SPEAK A DEER'S BODY LANGUAGE

It also helps to watch a whitetail's body language before attempting to draw. For many years, whitetails were thought to be silent creatures, and although we know they make a wide variety of vocalizations, most of their communication is through posturing and body language.

For the hunter, learning to read this body language requires a lot of time in the stand observing deer. Generally, it is best not to draw when in a deer's direct line of sight or if its ears are cupped in your direction. This will usually result in a blown opportunity. Also, if a deer is visibly nervous or on edge, it is best to wait for the animal to relax before trying to draw. Multiple animals means more eyes and ears and will only make drawing unnoticed even harder.

Time spent in the presence of deer will allow you to gauge the "mood" or "vibe" of the animal(s) in front of you. If they are keyed up, it is better to wait and live to fight another day. Once deer identify the location of your stand, especially catching your movement at close range, your chances for success are slim to none.

Most lessons are best learned the hard way, and I have learned far more from blown opportunities than anything else. Each missed opportunity offers a lesson. Spend as much time in the woods as you can this and every season, and learn all that you can. Bowhunting is truly an art, and nothing replaces experience when it comes to perfecting your mastery of it. ▪



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.*



PICK YOUR SHOT:
When a buck is looking your way and has his ears cupped towards you, your chances of successfully drawing on him aren't very good.







SANTEE STRINGER

Terry Madewell



Before new regulations took effect in June, all of these Santee Cooper stripers would have been illegal to keep.

NEW SANTEE STRIPER REGS ARE POPULAR

ANGLERS, GUIDES, SCDNR FEEL GOOD ABOUT CHANGES

Terry Madewell

The new striper regulations implemented on the Santee Cooper lakes this past June have received rave reviews from fishermen, guides and landing operators around Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie. This has created a lot of optimism for the striper fishing season that reopens Oct. 1.

Anglers had a brief window to enjoy the long-awaited regulatory change when passed in early June before the season closed for the summer on June 15. The 23- to 25-inch slot limit, with one striper over 26 inches legal, immediately created more striper-fishing interest.

According to my contacts, this is one the most universally appreciated legislative actions for the Santee Cooper system fishery in years.

The father-son guide team of Bob and Bobby Winters from Cross, S.C., provide a perspective from a long-time guide and a newcomer to the business. The elder Winters said interest in striper fishing perked up immediately.

"The new slot limit is a big impact event in a positive way," Bob Winters said. "I've been guiding for stripers since the 1970s and have seen a thing or two, and fishermen needed to be able to use this resource. Even with an abundant striper supply in recent years, fishermen were dealing with a situation where stripers could not be kept unless they were over 26 inches. Fish of those sizes were hard to come by, plus, that's the size-class that fish biologists said we need to keep in the lake. Striper-fishing interest dwindled as a result, so this is a long-awaited and much-needed change."

Bobby Winters said a new guide's perspective on the fishery is that the future is brighter for striper fishing interests and will be a positive for the lake-influenced economy.

"I'm very excited about the new size limits, and I think October through late-fall will usher in great striper fishing and lots more interest from anglers," he said. "We're now able to utilize a size-class of fish present in large numbers, but with enough control to hopefully maintain the quality fishery for the future. Fishermen don't mind catch-and-release on stripers if they can keep some and now we can."

LIVE BAIT IS GREAT

Bobby Winters said striper fishing will likely be excellent when the season opens on Oct. 1.

"Typically, the action is very good on both lakes," he said. "I often fish Lake Moultrie because of where I live, but if wind conditions are an issue, plenty of productive areas are available on Lake Marion."

Winters (843-700-0626) said the best tactic to open the season is live-bait fishing and watching for topwater schooling action.

"Early in the season, the bread and butter tactic is to use electronics to locate stripers and drop live herring or gizzard shad to that depth or just above," he said. "The weather always plays a big role, and we'll be prepared for topwater schooling fish and will cast bucktails and various topwater lures to schooling fish. Topwater fishing usually gets better later in the month and into November."

Winters said stripers may be in tight schools, so staying right on top of a school can be important. But if the fish are loosely packed over a large area drift fishing will be extremely effective.

SCDNR: PERSPECTIVE IS GOOD

Feedback from the S.C. Department of Natural Resources' perspective is positive as well. Chad Holbrook, who replaced retired Scott Lamprecht as regional fishing coordinator, said it's too early to have any specific data on how the new regulation may impact the fishery, but thoughts are it will be good for fishermen and the resource.

"The sampling study SCDNR relies on to monitor the striped bass population occurs during December to February and has since 1985," Holbrook said. "So from a biological perspective, we don't have any information about how the new regulation is impacting the population. But I have not heard of any problems from law enforcement or from anglers from this past June, and that's a positive sign. We want to encourage anglers to continue to follow the regulations while utilizing the resource."

Holbrook said the SCDNR's perspective is that the new regulations will continue to protect the adult spawning stock while allowing anglers to keep a few fish for dinner.

"One of SCDNR's missions is to find a balance between managing the state's natural resources and providing recreational opportunities for fisherman," he said. "We believe the population is stable enough to allow some harvest of 23- to 25-inch stripers, and we are excited that fisherman can utilize these fish." ▪



Terry Madewell

SLOTTED IN:
When the keeper season for striped bass in the Santee Cooper system opens on Oct. 1, anglers will be able to keep fish between 23 and 25 inches long, as well as one striper larger than 26 inches per day in a two-fish limit.



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



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Robert Satterwhite



Lake James State Park features a fishing pier, and it's in close proximity to a handful of public boat landings on the 6,500-acre mountain lake in Burke and McDowell counties.

PARK YOUR TACKLE AT THIS STATE PARK

LAKE JAMES IS A JEWEL FOR MOUNTAIN FISHERMEN

Wesley Satterwhite

North Carolina's state park system stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to mile-high Mount Mitchell, offering a variety of activities, including camping and fishing in most of the parks.

Unlike many campgrounds and recreation areas in the state's national forests and national parks that are seasonal, most of the state parks are open year-round, except for Christmas Day. Fees are affordable, and the amenities often include or surpass features found at high-cost private campgrounds.

Lake James State Park in Burke and McDowell County is one of the state's 41 state parks. The 3,600-acre park is divided into two sections: the Catawba River Area in McDowell County and the Paddy's Creek Area in Burke County. Both are on Lake James.

Established in 1987, the park initially included only the 565-acre Catawba River Area in McDowell County. After the park acquired an additional 3,000 acres, the Paddy's Creek Area was constructed and opened in the fall of 2010.

CAMPING

The park has 33 drive-in, tent-camping sites in the Paddy's Creek Area, 20 walk-in sites in the Catawba River Area and 30 boat-in sites on the Long Arm Peninsula section of the park. Both the Catawba River Area and Paddy's Creek Area have handicapped-accessible sites.

Drive-in campsites in the Paddy's Creek Area can accommodate up to six people and include a tent pad, large enough for two small tents or one large tent, picnic table, lantern post, metal food storage chest — the area does have foraging critters — and a fire pit. Most sites are far enough apart to afford some privacy, more than you'll find in national park and national forest camping areas. All sites can accommodate two vehicles. No sites offer hookups.

A large bath house is centrally located between the two camping loops in the drive-in camping area, providing hot-water showers and a large outside sink for washing dishes.

The walk-in, tent-camping sites in the Catawba River Area are 100 yards to 300 yards from the parking area. Several prime sites overlook the lake. Each site has a fire pit, picnic table, lantern post and small tent pad. Freshwater outlets are spread among the camp sites, and a bath house with hot-water showers is located near the parking area. Two drive-in handicapped accessible sites are near the parking area.

The boat-in camping area in Long Arm Peninsula has 30 sites. Amenities include pit-toilets, fire pit, picnic table and a small tent pad. No water outlets are available. Reservations are required.

FISHING

For trout fishing, the Linville River in the nearby Linville Gorge Wilderness Area operates under hatchery-supported regulations and is open to fishing year-round. The section below Lake James Powerhouse from the bridge on State Road 1223 to Muddy Creek is hatchery-supported waters.

The Catawba River from Muddy Creek to Morganton city limits is special regu-

lation trout waters and is noted for its trophy brown trout. Creel limit is two trout per day with a minimum size of 14 inches. No bait restrictions apply, and the stream is open year-round.

Lake James is noted primarily for its largemouth bass fishing, but it also has good populations of smallmouth bass, walleye, white bass, crappie, perch, catfish and sunfish. One excellent site to fish for walleye is in the Linville River upstream from the NC 126 bridge. The creel limit here is four walleyes, with no size restrictions. Elsewhere in the lake, the creel limit is eight walleyes with a minimum-size limit of 15 inches.

