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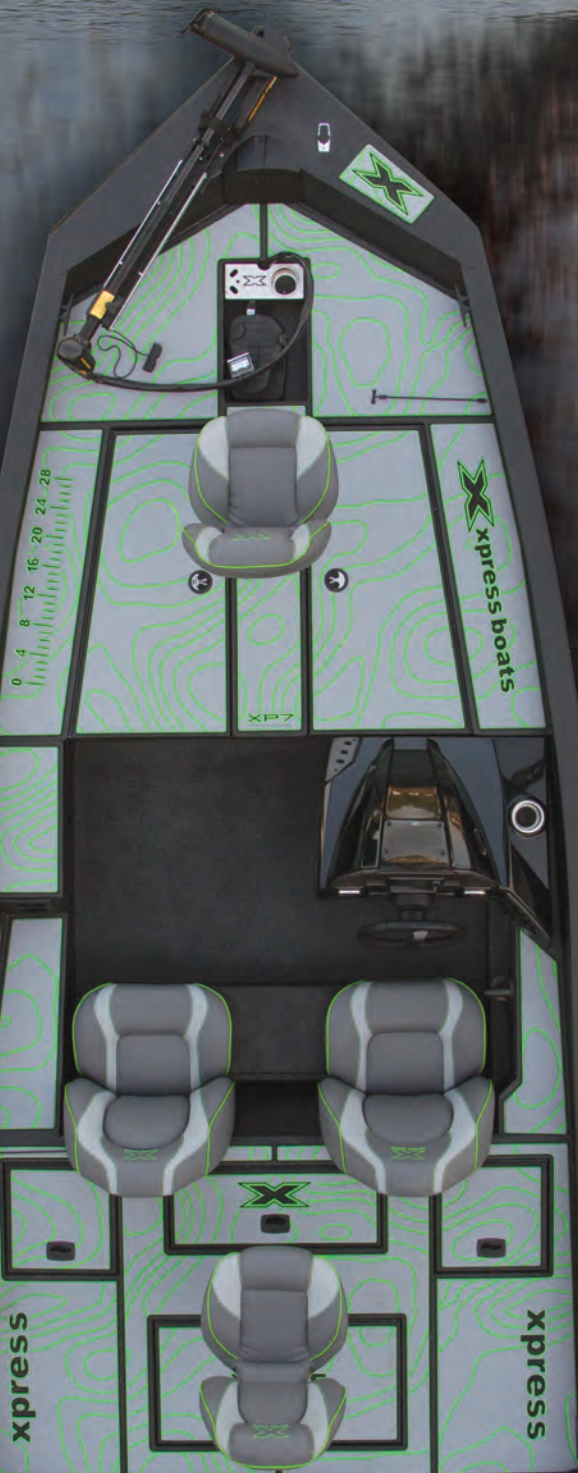
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35 Thanksgiving reds



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Take a stand!



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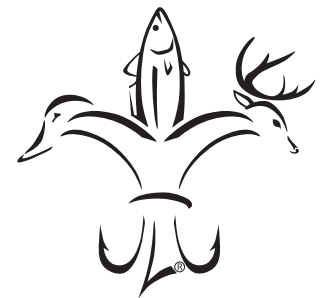
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Dylan Martin of Stoneville, N.C., killed a potential North Carolina state-record crossbow buck when he took this 171-inch Rockingham County buck on Sept. 8.

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Dan Kibler is managing editor of Carolina Sportsman magazine. If every fish were a redfish and every big-game animal a wild turkey, he wouldn't ever complain.

Dan Kibler

FLORENCE'S WILDLIFE EFFECTS SLIM



Noah Pennell of Roxboro, N.C. arrowed this 9-point, 138-inch buck in Caswell County on Sept. 24

CAROLINAS' FISH AND GAME SPECIES CAME THROUGH RECORD STORM

Hurricane Florence arrived in the Carolinas in mid-September, a little less of a blowhard than expected, but no less of a dominating presence. Once a Category IV storm, she was a Category I storm when she came ashore near Wrightsville Beach, N.C., and spent too much time raining on the Carolinas.

Her effects on the day-to-day lives of people living in the affected zones of both states will be far-reaching, in some cases, life-changing. She's gone, but she won't be forgotten soon.

But sportsmen in the Carolinas probably won't remember any negatives relating to hunting and fishing past the first of the year.

There were the expected fish kills, some well documented by news photographers: fish that moved up into new, flooded areas being stranded when the waters receded, the others caused by big slugs of water carrying hardly any dissolved oxygen riding down a number of rivers toward the ocean, suffocating unfortunate fish in their paths — but typical for hurricane situations.

A handful of ocean piers suffered damage: Carolina Beach Pier, Kure Beach Pier, Bogue Inlet Pier and Oceanana Pier on Atlantic Beach. Several have already been repaired and reopened, and other rebuilding efforts are underway.

In North Carolina, a handful of public boat access areas and game-lands access roads were closed temporarily, and the N.C.

Wildlife Resources Commission was forced to close the Holly Shelter Shooting Range, but no hunting seasons were affected.

South Carolina sportsmen didn't fare as well. The S.C. Department of Natural Resources closed sections of the Waccamaw, Sampit, Black and Pee Dee rivers to all vessels during the height of the flooding. SCDNR also closed seven Wildlife Management Areas in the flood zone to deer hunting, along with closing portions of the Pee Dee River and Waccamaw River drainages in seven counties to hunting for all game species except alligator, doves, teal, Canada geese, hogs and coyotes from Sept. 17 through Oct. 4. ■

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 www.CarolinaSportsman.com and click on the Bag-A-Buck contest for all the details.

MINOR-LEAGUE PITCHER IS FIRST BAG-A-BUCK WINNER

All in all, it's been a great year for 23-year-old Hunter Harvey of Catawba, N.C.

The son of retired major-league pitcher Bryan Harvey, he began the 2018 baseball season with the Baltimore Orioles before spending most of the season with the O's Class AA farm club in Bowie, Md.

On Sept. 23, hunting on a lease in Granville County, Harvey arrowed a pair of trophy bucks less than 10 minutes apart. The 10-pointer and 11-pointer, which scored 138½ and 139 inches, respectively fell about 20 yards apart.

Then, one of his hunting buddies, Jacob Brakefield, entered Harvey's bucks in *Carolina Sportsman's* Bag-A-Buck contest. His entry was drawn as the winner of the magazine's August-September contest on Oct. 2.

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

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

Harvey had located a nice rub line the day before, put out some corn and put up a stand. The next afternoon, a buck he recognized stepped out in the shooting lane, followed by a big 10-pointer, which he shot at 22 yards with a Mathews Halon bow and Rage Trypan broadheads. The buck, blood pouring from the wound, trotted away and went into the woods.

"He fell outside the lane, which is what kept me in the stand. If I'd seen him fall, I'd have gotten down," Harvey said. "About six minutes later, I looked up and thought I saw a doe coming down the lane, but it was a small buck, and the big buck was behind him.

"He was sniffing every drop of blood from the other buck, and



he walked up and stood almost in the same spot. I smoked him, and he fell 60 yards away. I about lost my mind.

"I had to get out of the tree then, because I was out of (buck) tags and afraid something else might walk up." ■

GOT PICS? We want 'em

Email images to: dank@carolinasportsman.com

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

*Digital images must be sent in jpeg format. High-resolution images (taken on your camera's highest setting) will work the best. All images (physical and digital) become property of Carolina Sportsman and cannot be returned.

Jeremy Shealy of Pomaria, S.C., helped tag this 13-foot-2, 1,012-pound alligator.

HUGE SANTEE COOPER GATOR TAKEN BY TRIO

Web editor Brian Cope of Edisto, S.C., posted this story on www.CarolinaSportsman.com on Sept. 11.

Jeremy Shealy of Pomaria, S.C., and Hunter Neeley of Chapin, S.C., killed a giant alligator in the swamps of Santee Cooper on Sept. 8, the opening day of South Carolina's alligator season.

The gator measured 13-foot-2 and weighed 1,012 pounds.

After Shealy drew his first-ever alligator tag, he knew Neeley was the man to call about putting a plan together. So Shealy and his girlfriend, Stacy Clark, joined Neeley aboard his airboat for an evening trip to Lake Moultrie, confident that they'd bag a trophy. None of them fully expected they'd kill one this size, or that they'd get the first hook in the big gator before dark.

"We got on the water about 6 p.m., and the wind was bad, so we had to fight that while we rode around checking a few

spots I thought we'd see some gators. We finally got a look at a good one, but it immediately went down and stayed under water," said Neeley.

But it was no average-sized gator, so the crew decided to wait it out in hopes it would resurface. About an hour later, it did.

"Jeremy made a cast at it, but he missed, and the gator went right back down," Neeley said. "We sat there for about 15 minutes, and luckily, the gator reappeared. This time, Jeremy hooked it. The gator started swimming, and just before he spooled the whole reel, I cranked the outboard and went after it. We got another hook in him after a while, and then it just sank to the bottom and stayed there."

At this point, the hunters put a 10-foot steel harpoon in the beast, then tried to get a second one in him.

"We had another harpoon that we were



poking along the bottom with, trying to find the gator, but it took a bite at the harpoon and broke it," Neeley said. "Then, we were able to stick him with another one, then shot him with a bow. We had five lines in him. We didn't expect to get on one before the sun went down, and we never got the lights set up, so now we're battling this big gator in the dark."

With five lines in the big reptile, they were able to pull it to the surface to put a .45 round in it.

"Jeremy shot it once, and it just kind of fazed him," Neeley said. "It swam off and sank again. We pulled him back to the surface, got two more shots in him, and that finished him off." ■

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SPORTSMAN'S BIG BUCK GALLERY



Dylan Martin of Stoneville, N.C., killed this 171-inch non-typical buck on Sept. 8 in Rockingham County.



Matt Atkinson of Aiken, S.C., killed this 140-inch, 11-point buck on Sept. 8.



Madison Parker, 19, of Florence, S.C., killed this 11-point, 140-inch beauty on Sept. 6 in Florence County.



Heath Rayfield of Chesterfield, S.C., took this 142-inch buck with double drop tines on Sept. 8.



Jacob Shepherd of Wilkesboro, N.C., took this 141-inch Wilkes County buck on Sept. 10.



Elijah Evans, 12, of Mebane, N.C., took this huge buck with a cross-bow on Sept. 9. The buck scored 164½ inches.



Alek Knight, 16, of Westfield, N.C., killed this 175-inch, 16-point buck in Stokes County on Sept. 24.



Tory Pegg of Oak Ridge, N.C., arrowed this huge Guilford County 9-pointer, with 11-inch tines and a 22-inch inside spread.



Chris Glosson, 14, of Rougemont, N.C., killed this 140-inch, 9-point buck with a crossbow Sept. 26 in Granville County.



Rockingham County, N.C., spit out this 140-inch 8-pointer for R.J. Seiler on Sept. 10.



Carter Phillips, a 6-year-old from Pittsboro, N.C., tagged out with two crossbow bucks in the first 10 days of the season, including this 10-point, Chatham County beauty.

To read full stories about any of these trophy bucks, www.carolinasportsman.com and access the deer-hunting section.



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TAKE A STAND!

Unusual locations often lead to great bucks, even if they mean hunting close to rural residences, on what might seem like the wrong side of the wind, or on the ground. Here's how....

By Jeff Burleson



Deer season is well underway across the Carolinas. By November, well over half the two state's annual whitetail harvest is already satisfied with a mixture of does and bucks from yearlings to true wall hangers.

Many hunters had a chance to tag a trophy early in the season when bucks least expected it or during a heavy rutting session in late October. As November progresses, the mature survivors are well educated and will rarely be fooled by hunters using traditional methods. They must think out of the box and utilize their surroundings to get a big buck in lethal range.

Even though deer are some of the largest of our wild animals by body mass, they are far from the top of the food chain. Survival depends on their ability to sense danger and evade capture. Deer and other animals first use their senses to detect danger, and then, their physical abilities to get out

of harm's way. Most prey species rely on their eyesight and hearing to detect danger and then their speed on land or in the air to avoid becoming a victim of predation. Predators also rely on their senses and physical abilities to capture prey.

Deer use their large eyes and oversized ears to detect approaching danger, but a deer's chief protection is a sense of smell that can be a real problem for hunters trying to get an old, mature buck in range. Deer can detect odors from great distances, but smart hunters can take advantage of their surroundings and still dupe a deer into coming into harm's way.





Jay Garner of Murrells Inlet, S.C., is a hunter who has ripped up the normal playbook and written a few of his own pages.

He may not kill a record-book buck every year, but when he pulls the trigger, his bounty is usually a mature animal with a full set of headgear. And he uses unusual scent-diversion tactics to fool even the smartest of bucks.

“I like to hunt near roads and houses for scent diversion,” he said. “Deer are used to smelling people near houses, and you can hunt with a bad wind and not spook the deer.”

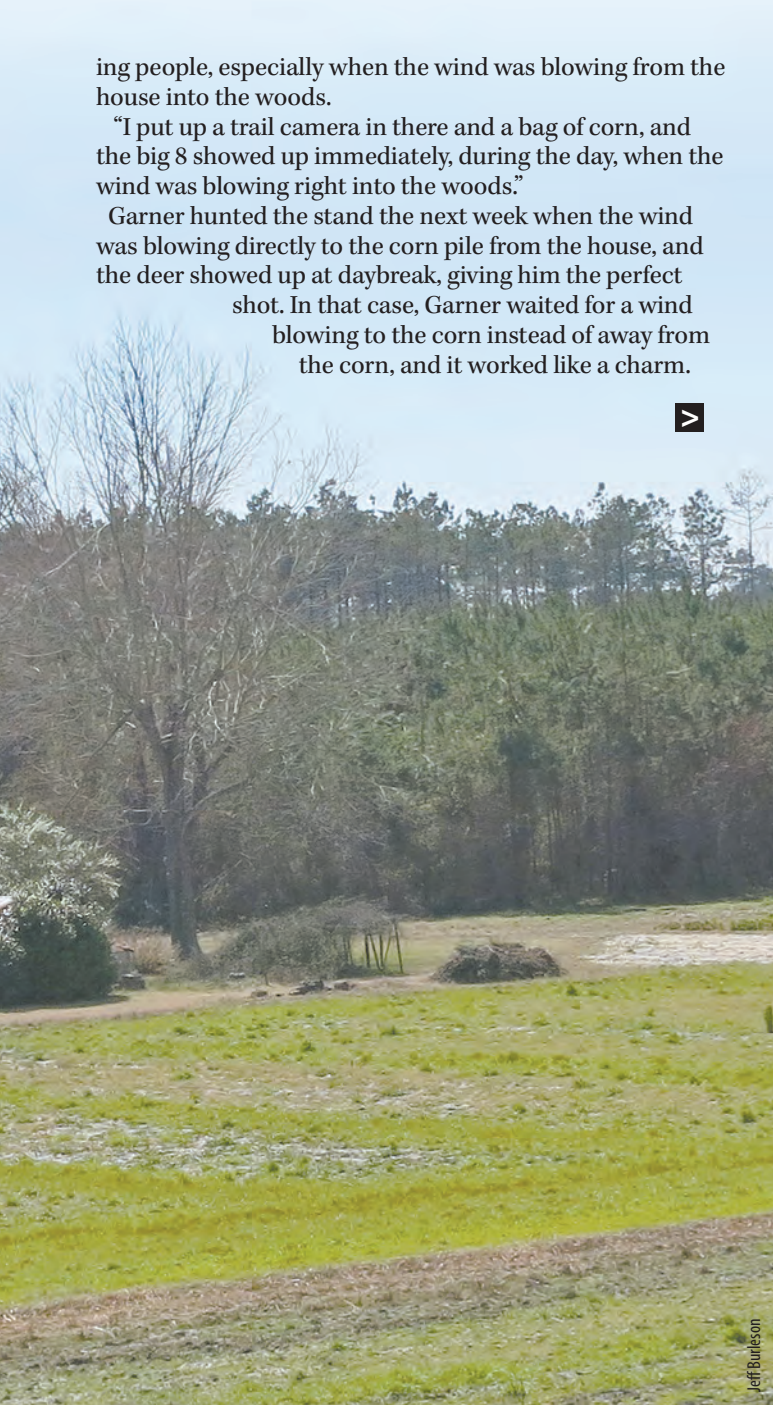
Last year, Garner killed a 140-inch 8-pointer in Marion County, S.C., close enough to a couple of houses across his property line to hear noises coming from them. He had the huge deer on

several of his trail cameras, but the deer was smart. The buck would never come out when the wind was perfect for his stand locations; Garner believed the deer was circling downwind and avoiding corn piles, but the deer would flood his cameras on every wind when Garner was away.

Garner decided to double down on the deer and set up a stand right behind a house near the road.

“The deer had a strong trail coming around this corner of the property, and there were some big tracks made from a heavy deer coming through there,” he said. “They used clotheslines frequently at this house, and these deer were used to smell-





BELOW: Deer are sometimes conditioned to human scents if they travel or live close to inhabited buildings. That can help hunters plan.

ing people, especially when the wind was blowing from the house into the woods.

“I put up a trail camera in there and a bag of corn, and the big 8 showed up immediately, during the day, when the wind was blowing right into the woods.”

Garner hunted the stand the next week when the wind was blowing directly to the corn pile from the house, and the deer showed up at daybreak, giving him the perfect shot. In that case, Garner waited for a wind blowing to the corn instead of away from the corn, and it worked like a charm.



Jeff Burleson



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Outside of Garner's unique situation, hunters can take advantage of local agribusiness to mask their scent. Hunting lands in the Carolinas are full of farms that raise cattle, hogs and poultry. These high-production animal farms produce massive clouds of unpleasant odors that can be detected at long distances, even by humans, and plenty of humans work at these facilities as well. Deer can smell these odors up close and out to several miles, and while the odor of animal waste may not completely mask human scent, the overwhelming scent plume creeping away from high-production animal facilities will definitely help hunters, especially when the wind is blowing from the facilities into the woods.

Deer grow to maturity by avoiding bad situations. Unfortunately for hunters, most deer learn from a hunter's misfortunes. Whether from a shift in wind while on stand or from a poor choice of movement in the stand, deer see, hear or smell something that teaches them for next time. With a little forethought, hunters can use their surroundings to make the best of a situation and dupe that trophy buck slipping around almost undetected. ■



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.



Hunters used to setting up downwind of corn of other bait piles aren't held to that standard in some cases.

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MINIMIZE EXPOSURE AT GROUND LEVEL

Shooting a big buck incorporates a wide range of factors that must come together nearly flawlessly. Hunters climb high in trees in lock-on stands, two-piece climbers, ladder stands or in elevated towers to gain a height advantage on deer.

While hunting in an elevated position provides increased visibility and a deferred scent cone at a higher elevation, erecting and getting into these stands can cause undue disturbances. A more-simple approach at ground level may not involve the advantages of height, but the ease of ingress and egress may make for a better opportunity to get a shot at a mysterious wall-hanger.

Veteran hunter Jay Garner hunts on a small seat typically used for turkey hunting.

"I first started using my strutter chair when I didn't have time to put up a stand 15 years ago," he said. "Now, I would rather hunt out of my turkey chair than be up in a (tree) stand. I use a gun rest and keep the gun up all the time. If they step out, you aren't fumbling around, and you can be ready to make the shot."

Garner trims out a shooting lane to his corn pile from a spot where he knows deer can't see him. He will typically place his corn piles at sites that are thicker than where most people generally want to set up.

"Having a thicker place reduces the visibility, but the deer are more likely to come out without hesitation than if they are in a more open area," he said.

Stand setup for ground-level situations can be quick and less invasive than a traditional stand setup. Hunters only have to clip a few branches around the spot they will be sitting and a few more for a shooting lane.

An issue for many hunters is the noise and visibility disturbances made when entering and exiting an elevated stand. A hidden, on-the-ground



Jeff Burleson

stand can reduce the chances of disturbing deer already on a food source for early morning hunts or throughout the day.

For the best results, hunters should rake out leaves and debris around the sitting area and make a clean trail leading to the stand to allow the least amount of noise coming and going. ■

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By Phillip Gentry

If you were to survey any given piece of hunting property, there are areas that cry out to be hunted. A majority of times, these areas are soon saddled with a permanent hunting stand, be it a ladder, box or other permanent fixture. A hunter may even take one or more deer from that stand the next season, or it may be one of those rare stands that produces every season. But the reason that site was chosen is because it looked good to the hunter, not because it was conducive to the deer.

In fact, studies have shown that mature, trophy bucks learn to pattern hunters better than the hunter patterns the deer. Part of deer patterning hunters is their learning to avoid permanent stand sites. The best chance a hunter has to tag a good deer is by being unpredictable and catching that deer on his feet, in an area he never detected or suspected.

One of the best way to be unpredictable, undetectable and get the drop on a trophy buck is to hunt from a portable climbing stand.

CLIMB FOR THE PRIZE

Most deer hunters only get one chance at a trophy buck. Here's how hunting from a climbing stand can make that chance more likely to happen.

Phillip Gentry

V



Kyle Clark, the owner of Doc's Deer Scents in Greer, S.C., has been hunting and patterning big deer in different parts of the country for most of his life.

He said several factors combine to allow the hunter to get the drop on a good deer: stealth, concealment and being in the right place at the right time. Using a comfortable, portable, climbing stand is part of that strategy.

Clark said stealth and the element of surprise work hand-in-hand with using a climber. Once he has identified an area a big buck is using, whether from scouting or images captured on a trail camera, he prefers to stay out of the area until it's time to hunt.

"Human scent control is always important," Clark said. "Several days before the hunt, I'll wash my clothes and body to make sure I'm as scent-free as possible. I repeat the process as soon as I leave the truck. The goal is to give the buck no idea I'm after him."

Clark is also going to hunt with the wind in his favor, and a climbing stand gives him more options than hunting

from a pre-positioned stand or hunting somewhere else altogether because the wind is not right.

"A climbing stand also offers a certain degree of scent control, because I can hunt high or low, and I can even make back and forth adjustments in the stand, stuff you can't do with any other type of stand," he said.

If he's hunting before the rut, his preference is to find a travel route between bedding and feeding areas. He's not looking for a wide-open area and hoping on a chance encounter with the buck; he wants to be concealed and have a smaller window for the buck to detect his presence. Setting up on a travel route close to the buck's home area gives him that advantage. He will check the wind, then pick a tree off the beaten path but within range of the trail and climb it.

During the rut, Clark said all bets are off as far as patterning the daily movements of bucks. He describes it as a free-for-all when a buck's home range expands from one to 10 square miles. Being mobile is the key, and a climbing stand provides him with that mobility.

"I'm going to stay in the woods all day, if I can, but that doesn't mean I'm going to sit in the same spot all day," he said.

BELOW: A climbing stand allows deer hunters to circle the wind and always set up downwind from the direction they expect to see deer appear.



Phillip Gentry

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For all-day hunting, he wants a climber that's comfortable. Hunting from a climber is similar to living in an RV; if you decide you no longer like the neighborhood or things change, you can pack up and move.

Later in the season, Clark focuses on food sources but keeps other factors in mind. By this time of year, hunting pressure is taking its toll on mature bucks, and they will retreat to tight areas. Most times that means extremely thick areas in proximity to a food source, enough to meet their needs.

"You have a lot of hard mast that matures at different times," Clark said. "By late season, a trophy buck is not going to travel any more than he has to during daylight hours. You want to get as close to his core bedding area as you can without bumping him."

Many times, a thick area on the edge of open feeding areas — think a clear-cut or grain field — will attract bucks. Clark warns that deer don't just wander through an open area. Using



Following the rut, bucks won't travel far from their bedding areas to feed when it isn't dark. So climb a tree close to his core area and intercept him.

a climbing stand, he will identify trees that overlook ditches, depressions or other key travel corridors that provide bucks with a continued sense of security. That includes maintaining a stealthy profile.

"At the end of the season, he's on high alert. You don't want to be hanging out in the open on a tree, looking like an elephant on a toothpick," Clark said. "Choose a tree that gives you a good vantage point and where the likely travel area will be within range of your weapon, whether that's a compound bow, gun or muzzleloader, but make sure there's some reasonable cover in front of you and preferably some thick cover at your back to help conceal you." ■



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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In the fall of 2000, John and Jerry Wydner were hunting deer near Eufala, Ala., when John's tree stand collapsed beneath him. Because he wasn't wearing the harness that came with his stand, he was headed to the ground and certain injury. However, he was able to catch hold of the top of the climber, and then shinny down the tree.

By the time he reached the ground, his clothing was torn, and he was bleeding and shaken. He immediately called for help. As soon as Jerry arrived, his first question was why John wasn't wearing his harness, to which John replied, "Were you wearing yours?"

That experience led to the design and manufacture of a safety harness for hunters that was comfortable, affordable and could be manufactured to fit the needs of a variety of users. The Wydners' design team decided it would be perfect if a harness could be belt into a vest that would be easy to get into and out of. The problem would be making it adjustable to fit different body sizes. After much trial and error, a product design that met all of the criteria was developed.

The HSS design has changed how hunters view safety harnesses. These systems have become the safest, most-comfortable and easiest-to-use harnesses on the market. The patented designs offer hunters conveniences that no other harness can give. These include having no hanging or

dangling straps, saddle-style leg straps for comfort should a fall occur, full adjustability for light or heavy clothing and unrestricted mobility in a tree stand like no other harness can offer.

For more information on Hunter Safety Systems gear, visit www.huntersafetysystem.com. ■

||||| The Hunter Safety Systems harness was designed after a close call involving a collapsed deer stand.



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SPC

November brings great bass fishing to Lake Russell, with big spotted bass schooling up and feeding. Here's how to find and catch them.

By Terry Madewell

Terry Madewell

OT ON

Bass fishing is excellent year-round in the Carolinas, but any time the possibility exists to hook and land dozens of black bass in a day of fishing, it's time to get the gear and go.

From mid-October though the end of the year, Lake Richard B. Russell on the Savannah River along the South Carolina-Georgia border becomes a spotted bass factory, spitting out daily catches that can reach near triple digits a distinct possibility.

The key is to identify the how, when and where to locate these aggressive bass.

Jerry Kotal, who guides for a number of species on Lake Russell, specializes in fishing for bass in November and December.

"It's exciting and fast-paced bass fishing and likely the most-consistently productive fishing of the year for me," Kotal said. "The key to big catches is location, location and location, because they are often schooled tight to distinct targets and are typically aggressive on the bite. Even in the cool and dropping water temperatures, we load up on quantity and quality spotted bass. I believe as the water temperature drops, the fishing actually seems to get better in late November and through December."

Lake Russell literally has forests of submerged standing trees, but Kotal's preferred tactic is to find bass by using electronics on open areas not littered with trees. He searches for a three-point combination of open-water clean humps or points, bass marked on or near the bottom and forage fish graphed at mid-depths or near the bottom.

"The combination of those three factors creates ideal situations that give me high confidence," he said. "Because of the tendency of bass to school in large groups at this time of the year, we typically catch multiple bass from any given place. The

most bass I've caught from any single target was 80 football-fat, spotted bass."

Kotal said it's more common to catch up to a dozen bass on a spot before the action slows and he moves to another area. As he develops the day's pattern, it gets easier to find the next productive target. He uses a marker buoy to reference the location he'll fish, but he doesn't drop it right on the fish.

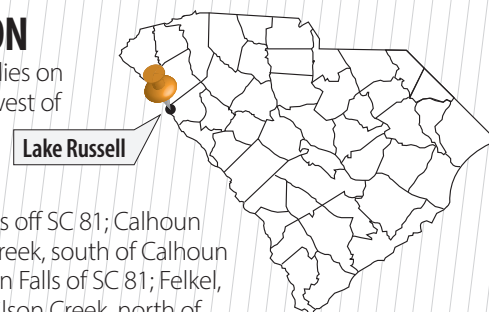
"Often, with plenty of shad in that

immediate area, I won't have to travel very far to get on another school of fish when action slows," he said. "Wind and weather patterns influence the location, and wind-blown points or humps at the mouth of a cove with the wind blowing into that cove are high-priority targets for me. Any factor that tends to bunch shad into a given area has the potential to congregate bass in big numbers."



DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE — Lake Russell lies on the Georgia-South Carolina line, southwest of Abbeville in Anderson and Abbeville counties. SC 81 and SC 72 provide the best access. Top public ramps are Milwood, southwest of Calhoun Falls off SC 81; Calhoun Falls State Park off SC 81; Beer Garden Creek, south of Calhoun Falls of SC 81; Blue Hole, west of Calhoun Falls of SC 81; Felkel, southwest of Lowndesville off CR 74; Wilson Creek, north of Lowndesville off CR 72; Allen Creek, west of Lowndesville, off CR 70.



WHEN TO GO — Mid-October through December are prime times to fool Lake Russell's spotted and largemouth bass.

BEST TECHNIQUES — Fish a white Flex spoon or a drop-shot rig on humps. Look to mark bass and baitfish over the hump before you drop down a bait. Bass are likely to be in tight schools late in the fall, first 25 to 40 feet deep, then in 50 feet of water as December arrives.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — Jerry Kotal, Jerry Kotal's Fishing Guide Service, 706-988-0860, www.jerrykotalsfishingguideservice.com; Wendell Wilson, Wilson's Guide Service, 706-283-3336; www.wilsonsguideservice.com. See also Guides and Charters in Classifieds.

ACCOMMODATIONS — Econo Lodge, Elberton, Ga., 888-690-5281; Days Inn, Elberton, Ga., 800-230-4134; Calhoun Falls State Park camping, 864-447-8267; www.southcarolinaparks.com/calhounfalls/camping.aspx.

MAPS — Kingfisher Maps, 800-326-0257, www.kfmaps.com; Delorme South Carolina Atlas & Gazetteer, 800-561-5105, www.delorme.com.



Kotal said that while it may be easier in terms of boat control to fish on days when little wind blows, some of the best fishing days are when a good chop exists on the water and funnels shad into predictable areas.

“On the windy days, it’s often easier to predict which humps, points and drops will hold fish,” he said. “The wind pushes shad into downwind coves and points, and that will typically reduce my searching. This is also where we often find larger schools of bass.”

Kotal said a reasonable day’s trip will produce anywhere from 30 to 50 bass, along with some huge white and yellow perch, but triple-digit catch days occur. The majority of the bass will be spots, but on a typical day a half-dozen largemouth are caught.

“Largemouth were originally the primary black bass species at Lake Russell, but now the spots dominate,” he said. “But we still catch a few big largemouth bass, along with some chunky spots in the 5-pound class. Typically 1½- to 3-pound fish dominate the catch, with some pushing 4 pounds sprinkled in.

“I’ve learned what black bass targets look like on the graph, but some large white and yellow perch also congregate on

these same spots,” he said. “These species mingle with bass because they’re all feeding on shad. Finding schools of shad with the presence of larger fish is a target worth fishing because bass are usually part of that scenario.”

Kotal primarily employs three lures. His top two are a ½- or ¾-ounce white Flex spoon he vertically jigs and a ½-ounce drop-shot rig dressed with a 4-inch finesse worm in watermelon, green pumpkin or watermelon seed color patterns. The third lure is a ¾-ounce, round jighead with a brown head and brown/purple silicon skirt. Kotal usually employs the jig only for tournament fishing because it’s apt to hang up, but he said it’s lethal when targeting big spots and largemouth.

For anglers wanting to really keep the rod bent, Kotal said using live gizzard shad, blueback herring or a small shiner minnow seals the deal.

“I’ll often pull live bait when searching for bass on a large hump, and that will sometimes get a bass to bite when things are slow,” he said. “And often, once we hook one with the live bait, the bass get fired up, and the spoons and drop-shot worms become very productive. Also, the smaller shiner minnows will usually produce plenty of bites from big white and yellow perch and the occasional crappie. It doesn’t occur on every trip, but the live bait will occasionally enable us to hook a big striper, and a 20-pound-plus striper on standard bass gear elevates excitement to an elite level.”

- Guide Jerry Kotal often fishes two rods when Lake Russell bass are on humps: a drop-shot rig he leaves in the rod holder and a Flex spoon he jigs vertically.

Terry Madewell





Jerry Madewell

- A plastic worm on a drop-shot rig produces plenty of nice spotted bass for guide Jerry Kotal, especially in the fall when spots are schooling.

DOUBLE-TIMING BASS

Guide Jerry Kotal said that most of the time, Lake Russell bass will orient to a small, specific target on the bottom, and a school of fish is very concentrated in a small area, but that's not always the case.

"Occasionally, I'll graph an area that has plenty of baitfish, maybe several pods of shad, but they're located over a general area on a hump," he said. "This can occur any time, but I've seen it occur regularly on calm days when shad schools can be practically anywhere, with little or no wind to push them."

In this situation, Kotal said bass can be marked on the graph, but they'll be very scattered and holding tight to the bottom, making them difficult to distinguish. But with ample baitfish and some isolated bass marks, he'll use his electric motor to maneuver above the schools of shad.

Kotal prefers anglers to use different lures until a pattern is determined. If he's on the lake by himself, he'll double up and fish two lures at a time.

"One lure I really like is a drop-shot rig using a 4-inch finesse worm," he said. "Not only can I fish it in a regular manner, but when working an area along a ledge or hump for scattered fish, I'll put the drop-shot rig in a rod holder and drag the rig as I maneuver the boat. I'll also employ a 1/2- to 3/4-ounce white Flex spoon and vertically jig the spoon as I search. It's not unusual at all for a bass to bite the drop-shot rig being pulled, and I can watch that rig while jiggling the spoon."

"Often, once I hook a bass on one of the rigs, it seems to supercharge the bass, because suddenly, the graph lights up with frenzied fish activity. Frequently, when I find a good school of bass, I'll find I've got bass hooked on both rigs at once."

"But that's a problem I look forward to." ■

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Most spotted and largemouth bass in Lake Russell are found in 25 to 40 feet this month, but they'll go deeper in December — while still biting.

INSET: A good set of electronics will allow anglers to readily mark schools of bass holding close to the bottom in open water. Often, perch are on the same spots.



Kotal said bass gradually slips deeper as the water cools; in November, most of the fish are in 25 to 40 feet of water, but by December, the 50-foot range is best. In the ultra-cold water of January, fishing is still productive but generally in 60 to 80 feet of water.

Kotal's backup plan to fishing the open, clean humps and points is working standing timber using similar techniques.