A fishing pier is adjacent to the large swimming area below the park's ranger office and concession area. The park office is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays.

BOAT ACCESS

Canoes and kayak rentals are available at both camping areas. Three public boat ramps provide access to the lake. Hidden Cove is open only during park hours and is closed during the winter. Canal Bridge is open 24 hours a day throughout the year. Both ramps are within 2 miles of the Paddy's Creek Area on NC 126. The Linville River Boating Access Area is on NC 126 northwest of Morganton, off Jamestown Road and is open 24 hours a day.

Lake James also has several commercial marinas,

FEES

The park uses a "dynamic pricing" system for all sites. Prices run from $18 for weekday camping to $32 per night for weekends and holidays. Drive-in sites are $18 per night on weekdays $20 per night Sunday through Thursday, $20 per night on Fridays and Saturdays, and $26 per night on holiday weekends. Walk-in sites in the Catawba River Area are $18 for week days, $26 per night on Fridays and Saturdays and $32 per night on holiday weekends. Boat-in sites are $13 per night at any time. Discounts of $6 per site are available for senior citizens (62 and over) and for members of the military.

ADVISORY

Both sections of the park close their gates in the evening. Opening and closing times depend on the season but usually are between 8 and 10 p.m. If you're out too late, you'll have to walk to your campsite.

CONTACT/DIRECTIONS

The park's phone number is 828-584-3328. For reservations, call 877-722-6762 or visit. lakejames@ncparks.gov. Directions: From I-40, take Exit 94, go north, turn left on US 70 for 1½ miles to Bridgewater Road. Continue for 1.2 miles to Benfield's Landing Road, go 2 miles to a stop sign and turn left onto NC 126. Follow signs to the Catawba River Area, about 1.5 miles on the right. To get to the Paddy's Creek area, turn right on N.C. 126 and follow signs to the campground. ▪



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.*





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From T-Reed to T-Rex.

It wasn't a long stretch for the call designers at South Carolina-based Big Lake Outdoor Products, who earlier this year debuted a pair of T-Rex duck calls, one in acrylic and one in wood.

The T-Rex calls feature the company's stainless-steel T-Reeds, which make for extremely raspy calls in a double-reed format, combining the No. 3 and No. 4 sizes. Both calls make great sounds for hunters trying to imitate mallards, and the two reeds inside the acrylic body make for a guttural call that's death on diving ducks.

The wooden versions are made from Bocoto and/or Dymond wood laminate, an extremely hard wood that makes for a distinct sound.

The wooden version retails for $50 and the acrylic version for $110.

More Info: www.biglakeoutdoorproducts.com





HALO XL600 LASER RANGEFINDER

Never again will you have to guess how far away that gobbler is walking. The Halo XL600 is a compact little tool that fits easily in your hand and doesn't carry a price tag that will knock you out. At 6X power, it's able to range objects out to 600 yards, and it's a must-have for turkey and deer hunters — especially bowhunters who can range objects near their stands long before that big buck arrives. Water resistant, it has AI technology that allows hunters not only to measure flat distances between rifle and target, but it also accounts for the slope of the land.

MSRP is $119.99.

More Info: www.halooptics.com

New product submissions can be emailed to **Mark Boyd** at **markb@lasmag.com** or call 601-829-8080.

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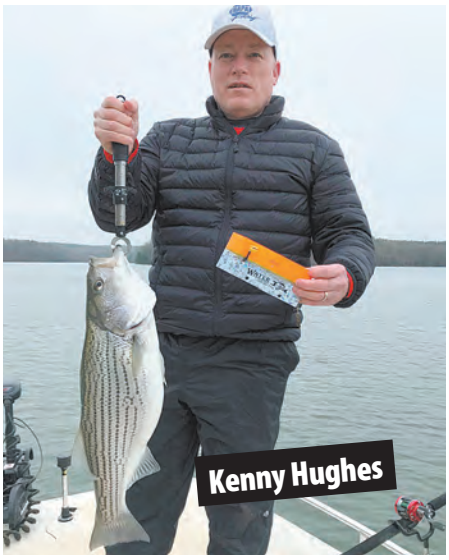
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Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



Kenny Hughes caught this 10-pound Lake Hartwell striper on March 19, 2019, using a Water Bugz planer board and herring.



James Brooks of Siler City, N.C., caught this 24-inch red with multiple spots near Carolina Beach Inlet on Oct. 9, 2017.



Lee Winstead killed this nice buck in Nash County, N.C., on Sept. 22, 2017, with a crossbow.



Melanie Eaton caught this 34-pound, citation king mackerel out of Morehead City last fall.



Ronnie Spivey of Rocky Mount, N.C., had a great catch of black crappie in Edgecombe County in October 2017.

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 dank@carolinasportsman.com

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



Paul Boggs of Old Fort, N.C., caught this 23-inch brown trout out of the Catawba River's headwaters in spring 2017.



Randy Thomason caught this nice black drum near Drum Island, S.C., on April 1, 2018, using a slab of oyster on a Carolina rig.



Mike Little of Granville County, N.C., killed his first gobbler on May 3, 2017.



Dianne Winningham caught this 35-pound blue catfish in South Carolina's Cooper River at Pimlico in April 2018.



Hunter Jimeson of Marion, N.C., caught this big bass out of his great-grandmother's pond in Guilford County in Sept. 2017.



Brandy Edwards of Surf City, N.C., caught this 12.8-pound gag grouper on Oct. 15, 2017, on a trip out of Topsail Beach.



Kate Forlines caught this 57-pound redfish, one of six she and Ed Renn landed in the Neuse River near Oriental, N.C.



Tag Graziano caught this nice bull redfish in South Carolina's May River.



Avery Atkins killed her first turkey on April 26, 2018, near Pineville, S.C., with her grandfather's single-shot .410.



Ethan Pawelczyk, 7, caught this 13-pound striper on a pencil popper on Sept. 11, 2016, on North Carolina's Kerr Lake.

Hunting/Fishing
SCRAPBOOK



Dalton Marsh shows off two nice crappie caught in October 2016 in North Carolina's Jordan Lake.



Josh Tackett of Weaverville, N.C., caught this 4-pound spotted bass from Lake Jocassee on Sept. 3, 2017.



Dawson Flowers of Hartsville, S.C., made this 8-point buck his first deer kill ever, in Darlington County last Nov. 2.



Ty Morris caught this nice channel cat from South Carolina's Lake Murray in August 2017.



Jeffrey Stewart and his hunting buddies killed these rabbits in Lancaster County, S.C., this past season.

GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

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

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or to dank@carolinasportsman.com

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



Michael Gerrard Jr., 11, caught this 27-inch striped bass on a piece of crab from North Carolina's Blounts Creek last Aug. 5.



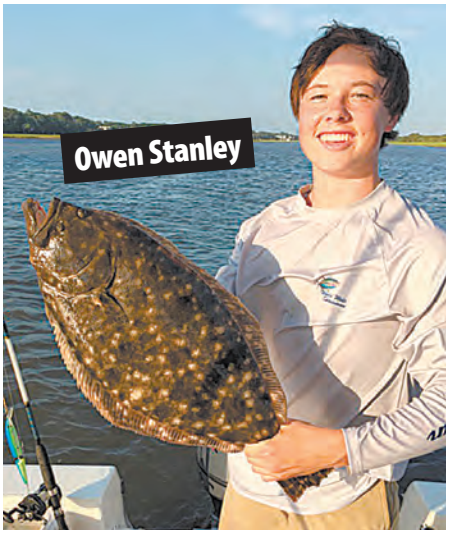
Bryan Buckner of Saluda, N.C., caught this 4-pound spotted bass out of South Carolina's Lake Jocassee this past winter. The fish was on the bottom in 25 feet of water.



Sarah Van Duyn made these two crappie her first fish ever. They were caught in July 201 from the Perquimans River near Hertford, N.C.



Emma Reaves killed this 8-point buck, hunting with her dad in Bladen County.



Owen Stanley caught this big flounder caught at Sunset Beach in July 2016.



Cameron Diesfield, 12, from Sanford, N.C. took this 5-point crossbow buck in velvet on Sept. 12, 2017 in Chatham County.



David Hall caught this 28-pound striped bass on South Carolina's Clarks Hill Lake.



Zack Lennon killed this 152-inch trophy in Montgomery County, N.C., last fall. Its gross score was 152.



Karley Davidson of Seagrove, N.C., killed this 10-point, 130-inch buck in November 2014.



Chase Schaap, 13, from Holly Springs, N.C., caught this 19½-inch speckled trout fishing at Oak Island.