"Occasionally, the bass will just totally prefer the timber. Graphing fish targets is more difficult in the woody cover; it can be done, and this is an excellent alternative," he said. "Most of the time, the open, clean areas produce, but I'll go the trees when necessary. The trees and limbs make it more difficult to fish, but find the shad and mark fish, and you'll usually get bass to bite."

"A lot less fishing pressure exists this time of the year, and even with the sensational bass fishing, the lake has few fishermen, especially during the weekdays," Kotal said. "A lot of outdoorsmen are deer hunting or after small-game species once those seasons arrive. But the bass fishing is dependable, fast-paced and fun." ■

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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.

By Phillip Gentry

THANKSGIVING REDS

November redfish in the Carolinas can be caught on three basic patterns, so spool on some line and catch them before the turkey is all eaten.

A man with a beard and sunglasses, wearing a grey jacket and a black cap with "BLUE-WAVE BOATS" on it, is smiling while holding a large redfish on a boat. The fish is held vertically, showing its scales and fins. The background shows the blue water of the ocean and a clear sky. The boat's interior, including a white seat and a motor, is visible.

November represents a transition for many saltwater species along the coasts of both Carolinas. While some migrate from shallow to deeper waters, other species migrate back to the ocean, even out to Gulf Stream waters, not to be seen until next spring. Red drum represent a little of both when it comes to fall migrations.

During November, redfish of different ages and sizes can be found in two or three primary patterns. Guide Stephen Fields of Charleston (S.C.) Fishing Company travels the southeast giving seminars on the use of state-of-the-art mapping software when he's not fishing or guiding. He said the size of the redfish you're targeting will dictate where you need to be fishing and what you need to have tied on.

THANKSGIVING REDS

If you fish inshore, November begins the basic, shallow-water, sight-fishing pattern for redfish that fit inside, just over or just under the slot limit. As waters begin to cool and clear, Fields will start taking his clients to areas where the water may only be covering the backs of the fish by a few inches.

“This month, the bait will start thinning out, and redfish will school up, which helps them work on the collections of mud minnows and other small baits that will still be available in the creeks,” said Fields (www.charlestonfishingcompany.com). “It’s also time for them to get spooky, because dolphins also move from chasing baitfish to chasing redfish for food.”

Fields targets redfish on shallow flats, and he looks for flats adjacent to deep water. He doesn’t immediately head for skinny water, having too-often passed over schools holding in the 3 to 4 feet of water just outside the shallow flats.

“I prefer to start deep and work my way in,” he said. “I’m really

going to key in on (areas) with 3 to 4 feet of water along the edge of skinny water.”

When he’s fishing by himself or with experienced anglers, Fields uses artificial lures exclusively. He will downsize his lure choices and suggests anything that mimics a 3- to 4-inch baitfish or shrimp will get more bites than using the bigger artificial anglers have used all summer and fall.

He rigs soft plastics on a weedless jighead, anything from a standard Texas rig to a shaky head to one of the newer saltwater-style jigheads that mimic bass-fishing tackle.

“I use more-conventional bass tackle in the winter than I do any other time of the year,” he said. “I’m fishing shallow water, and I still like the weedless aspects, because I’m going to be casting into and around structure which might include shell, rocks or grass.”

When fishing with clients or if the bite gets really tough, Fields will make sure he has some mud minnows on board. He rigs them under a popping cork or on a lightweight Carolina rig to ride just off the bottom.

“What you don’t want is for the



Phillip Gentry



Redfish in the marsh won't stray far from very skinny water, but many anglers run over them on their way back to the flats. **INSET:** When fishing with clients or if the bite gets tough, Fields will suspend mud minnows under a popping cork just off the bottom to keep the bait from hiding in the mud.

Phillip Gentry

mud minnow to dig into the bottom and hide, which they do very well," he said. "I either want the bait to ride up off the bottom and flow with the current or I want to work the Carolina rig so the bait is moving."

For bigger redfish, the adults that measure longer than the slot limit, Fields heads for the nearest inlet and fishes any rocks or jetties there, or he looks for adult redfish to start to school up off the beaches just outside the surf line.

"If they're off the beaches, just look for birds," he said. "The bulls will be out there chasing the last of the bigger mullet."

While he may still be anchoring to soak cut mullet and waiting for adult redfish to move through inlets and jetties, he's going to be actively following the schools off the beach.



With the departure of larger baits from the inshore creeks and rivers, downsizing to 3 and 4 inch plastic baits will garner anglers more bites.

"Move with the schools and cast big artificial baits: big plastics and casting spoons. I like the larger Z-Man Streakz or something like a Thury Super Natural Big Bait or a 10-inch Headlock casting spoon."

Another November pattern is to head for nearshore reefs and wrecks and vertically jig for adult redfish. Fields said it's not unusual to find smaller fish on nearshore wrecks but warns that anything outside the 3-mile line is Federal waters, where all redfish must be released.

"For vertical fishing over a wreck or reef, I'll tie on a big jigging spoon or a standard white bucktail," said Fields. "One of the hottest jigging spoons last season was the Colt Sniper jigging spoon. It looks like a lot of the other jigging spoons on the market, but this one has been catching a lot of fish."

Rather than stuffing yourself on Thanksgiving turkey and plopping down on the couch to watch the game, this holiday season, it might be worth your while to tie on your favorite lure and head out to do battle with some redfish. ■



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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"I use the phone app just as much off the water as I do on it," said guide Stephen Fields of Charleston, S.C., a member of Navionics' pro staff. "It's a great tool to plan, study and scout areas before you head to a particular destination."

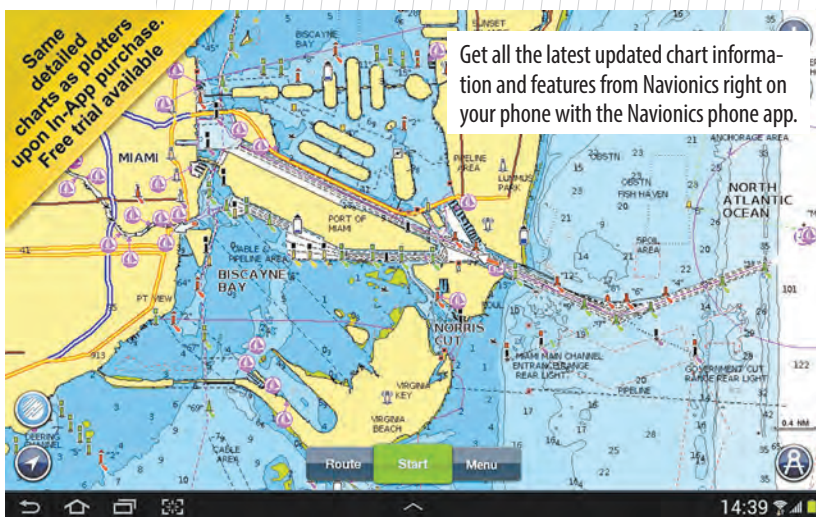
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"It lets you customize your charts, because 90 percent of the fish live in 10 percent of the water," he said.

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You can try the app, including its integrated charts and features with the 2-week trial of Navionics+. The app also comes in an "HD" version, with a tablet-optimized interface. If you like the trial app you can place a subscription to get the app for one year for around \$10 depending on the areas you choose.

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By Craig Holt

FOUR NC HOTSPOTS FOR NOVEMBER TROUT

When it comes to specks, you can't go wrong following the advice of four veteran guides who know their home waters and how to fish them.



Guide Ricky Kellum believes New River speckled trout will bounce back quickly from the effects of Hurricane Florence.

NOVEMBER ALONG THE NORTH CAROLINA COAST

IS A MAGICAL TIME TO FISH FOR SPOTTED SEATROUT, AKA SPECKLED TROUT, BECAUSE OF ONE OVERRIDING FACTOR: WATER TEMPERATURE.

That's one thing that four saltwater guides — Noah Lynk of Harkers Island, Dale Collins of Swansboro, Ricky Kellum of Jacksonville and Jot Owens of Wilmington — all agree on.

With North Carolina's coast running from 33.76 degrees north latitude at Sunset Beach to 36.61 degrees north latitude on the Currituck Banks, saltwater temperatures may vary widely in state waters. That means trout can be found looking for food behind barrier islands or in the ocean. Here's how the four guides target trout in their home waters.

CAPE LOOKOUT AREA

"Water temperature and tides are the two things that affect fishing the most around where I live," said Lynk, 47, who operates Noah's Ark Fishing Charters. "Temperature affects where shrimp, baitfish and specks live in November. Will they be inside if it's warm or move to inlets or the ocean if it's cold? Temperatures tell me where to fish."

One of his favorite places for early-November specks is the North River near Beaufort.

"They'll be in 2 or 3 feet of water," he said. "If it gets cold really fast, everything leaves; it'll be dead up there. But as soon as it warms up, shrimp and trout come back a day or two later. Or, if we have sustained cold, they stay outside."

When fishing shallow water, Lynk (252-342-6911) likes MirrOlures — but not suspending twitch baits.

"I use MirrOlure Little Johns and Marsh Minnows," he said. "A Little John looks like a bullet. You'd think someone would've invented (one) years ago; it's as low-tech as you can get.

"I use it with a ¼-ounce jighead. You can trim them to 1½ or 2 inches long,

and they'll dart all over the place when you pop 'em off the bottom, like a baitfish that's been whacked on the head and tossed overboard. Trout can't resist it. A Marsh Minnow has a paddletail and really cuts up in the water, too.

"I cast and let 'em drop back in current

light Star spinning outfit spooled with 12-pound braid with an 18-inch fluoro-carbon leader.

CAPE FEAR EAST

Owens, owner of Jot It Down Fishing Charters, hunts specks at inside chan-



Dale Collins of Swansboro hunts for spotted seatrout with soft-plastic grubs and MirrOlures during November.

Courtesy Dale Collins

and pop 'em up. Yeah, they're small, but elephants eat peanuts."

Lynk also uses scented Fishbites Fight Club lures, including 3-inch curlytails, 4-inch paddletails, 5-inch jerkbaits and the 3½-inch Fight'n Shrimp. He fishes everything on a 7-foot, medium-

nels and creeks that connect to inlets from Carolina Beach to Topsail Island.

"Early in the month, water (temperatures) can be from the upper 50s to upper 60s," said Owens (910-233-4139). "But when it gets lower than 52 degrees, specks get harder to catch inside. In my

experience, the best November temperature for trout is 55 to 62 degrees. Double-digit specks get caught then, not a lot, but the possibility goes up. Plus, most trout you catch will be strong 2- to 5-pounders.”

On his best November trips, Owens said his parties will catch 70 trout.

“All were keeper sizes, too,” he said. “Two Novembers ago, (one of his clients) caught a 9½-pounder. I told them they’d never see another trout like that in their lives. A few minutes later, they caught an 8-12.”

Both trophy specks came off an oyster bank near a channel leading to an inlet. They smacked a MirrOdine 17MR-808, a 2½-inch suspending twitch bait.

For light lures, Owens uses 7-foot, light-action rods with 1000 to 2000 series spinning reels. For larger lures, he mates 2500 to 3000 series reels to 7-foot, medium-action rods.

“In shallow water, I use MirrOlure 17MRs and Catch 2000 Juniors. For deep water, I use MR18s, 52Ms or 52MRs,” Owens said. “I also like darker lure colors in (stained) water and lighter colors in clear water.”

If the artificial lure bite slows, he may employ live baits with float rigs in shallow water.

“I like a slider or clip-on rig with No. 6 red or black treble hooks tied to 2 feet of 20-pound fluorocarbon (leader),” Owens said, “sometimes with a small split-shot above the bait. But if I’m fishing deeper, I may use a small, egg-sinker Carolina rig with 3 feet of 20-pound fluorocarbon leader, so the bait can sink naturally.”

NEW RIVER

Kellum, 51, has a well-earned reputation as one of North Carolina’s top trout guides, having fished for most of his life

on the New River, which has been known to give up plenty of gator specks.

“The river is getting better than ever,” said Kellum, who owns The Speckled Specialist Fishing Charters.

Unlike most coastal streams, the New has a year-round supply of live shrimp, an advantage for Kellum’s novice anglers. He likes to hand them a slip-cork rig fish in channels near bridges on a falling tide. Otherwise, he sticks to slow-sinking artificial lures: his favorite Betts Billy Bay Halo Shad and signature Perfect Sinker Shrimp.

“But if trout are hitting surface lures, it’s hard to beat a bone-colored Zara Spook Jr. in clear water or a red head/chartreuse body model upriver,” said Kellum (910-330-2745), who replaces the factory hooks with No. 4 4X trebles because “No. 2 and No. 4 trebles are wire, and a big redfish or striper can bend ‘em. You won’t lose fish with No. 4 4X trebles made for king mackerel baits.”

If bluefish are plentiful, he likes a MirrOlure MR17 twitch bait in electric-chicken or the new 3½-inch MirrOdine 27MRBG-51SBG with reflective sides that mimics a menhaden.

SWANSBORO

Dale Collins sits in the catbird seat of North Carolina’s central coast, with Lynk to his north and Kellum and Owens to his south.

continued >

When inshore water temperatures dip below 52 degrees, guide Noah Lynk heads for the Cape Lookout rock jetty to find gator trout.

ROCKIN’ AND REELIN’ FOR SPECKS

When the North Carolina coast typically experiences the first actual onset of cold weather in late November, two guides — Noah Lynk and Jot Owens — have an advantage.

“(Cold water) pushes baits and trout toward the ocean,” said Lynk, whose Harkers Island base of operations is 4 miles from Cape Lookout and Barden Inlet. “And the Cape Lookout rock jetty usually has water 4 or 5 degrees warmer because it’s nearer the ocean and deep water. The rocks intercept and hold baitfish and attract big trout and red drum.”

Owens has a similar situation at Wrightsville Beach’s Masonboro Inlet jetties.

“When it gets cold, I absolutely agree about inlets and rock jetties,” he said. “Ocean water is little bit warmer, and the jetty will hold baits and gamefish. My biggest trout have come in late November and early December at inlets.”

Lynk likes to fish live mud minnows on float rigs at the Cape Lookout rock jetty.

“You can have a blast for trout and drum,” he said. “MirrOlures also work out there. My two biggest specks, a 9½-pounder and a 10-pounder, came off the jetty after Thanksgiving. Both hit MirrOlures. It’s not a numbers game, but you might catch a big dog.” ■



▼

But Collins, 49, who operates Fish or Die Charters, wouldn't trade places with the other three guides because he has so much prime water to fish, including the White Oak River, Bear, Bogue and Browns inlets and the back sides of Bear, Browns and Bogue islands, Hammocks Beach State Park, the Bogue Sound and hundreds of marsh islands and creeks, plus four large highway bridges.

"In a normal November, specks move up creeks into deep holes," said Collins, who runs the tackle shop at Dudley's Marina at Cedar Point. "I really slow-fish 3¾- to 5-inch soft plastics on light jigheads from the shoreline out on falling tides and from the middle of a creek in on rising tides or with MR18 MirrOlures."

Collins (252-422-4326) likes November because bait-stealing "trash" fish like pinfish and hogfish have left for the ocean. That lets him rig Billy Bay popping-cork rigs with live shrimp or mud minnows.

"Small specks show up near inlets, but if the water's really salty, bigger trout move up the rivers and into backs of creeks so far you can hear banjo music," Collins said.

That's when Collins breaks out artificial lures, including a 3½-inch D.O.A. Golden Bream shad-tail

SPECKS GO WITH THE FLO - BUT NOT FAR

Four of North Carolina's best salt-water guides agree that September's Hurricane Florence caused habitat changes for speckled trout, moving them out of their favorite inshore haunts.

But they said specks would return to their neighborhoods and get on with their lives — just like people.

"Before (Florence), all the trout were up the Trent, Neuse and Pungo rivers, and the waters pushed them out," said Noah Lynk of Harkers Island. "Trout don't like polluted water. We always catch lots of trout here right after a big storm. You can tell they're river trout because they're really dark, black-colored and not silvery. When (Hurricane) Matthew hit up around Little Washington (October 2016), within a day or two, we were inundated with trout. I took people who didn't even know what a trout was, and they caught limits."

Around Swansboro, Dale Collins said Florence's flood waters "ran all the shrimp out of the (White Oak) river. That hurt trout fishing a while, but it usually picks up by a month later."

Ricky Kellum agreed flood waters push trout out of feeder creeks because specks "look like large-mouth bass in color: dark-green, not ocean silver."

"The (New River) always recovers fast after hurricanes," he said. "We caught trout a week after Floyd and Fran. Tide changes clear up the water."

Lynk said specks "absolutely" will return from the ocean to inside waters after a big storm.

"Typically, you have a month that's on hold because of dirty water and beat-down grass," he said. "But by mid-October, trout really start to show and the bite turns on." ■



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grub or a gold Z-Man paddletail or Fluke on a 1/16-ounce Blue Water Candy jighead. He also may use a 4-inch Gulp swim mullet or shrimp.

“Most specks will be 2 to 5 pounds, but you can catch 6-pounders,” he said.

In deeper water, he'll cast and retrieve MirrOlures MR18s after replacing the factory hooks with No. 6 VMC trebles custom-tied with feathers. He likes 7-foot, medium-light Star Seagis rods with 2500 Penn Conflict spinning reels spooled with 10-pound braid and an 18-inch leader of 12- to 15-pound pink Yo-Zuri fluorocarbon.

“I use a loop knot to tie to lures because it gives them a little more action,” Collins said. “I always look for a little swifter water with a deep trough nearby or oyster rocks with a deep ledge close by. Those places hold trout in November.” ■



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



November weather can swing from comfortable to cold, but guide Jot Owens of Wilmington knows where to find seatrout in all conditions.

Courtesy Jot Owens

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NOVEMBER:
PRIME TIME FOR

**SUPER
GROUPE**

By Jerry Dilsaver



These popular bottomfish are as close to the beach as they'll ever be, and this North Carolina captain has a few ideas about catching them.

John Mallette's love affair with grouper began when he was a teen on Topsail Island, N.C., where his family once owned Ocean City Pier. He took one trip with Joe Hifko, a noted fisherman, and was hooked right away.

He honed his craft in many places, including Caribbean islands, Central American countries, Venezuela and Hawaii but returned to his home base and now runs Pelagic Hunter Sportfishing out of Swan Point Marina in Sneads Ferry, an Onslow County port that offers good bottom-fishing all the way from Cape Fear to Cape Lookout.

"Our offshore fishing is good," Mallette said. "There are lots of regulations, and some fish are heavily protected, but we can usually find some action and bring in good catches. Make no mistake though, grouper fishing, or actually all offshore bottom-fishing, is meat-fishing. It's fun, but it's for people who want to take home lots of fish."

Mallette said offshore fishing has the potential to be good all year, but he likes fall fishing the best. When the water begins to cool, fish get active and begin feeding aggressively. Gag and black grouper move inshore, but they can be really finicky and bite very subtly in the shallow water; that makes them a challenge for inexperienced fishermen. However, experienced grouper fishermen can usually fill limits within sight of the taller buildings along the beach. Most grouper fishermen find them easier to catch in deeper water, generally 80 to 120 feet, and red grouper are also found at those depths.

"Locating grouper takes practice," Mallette said.

"It's easy to find the big rocks and wrecks that are loaded with fish, but those typically don't hold a bunch of grouper. Those are mixed concentrations of beeliners, triggerfish, black sea bass, grunts, porgys and such. They're fun to catch and taste pretty good, but there won't be many grouper in the mix.

Grouper would be difficult to catch, anyway, as the smaller fish are more aggressive and tear up baits before grouper move to them.



“look for smaller rocks or other places with low relief that are harder to find,” Mallette said. “Grouper are right on the bottom and don’t mark well. Sometimes, they’re just a couple of pixels on your scope, and sometimes they don’t mark at all. You’ve got to have faith in your spot.

“Because they’re hard to find, these places don’t get fished much,” Mallette said. “Grouper haven’t seen their buddies being jerked up and disappearing, and they are more relaxed. Sometimes, it takes a little while to get them going, but once they turn on, you can catch a surprising number of them from a small rock. These are often larger grouper, too.”

Mallette said anchoring is the most important part of grouper fishing. Once that perfect rock is located, you must get anchored so your baits drop to the fish, and it’s more difficult than it seems. You drop the anchor in sand away from the rock, and wind and current push the boat back over the rock. The direction to move away from the rock in order to anchor over it is called the anchor course.

“Many new grouper fishermen don’t understand the importance of finding the anchor course and getting anchored properly,” Mallette

The author caught this red grouper in the fall, when the popular bottomfish move closer to shore as the water cools.



said. “It’s like bream fishing when they are on a bed. The fishing is hot and heavy when your bait drops down to the bed, but being only a foot or two off doesn’t get bites.

“You can adjust your position fore and aft by shortening or lengthening the anchor line, but if you’re off to the side, you must refigure the anchor course and anchor again. Some days, wind is all you have to deal with, and getting anchored is pretty easy. However, some days there is current, and getting anchored just right is harder.

“Some fishermen try to grouper fish without anchoring, but it isn’t very productive. Grouper get comfortable on the rock they consider home and won’t leave the comfort of their structure to chase a bait. Several of the other offshore bottom species bite drifting baits well, but it’s rarely a good way to catch grouper.”

DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE — Sneads Ferry is most-easily accessed via NC 210 or NC 172 from US 17 between Wilmington and Jacksonville. Catch US 17 in New Bern and head south, or take I-40 to NC 24 to US 17. Popular public boat ramps are Fulcher’s Landing in Sneads Ferry and under the NC 210 bridge at North Topsail Beach.



WHEN TO GO — Grouper fishing is open from May 1-Jan. 1. The fishing really picks up in the fall when cooling water moves fish closer to the beach.

TACKLE/TECHNIQUES — Rods for grouper need a soft tip to feel subtle strikes but enough backbone to lift a fish off the bottom. Tuna sticks in 5½- to 6½-foot lengths in 50- to 80-pound class are popular. Penn Senator reels in 4/0 to 6/0 sizes are long-time favorites. A good drag system is important. Reels should be filled with 80-pound braid, with a topshot of around 30 feet of 130-pound monofilament. Single- and double-hook bottom rigs are common, with baits including Spanish sardines, cigar minnows and Boston mackerel. Jigging is less common, but 6- to 8-ounce diamond jigs are the ticket.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — John Mallette, Pelagic Hunter Sportfishing, 910-934-2628, www.carolinaoffshorefishing.com; New River Marina, 910-327-2106, www.newrivermarina.com. See also Guides and Charters in Classifieds.

ACCOMMODATIONS — Quality Inn & Suites, 910-327-8282; Topsail Shores Inn, 910-685-0969; Seaview Motel, 910-328-3172; Onslow County Tourism Office, www.onslowcountytourism.com.

MAPS — Capt. Segull’s Nautical Charts, 888-473-4855, www.captainsegullcharts.com; Sealake Fishing Guides, 800-411-0185, www.thegoodspots.com; Maps Unique, 910-458-9923, www.mapsunique.com; Grease Chart, 800-326-3567, www.greasechart.com; GMCO’s Chartbook of North Carolina, 888-420-6277, www.gmcomaps.com.

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Once positioned above the fish, Mallette likes to drop natural baits to them. He also carries a couple of rods rigged for jigging but admits he rarely uses them.

For bait, Mallette uses lots of Spanish sardines, cigar minnows and Boston mackerel. He has a progression he follows, beginning with fresh or thawed sardines hooked in the head, either up through both jaws or through the eyes. If the bite slows, he starts hooking some baits in the tail. If this doesn't work or the bite slows again, he switches to frozen sardines or cigar minnows. After this, he switches to Boston mackerel, then to chunks of meat and finally, to menhaden, spots and bluefish.

“I always leave the dock planning on catching grouper, but sometimes they don't cooperate.”

Mallette said not to use menhaden for grouper except as a last resort. He said they will sometimes catch a few more fish, but they attract ringtails. Once ringtails move in, you might catch some of the other species, but they get aggressive and will tear up your baits before grouper can to eat them. After going through this progression, Mallette moves to another rock.



Gag grouper are one of a handful of grouper species that are extremely popular with sportfishermen.

“I believe the best grouper fishing is in the spring, right after the season opens, and then again when the water begins to cool in the fall,” Mallette said. “They are here all year, but sometimes react to weather changes, strong currents and things that don't affect other fish. I always leave the dock planning on catching grouper, but sometimes they don't cooperate. On those days we concentrate on the other bottomfish species and usually manage decent catches. This is a big ocean, and as much as we know, there is still plenty we don't know, so there are days we must be satisfied with what is biting. The good news is that most of the other offshore bottom species are willing biters and taste pretty good, too.” ■



Jerry Dilsaver of Oak Island, N.C., a full-time freelance writer. He is a former Southern Kingfish Association national champion and USAA Angler of the Year.

Fisheries managers expect anglers in South Atlantic states to have at least a short red snapper season in 2019.



Changes may be coming in the **snapper/grouper** fishery

Dr. Michelle Duval of the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, chair of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, anticipates a few changes to how the snapper/grouper fishery is managed after fishermen brought up some issues during the SAFMC's Visioning Project last year.

“One of the things fishermen asked for was simpler regulations that would be easier to understand,” Duval said. “One example of this is in the shallow-water grouper fishery, where the bag limit is aggregate and may contain only one fish of certain species and not one of every species and even includes golden tilefish. Minimum sizes vary even within the grouper family, plus, there are established closures, and some species are prohibited entirely.

“We now know the complex regulations are confusing, and (we) are looking for ways to make it simpler. It takes a while for these things to work their way through, but we ... are planning to introduce some ideas next year.”

Duval said one of the things the SAFMC is working on is to try to establish at least a short season for red snapper in 2019.

Duval said SAFMC is also examining the shallow-water grouper spawning closure and the possibility of reducing the minimum size for black sea bass, even though stock assessment has been delayed. She credits angler input for bringing issues to the SAFMC. ■

John Mallette's grouper rig

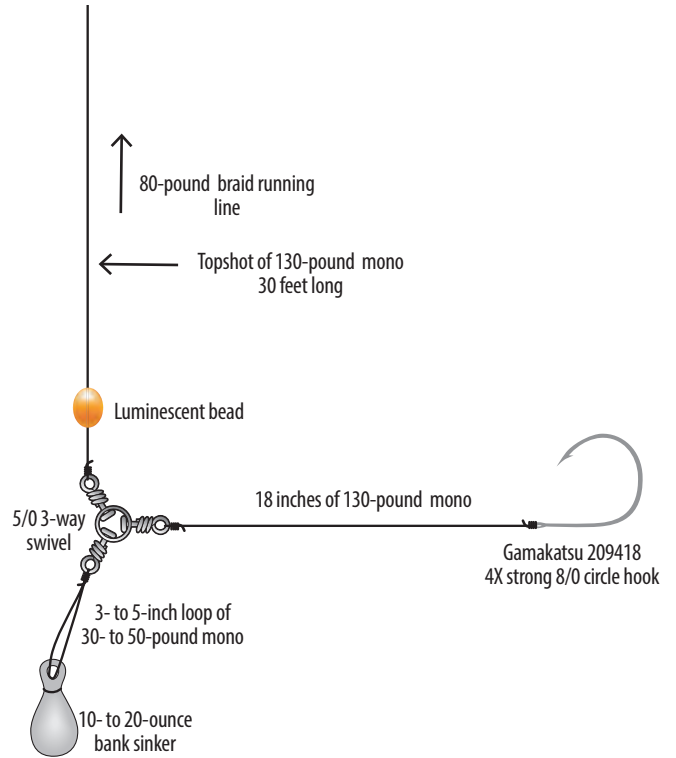
John Mallette said most fishermen don't think of it this way, but his grouper rig begins 30 feet above the hook. He likes to fish using 80-pound superbraid, but he adds a 30-foot topshot of 130-pound monofilament for the end of the line for abrasion resistance.

He said if a grouper "holes up" in a rock with ragged edges, the odds are pretty good it will chafe the braid until it breaks and the fish escapes. The 130-pound mono is much more abrasion resistant and often holds together long enough to work a grouper out of a rock.

Mallette slides a large, luminous bead on the topshot and ties it to a 5/0 3-way swivel. The bead prevents excited fishermen from reeling the swivel through the tip guide and chipping or breaking the guide. This eye of the swivel will become the top eye for the rig.

An 18-inch section of 130-pound mono ties to the middle eye and extends to a 8/0 Gamakatsu 209418 4X strong Octopus Circle Hook. Regulations require using a circle hook, and this is a wide-gap style with a high-hookup ratio. Mallette said if the grouper are acting finicky, make the leader longer; this allows fish to pick up and chew the bait without feeling resistance from the sinker.

The lower eye is for attaching the sinker. Mallette uses a piece of 30- to 50-pound mono tied to the bottom eye with a 3- to 5-inch loop to attach a bank sinker. The loop allows the sinker to easily be switched to lighter weight for shallow water and/or less current or more weight for deeper water and/or more current. This line is lighter, so it will break off — not the whole rig — if the sinker hangs up. Mallette prefers to fish a 10- or 12-ounce sinker so even subtle bites can be easily felt, but he said heavier sinkers will be required when the current is strong. ■



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Flounder are one of a handful of saltwater species that are commonly caught in the surf this month across the beaches of the Carolinas.



BEACH-BOUND ISN'T SO BAD

SURF FISHING REALLY COMES INTO ITS OWN IN THE CAROLINAS THIS MONTH

Brian Cope

October was a big transition month for saltwater fishing in the Carolinas, and by November, the water and air temperatures have cooled off considerably, but those aren't the only changes.

While some anglers have stowed their gear and decided that fishing can wait until the spring, they're missing out on some of the best action of the year, especially fishing from the surf.

The entire fall is good for beach-bound anglers, but the fishing really peaks in November. The bull redfish make their trek from north to south, skirting the coastlines of both Carolinas and feeding heavily before the cold weather comes and they head offshore or into the creeks to pack up into tight schools. And they aren't the only species biting off the beaches. You can catch speckled trout, bluefish and even flounder are other species in the surf this month.

You'll see a wide variety of gear being used this month by surf anglers. Some

are targeting bull redfish and big sharks, using heavy rods and reels that look more fitting on billfish boats. They'll use large, single-hook rigs with weights up to 8 ounces or more, and they'll get their baits, which can range from half a mullet to half a stingray, into the strike zone by paddling them out in a kayak.

Those anglers are looking for quantity over quality, and as long as they are patient, they'll usually find it this month. They usually try to drop their bait into the first deep hole beyond the breakers, and because that location can change every day, many anglers will scout the beach at low tide.

BE PREPARED, SCOUT

Scouting is a good idea, no matter what species you're targeting, and you should pay attention to more than just the location of the deep holes. It's something that many anglers overlook, according to John Knight, a seasoned surf angler who spends much of his time fishing North

Carolina's southern beaches late in the fall.

"You want to look at any high spots and low spots during low tide," he said. "That will tell you where the depressions and shallow spots will be once the tide comes in. And it's not necessarily the deepest holes that will hold fish. If you're after really big sharks, then yes, that's what you want, but especially if you're after fish to eat, you just need to pay attention to basically any changes in depth. Those changes are where the fish will be."

Anglers looking for keeper-sized fish for the frying pan should forget about that super-heavy gear the shark and bull redfish anglers are using. You definitely want stout gear to fish the surf, but spinning reels in the 3500 to 5500 range are fine, and Knight also likes using conventional casting reels. Rods in the 8- to 12-foot range are common, and anglers typically use weights that range from 1 to 4 ounces and hooks in the 3/0 to 5/0 range.

For bait, anglers can use just about any



Brian Cope

type of cut or live bait, and whatever they catch in the surf with a cast net is as good as it gets this time of year.

DON'T CAST TOO FAR

Knight said one of the biggest mistakes anglers make while surf-fishing is thinking they need to cast past the breakers.

"This goes back to knowing the lay of the land by scouting before the surf comes in," he said. "You want to target the changes in depth, and many of those changes occur close to the beach and long before the breakers end. Casting past the breakers really does little in the way of increasing your chances at catching fish. On some days, I've seen women and kids catch far more fish than the grown men they're fishing with, and it's mainly because they don't have the strength to cast beyond the breakers. So they're sort of accidentally catching fish, while the grown men make some great, long-distance casts, but aren't casting to where the fish are."

Some anglers prefer pyramid-shaped sinkers, which are designed to stay in place despite the moving water, and some use sinkers with thin, protruding wires that dig into the sand to anchor them more securely. But other anglers stick with egg sinkers and don't mind their bait shifting around with the tide. ■



Brian Cope of Edisto Island, S.C., is a retired U.S. 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.

Umbrellas can prolong a day of surf fishing. Even this time of year, it's easy to get sunburned, and an umbrella can also help keep anglers cool on unseasonably warm days, of which the Carolinas often have plenty of early in the month.

Cast nets and 5-gallon buckets are good for catching and keeping bait alive, and sharp knives make quick work of tangled lines and are also essential for cutting baitfish.

SURF ACCESSORIES:

Beach carts to haul rods, coolers and other fishing gear are common pieces of equipment for surf fishing, and rod holders with sand spikes are good for holding rods in place as anglers wait for a bite and also when they're baiting hooks.

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JERKBAITS: NOT JUST FOR SPRING

LONG, SKINNY HARD BAIT WILL FOOL BASS IN CLEAR WATER FROM OCTOBER THROUGH MARCH

David Brown

When you think of baits that bass fishermen turn to in the fall, you think of moving baits like crankbaits and spinnerbaits. A lot of people overlook a hard jerkbait, because everybody thinks about fishing them in late winter and early spring. If you think about it, late October, November and December can fish a lot like late winter and early spring, with baitfish relatively shallow and the water relatively clear.

When the water starts to cool late in the fall, bait does tend to get shallow, especially blueback herring if you're fishing a lake that's got them. If you aren't, the shad also migrate back into the creeks and coves and get shallow. The largest part of the bass population is going to be right where the baitfish are. That's where I use my Humminbird down-imaging and side-imaging unit to find bait in the creeks that hold a lot of bait, and I try to fish around it.

This is where a problem comes in. In most of the lakes in the Carolinas, it's hard to get bass to bite, because they've literally got hundreds of thousands of shad or herring where they're living that

they can eat. And that's where a jerkbait can get you bites when other baits you might think to pick up first won't.