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

• The "Best Days" column is based on the ever-changing positions of the sun and the moon, rating each day on a scale of 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more solar/lunar influence that day is experiencing (see "Value" column or corresponding black bars).

• The two Primary periods (Moon Overhead and Moon Underfoot) vary in length from one hour to three-and-one-half hours, depending on a number of important lunar cycles, such as how close the moon is to the earth that day and how high its orbit is. The solar symbols alert you to when a Primary period overlaps a major solar period (eg: Dawn, High-Noon, and Dusk). The secondary periods of Moonrise and Moonset last about one hour each . . . 30 minutes before and after the listed time. (See key at bottom of each month for more detail.)

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

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

AVAILABLE PRODUCTS:

The 2018 PrimeTimes Wall Calendar. **$12.95** (plus $4 s&h). Know the best days, best times, and their relative strengths for all of 2018 with this information-packed, full-color, 11-inch by 17-inch, graphic peaks-and-valleys forecaster. Includes rise and set times for the sun and moon, space to log your catches, "Timely Tips," plus fish and game symbols showing you each month's don't-miss periods. Also includes exclusive summary charts revealing the best and worst days of 2018, the year's best periods, a look ahead at 2019, and more. Comes with FREE 2018 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for $7.95, plus $3 s&h.

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

2018 Ultimate PrimeTimes software for PCs. $29.95 (plus $3 s&h, or no s&h if downloaded from web). The world's best forecaster allows you to fine-tune the peak times to your exact location, quarry, and even weather. Too many features to list here, including making your own App. For more details, please call us or visit our web site (see below).

SPECIAL PACKAGE OFFERS:

#1: ***Wall Calendar, Astro Tables and "How to Know..." book.... $19.95*** (plus $5 s&h).

#2: ***Same as #1, plus Software...$46.95*** (plus $6 s&h).

#3: ***Same as #2, minus book...$37.95*** (plus $5 s&h).

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For more information and samples of PrimeTimes products, visit our web site: **www.primetimes2.com**

2018 OCT

BEST DAYS — POOR / FAIR / GOOD / EXCL — VALUE

LUNAR PERIODS — TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED

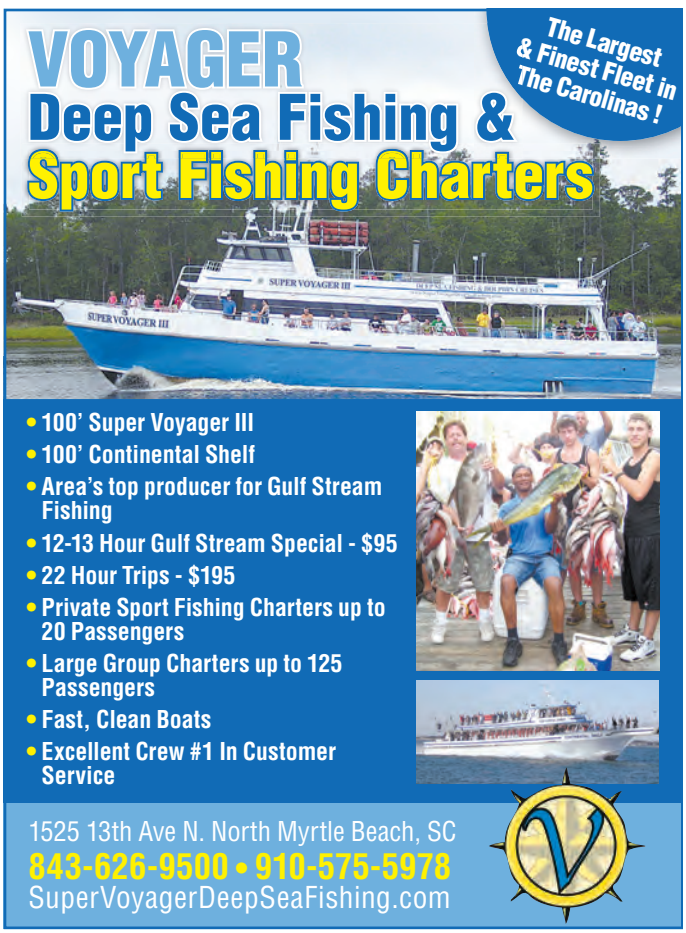
	BEST DAYS	MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
Mon 1	53	11:54 pm	4:34 am - 7:56 am	1:32 pm	4:59 pm - 8:21 pm	HIGH
Tue 2	64		5:30 am - 8:56 am	2:31 pm	5:55 pm - 9:21 pm	HALF
Wed 3	54	12:54 am	6:31 am - 9:53 am	3:26 pm	6:56 pm - 10:18 pm	
Thu 4	49	1:58 am	7:32 am - 10:48 am	4:16 pm	7:57 pm - 11:13 pm	
Fri 5	58	3:06 am	8:36 am - 11:38 am	5:01 pm	9:01 pm - 12:03 am	Perigee
Sat 6	65	4:14 am	9:37 am - 12:27 pm	5:42 pm	10:02 pm - 12:52 am	
Sun 7	71	5:22 am	10:39 am - 1:11 pm	6:20 pm	11:04 pm - Midnight	
Mon 8	72	6:30 am	11:40 am - 1:52 pm	6:56 pm	Midnight - 1:36 am	NEW
Tue 9	58	7:35 am	12:39 pm - 2:35 pm	7:31 pm	12:05 am - 2:17 am	
Wed 10	44	8:40 am	1:38 pm - 3:16 pm	8:07 pm	1:04 am - 3:00 am	
Thu 11	31	9:43 am	2:33 pm - 3:59 pm	8:44 pm	2:03 am - 3:41 am	
Fri 12	24	10:44 am	3:28 pm - 4:44 pm	9:24 pm	2:58 am - 4:24 am	
Sat 13	21	11:42 am	4:23 pm - 5:29 pm	10:07 pm	3:53 am - 5:09 am	
Sun 14	20	12:37 pm	5:15 pm - 6:17 pm	10:53 pm	4:48 am - 5:54 am	LOW
Mon 15	24	1:28 pm	6:04 pm - 7:06 pm	11:42 pm	5:40 am - 6:42 am	
Tue 16	32	2:15 pm	6:51 pm - 7:57 pm		6:29 am - 7:31 am	HALF
Wed 17	22	2:58 pm	7:37 pm - 8:45 pm	12:34 am	7:16 am - 8:22 am	Apogee
Thu 18	17	3:36 pm	8:18 pm - 9:36 pm	1:27 am	8:02 am - 9:10 am	
Fri 19	20	4:12 pm	8:58 pm - 10:26 pm	2:22 am	8:43 am - 10:01 am	
Sat 20	23	4:45 pm	9:36 pm - 11:18 pm	3:18 am	9:23 am - 10:51 am	
Sun 21	36	5:17 pm	10:12 pm - 12:10 am	4:15 am	10:01 am - 11:43 am	
Mon 22	49	5:48 pm	10:50 pm - 1:02 am	5:12 am	10:37 am - 12:35 pm	
Tue 23	61	6:20 pm	11:27 pm - Midnight	6:11 am	11:15 am - 1:27 pm	
Wed 24	68	6:54 pm	Midnight - 1:57 am	7:12 am	11:52 am - 2:22 pm	FULL
Thu 25	61	7:30 pm	12:07 am - 2:53 am	8:14 am	12:32 pm - 3:18 pm	
Fri 26	54	8:11 pm	12:51 am - 3:51 am	9:18 am	1:16 pm - 4:16 pm	
Sat 27	48	8:57 pm	1:38 am - 4:50 am	10:23 am	2:03 pm - 5:15 pm	
Sun 28	45	9:49 pm	2:30 am - 5:50 am	11:27 am	2:55 pm - 6:15 pm	
Mon 29	47	10:47 pm	3:25 am - 6:51 am	12:28 pm	3:50 pm - 7:16 pm	HIGH
Tue 30	51	11:50 pm	4:26 am - 7:48 am	1:24 pm	4:51 pm - 8:13 pm	
Wed 31	62		5:25 am - 8:45 am	2:15 pm	5:50 pm - 9:10 pm	HALF & PERIGEE

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**.*





2017-18 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. 8-30 Oct. 14-Nov. 18 Dec. 9-Jan. 1, 2019 (bucks only)
	Muzzleloader	Oct. 1-13
	Gun	Nov. 19-Dec. 8
Northwestern	Bowhunting	Sept. 9-Nov. 2
	Muzzleloader	Nov. 3-16
	Gun	Nov. 19-Jan. 1, 2019
Central	Bowhunting	Sept. 8-Oct. 26
	Muzzleloader	Oct 27-Nov. 9
	Gun	Nov. 10-Jan. 1, 2019
Northeastern/ Southeastern	Bowhunting	Sept. 8-28
	Muzzleloader	Sept. 29-Oct.12
	Gun	Oct. 13-Jan. 1, 2019

BEAR

Oct. 15-Nov. 17 & Dec. 10-Jan. 1, 2019:	In and west of Surry, Wilkes, Caldwell, Burke and Cleveland counties
Nov. 10-Jan. 1, 2019:	Alamance, Anson, Cabarrus, Caswell, Chatham, Davidson, Durham, Granville, Guilford, Lee, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Orange, Person, Randolph, Rockingham, Rowan, Stanly,Union counties
Oct. 13-Jan. 1, 2019:	Franklin, Harnett, Johnston, Hoke, Moore, Richmond, Scotland, Vance, Warren, Wake counties
Nov. 17-Jan. 1, 2019:	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. 10-25, Dec. 8-23:	Dare, Hyde, Tyrrell counties
Nov. 10-18, Dec. 8-23:	Currituck, Gates, Perquimans counties
Nov. 9-18, Dec. 8-23:	Camden, Chowan, Pasquotank counties
Nov. 10-18, Dec 8-23:	Beaufort, Bertie, Craven, Hertford, Jones, Martin, Washington counties
Nov. 17-Dec. 16:	Edgecombe, Greene, Halifax, Lenoir, Nash, Northampton, Pitt, Wayne, Wilson counties

SQUIRREL	Oct. 16-Feb. 28, 2018 (gray & red squirrels) Oct. 16-Dec. 31 (fox squirrels) 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 & QUAIL	Nov. 18-Feb. 28, 2019
GROUSE	Oct. 16-Feb. 28, 2019
WILD TURKEY	April 13-May 11, 2019 (Youth Only: April 6-12, 2019)
RAILS (KING, SORA, VIRGINIA, CLAPPER)	Sept. 1-Oct. 13, Oct. 22-Nov. 28
(GALLINULES, MOORHENS)	Sept. 1-Oct. 13, Oct. 22-Nov. 28
CANADA GEESE Statewide: Sept. 1-30	Resident zone, Oct. 3-13, Nov. 10-Dec. 1, Dec. 15-Feb. 9. NE Zone, Jan. 11-26, permit only
SNOW, BLUE, ROSS GEESE	Oct. 9-Feb. 9, 2019, Feb. 11-March 30, 2019 (permit)
DUCKS	Oct. 3-6, Nov. 10-Dec. 1, Dec. 15-Jan. 26, 2019
EARLY TEAL	Sept. 12-29 (east of US 17 only)
SEA DUCKS	Nov. 19-Jan. 26, 2019
~~**BRANT**~~	~~Dec. 15-Jan. 26, 2019~~
DOVE	Sept. 1-Oct. 6, Nov. 17-Jan. 1, 2019; Dec. 10-Jan. 31, 2019
TUNDRA SWAN	Nov. 10-Jan. 29, 2019. Bag limit 1, by permit only.
RACCOON, OPOSSUM	Oct. 16 (at sunrise)-Feb. 28, 2018
WOODCOCK	Dec. 8-Jan. 29, 2019

2017-18 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. 1-Oct. 13, Nov. 10-24 Dec. 15-Jan. 15, 2019	15	45
Crow	Nov. 1-March 1, 2019	No limits	
Quail	Nov. 20-March 1, 2019	12	36
Rabbit	Nov. 23-March 1, 2019	5	15
Squirrel	Oct. 1-March 1, 2019	10	30
Fox	Nov. 23-March 1, 2019	No limits	
Grouse	Nov. 23-March 1, 2019 (Game Zone 1 only)	3	9
Raccoon/	Sept. 15-March 15, 2019 (statewide)	3 raccoons per party	
Opossum	Sept. 15-March 15, 2019 (Game Zones 3, 6)	No limits	
Other	Nov. 26-March 1, 2019	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, WIlliamsburg counties)	1	(permit only)
Rails	Oct. 6-10		
King & Clapper	Nov. 3-Jan. 6, 2018	15	45
Sora & Virginia		25	75
Gallinules	Nov. 3-Jan. 6, 2018	15	45
(common/purple)			
Snipe	Nov. 14 - Feb. 28, 2019	8	24
Woodcock	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31, 2019	3	9
Wild Turkey	March 20-May 5, 2019 (statewide private land)	3	
	April 1-May 5, 2019 (statewide WMAs)	3	

DEER SEASON

ZONE	ARCHERY	PRIM WEAPON	GUNS
1		Oct. 1-10	Oct. 11-Jan. 1, 2019
2	Sept. 15-30	Oct. 1-10	Oct. 11-Jan.1, 2019
3			Aug. 15-Jan. 1, 2019
4	Aug 15-31		Sept. 1-Jan. 1, 2019
Youth Day			Jan. 6, 2019

WATERFOWL SEASONS

SPECIES	DATES	BAG LIMIT
Duck	Teal only: Sept. 15-30	6
	Nov. 17-24, Dec. 8-Jan. 27, 2019	6
Canada geese	Sept. 1-30, Nov. 17-24, Dec. 8-Jan. 27, 2019 Feb. 13-28, 2019	15
Blue/snow (light) geese	Nov. 17-24, Dec. 8-Jan. 27, 2019, Feb. 13-28, 2019	25
Brant	Nov. 17-24, Dec. 8-Jan. 27, 2019	2
Sea ducks	Nov. 17-24, Dec. 8-Jan. 27, 2019	6
Mergansers	Nov. 17-24, Dec. 8-Jan. 27, 2019	5 (1 hooded)
Coots	Nov. 17-24, Dec. 8-Jan. 27, 2019	15

How to use the **SPORTSMAN** Tide Guide

Fish feed most actively when the tide is moving. The Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most active feeding periods each day in the TIDE GUIDE. To find the best time to fish your favorite honey hole, locate the spot under Tide Corrections that is closest to the area and add or subtract the time from the corresponding daily prediction.

Tide Corrections

Atlantic Beach, Ocean	**HIGH**	**LOW**
Cape Lookout Outer Coast	-0.02	0:10
Shell Point Harkers Island	2:07	2:45
Harkers Island Br. Outer Coast	2:23	2:42
Channel Mkr.Lt. #59 Outer Coast	1:40	1:38
Lenoxville Point Outer Coast	1:29	1:23
North River Bridge Outer Coast	1:24	3:19
Beaufort In. Ch. R. Outer Coast	0:22	0:22
Beaufort Duke Marine Lab	0:57	0:50
Gallant Channel Outer Coast	1:04	0:55
Newport River Outer Coast	1:25	1:40
Core Creek Bridge Outer Coast	1:41	1:57
Fort Macon USCG Station	0:32	0:29
Morehead City Outer Coast	0:41	0:38
Atlantic Beach Outer Coast	0:00	0:00
Triple ESS Marina Bogue Sd	0:50	0:39
Atlantic Beach Outer Coast	1:03	1:13
NC State Fisheries Outer Coast	1:20	1:43
Coral Bay Atl. Beach Outer Coast	2:02	2:25
Spooner Creek Outer Coast	2:35	2:55
Bogue Inlet Outer Coast	0:28	0:26
New River Inlet Outer Coast	0:31	0:28
New Topsail Inlet Outer Coast	0:35	1:11

Oregon Inset, USCG Station	**HIGH**	**LOW**
Currituck Beach Lt. Outer Coast	-0:06	0:14
Nags Head Area All Ocean Front	-0:22	0:34
Kitty Hawk (ocean) Outer Coast	-0:10	0:18
Jennetts Pr. (ocean) Outer Coast	-0:14	0:19
Roanoke Sound Chan. Outer Coast	2:07	2:08
Oregon Inlet Marina Outer Coast	1:02	1:57
Oregon Inlet Outer Coast	0:27	0:24
Oregon Inlet Bridge Outer Coast	0:13	0:04
Oregon Inl. Channel Outer Coast	0:21	0:17
Old House Channel Outer Coast	1:04	1:19
Oregon Inlet (USCG Station)	0:00	0:00
Davis Slough Outer Coast	0:39	0:50
Cape Hatteras Outer Coast	-0:14	0:34
Hatteras (ocean) Outer Coast	-022	0:34
Hatteras Inlet Outer Coast	0:01	0:08
Ocracoke Inlet Outer Coast	0:02	0:10
Ocracoke Ocracoke Inlet	0:17	0:31
Cape Lookout Outer Coast	-0:24	0:42