This about it; everybody has a jerkbait tied on in February and March, when you have cool, clear water and baitfish moving shallow. Those conditions are a perfect match for November and December. You can use one to imitate a shad or a herring, and you can fish the depths that the bait like to get in. I don't really tie one on until late October, because in September and early October, the bait is going to be deeper than you can fish a jerkbait, which is usually only 4 or 5 feet deep.

I start fishing a jerkbait like a Rapala Shadow Rap Shad or Shadow Rap Deep in late October when the water starts cooling off. As November progresses, and by the end of November, the water is cold enough that the shad will be acting differently. Those two baits have a cool action, because when you jerk and pause them, they have a little "dying quiver" action, a very slow rise. Tons of baits on the market will suspend, but not a lot of them will suspend with their heads tilted forward like these.

The big thing you have to learn — with every jerkbait you tie on, different kinds and different sizes — is how deep they will run. Variables include different rods that will cast them different distances, on different lines. For example, a jerkbait will run deeper on fluorocarbon than monofilament. You need to find out how deep that bait will run, so you can get it to the right depth where the bait and bass are holding.

DOWN, SUSPENDED?

I will use a crankbait in late October and November if I think the bait has to touch bottom, if there's some brush or cover that I want to bring it through. But if I see a lot of bait back in a creek, and there isn't a lot of cover, then I'll throw a jerkbait. With a crankbait, you want to make contact with cover, but when the bait is suspended, you want a jerkbait. A Shadow Rap Shad or Shadow Rap Deep has a very erratic action, and sometimes, that's what it takes to catch suspended fish.

I'll fish jerkbaits on a medium-action, 6-foot-6 to 7-foot Bass Pro Shops carbon-lite baitcasting rod and a Johnny Morris signature series reel spooled with 10- to

TAKE THE TEMPERATURE:

The colder the water gets late in fall, the less action your hard-plastic jerkbait needs to have, because baits with an erratic action don't mimic the way a shad or blueback herring that's cold moves.



12-pound XPS fluorocarbon. I like the way fluoro lets a bait get down a little deeper; it can actually make a difference of a foot or a foot-and-a-half. Unless I am fishing over vegetation, I want to get them deeper. If you're fishing in 10 feet of water and have vegetation coming up to within a few feet of the surface, then you want to fish a jerkbait on monofilament.

I like shad or blueback colors in the fall: pro blue, or clear/blue back. And I'll fish these baits pretty quickly. In the late winter or early spring, I might pause a bait for several seconds after I make a couple of twitches with my rod tip, but your pause in the fall needs to be short — one second at the most. You try to find the speed and cadence that the fish want any time you get on the water; you want to find out which retrieve triggers them. Sometimes it's methodical, sometimes fast and erratic.

This time of year, especially in November, fish are going to be schooling, so if I get them started biting a jerkbait, I'll keep throwing it until they stop biting before I go to a different bait. But this time of year, if you get them fired up on a jerkbait, you'll catch most of the fish in the same immediate area on a jerkbait.



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

One thing to think about: when the water really gets cold, then I'll likely go to a Husky Jerk.

It's a little bit bigger bait, and its action isn't as erratic as the Shadow Rap Shad or Shadow Rap Deep. Its action is more like a shad in cold water, slowly suspending.

I want to emphasize that I'll fish a jerkbait all the way from late October to the end of March. Any time during that period, if I'm fishing in clear water, I'm going to have one tied on. They are so very effective, and so many fishermen miss out because they don't start fishing one until January or February. ■

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Smaller duck species like this teal are among the first to migrate south in the fall, followed by bigger ducks, geese and swans.

A man wearing a camouflage jacket and a cap with a logo that says "MISSISSIPPI OAK BRUSH" is holding a teal duck. He is standing in a marshy area with water and reeds in the background. The duck is being held in front of him, and he appears to be examining it.

TIME FOR THE BIG DUCK MIGRATION

CAROLINAS EXPECT HUGE INFLUX OF WATERFOWL THIS MONTH

Jeff Burleson

Even though waterfowl hunters got a brief chance to bag a few ducks over the past two months, the meat of the season doesn't arrive until now.

November and December mark the onset of mass migrations into the Carolinas. The swamps, marshes, moist-soil areas and flooded grain fields will get new arrivals this month. All manipulated fields will need to have a full complement of water to have food ready and available for incoming birds.

Ducks and other migratory birds leave their brooding grounds and venture south to greener pastures for the winter. According to Dean Harrigal, former water-

fowl coordinator for S.C. Department of Natural Resources, the primary environmental change for migratory movement is a change in photoperiod.

"The shortening of day length triggers birds to migrate south," Harrigal said. "The days get shorter here and a whole lot shorter up north."

Day length is variable depending on the location and the time of year. Days become shorter, creeping towards the Dec. 21 winter solstice. In the fall, days get much shorter up north than in the Carolinas, and ducks in Canada and in the northern United States begin to make their way southward.

"Combine cooler temperatures, a

decrease in photoperiod and a full moon, (and) you get a strong wave of migration," he said.

While the Carolinas can experience cooler weather in October, real cold, with consistent winter weather possibilities usually doesn't settle across North America until the beginning of November. Overall, the peak migration for ducks occurs from November through December, when consistent cooler temperatures settle and the days get shorter. But some species of ducks can handle cooler weather longer and will not head south until their local food

continues on page 58

DUCK-BANDING INFO ESSENTIAL TO MANAGING WATERFOWL

Since 1940, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has managed national fish and wildlife populations and their habitat to protect and promote the resources. As part of those efforts, USFWS manages migratory birds jointly with Canada and Mexico, and to make educated, informed decisions, hunter input and band data must be included.

Hunters kill thousands of ducks annually across North America, and band-return data is crucial to determine migration patterns and lifespan of ducks by species. And the bands tell great stories. Through 2018, more than 15 million ducks have been banded, around 200,000 per year in North America. Slightly less than 100,000 bands are returned annually, and they provide excellent data for biologists to determine life span, survival rates, migratory patterns and familial relationships.

The bird-banding lab in Laurel, Md., analyzes and records all data from band returns throughout the hunting season. While most ducks live less than 10 years, band-return data indicates some waterfowl species to live much longer, including a 29-year-old canvasback and a 33-year-old Canada goose.

Band data has provided researchers a wealth of information about how far and where ducks typically migrate. Ducks killed in the swamps of the Carolinas come from a wide variety of locations, banded locally to from as far away as Alaska.

Bands play a vital role in the management of North America's waterfowl and every hunters should check the legs for shiny jewelry before discarding carcasses. ■



Jeff Burleson

PRACTICE DUCK-HUNTING SHOTS

Duck hunting often sets hunters in precarious situations where low light, unstable footing and unusual circumstances increases the difficulty for making clean shots on aerial targets. With duck season arriving soon, a little last-minute practice can make a substantial difference.

The best way to practice is a round or two of sporting clays. A typical round provides hunters with shooting situations at numerous stations available. Targets are typically called "setting mallards," "whistling woodies," "incoming bluebills," or "springing teal" and they can prepare a hunter for a typical day on the water. To make the most out of practice, hunters should bring the shotgun they typically take on duck-hunting trips. And after a couple of rounds, hunters will gain precision with their shots and hopefully, better accuracy as well.

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GREENER PASTURES

continued

and water dwindles away.

Different species will migrate at different times as well. Initially, smaller ducks will migrate, first followed by larger species of geese and swans.

“Blue-winged teal are among the smallest of all waterfowl species, and they will migrate into the Carolinas first, before any others. South Carolina has a short teal season in September that is predominantly blue-winged teal,” Harrigal said.

Pintails, wood ducks, gadwall and widgeon will migrate with photoperiod changes in November. Wood ducks, mallards and green-winged teal are more driven by food and water than photoperiod. Diving ducks — scaup, ringneck, canvasback and bufflehead — move towards the end of the migration and are more driven by the decrease in the availability of food and seasonal shrinkage of habitat.

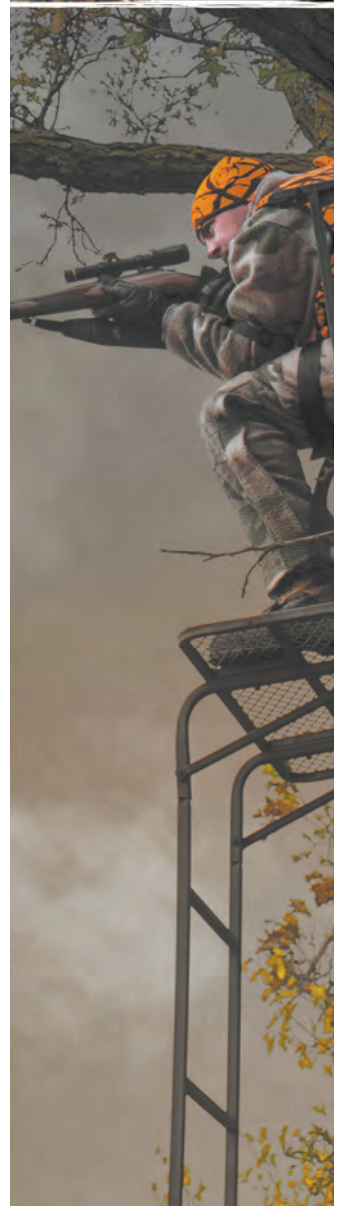
Regardless, most ducks of all species, includ-

ing puddle ducks and diving ducks, will settle into the Carolinas by November and early December. That makes the upcoming hunting seasons not something to miss.

In North Carolina, the season opens Nov. 10 and runs through Dec. 1, then reopens Dec. 15 through Jan. 26. In South Carolina, the season opens Nov. 17 and runs through Nov. 24, then reopens Dec. 8 through Jan. 27. ■



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



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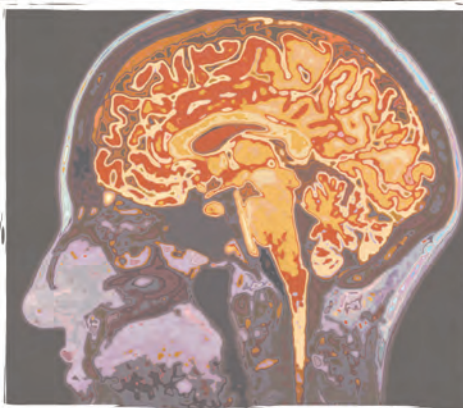
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SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY

Phillip Gentry

Municipal lakes in the Carolinas typically have well-maintained boat ramps or specifically designated kayak launch areas.

INVEST IN MUNIS WHEN FALL FISHING ARRIVES

CITY LAKES AND PONDS OFFER KAYAKERS PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES

Jason Saledas

If you are a member of one of the burgeoning kayak fishing clubs in the Carolinas, chances are pretty good that you've fished in a local, municipal lake.

Muni lakes and kayaks go hand-in-hand as the water districts or other entities that own the lakes love to promote the green way of life, especially if the water is being used for public consumption. The other beautiful thing about muni lakes is that if power boats are allowed on the water, it's typically with a horsepower restriction in the neighborhood of 10 HP or less. This means paddlers don't have to fear being flattened like a squirrel in the middle of a busy interstate by a glitter rocket or cabin cruiser when crossing the main body of the lake.

Another beautiful thing about muni lakes is that all of them have pretty decent fishing for a number of species. Some lakes may even further restrict creel limits beyond what is allowed by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission or the S.C. Department of Natural Resources. That's a win-win for catch-and-release anglers.

Muni lakes may range in size from a

couple hundred to a couple thousand acres, but most lakes in the Carolinas settle between the 400- to 900-acre range. This means a lot of water moves through the lake and also means these lakes tend to be immune from fall turnover or de-stratification that frequently plagues larger impoundments this time of year.

Municipal lakes often have very interesting topography that ranges from a main-lake basin dug with heavy machinery to help impound the lake to old farm ponds and other unique structures beneath their surfaces. In today's cartographic world, the municipality may have gone as far as creating a topographic map that is available through the owning entity, especially if they permit docks to be built by residents, as the maps are used in the dock-approval process.

Learning to fish muni lakes is no different than learning to fish a larger impoundment, except the fish's home range is smaller. Fish typically do not seasonally move as far as they would in a larger impoundment, and the primary forage fish is most likely threadfin shad, which helps keep fish in closer proximity.

Muni lakes may or may not have well-defined creek and river channels, especially if development is permitted on the lakeshore. Muni lakes tend to get a lot of bank beating during the spring by resident anglers, which opens the doorway for a paddling angler with up-to-date sonar skills to have as much or more advantage on finding, and catching fish, as any of the local residents who fish the lake two to three days a week.

The final perk is launch areas. A muni lake is more likely to have a kayak-only launch facility than any other body of water. This again goes back to the green movement and the fact that it's much cheaper to dump a few tons of sand or crushed run on a gently sloping bank than it is to concrete a roundabout with partitioned back-down lanes and build a courtesy dock. ■



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.

NOVEMBER'S BEST FISHING BETS

North Carolina

What — Largemouth bass, crappie, hybrid bass

Where — Greensboro city lakes: Lake Higgins, Lake Brandt, Lake Townsend

How — In fall, bass will invade the shallows, chasing baitfish. Spinnerbaits, crankbaits and Flukes will work. Cast as shallow as you can and retrieve parallel to the bank.

Launch — Each lake has its own launch area available at a charge of \$6 per day, or purchase an annual kayak-launch pass for \$60.

Insider tip — There's no better way to match the hatch than catching bait directly from the lake you're fishing. Greensboro City Lakes allow you to use cast nets for catching bait only, so bring your net and a bait container.

South Carolina

What — Bass, bream, catfish

Where — Lake H.B. Robinson, Hartsville, S.C.

How — For bass, try flipping a black/blue jig and craw combo around any of the boat docks that have deeper water off the front. Crappie can be caught fishing jigs or live bait around submerged timber. There are fish attractors in the lake.

Launch — Progress Energy maintains a public boat ramp and pier at the north end of the lake. Boaters can gain access to this ramp via Lake Robinson Drive, aka State Road S-13-346. This road crosses the lake between Middendorf Rd. and W. Bobo Highway.

Insider tip — There is a fish consumption advisory on Lake Robinson for mudfish (don't eat), bluegill, warmouth and chain pickerel (one meal per week) and largemouth bass (one meal per month).

MUNI LAKE MONSTER:

Big fish live in small ponds? That's never more true than when it's applied to a municipal lake. These lakes don't receive the same fishing pressure as big impoundments, and while some may receive as much pressure per acre but generally with less intensity, meaning kayaking anglers with appropriate sonar and fishing skills are capable of catching some truly sizable fish, especially bass. My personal best bass came from a municipal lake while kayak-fishing with a buddy more than 10 years ago. We were pretending it was the 1980s by fishing with bubble-gum floating worms. Just big, pink worms and an offset hook. Although he'd never been on this lake before we fished, my buddy pointed out an area where he thought he'd seen a huge bass guarding a nest. He told me to cast at her as he was re-tying after catching a decent largemouth bass. You always imagine that a 10-pound bass would hit much differently than say a 2-, 3- or even a 5-pound bass. This one didn't. As the worm was fading into the depths, I felt the usual thump, and then the line moved off to the side. Never one to be stingy on the hookset, I gave the fish as big a pro-angler hookset as I could muster without turning the kayak over, and the fish simply exploded. Two aerial leaps and four hard runs on 12-pound test and medium-action spinning gear is enough to cause heart failure. Having tired out, the fish rolled up next to the boat, and I lipped it and brought it aboard. This was before measuring boards and identifiers or even carry hand-held scales were common. I tossed my buddy my digital camera, and he snapped two photos before I released the fish. We both agreed the fish would go in the high 9s but probably lacked an ounce or two of being a true 10-pounder. That's okay; after all, it was just a bass.

continues on page 62



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SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY

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The beauty of the Pond Magic is that it you can target not only bass of all sizes, but the smaller size will also catch crappie, catfish or pickerel many other fish that inhabit small bodies of water. This bait is available in 11 color schemes, including: Craw, Grass-hopper, and Nest Robber.

The baits weigh 3/16-ounce, employ 2/0 Mustad hooks and tandem blades.

MSRP is \$3.79 purchased from the BOOYAH website and are also available from many online retailers. Get more info at www.booyahbaits.com.



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COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver

GET CHEEKY WITH MOJO GROUPER

MOJO FIREDISC GROUPER CHEEKS MAKE A FINE MEAL

MRAD

The odd weather that has been prevalent in the Carolinas this year has continued into the fall. After rain and heat through the summer, Hurricane Florence backed into the east coast and wreaked havoc from Cedar Island, N.C. to Cape Romain, S.C.

There are areas where inshore fish bit immediately after the storm passed, and fall is also a great time for inland fishing and hunting, so sportsmen have many options for fresh game and fish on their tables. However, fall is typically a time for calm ocean waters, allowing fishermen easy trip to the edge of the Continental Shelf where big grouper live. They are the target here, not because of their body meat, which is excellent, but because this recipe uses their cheeks, and larger grouper have larger cheeks.

Grouper are generally considered a prime offshore bottomfish for the dinner table. However, there are parts of grouper that are discarded during the cleaning process that excellent table fare. The cheeks are at the top of this list for many fishermen. They really are tender and delicious.