Southport, Cape Fear River	**HIGH**	**LOW**
Masonboro Inlet Outer Coast	-0:14	0:06
Wilmington Beach Outer Coast	-0:48	0:49
Cape Fear Outer Coast	-0:33	0:39
Bald Head Cape Fear	-0:17	0:22
Fort Caswell Cape Fear River	-0:12	0:16
Southport Cape Fear River	0:00	0:00
Reaves Point Cape Fear River	0:15	0:34
Yaupon Beach Outer Coast	-0:39	1:00
Lockwoods Folly Int Outer Coast	-0:29	0:23
Shallotte Inlet (Bowen Point)	0:10	0:17
Tubbs Inlet Outer Coast	-0:19	0:23

Atlantic Beach Ocean

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 12:35 am 2.7 H 6:29 am 0.4 L 1:13 pm 3.5 H 7:37 pm 0.7 L	2 LQ 1:35 am 2.7 H 7:30 am 0.5 L 2:17 pm 3.5 H 8:45 pm 0.7 L	3 2:43 am 2.7 H 8:38 am 0.5 L 3:25 pm 3.5 H 9:52 pm 0.6 L	4 3:54 am 2.8 H 9:49 am 0.4 L 4:32 pm 3.6 H 10:54 pm 0.4 L	5 5:00 am 3.0 H 10:58 am 0.2 L 5:33 pm 3.7 H 11:49 pm 0.2 L	6 6:00 am 3.2 H 12:00 pm 0.0 L 6:29 pm 3.7 H
7 12:40 am 0.0 L 6:54 am 3.5 H 12:58 pm -0.1 L 7:21 pm 3.7 H	8 NM 1:27 am -0.1 L 7:45 am 3.7 H 1:51 pm -0.2 L 8:10 pm 3.7 H	9 2:12 am -0.2 L 8:33 am 3.8 H 2:42 pm -0.2 L 8:56 pm 3.5 H	10 2:55 am -0.2 L 9:20 am 3.9 H 3:32 pm -0.1 L 9:42 pm 3.4 H	11 3:37 am 0.0 L 10:06 am 3.8 H 4:21 pm 0.1 L 10:27 pm 3.1 H	12 4:20 am 0.2 L 10:52 am 3.7 H 5:10 pm 0.3 L 11:13 pm 2.9 H	13 5:03 am 0.4 L 11:39 am 3.5 H 6:01 pm 0.6 L
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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 5:24 am 0.1 L 12:21 pm 5.2 H 6:29 pm 0.2 L	2 LQ 12:48 am 3.8 H 6:25 am 0.2 L 1:22 pm 5.0 H 7:37 pm 0.2 L	3 1:57 am 3.8 H 7:34 am 0.2 L 2:33 pm 5.0 H 8:48 pm 0.2 L	4 3:17 am 4.0 H 8:50 am 0.2 L 3:47 pm 5.0 H 9:51 pm 0.1 L	5 4:30 am 4.4 H 9:59 am 0.1 L 4:53 pm 5.2 H 10:45 pm 0.0 L	6 5:30 am 4.8 H 11:00 am 0.1 L 5:50 pm 5.2 H 11:36 pm -0.1 L
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Southport Cape Fear River

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How to use the SPORTSMAN Tide Guide

Fish feed most actively when the tide is moving. The Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most active feeding periods each day in the TIDE GUIDE. To find the best time to fish your favorite honey hole, locate the spot under Tide Corrections that is closest to the area and add or subtract the time from the corresponding daily prediction.

Tide Corrections

	HIGH	LOW
Cherry Grove(inside)	0:24	0:04
Springmaid Pier Outer Coast	-0:07	-0:30
Murrells Inlet Outer Coast	0:12	0:12
Pawley's Island Outer Coast	-0:10	-0:33
North Inlet Outer Coast	0:03	-0:08
Ent. (south jetty) Winyah Bay	-0:07	-0:36
S. Is. Ferry Winyah Bay	1:08	1:13
Georgetown Pee Dee River Br.	1:55	2:27
Black River (south of dunbar)	3:33	3:57
Sandy Island Thoroughfare Crk.	2:51	3:12
N. Santee Brg. Outer Coast	1:23	1:42
Brown Island S. Santee River	0:41	1:19
McClellanville Jeremy Creek	0:36	0:40
Dewees Inlet Outer Coast	0:07	0:03
Breach Inlet Outer Coast	0:05	0:01
Fort Sumter Charleston Harbor	0:07	0:06
Gen. Dynamics Pier Cooper River	1:50	1:42
Horlbeck Creek Cooper River	0:52	0:43
Big Paradise Island Wando River	1:35	1:08
Wappoo Crk. Br. Ashley River	0:38	0:41
Folly Island Outer Coast	0:01	0:01
Folly River (below bridge)	0:29	0:10
Elliott Cut Stono River	1:04	1:08
Limehouse Bridge Outer Coast	1:52	1:49
Rockville Bohicket Creek	0:28	0:22
Dawho Bridge North Edisto River	1:05	1:01
Edisto Marina Big Bay Creek	0:06	0:25
Willtown Bluff S. Edisto River	1:45	2:38
Eddings Point Crk. St. Helena Sound	0:29	0:22
Fields Point Combahee River	0:42	0:59
Highway Bridge Combahee River	1:56	2:34
Summerhouse Point Bull River	0:59	0:43
Fripp Inlet Bridge St. Helena Sound	-0:09	-0:20
Broad Creek Port Royal Sound	0:36	0:25
Station Creek Port Royal Sound	0:24	-0:13
Trenchards Inlet Port Royal Sound	0:15	-0:14
Parris Island Beaufort River	0:37	0:33
Beaufort Beaufort River	1:07	0:59
Victoria Bluff Colleton River	1:01	0:47
Hilton Head Island Braddock Point	0:05	0:05
Bluffton May River	0:52	0:31
Daufuskie Landing New River	0:21	0:34

Dunn Sound Little River Inlet

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 12:37 am 4.6 H 7:03 am 0.4 L 1:03 pm 5.4 H 7:55 pm 0.8 L	2 LQ 1:40 am 4.6 H 8:03 am 0.5 L 2:06 pm 5.5 H 9:04 pm 0.8 L	3 2:44 am 4.6 H 9:11 am 0.5 L 3:09 pm 5.6 H 10:16 pm 0.7 L	4 3:47 am 4.7 H 10:22 am 0.4 L 4:11 pm 5.6 H 11:21 pm 0.5 L	5 4:49 am 5.0 H 11:29 am 0.2 L 5:12 pm 5.7 H	6 12:17 am 0.2 L 5:49 am 5.4 H 12:29 pm 0.0 L 6:10 pm 5.9 H
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Charleston Customhouse Warf

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 12:38 am 5.3 H 6:57 am 0.4 L 1:10 pm 6.1 H 7:48 pm 1.0 L	2 LQ 1:41 am 5.2 H 7:58 am 0.5 L 2:16 pm 6.1 H 8:53 pm 1.0 L	3 2:50 am 5.2 H 9:04 am 0.4 L 3:25 pm 6.2 H 9:59 pm 0.8 L	4 3:59 am 5.4 H 10:11 am 0.3 L 4:32 pm 6.3 H 11:01 pm 0.5 L	5 5:05 am 5.7 H 11:16 am 0.1 L 5:34 pm 6.5 H 11:59 pm 0.2 L	6 6:06 am 6.0 H 12:16 pm -0.2 L 6:30 pm 6.6 H
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Harbor River Bridge

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Beginning Oct. 1, anglers can keep two Albemarle Sound stripers at least 18 inches long per day.

ALBEMARLE SOUND STRIPERS ARE ON TAP

Dusty WIlson

Tactics change on sound, in tributaries as October progresses

Along with the brisk winds of October comes a special time on North Carolina's Albemarle Sound: keeper season for striped bass.

Although anglers have been releasing their catches since May, Oct. 1 gives them the opportunity to fill their daily creel limit of two fish at least 18 inches long per person through a variety of methods, including trolling, casting, jigging or chasing birds to find schooling fish.

Guide Jeff Onley of Albemarle Fishing Charters in Elizabeth City, N.C., is prone to use any of these fish-catching procedures in a day's time, but he said each has its time and place for maximum effectiveness. In early October, when water temperatures are subject to be on the warmer side, he literally has signs to point him to the fish.

"In the beginning of the season, I like to run to the channel markers out in the sound and the rivers in 8 to 10 feet of water and jig 1-ounce Hopkins spoons and Stingsilvers," said Onley (252-333-6524).

The Albemarle's tributaries are fair game for keeper fish on Oct. 1, with the exclusion of the Roanoke River, which is managed under separate regulations. Onley favors fishing from Elizabeth City, where he is close to the Pasquotank, Perquimans and Chowan rivers.

As water temperatures cool, Onley heads to shallower water in the 3- to 7-foot range to fish the pilings of old trade piers found in the rivers and sound. Here, he casts ¾-ounce, silver/blue back Rat-L-Traps and 4-inch Gulp swimming mullets on ¼-ounce jigheads. Also, the rock piles surrounding any of the old lighthouses in the sound are hot spots. Business really picks up whenever he sees diving birds, signaling a schooling frenzy in the sound.

"Depending on the weather, the fish could school anywhere from mid-October to mid-November," Onley said. "If it's milder, they may school into December. They'll definitely be seagulls on them when they are. You can get right over top of the fish and jig with a white or chartreuse bucktail or a 1-ounce Hopkins spoon or Stingsilver."

If fishing gets tough, Onley trolls over stump beds near the receding shorelines of the rivers and sound in about 9 feet of water. The same Rat-L-Traps and swimming mullets are used, along with in 4- to 5-inch Rapala Husky Jerks. Onley trolls at about 2 knots with four baits about 30 yards behind the boat. ▪

— Dusty Wilson

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All images will be considered, but those taken on the water or in the woods will have the best chance of being featured.

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HOT JOCASSEE BASS

Fall brings fish up to hit topwater baits



Cooling water temperatures will push Lake Jocassee's bass toward shallow water and the shoreline in October and November.

Lake Jocassee's bass will still be deep for the most part, even in October when temperatures usually begin to fall, according to guide Rob McComas of Mill Spring, N.C.

Nestled in the South Carolina mountains, Lake Jocassee features a relatively small surface area compared to its depth. That allows for slower heating in the spring and slower cooling in the fall.

"Jocassee will actually be a little warmer than some of its neighbors to the south," said McComas, who follows the advice of long-time pro angler Larry Nixon: "There will always be some bass shallow."

"I try to focus on those fish that either live shallow, or have crept up in the water column a little ahead of the others in October. It can be a grind, but if you stick with it, you can catch some 3½- to 6-pound largemouths on topwater baits."

McComas prefers baits like Spooks and Chug Bugs in clear colors and colors as natural or translucent as possible on wake baits and other lures with similar actions.

"The topwater bite will mostly be largemouths, but sometimes, if its one of those Jocassee days, you may find some aggressive smallies up early running the banks. You can catch some spotted bass with soft plastics on the ends of some deep laydowns or on points. And as usual, its hard to go wrong with watermelon-colored finesse worms, Texas-rigged or on a drop-shot."

As November approaches, McComas (828-674-5041) said fish will start working their way back into rivers and creeks.

"I'll usually pick a river, start at the mouth and work to the back. Fish will not usually be at the backs in November, but fish don't care where I think they should be or what the calendar says, so it never hurts to check," he said. "If I notice fish at the mouth, half back, or all the way back, I'll try to copy that in the next river or creek."

McComas said Jocassee bass can be found working the banks one day and over the river channel the next.

"Drifting live bait in the river channels is a good way to catch the open-water schools, especially the spots. Fish minnows at the depth you mark fish, usually 20 to 40 feet. Laydowns are always good to check. The fish may be more in the trees than off the ends like they are in October. Topwater can still be good, as well as spinnerbaits, swimbaits and crankbaits," he said.

"Remember, Jocassee can hurt your feelings. It's a tough lake but has some good rewards in it." ▪

— Pat Robertson

SENC KING MACKEREL

have "first Friday" date with fishermen



Kara Herring and daughter, Summer, show off a big king mackerel caught off Southport, N.C., last fall.

Jerry Dilsaver

King mackerel off North Carolina's southeastern coast must keep a calendar just like fishermen and circle the first Friday in October. For several decades, kings have been arriving along the beaches between Cape Fear and the South Carolina state line by that date. It's uncanny, but it happens like clockwork. They may arrive earlier, but they always put in a big appearance by the first Friday in October.

The abundance of kings along the beaches shouldn't be a surprise. Two of the two things that drive them are available in spades. First, baitfish are abundant, and all of a king's favorites are here. Menhaden and mullet schools roam from just behind the breakers out several miles out, and bluefish, Spanish mackerel and more smaller predators gather to feast on them. With kings, everything smaller is in their food chain and is eaten to bulk up for the winter.

Second, the water has cooled to the lower 70s, and kings, like fishermen, prefer the cooler water. Many biologists list kings' preferred water temperature range at 68 to 78 degrees, and 72 to 74 degrees is typical off Oak Island during October.

Kings move close to the beach to feed on this smorgasbord of baitfish and move into range of lots of fishermen. Action begins with pier anglers and continues with boat fishermen. Early in October, the best action begins about 500 feet off the beach and runs to about 15 miles offshore. The water continues to cool, and by late October, the action has shifted a few miles off the beach, but usually within sight of taller buildings and water towers.

Slow-trolling live baits is a popular way to catch kings, but they also hit dead natural baits and lures — just not as readily. The standard live-bait rig is made of wire, with a pair of 4X strong, No. 4 treble hooks, 5 to 6 inches apart. There are many variations, including more hooks for larger baits, a single hook for the nose hook and other hook spacings for live baits tethered in place around the end of piers or drifted offshore by balloons when the winds are northerly. ▪

— Jerry Dilsaver

CLARKS HILL SLABS GROW UP PLENTY

October usually kicks off a 3- to 4-month period of big crappie, and big numbers of crappie, on South Carolina's Clarks Hill Lake, according to guide William Sasser.

"On a good day, you will be catching anywhere from a half-pound fish up to a 2-pound fish. You hardly ever catch a little crappie this time of year," said Sasser, who believes the hand-sized crappie that dominate in spring grow quickly through the summer into slabs that are more common come October.

"I don't know what the growth rate of crappies is in Clarks Hill, but I just know that in October, November and December, you don't catch many small crappies," he said.

Along with the increased size comes good numbers, he said.

"A good day's catch at the beginning of October would probably be 40 to 50 fish," he said. "In the latter part of the month, it would be a limit of fish for each fisherman."

But while the numbers will be there, Sasser (706-589-5468) said he prefers not to overfish the resource.

"If I have five people on the boat, the limit would be 100 in South Carolina and 150 in Georgia, but I try to veer away from those numbers," he said. "My personal feeling as a guide is if you have four or five guys and you hit 60 fish, that is probably enough for the day, because that is a good day of fishing."

The key for fall crappie is water temperature, Sasser said.

"The cooler the water temperature, the more fish you catch. It needs to get down into the low 80-degree range and the upper 70s," he said.



Guide William Sasser said Clarks Hill spits out a lot of big crappie once October arrives and fish start to feed up for the winter.

Pat Robertson

As fall progresses, he said, fishing should be better as the temperature declines with the approach of winter and colder weather. But that is not always the case.

"I've seen October temperatures that were a repeat of September. I've seen September fish like October, and October fish like September."

Early on, Sasser said he will be fishing in 25 to 35 feet of water in creek channels in the backs of tributaries off the main lake.

"In the first part of the month, the fish will probably be 20 feet deep, above the creek channels and above the trees that we put out. You can do some pretty good jig fishing then, pulling jigs very slowly along the channels and over the brush," he said.

"In late October, the fish may be a little shallower, maybe 15 feet deep above 20 to 25, sometimes 30 feet of water."

By this time, fish will be schooling more than earlier, so he will anchor over brush piles in the backs of the creeks. Some areas seem to be better for one style of fishing than others. ■

— Pat Robertson

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Lake Hickory produces plenty of nice-sized stripers in October.

LAKE HICKORY STRIPERS START SPREADING OUT SOON

Guide Colt Bass of Colt Bass Fishing said Lake Hickory's stripers get "cranked up" in October as they devour forage to pack on weight for the winter.

"The fish have been laying low and have been stressed out during the hot weather through September," said Bass. "With October's cooling patterns, the fish will be in full-out feeding mode until the bitter cold comes."

Bass (coltbassfishing.com) looks for stripers in their deep, summer holes because the fish are going to start moving out of these holes to shallow flats nearby. By mid-October, fish will no longer be confined to deep holes but spread out in 10 to 30 feet of water; the depth changes daily.

Consequently, Bass pulls his baits from deep to shallow waters, backtracking as need be, until the fish are found.

His spread consists of 7-foot Ugly Stik rods and Avet SXJ reels spooled with 17-pound line. He uses Carolina rigs for downlines that hold 4- to 9-inch live shad on 2/0 to 5/0 circle hooks. He runs four to six of these lines to cover depths from 14 to 30 feet. The downline rigs are mounted off the gunwales of his boat.