The cheeks are just what you would think: pockets of meat just below the eye and above the mouth. Many fishermen compare them to scallops more often than to the grouper's body meat. They definitely have a different texture than the rest of the grouper, and all grouper have them.

The cheeks aren't particularly large on a barely legal grouper, but they are there. Locate the bone pocket under the eye and use a sharp fillet knife in a circular motion to scoop them out. They will be about the size of a tablespoon on smaller grouper and almost the size of a ladle on large grouper. All are excellent, it just takes more of the smaller ones to make a meal.



Jerry Dilsaver

A FireDisk cooker is the perfect vehicle for preparing fish chunks like grouper cheeks and veggies. **INSET:** Grouper cheeks make for a great and unusual meal on a fall evening — and one few fishermen know about.



MOJO FIREDISC GROUPER CHEEKS

This might be the simplest recipe ever featured in 16 years of this column. Don't take that as a bad thing, as I also believe it is excellent. It's just so simple I kept overlooking it.

Several weeks ago, I was visiting one of my favorite fishmongers and saw a package of grouper cheeks buried in the ice. I really like grouper cheeks, so I bought them. I invited one of the neighbors over, and she asked if this would be a recipe for the column; she was all in favor of it. I won't include her name on the possibility someone might not like this, but my neighbor gets the credit for having it included or the blame if you don't like it.

Regular readers know I like Mojo marinade. There are several, and all are good, but the one I prefer is Goya Mojo Criollo, the Cuban version of mojo sauce, loosely translated as garlic sauce. I can taste the garlic but don't find it to be strong, and I believe the orange and lemon juices are the real secret. They penetrate the meat to keep it moist and tender while cooking.

My introduction to fish cheeks was about 25 years ago at Camp Opportunity in Ohio, a deer-hunting camp that Capt. Ottie Snyder managed for Horton Crossbows. Snyder was a walleye guide on Lake Erie during the season and managed Camp Opportunity during the winter. He would save walleye cheeks all summer and bring them to the camp for special treats for hunters.

His favorite way to prepare walleye cheeks was to sauté them in a little olive oil with peppers and onions. They were excellent, and I headed home with them high on my priority list.

I haven't tried any fish cheeks that weren't good, but grouper

cheeks have become my favorite. Some larger cheeks must be cut several times to pare them down to bite-sized pieces. Cook them whole and then cut them.

I used bell peppers and sweet onions as vegetables. I often add fresh mushrooms and have added green beans, jalapeno and poblano peppers, several nuts and more. Don't be afraid. If you like a vegetable that won't fall apart in a stir fry, give it a try.

I believe this recipe would be good with just the Mojo marinade, but I add a little pepper to the vegetables before marinating. Some folks will also add salt, but the marinade adds plenty for me. Don't get lazy and marinate the vegetables as long as the cheeks. It tends to wilt them a little; they don't taste the same.

I suggest marinating the cheeks several hours but have left them all day with no adverse effects. Don't overcook the cheeks. They are naturally tender, but can get chewy if overcooked.

I prepared this meal outside on my FireDisc Cooker. It does a good job, and I can pour some Mojo marinade in the pan to help season while cooking and not have concerns that my exhaust fan can handle the steam. A conventional wok or cast-iron pan will work, just not as well. ■

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound of grouper cheeks

1 package of mixed color bell peppers or 1 each red, yellow and orange bell peppers

½ sweet onion

Goya Mojo Criollo marinade

Salt and pepper

Buttery flavor non-stick cooking spray

PREPARATION:

Put grouper cheeks in container and cover with Mojo Criollo marinade. Allow to marinate for at least 2 hours. All day is not too much as long as marinate and cheeks are kept cold. Slice peppers and onions. Lightly sprinkle coarse, ground black pepper on peppers and onions. Put the peppers and onions in Zip-Lock bag, squeeze the air out and cover with Mojo Criollo marinade. Only allow the vegetables to marinate approximately 30 minutes.

Spray the FireDisc pan with buttery flavor cooking spray, covering until it beads (fairly heavy). Preheat FireDisc to medium heat. Add vegetables and Mojo Criollo marinade to FireDisc pan. Stir often and cook until peppers and onions show a slight dark scaling. The liquid will steam and evaporate.

Move the peppers and onions to the outer edge of the pan to keep them warm, but not cooking further. Remove the grouper cheeks from the Mojo Criollo marinade and place in center of FireDisc.

Let them sear about 30 seconds to a minute. Add the Mojo Criollo marinade from the marinating container until it almost covers the grouper cheeks. Cook this, stirring frequently.

The Mojo Criollo marinade will steam and evaporate. The grouper cheeks may be done just before all is gone, but certainly just after. Be careful not to overcook the grouper cheeks. A very light browning of the edges or one side is OK, but not darker. This will take approximately 6 to 10 minutes, depending on the number of cheeks and amount of marinade.

I like to serve grouper cheeks with simple sides. A green salad or lettuce wedge is great to start, and a baked sweet potato is an excellent side. Some folks might prefer a regular baked potato, and corn on the cob also goes well. If you would



like dessert, use something light. Pudding is good, or you can serve flan to stay with the Latin Mojo taste. ■



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.

STICKS AND STRINGS

Sammy Romano

Use a permanent marker of some kind to mark where your speed ring is set; it will be easy to determine if it's been moved.

HAWKE

CROSSBOW SCOPES 101: SIGHT THEM IN CORRECTLY

IT'S A PROCESS INVOLVING SEVERAL STEPS, BUT IT'S INVALUABLE WHEN THAT BUCK APPEARS IN THE WOODS

Due to increasingly more liberal regulations and an aging population with accompanying physical limitations, crossbow use has increased dramatically almost nationwide.

The increased demand has led to many technological advances in crossbow design and accessories. The accessory that has seen the most improvement is the scope. Better optics and newer features such as variable power, illuminated reticles and ocular lens adjustments combine to make these scopes clearer and more accurate than ever.

A HUGE LEAP IN TECHNOLOGY

For many years, crossbow scopes were fixed power with multiple crosshairs. This enabled the shooter to have multiple aiming points without resorting to “Kentucky windage” — holding over the target at longer distances. The problem was that each manufacturer only made one scope for many different crossbow models of different speeds. This led to vast differences in the corresponding

distances at which each crosshair was zeroed depending on which model crossbow it was mounted on. Shooters had to learn distances through trial-and-error by shooting a lot of arrows at varying distances, often carrying a “cheat sheet” to keep track of them.

Higher-end, modern crossbow scopes, such as the Hawke Optics XB-1 that I use, allow the shooter to calibrate the crosshairs to exact, 10-yard increments, making life much simpler. This is achieved by turning the variable-power ring to adjust appearance of the gaps in the crosshairs.

Unlike a variable-power rifle scope, where a hunter uses a higher power to examine his target better or shoot longer distances and a lower power for closer shots; once a crossbow is sighted in, the shooter never moves the variable power ring again. This is probably the most-misunderstood feature; I get more questions about it than any other crossbow topic. This week alone, I've had eight to 10 phone calls asking for help with this feature.

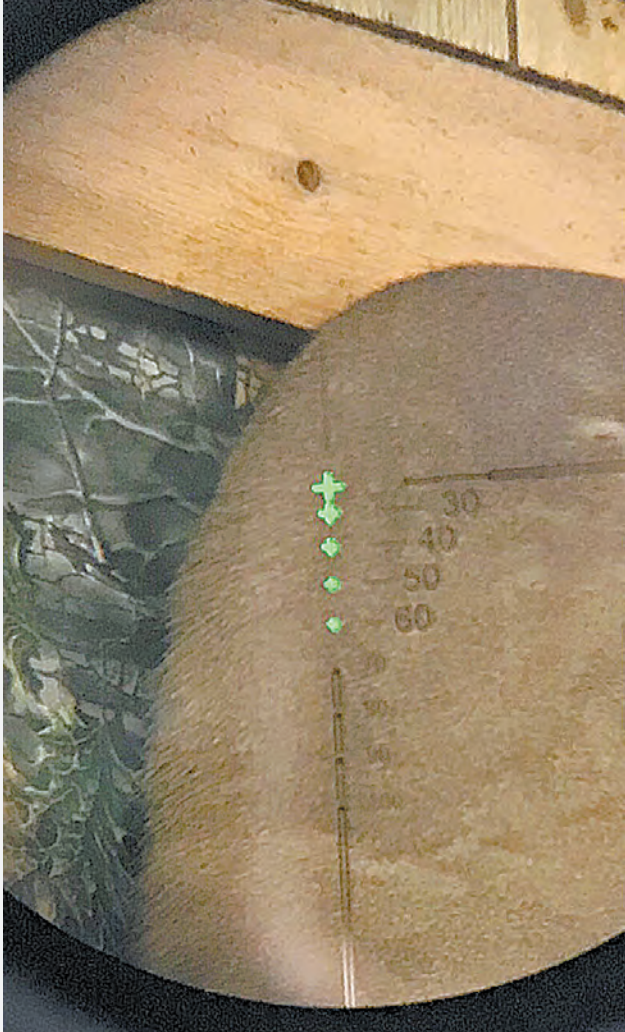
STEP BY STEP ZERO

First, make sure that the scope is properly mounted, level, and that all screws

have been tightened on both the base and rings. Then, adjust the ocular focus ring at the back of the eyepiece until the crosshairs become clear and focused. Next adjust the variable-power ring, aka speed ring, to the published speed for your crossbow. There is no need to chronograph your crossbow; you can calibrate the scope better by shooting at two distances. Next, zero in your top (20-yard) crosshair at a measured 20 yards using the scope's windage and elevation turret adjustments.

It is important to remember that these adjustments are being made at only 20 yards, because most scopes are ¼- or ½-minute of angle, meaning at 20 yards it will take five clicks to move your arrow's point of impact ¼- or ½-inch. In other words, you will be moving them a good bit more than when you zero a rifle at 100 yards. Once you have the top crosshair zeroed at 20 yards, replace the covers on the adjustment turrets, as you will not have to move them again.

Now that your top crosshair is zeroed at 20 yards, move back to 30 yards. Shoot at the bull's-eye using the second crosshair from the top. Your arrow should



ONE AT A TIME:

When sighting in a crossbow scope, start with the top crosshair and work your way down, shooting at a greater distance each time to keep your point of impact consistent at each range.

impact the target in line with the bull's-eye left to right. If it hits the bull's-eye, you are done. If it impacts high, slightly turn the speed ring higher (counterclockwise) to lower the point of impact. If it impacts the target low, slightly turn the speed ring lower (clockwise) to raise the point of impact. Continue adjusting until the second crosshair is zeroed at 30 yards. When that's done, you should be sighted in at all distances. Check another distance — the third crosshair at 40 yards — and if this checks out, you are done.

I recommend marking across the speed ring and scope tube using a paint marker so you can see if someone moves this adjustment. Do not move the speed ring again or it will throw your scope out of calibration. Once you have your scope calibrated and are using a rangefinder to range a target, there is no reason to miss.

A little time spent on the range calibrating your scope will pay dividends when the moment of truth arrives in the field.

These scopes are an excellent addition to any crossbow that does not have a scope with this calibration feature. Try one out this year to improve your results a field. ■



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

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Terry Madewell

Drift-fishing is an established way for Santee Cooper fishermen to land striped bass and blue catfish.

DOUBLE DIPPING FOR STRIPERS, CATS

SANTEE OFFERS GREAT NOVEMBER OPPORTUNITIES

Terry Madewell

Veteran guide Dave Hilton from Ridgeville, S.C., has long cherished the opportunity to catch multiple species of fish at Santee Cooper. During November, the striper and catfish action is exceptional on Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie, so Hilton set out to learn how to double-dip. “Stripers and catfish are typically on a great bite right now, among the best of the year for both species,” he said. “Instead of targeting only one, I learned how to catch both on the same trip at the same time.”

THE PLAN

Hilton (843-870-4734) said his technique relies on location. Plenty of places exist on both lakes for catching stripers or catfish, but the options for finding both in the same proximity are few.

“Electronics play a huge role,” he said. “I’ve guided for 27 years and have identified areas where I can reasonably expect to catch either species, and I’m targeting drops, humps and deep holes. By drift-fishing, I can utilize the wind direction

to help me get the right drift pattern. Before beginning, I’ll check to ensure ample forage and targeted species are along the route.”

Hilton makes long drifts that take his pontoon boat over diverse bottom contours, covering striper or catfish targets. Typically, his parties catch stripers over some locations and catfish at others.

“But we’ll also drift over areas with unique underwater features that attract both species,” he said. “One example is a high spot right along the edge of a drop. When that occurs, we can get real busy, real quick, with a big cat or two and multiple stripers.”

Thus, he said, chaos can be a good thing.

THE SETUP

In terms of rigs, Hilton’s setup would make a spider jealous, with all the protrusions from his boat in terms of rod numbers, angles and directions. He employs multiple catfish drift rigs out of the back of the boat with rods held at a 45-degree angle.

“With rods up, the rod tips bounce more, and I feel it gives the bait a more lifelike appearance, leading to aggressive bites,” said Hilton, who uses a variety of baits; gizzard shad, blueback herring and white perch are favored.

Because he often fishes the stump- and tree-laden bottom of Lake Marion, his tackle is suited for the snaggy lake floor. He employs the typical Santee rig, but often with 100-pound main line.

His striper setup employs multiple rigs that are set flat on the sides of his boat in his duo version of the Driftmaster rod holder. This version is designed to hold rods at two angles; he sets the catfish rods at the “up” angle and the striper rigs parallel to the water.

He prefers 7½-foot rods with a much-lighter tip action, and the medium-light “striper” action Ugly Stik is one of his rod choices. He uses 15-pound line with a 1- to 2-ounce sinker above an 18-inch leader.

His favorite striper bait is live blueback herring, but a gizzard shad the size of a dollar bill or slightly smaller is excellent. He hooks live baits through the nose

when drift fishing.

“The biggest concern is a striper will often tap the bait before inhaling it,” Hilton said. “To avoid premature hooksets, I tell my fishermen the striper just licked that herring; chill and give him a few seconds to swallow it.”

During November, Hilton will fish 25 to 30 feet deep on Lake Marion and often down to 40 feet on Lake Moultrie. For stripers, he’ll watch his graph adjust to where fish are suspended in the water column.

“For best results, I drift fairly slow, staying in the 0.3 to 0.5 miles per hour range using drift socks as necessary,” he said.

THE SCORE

Hilton said a typical catch for the day will be a full 120-quart cooler.

“This is real fishing, so no guarantees, but usually it depends on the size of the catfish and stripers as to how many fish it takes, but that’s my goal,” he said.

“Typically, 20 to 30 stripers and 15 to 20 catfish or more per day are caught. We boat a lot of 15- to 20-pound catfish, and 30 to 40-pound catfish are realistic.”

Doing the Hilton “Double-Dip” simply enhances the odds of catching catfish and stripers on the same trip and Hilton said for best results he simply keeps faith in the big-picture process.

“I use the PP&S rule,” he said.

“Patience and persistence sprinkled with at least some skill leads to doubling on striper and catfish success.” ■



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.



HEAVY FISH, HEAVY TACKLE:

Terry Madewell

Guide David Hilton makes sure his tackle is up to the task of doing battle with trophy blue catfish on Lake Marion or Lake Moultrie. He'll spool his reels with up to 100-pound test line.

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HEAD FOR THE MOUNTAINS

Robert Satterwhite

Because of injury, Austin Neery couldn't follow one of his childhood dreams — to be a professional baseball player — but nothing has gotten in the way of his desire to be a professional bass-fishing guide.

LIVING OUT A DREAM

BASS FISHING WAS YOUNGSTER'S PASSION; NOW, HE'S SMILING ALMOST EVERY DAY AS A FULL-TIME FISHING GUIDE

Austin Neery developed a passion for bass fishing when he was four years old, fishing from a boat dock on Lake Wylie near Charlotte, N.C. — a passion fueled by his father's love for bass fishing.

By the time he was 10, he was fishing on his own, competing in local Christian-based bass fishing tournaments and regional casting tournaments. At 14, he won the national Kids Casting tournament and a \$5,000 prize, competing against 8,000 participants nationwide.

Mike Neery, Austin's father, coached Austin and his younger brother, who, after he was grown, decided to pursue another lifestyle. Austin persisted with bass fishing.

"I had two methods of teaching," Mike Neery said. "I would have Austin fish with only one type of lure until he mastered it before trying another one."

The second method was more Zen-centered.

"I would tell Austin to close his eyes and

cast, calling on 'The Force' (from the Star Wars movie) to guide him."

Mike Neery, a lifelong bass fisher, had dreamed of being a professional fishing guide, but he had a family to support, so he chose a more reliable method of making a living: building homes. The Neery family moved from North Carolina to Maryland, where Mike Neery plied his trade around the Washington, D.C., area.

Meanwhile, Austin found an additional sport to pursue: baseball. He excelled enough to win a baseball scholarship to Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, N.C., but as a sophomore, he suffered a debilitating shoulder injury, losing his scholarship and dashing any hopes of becoming a professional player.

After he recuperated, Austin turned to his first love — bass fishing — forming Western Carolina's first bass-fishing club and competing in area tournaments. In an area with thousands of streams where trout fishing reigned and scores of trout-fishing guide services proliferated, Neery

noticed that only a few bass-fishing guide services were available.

"All those trout streams ended in a lake somewhere," Neery said, noting the high country has dozens of lakes, all of which hold what Neery and many other fishers consider the kings of fresh-water game-fish: largemouth and smallmouth bass.

While Austin Neery was still in school, Mike Neery, "fed up with the traffic in D.C.," moved his family to western North Carolina.

With backing and encouragement from his father, Austin Neery established a bass-fishing guide service and recruited a friend to assist him: T.K. Beutell, a native of the area whose family owns one of the largest Christmas tree farms western North Carolina.

Neery had found his niche. The guide service was so successful that a year later, Neery opened a fishing outfitting shop — Dream Catcher Guides and Fishing Supplies — on the outskirts of Sylva, N.C.

Although he guides on the large lakes in the region — Fontana, Chatuge, Hiwassee, Santeetlah and Lake James in North Carolina, Jocassee in South Carolina and Burton in Georgia — Neary said smaller lakes provide some of the best bass fishing and often are overlooked. The most productive, he said, are Lake Junaluska in Haywood County, Nantahala Lake in Macon County, and Cedar Cliff, Bear Lake, Wolf Creek and Glenville, aka Thorpe, in Jackson County.

The small lakes have plenty of big bass and a lot less fishing pressure than the larger lakes, Neary said: “I once caught two 9-pounders back-to-back on Bear Lake.”

Guide trips focus mainly on largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass, depending on the lake. Lake Chatuge in Clay County has mostly spotted bass, and spots are showing up in many of the area’s large reservoirs.

Neary uses both baitcasting and spinning gear, depending how the bass are acting, and he fishes with large lures, especially baitfish imitations and crawfish imitations.

“Bass eat a lot of small bream, trout and crawfish,” he said.

Neary does many of his trips on Lake Glenville.

“Glenville has a good population of bass and some big bass,” he said.

Neary guides year-round, but the absolute best time to fish for bass, he said, is during the spring spawn.

Dream Catcher is an all-purpose fishing shop. While bass-fishing guide services are the primary focus, Neary also employs two part-time fly-fishing guides and sells fly-fishing supplies. Neary and Beutell are the only full-time bass guides.

The shop is a family affair. Mike Neary helps in the shop and does occasional guiding. Neary’s grandmother helps in the shop when needed.

Austin Neary (Austin@DreamCatchersFishing.com) not only filled a niche in an area dominated by trout fishing, he also found a career doing what he loves best: bass fishing. Mike Neary, too, in a way, has realized a life-long dream of being a professional fishing guide. ■



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.



PRESSURE POINTS:

Guide Austin Neary loves fishing on the larger reservoirs in the high country of the Carolinas and Georgia, but he believes that smaller lakes have even better fishing because the fishing pressure is at a much-lower level.

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Z-MAN BAIT BINDERZ TACKLE BAGS

Hard-sided tackle boxes are so 80s! They are bulky and create a lot of wasted space. And if you're using mostly soft-plastic lures, it's inconvenient to store them in hard tackle boxes while keeping them in their factory bags.

The new doublewide Z-Man Bait BinderZ gives anglers the perfect storage option. These soft-sided bags are durable, take up little room, and allow you to store your soft plastics in their factory bags. But, the BinderZ also have bulk storage areas for fishing essentials like pliers, scissors, spools of line, and jigheads.

The corrosion-resistant binder rings are perfectly sized and spaced to fit the factory-punched holes on Z-Man's soft plastic pouches, but the BinderZ have plenty of room to store plastics from other manufacturers as well.

Hook-and-loop closures and plastic snaps keep your tackle secure, provide easy access, and won't rust or corrode like zippers. The doublewide BinderZ retails for \$34.99.

More Info: www.zmanfishing.com



TINK'S BLACK LABEL

If one scent product is iconic in the deer-hunting industry, it's Tink's #69 Doe-in-Rut. So how do you make the best better?

The folks at Tink's, who have been branding and bottling their deer lure since 1972, have certainly tried. This fall, they've brought out a top-drawer version of the classic, Tink's Black Label, in limited quantities, for hunters who want the best of the best.

Black Label is a doe-urine scent collected from does that are fed a special diet to keep them in optimum health, and it's in a concentrated formula, collected from the peak of a doe's estrus cycle. Black Label comes in a 2-ounce bottle that's inscribed with the date the bottle was filled, so hunters know exactly how fresh their lure is.

Tink's Black Label has an MSRP of \$24.99.

More Info: www.tinks.com



HYBRIDLIGHT'S MAMMOTH

Talk about a flashlight that's much, much more. That's HybridLight's Mammoth, a multi-light/charger that can take on just about any lighting task a sportsman can think of.

The Mammoth puts out a bright 400 lumens as an LED light or 150 lumens as a flashlight, the difference being one click of a button. It recharges from a USB port, a built-in, retractable wall plug, or built-in solar panel. Battery life is 35 hours for the flashlight function and 18 hours as an area light from a built-in, lithium-ion battery.

The Mammoth has a rotating, magnetic base and a 120-degree flexible head that allows it to be used as a desk lamp on a campground table or a perfect, angled light for working under the hood of a vehicle or ATV.

The Mammoth, which has a MSRP of \$59.95, is 9 inches long and weighs a half-ounce more than a half-pound.

More Info: www.hybridlight.com



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



Brent Walsler

Brent Walsler of Lexington, N.C. caught this 9.76-pound bass on Sept. 29, 2017, on Jordan Lake, as part of Operation North State's Jordan Lake Top Shelf Fishin' Festival, which treated 50 Wounded Warriors and disabled veterans to a day on the water.



Luke Stanley

Luke Stanley, 14, got his first turkey on the first day of youth season in Chatham County, N.C., in 2017.



Carl Butler

Carl Butler caught this 4-pound flounder on Oct. 14, 2017, in the Neuse River near Oriental, N.C., with Capt. Joe Ward.



Tanner Nimmons

Tanner Nimmons of Myrtle Beach, S.C., caught this 18-pound carp while bream fishing in a local pond on ultralight tackle.



Scott Gurley

Scott Gurley of Goldsboro, N.C., caught this 14-inch, 1-pound, 13-ounce yellow perch in Tranter's Creek on Feb. 6, 2017.



Tina Thomason

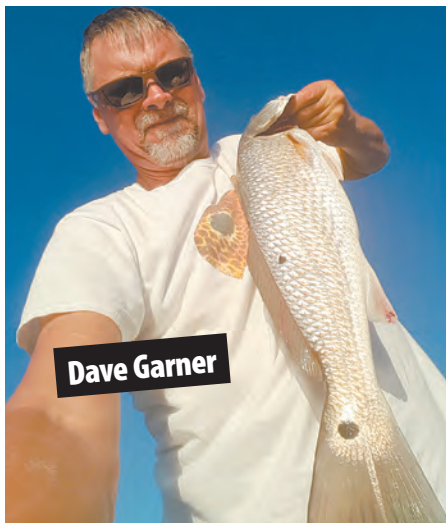
Tina Thomason caught her first redfish April 1, 2018, on the south jetty outside Charleston Harbor on cut mullet.

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



Dave Garner

Dave Garner caught this nice redfish at Ocean Isle, N.C., in September 2017.



Dianne Wilson

Dianne Wilson of Mint Hill, N.C., caught this 35-pound, 40-inch red on Garden City Pier on Oct. 27, 2017.



Bryson Pate

Bryson Pate of York, S.C., killed his first deer last fall, this 8-point buck.



Marvin Sartin

Marvin Sartin of Aurora, N. C., caught these speckled trout — 7, 5 and 3 pounds — on a Super Spook, Jr. on Oct. 28, 2017.



Amy Ford

Amy Ford killed this 11-point buck on Friday, Oct. 27, in Beaufort County, N.C., with a 15-yard shot.

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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Lillian Rutter

Lillian Rutter, 9, caught this 15-pound catfish in the Little Dee River near Conway, S.C.



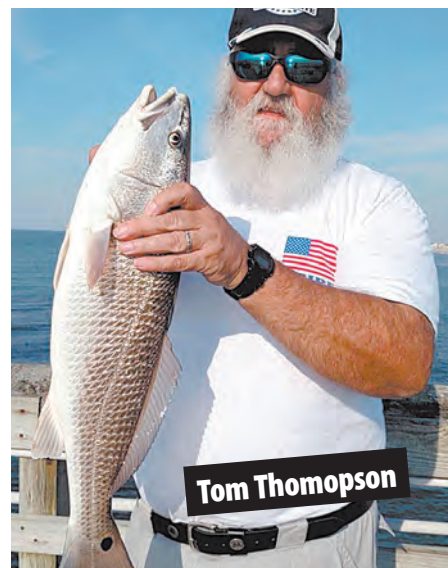
Danny Thames

Danny Thames caught this 43-inch, citation red drum in the surf at North Carolina's Fort Fisher in November 2017.



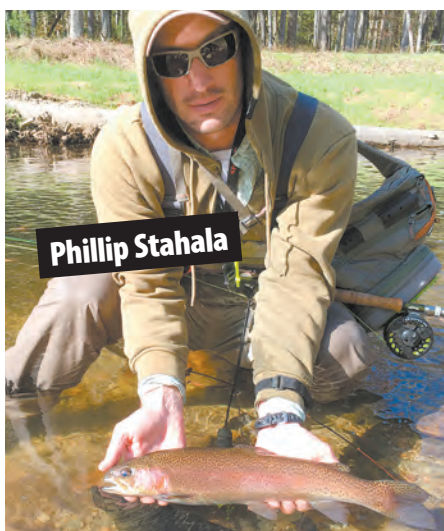
Dennis Dulin

Dennis Dulin caught this nice hybrid bass at South Carolina's Clarks Hill Lake.



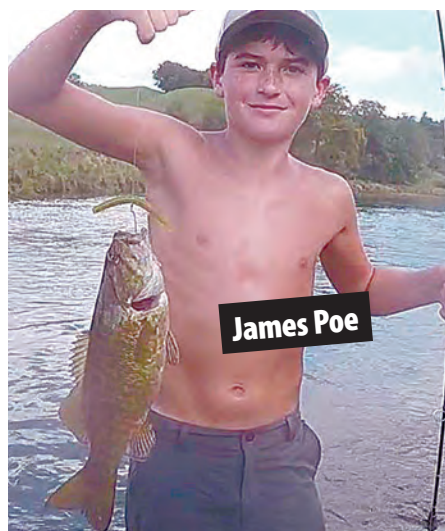
Tom Thomopson

Tom Thomopson of Salisbury, N.C., caught this 25-inch red drum on Ocean Crest Pier on Sept. 15, 2017.



Phillip Stahala

Phillip Stahala of Charlotte, N.C., caught this rainbow trout on a streamer in Stone Mountain State Park on Oct. 16, 2017.



James Poe

James Poe caught this nice smallmouth bass on Sept. 16, 2017, on the New River close to the N.C./Va. border.



Dan Failor

Dan Failor of Richlands, N.C., caught this nice redfish on a topwater bait near New Bern.



Charlie Arnette

Charlie Arnette, 11, killed his first turkey on opening day of South Carolina's 2018 season.



Brittyn Shannon

Brittyn Shannon caught this 10-pound bass, only her second fish, on June 7 in a private pond in Prosperity S.C.



Corey Ormond

Corey Ormond caught this 24½-inch, 5.3-pound speckled trout in North Carolina's Pungo River on Nov. 10, 2017.

HUNTING SEASONS

DEER

Region	Weapon	Season Dates
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
Central	Gun	Nov. 19-Jan. 1, 2019
	Bowhunting	Sept. 8-Oct. 26
	Muzzleloader	Oct. 27-Nov. 9
Northeastern/ Southeastern	Gun	Nov. 10-Jan. 1, 2019
	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. 17-Dec. 16:	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

Resident zone, Oct. 3-13, Nov. 10-Dec. 1, Dec. 15-Feb. 9.
Statewide: Sept. 1-30
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

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/ Opossum	Sept. 15-March 15, 2019 (statewide)	3 raccoons per party	
Other furbearers	Sept. 15-March 15, 2019 (Game Zones 3, 6)	No limits	
Bear	Oct. 17-23 (still hunting only) (Game Zone 1 only) Oct. 24-30 (dogs), (Game Zone 1 only) Oct. 17-30 (Horry, Georgetown, Williamsburg counties)	1 5 per party 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 Nov. 17-24, Dec. 8-Jan. 27, 2019	6 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

ASTRO TABLES

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

The "Best Days" column is based on the ever-changing positions of the sun and the moon, rating each day on a scale of 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more solar/lunar influence that day is experiencing (see "Value" column or corresponding black bars). The two Primary periods (Moon Overhead and Moon Underfoot) vary in length from one hour to three-and-one-half hours, depending on a number of important lunar cycles, such as how close the moon is to the earth that day and how high its orbit is. The solar symbols alert you to when a Primary period overlaps a major solar period (eg: Dawn, High-Noon, and Dusk). The secondary periods of Moonrise and Moonset last about one hour each... 30 minutes before and after the listed time. (See key at bottom of each month for more detail.)

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

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

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

and-valleys forecaster. Includes rise and set times for the sun and moon, space to log your catches, "Timely Tips," plus fish and game symbols showing you each month's don't-miss periods. Also includes exclusive summary charts revealing the best and worst days of 2019, the year's best periods, a look ahead at 2020, and more. Comes with FREE 2019 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for \$8.95, plus \$3 s&h. **Book: "How to Know When to Go" by Rick Taylor.** \$14.95 (plus \$4 s&h). 100 pages, 43 illustrations. A comprehensive look at the main factors influencing fish and game activity periods, plus how to devise an effective when-to-go game plan using any year's PrimeTimes calendars. Individual assessments of bass, panfish, deer, turkey, and more.

2019 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).

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2018 NOV	BEST DAYS				VALUE
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	
Thu 1	■	■	■	■	49
Fri 2	■	■	■	■	41
Sat 3	■	■	■	■	37
Sun 4	■	■	■	■	44
Mon 5	■	■	■	■	50
Tue 6	■	■	■	■	55
Wed 7	■	■	■	■	57
Thu 8	■	■	■	■	44
Fri 9	■	■	■	■	32
Sat 10	■	■	■	■	20
Sun 11	■	■	■	■	14
Mon 12	■	■	■	■	13
Tue 13	■	■	■	■	11
Wed 14	■	■	■	■	18
Thu 15	■	■	■	■	31
Fri 16	■	■	■	■	24
Sat 17	■	■	■	■	22
Sun 18	■	■	■	■	25
Mon 19	■	■	■	■	39
Tue 20	■	■	■	■	51
Wed 21	■	■	■	■	65
Thu 22	■	■	■	■	72
Fri 23	■	■	■	■	64
Sat 24	■	■	■	■	57
Sun 25	■	■	■	■	49
Mon 26	■	■	■	■	45
Tue 27	■	■	■	■	42
Wed 28	■	■	■	■	45
Thu 29	■	■	■	■	51
Fri 30	■	■	■	■	38
25 50 75 AVERAGE					

LUNAR PERIODS					
TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED					
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT		
12:56 am	6:26 am - 9:36 am ☀	3:00 pm	6:51 pm - 10:01 pm	☾	
2:03 am	7:28 am - 10:24 am	3:41 pm	7:53 pm - 10:49 pm	☾	
3:09 am	8:28 am - 11:08 am	4:18 pm	8:53 pm - 11:33 pm	☾	
3:15 am	8:27 am - 10:49 am	3:53 pm	8:52 pm - 11:14 pm	☾	End DST
4:20 am	9:24 am - 11:30 am	4:28 pm	9:49 pm - 11:55 pm	☾	
5:24 am	10:23 am - 12:09 pm ☀	5:03 pm	10:48 pm - 12:34 am	☾	
6:27 am	11:20 am - 12:52 pm ☀	5:39 pm	11:45 pm - Midnight	☾	NEW
7:29 am	12:16 pm - 1:34 pm	6:17 pm	Midnight - 1:17 am	☾	
8:29 am	1:12 pm - 2:20 pm	6:59 pm	12:41 am - 1:59 am	☾	
9:26 am	2:05 pm - 3:07 pm	7:44 pm	1:37 am - 2:45 am	☾	
10:20 am	2:55 pm - 3:57 pm	8:32 pm	2:30 am - 3:32 am	☾	LOW
11:09 am	3:45 pm - 4:47 pm ☀	9:24 pm	3:20 am - 4:22 am	☾	
11:54 am	4:31 pm - 5:37 pm ☀	10:17 pm	4:10 am - 5:12 am	☾	Apogee
12:34 pm	5:15 pm - 6:27 pm	11:11 pm	4:56 am - 6:02 am	☾	
1:10 pm	5:53 pm - 7:19 pm		5:40 am - 6:52 am	☾	HALF
1:44 pm	6:32 pm - 8:08 pm	12:06 am	6:18 am - 7:44 am ☀	☾	
2:16 pm	7:10 pm - 8:58 pm	1:02 am	6:57 am - 8:33 am ☀	☾	
2:47 pm	7:45 pm - 9:51 pm	1:58 am	7:35 am - 9:23 am	☾	
3:18 pm	8:22 pm - 10:44 pm	2:56 am	8:10 am - 10:16 am	☾	
3:50 pm	9:00 pm - 11:40 pm	3:56 am	8:47 am - 11:09 pm	☾	
4:25 pm	9:42 pm - 12:38 am	4:57 am	9:25 am - 12:05 pm	☾	
5:05 pm	10:28 pm - 1:38 am	6:02 am	10:07 am - 1:03 pm ☀	☾	FULL
5:49 pm	11:19 pm - Midnight	7:08 am	10:53 am - 2:03 pm ☀	☾	
6:41 pm	Midnight - 2:39 am	8:14 am	11:44 am - 3:04 pm	☾	
7:38 pm	12:16 am - 3:42 am	9:19 am	12:41 pm - 4:07 pm	☾	HIGH
8:41 pm	1:16 am - 4:42 am	10:19 am	1:41 pm - 5:07 pm	☾	Perigee
9:48 pm	2:18 am - 5:40 am	11:13 am	2:43 pm - 6:05 pm ☀	☾	
10:55 pm	3:22 am - 6:34 am	12:01 pm	3:47 pm - 6:59 pm ☀	☾	
	4:23 am - 7:23 am	12:43 pm	4:48 pm - 7:48 pm	☾	HALF
12:02 am	5:22 am - 8:08 am	1:21 pm	5:47 pm - 8:33 pm	☾	