Bass also runs two to three planer boards further off the sides of his boat, all baited with live shad and herring and covering depths from the surface to 10 feet.

By using this combination, Bass covers depths from the surface to 30 feet: the strike zone for October stripers.

He said water temperature is a significant factor this month.

"A water-temperature range from 60 to 72 degrees is awesome, but anywhere 75 degrees and below is good until it drops to about 55 degrees," said Bass.

Bass hopes for more stable water levels this fall. He contends fluctuating water levels hurt the striper fishing.

Bass said Hickory yields plenty of stripers ranging from 6 to 8 pounds this time of year, but the chance for bigger fish is always there.

"I catch a lot of fish in the teens this month," he said. ▪

— Tony Garitta

Reds up next >

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THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER

Redfish make a big move this month along SENC coast

Rennie Clark Jr., a guide and redfish tournament fisherman, calls this month "Red October" along the North Carolina coast north and east of Cape Fear River.

"Red-drum fishing is usually the best this month," said Clark, 42, of Carolina Beach-based Tournament Trail Charters. "But it depends on when the mullet run starts and stops."

Although Native Americans call October the "Month of the Hunting Moon," it applies to fish as well. Reds and other species usually begin to move south at the first hint of cooler weather, normally during mid-fall.

"Actually, the mullet run started early because of all the rain in August," said Clark (910-465-8943), who chases redfish from Bogue Inlet to mouth of the Cape Fear River. "A couple weeks after the rain, nothing was inside.

"But when we have a few nights in a row when the (air) temperature drops into the 50s, it cools down the water to the 70s, and the mullet runs start."

From jumpers to finger sizes, mullet and shrimp flow out inlets from inside waters and scurry south along the surf zone. Red drum, from "rats" to bulls, follow.

After the first mullet blow — a storm or hard wind from the northeast, Clark targets choke points that include inlets where baitfish and shrimp migrate toward the Atlantic.

"Red drum, flounder, spotted seatrout and sharks wait for baits at inlets and in the 'suds,'" he said.

Clark prefers artificial lures when he's fishing with experienced anglers. For novice clients, Clark favors live baits and popping-cork rigs.

"Sight-fishing for reds is best when the water cools down and clears up," he said. "I've seen schools of 1,000 fish on calm days. When the sun gets up, you can see 'em just under the surface."

A north wind is favorable at most venues south of Cape Lookout because it creates small waves and makes sight-fishing easier. However, Clark and his tournament partners have won their last two IFA tournaments on oyster shells in bays behind barrier islands.

"Some resident fish will stay in skinny water (behind barrier islands) in October, but most of them are on the move," he said. "Anywhere there's a good drop-off near the end of an oyster point is a good place to catch redfish on a falling tide."

When the water's clear enough for sight-fishing, Clark often casts a 3- to 3½-inch green/blue stripes Category 5 Manic Minnow or a Suicide Croaker threaded onto a weedless ⅛- to 1/16-ounce Eye Strike jighead.

"I like a lot of natural colors for clear water: clear brown, green or blue," Clark said. "I want my lures to look natural if I throw 'em at a school of





Guide Rennie Clark of Carolina Beach, N.C., likes soft-plastic, artificial lures in blue colors when he's targeting bull reds in the fall.

reds, especially if they're after baitfish on the surface. But a biologist told me tests showed redfish and trout prefer blue in lures."

Clark uses heavier, ¼-ounce, jigheads if there's strong current or wind.

"If I want to skip a light lure, I'll sometimes crimp a ⅛-ounce split-shot (up the line)," said Clark, who uses two basic set-ups for redfish, including a medium-light, 7-foot St. Croix Triumph rod mated to a 2500 or 3000 Series Shimano or Stradic spinning reel and a medium-action rod for popping-cork or bottom rigs.

"If I soak live baits, I'll use ½-ounce jigheads," he said. "But if I'm fishing for bull reds, I like a medium-action rod with heavier line and throw a Rapala Skitter Walk 11 or a big MirrOlure."

Clark's light-rod reel backing includes 15-pound Tuf-Line braid, but he spools 20- or 30-pound test braid onto reels mated to medium-action rods. He ties 18 inches of 20- or 30-pound Sufix Invisi-Line fluorocarbon leaders to his braid.

"There are dozens of choke points and inlets up and down the coast that have baitfish going into the ocean and down the beaches in October when the water temperature gets right — with reds right on their tails," Clark said. "Seeing 1,000 redfish in a school is something you don't forget." ▪

— Craig Holt

Tillery up next >





TILLERY SLABS

are hanging around thermocline



Lake Tillery's crappie will be hanging around the thermocline in October until the lake turns over and layers of water mix.

Tony Garitta

David Diggs of Norwood, N.C., said October is a great time to catch Lake Tillery's big crappie.

"Anglers who can find the thermocline with their sonar units will have the most success," said Diggs, of David Diggs Hunting & Fishing Supplies. "The fish are feeding up for the winter and ready to bite."

The thermocline is a layer of water between the warmer, mixed layer at the surface and the cooler, deeper layer. The layer near the bottom usually does not contain enough dissolved oxygen to support fish. The thermocline serves as a liquid barrier between the two layers and supports large numbers of suspended fish.

"Light conditions influence suspending fish, too," said Diggs (704-690-0033). "On cloudy days, you may be fishing in 25 feet of water, but the crappie are suspended only 3 to 5 feet beneath the surface. On sunny days, the light conditions will push the fish deeper, but not to the bottom because of oxygen-poor waters."

Diggs cautions fishermen not to get discouraged in their search for crappie.

"It takes time to find the fish, but once you locate them, the time will be well spent," he said. "You might also have to cope with fall turnover, when weather conditions can overturn and mix all the water in the lake. The quick change slows the bite."

Turnover frees fish confined to the thermocline to move to other depths, making it tougher to find and catch them, but it usually lasts only a week.

Diggs trolls at 1.5 mph or less to locate crappie, setting out poles 8 to 16 feet long mounted on the front, back and sides of his boat using a combination of long lines, tight lines and free lines with some of the lines employing double rigs. To troll deeper, he tilts some of his rod tips towards the water while the others remain upright. His spinning reels are spooled with 6-pound fluorocarbon.

To sample various depths, he uses 1/16- and 1/32-ounce jigs. In clear water, he favors silver, Tennessee shad and John Deere green; in dark water, he uses dark blue and chartreuse. The jigs are often tipped with minnows.

After he catches a few crappie at a certain depth, Diggs adjusts his spread to make his other baits run at that depth.

"Crappie look up to feed, so run your baits slightly above the fish," said Diggs, whose productive trolling grounds include Jacobs Creek, the Steel Bridge and the mouths of deep coves." ▪

— Tony Garitta

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SPOT RUN ON
across Murrells Inlet's estuary



The spot run will draw loads of anglers to Murrells Inlet in October.

Jeff Burleson

Every year, South Carolina's coastal estuaries fill up with boaters and anglers, but when the parking lot at Murrells Inlet's public boat ramp is filled with boat trailers in the fall, it's not a boaters convention. The spots are biting!

A small fishing village on the southern end of the Grand Strand, Murrells Inlet is known for fabulous seafood restaurants on every corner, but in October, its focus shifts to the productive estuaries that are just a short boat ride away from the popular Marshwalk.

Russell Baisch of Baisch Boys Bait and Tackle sees about everything in Murrells Inlet, and the spot season is, hands down, one of the most-popular times for anglers to fish in these waters.

"The spot run begins in mid-September and typically continues to the end of October," said Baisch (843-651-1915). "The best spot fishing is in October, usually three days after the full moon."

Spots migrate annually into South Carolina waters during the fall, but some areas offer a better chance of filling a cooler than others. Murrells Inlet is well known for one of those better places.

"Murrells Inlet is a very productive spot fishery because of all the food available in our estuary," Baisch said. "Brown shrimp spawn here in the summer and will begin to migrate out as it turns cool. That makes it a prime place for black drum, red drum, speckled trout and spot."

Spots eat a variety of foods, with small crustaceans and worms their preferred forage. Baisch said they will eat cut shrimp, clams and squid, but his best seller is blood worms.

"We sell more blood worms to spot fisherman than anything else, and we keep a massive stock during the spot run to make sure anglers have what they need. We also keep an overstock of our hand-tied spot rigs," he said.

The typical bottom rig is made of twisted wire and metal crimps. Baisch ties his own rigs out of 20-pound monofilament. He recommends using gold Aberdeen hooks in sizes from Nos. 2 to 1/0 and just enough weight to keep the rig on the bottom: about ¾-ounce to 1½ ounces. He recommends using a bag of clam chum to concentrate the fish in one spot.

Spots can be caught all over the estuary, but typically, the best places are in Garden City Creek out from the public boat ramp to the inlet and halfway up Oaks Creek.

"It's not a question of if the fish will show up, it's when," Baisch said. ▪

— Jeff Burleson

IOP Reds up next >



IOP REDS FEEDING

Anchor down, fish creek mouths



The late Bennett Kirkpatrick of Rock Hill, S.C., shows off the kind of redfish that the waters around Isle of Palms can produce.

Brian Cope

The cooling waters of fall have moved in, and redfish in a mix of sizes are feeding heavily in the inshore waterways and Lowcountry creeks around the Isle of Palms north of Charleston. Summer is over, and fewer people are on the water, but the redfish bite is as hot as it's been since the spring.

Guide Garrett Lacy of Charleston Fishing Adventures has a plan for catching these fish.

"The best place to be right now is in any of the main waterways that have smaller creeks intersecting with them," said Lacy (843-478-8216). "At high tide, redfish move into those creeks, but once the tide begins to drop, they head just into the main waterway and set up at the mouths of those smaller creeks. As the outgoing tide pulls the baitfish out, the redfish are in perfect ambush spots."

That means anglers also have perfect ambush spots.

Lacy positions his shallow-draft boat within casting range of one or more creek mouths, puts down his Power Poles and casts live mullet into those areas on multiple rods. He uses 3/0 circle hooks, which allow the redfish to hook themselves if they pick up a bait and begin swimming away.

"I put four rods out and set them all in rod holders. If the fish are in a feeding mood, they won't ignore these for long," he said. "And it's best to not pick up a rod just because it's getting a bite. Let the rod bend fully, and the fish will be hooked. Then, it's time to handle the rod and fight the fish."

Lacy urges anglers not to spend too much time in an unproductive spot waiting on a bite.

"These waterways have way too many creeks and way too many hungry redfish for anglers to sit in one spot without getting a bite for more than 15 minutes," he said. "The bite often happens before I even get all four rods set up, so if you're able to put four rods out and wait 15 minutes without putting a fish in the boat, it's time to move on."

Moving on may be a matter of just 10 or 20 feet, which can be as simple as raising the Power-Pole and drifting within casting range of the next creek mouth.

Lacy said anglers can expect to catch everything from undersized fish to bull redfish in the 35 to 40-inch range.

"Redfish of all sizes are in these areas right now, and they're all hungry. You might catch a 16-inch keeper and a 38-inch fish from the same hole on two rods that are sitting in rod holders right next to each other," he said. ▪

— Brian Cope

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Falling water temperatures kick off good fall action

Even though autumn officially started last month, October is the month most anticipated when it comes to saltwater fishing along the border between the Carolinas, especially where speckled trout are concerned.

North Carolina and South Carolina are home to specks throughout the year, but the spring and fall transitions are when anglers will rarely have a dull moment on the water, especially in the estuaries just to the north and south of Little River Inlet.

Guide Kyle Hughes of Speckulator Inshore Fishing Charters fishes the Little River area, plus almost every creek north to Lockwood Folly River near Holden Beach, N.C.

"For me, October can be fantastic, but the real question is when in October," said Hughes (940-840-7186). "Once the water temperatures dip into the mid-60s, the trout start bunching up, and the bite kicks off."

Hughes begins targeting his fall trout, which are generally in the major creeks and rivers close to the Intracoastal Waterway. He avoids the Little River Inlet jetties early in the season.

"The water temperatures in the creeks begin to fall first, well before the ocean; that makes the inshore waters better places to find trout in October," said Hughes, who targets main creeks and rivers such as Dunn Sound, Calabash River, Shallotte River and Lockwood Folly River as well as Dunn Sound and the ICW itself. "These are all good options this time of year when the trout begin to crank up their feeding as they enter into the seasonal cool down."

Trout generally eat about anything they can, but shrimp, mullet, menhaden and small fish are staple forages throughout the year when available. Hughes looks for trout ambushing bait along points, creek mouths and eddies in creek bends. The forage species will congregate along main thoroughfares after getting washed inside and outside of smaller tributaries.

Hughes' tackle choice rarely changes much; floating live shrimp is his go-to tactic. He sets all of his slip bobbers to drift live shrimp into the lower third of the water column, but he will also keep a few rods rigged with artificial lures, especially a topwater plug or two.

"Trout get aggressive in October, and a topwater plug can be irresistible. I always have some in the boat, especially on cloudy, overcast days," he said.

The trout fishing begins to take off this month in the Little River area and should continue towards the Christmas holiday. ▪

— Jeff Burleson



Speckled trout get active around Little River Inlet when the water temperature drops into the mid-60s.

Jeff Burleson



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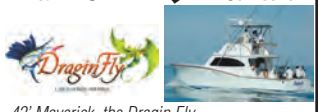


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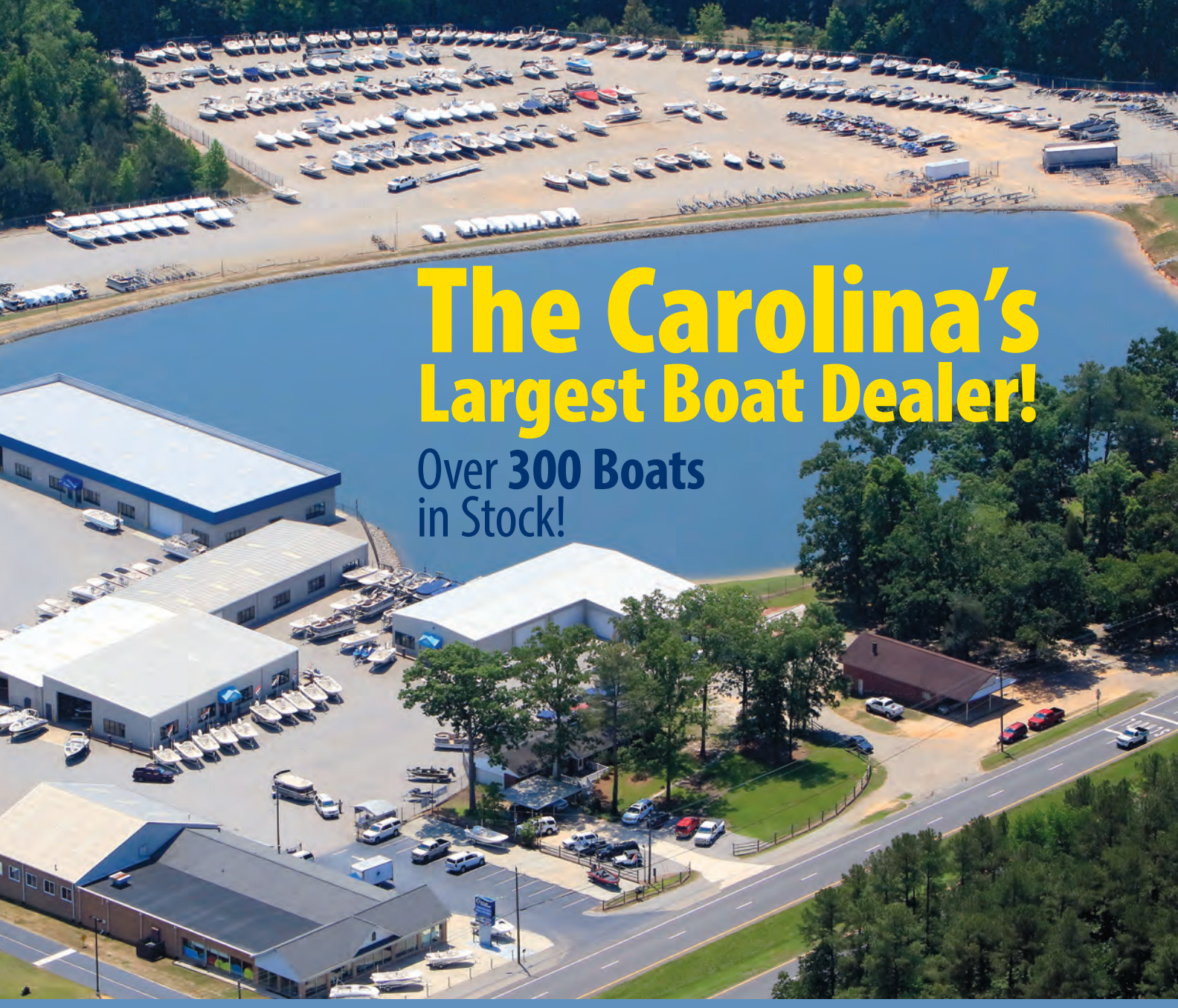

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