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

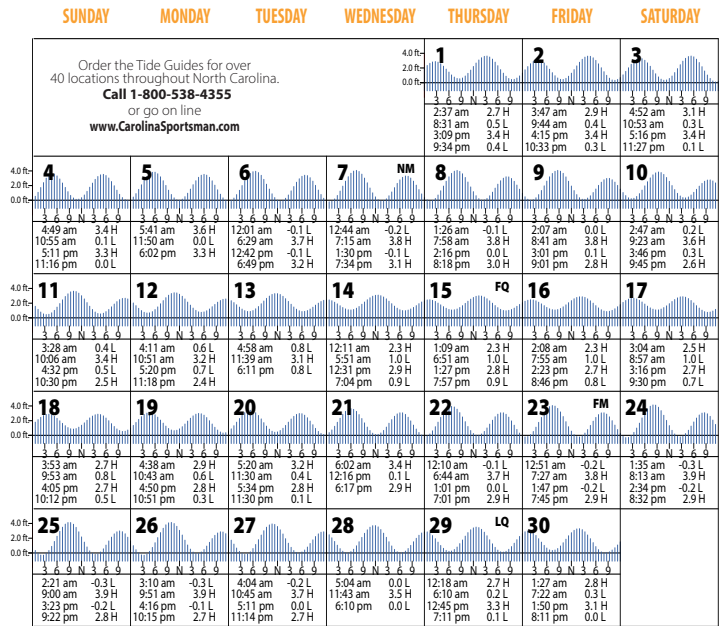
Oregon Inset, USCG Station

	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	-0:22	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

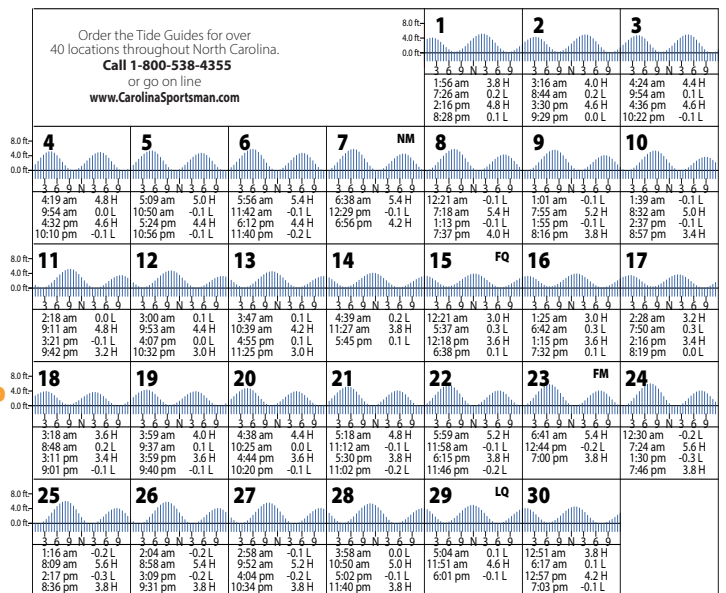
Southport, Cape Fear River

	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
Shalotte Inlet (Bowen Point)	0:10	0:17
Tubbs Inlet Outer Coast	-0:19	0:23

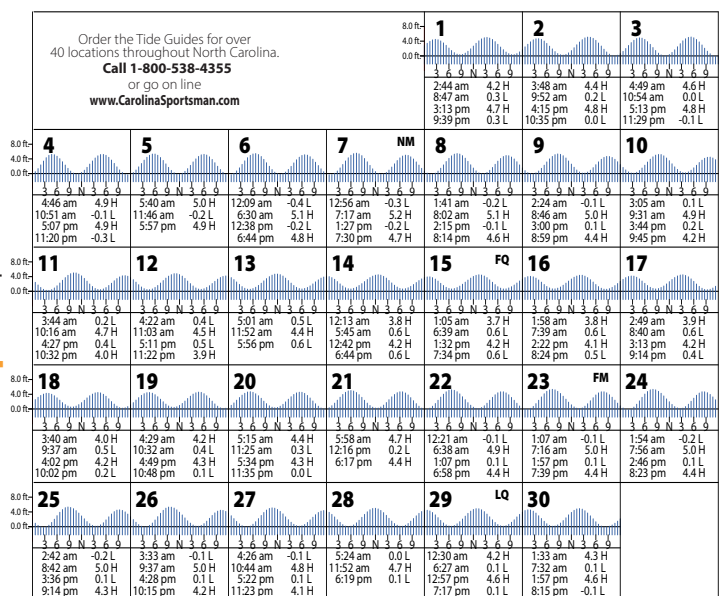
Atlantic Beach Ocean



Oregon Inlet USCG Station



Southport Cape Fear River



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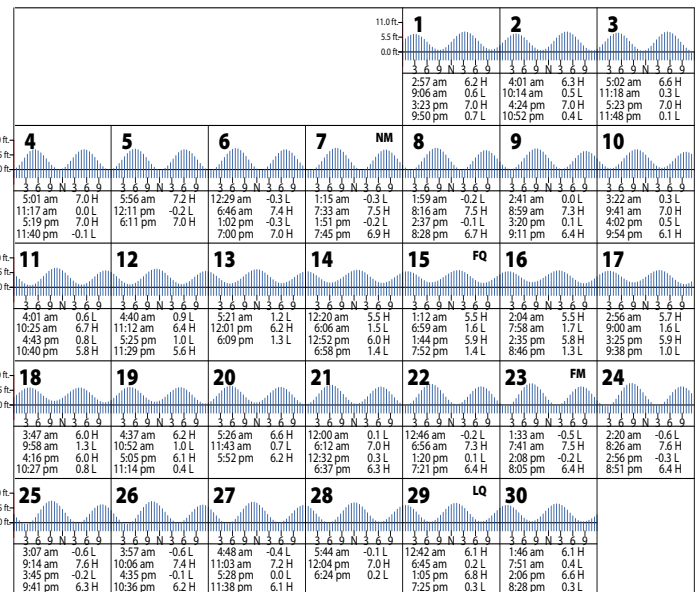
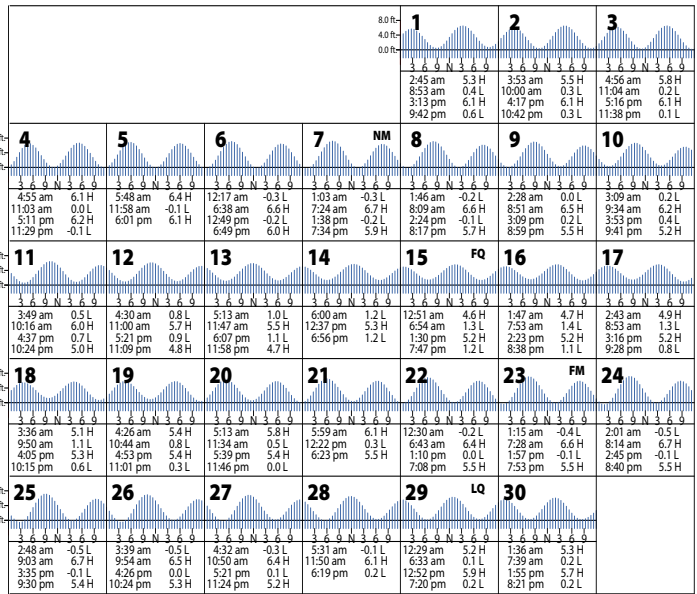
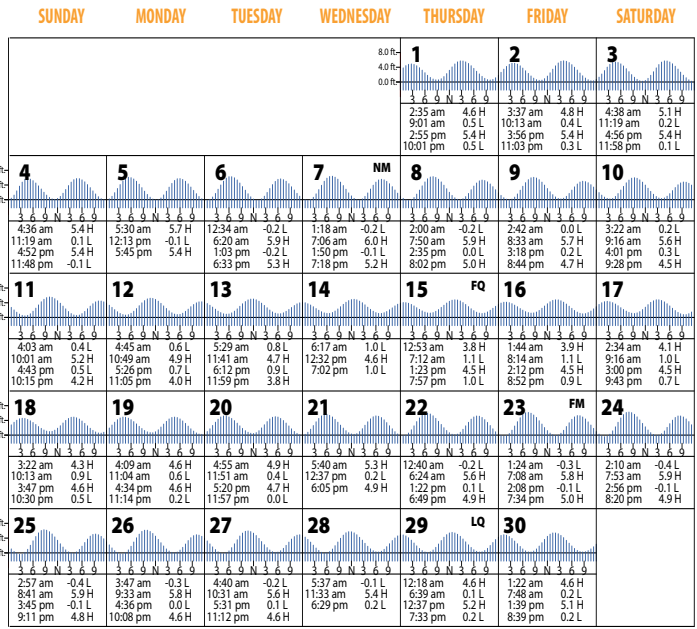
Tide Corrections

	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
Deweese 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

Charleston Customhouse Wharf

Harbor River Bridge



Sportsman FISHING HOTSPOTS

Guide David Towler of Swansboro, N.C., knows red drum are available in 2 to 3 feet of surf water off local barrier islands this month.

SURF REDS MAKE FOR NOVEMBER FUN

Barrier-island surf south of Crystal Coast turns on when water cools plenty

Red drum swim in skinny waters behind barrier islands, around inlets and in ocean surf “all-year long,” according to guide David Towler from Swansboro, N.C.

But members of the species are especially accessible in the surf on beaches from North Carolina’s Crystal Coast south during October and November. Their voracious appetites as they fatten up for winter’s hard times never fail to excite Towler.

“When I was playing sports in high school, I’d get amped up, and my buddies would say, ‘Get ready for Towler time! That’s what October and November red fishing can be like.’”

Towler said potential clients cancelled fishing trips for a month after Hurricane Florence devastated the coast.

“A week after, two trips got cancelled because beach houses (anglers had rented) weren’t there anymore,” said Towler, who owns Towler Time Charters. “But by November, conditions should be back to normal, especially surf-fishing.”

Towler, 32, who started guiding three years ago, still chases fall redfish from his boat, but he found casting from the shore of local barrier islands as productive and not as dicey as ocean angling from a fishing platform.

“I’d rather pull up from a slough behind an island and walk across to the ocean,” he said. “Redfish are in the suds in 2 to 3 feet of water chasing baitfish. You can see if you look, and you don’t have to throw a lure a mile. In fact, most anglers throw right over fish at their feet.

“The surf also is good for flounder and trout this time of year;

they also hit soft-plastic lures I cast at redfish.”

Towler’s most-productive and easiest-to-access surfin’ safari spots include beaches at Bogue Inlet, Hammocks Beach State Park at Bear Island, Bear Inlet and Browns Inlet.

When light to moderate winds blow from the north to the west, a calm ocean tempts red drum “to just crush a big topwater lure like a full-size Spook, big Top Dog or ½ - to 1-ounce Johnson gold spoon,” Towler said.

“But if the water’s too wavy, topwaters don’t work as well because reds can’t see ‘em,” he said. “I like a big Spook with silver sides and white belly. If the water’s a little rough, that’s when I’ll cast a 4- or 5-inch Z-Man DieZel MinnowZ swimbait or Z-Man StreakZ. They’re a little bigger than the normal soft plastic but have bigger profiles in the surf.”

Towler (910-554-4742) uses the same tackle he employs from his boat: 7-foot, medium-action spinning rods with 2500 series reels spooled with 15- to 20-pound braid and 2 feet of 25-pound fluorocarbon leaders.

“If a hook gets bent, I change out (trebles) with a No. 2 or No. 4 VMC (hook),” he said.

Towler’s favorite redfish lures include a 2-inch, ¼-ounce Johnson Sprite Gold Spoon or a 2½-inch, ½- and ¾-ounce Original Johnson Gold Spoon.

“They’ve got a good wobble and shine and splash in the surf,” he said. ■

— Craig Holt

BIG KINGS STILL CALL GEORGETOWN HOME IN NOVEMBER

The summer of 2018 was one to remember for king mackerel, which dominated the nearshore and offshore waters off Georgetown, S.C. for most of the spring and summer, and with the water cooling, the bite certainly won't end, even though numbers will be off slightly. The ones still around are on the hefty side, looking for an easy meal.

Kings continue to offer anglers a real opportunity in the waters off Georgetown. The jetties at the entrance to Winyah Bay convey massive amounts of flow from five river systems, pulling nutrient-rich waters into the Atlantic Ocean. Baitfish and predators lurk in the region, making it a perfect spot to lock up with a big king mackerel in November.

Steve Roff of Barrier Island Guide Service continues to target kings well into the fall, especially big ones.

"November is still a great time to catch king mackerel out of Georgetown," said Roff (843-446-7337). "The best bite begins in September with smaller kings and progressively gets better with bigger fish as the water cools."

Kings prefer waters temperatures in the 60s and will move to find water in that range wherever possible. During November, the water temperatures in the ocean can vary tremendously depending on the weather. Kings could be just off the beach or 20 to 30 miles offshore in 100 feet of water.

King mackerel will be wherever the bait is, and the best bite is typically around a temperature break. As November arrives, inshore waters will cool much more quickly than the ocean, creating a difference in temperature bursting into the ocean that creates a tide line, and there are still plenty of baitfish pouring out of the inlet to escape the inshore cool down.

Roff's first reaction in November is to find kings around these tide lines.

"Tide lines are always great places to find bait and kings feeding along these mixing zones. As long as the water temperatures don't fall too much near the inlet, there will still be some kings around," he said.

If nearshore waters are too cool, Roff will venture further offshore before he drops his lines. Reefs or livebottom areas are always good places to try.

"Anything to concentrate baitfish with the right temperature is key to finding big kings in November," said Roff, who likes to use live bait in November, and the bigger the better for the big smoker kings lurking in area waters.

More kings might be caught in October, but the number of big fish caught off Georgetown in November makes a trip worthwhile. If anglers can find the right water temperature and a concentration of bait, lines will surely begin to sing. ■

— Jeff Bureson



The waters off Georgetown, S.C., hold enough bait to attract big kings into late fall.

KERR LAKE SLABS are on the move through November

When water temperatures drop, crappie go on the feed at Kerr Lake on the North Carolina-Virginia border.

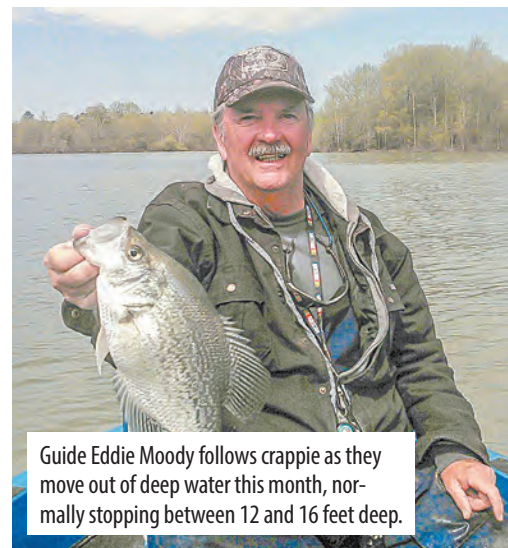
But where can they be found and how can they be caught? According to guide Eddie Moody of Roxboro, N.C., November fishing will run the gamut of water depths and techniques as slabs pack on weight before winter.

"They can be in any pattern you can think of and in all stages of getting ready for the winter," said Moody, owner of Slab's Guide Service. "But the grocery store of shad and bait will be moving into the creeks and everything will be following them."

To get the ball rolling, Moody — a habitual long-line troller — will do what he likes best. He drops a dragnet of six to eight crappie-sized crankbaits from 2½ to 4 inches long and trolls them from 0.6 to slightly above 1 mph. This is particularly effective in early November as crappie leave deep water and scatter upwards to the 12- to 16-foot range.

Moody regularly targets near channel ledges and points inside creeks. As water temperatures fall to the low 60s and crappies' metabolisms won't allow them to chase fast-moving baits, he

will switch to jigs tipped with minnows to stay in the strike zone. "If you have to troll any slower than 0.6 miles per hour to get bit, you need to switch to tight-lining," said Moody (984-363-5256).



Guide Eddie Moody follows crappie as they move out of deep water this month, normally stopping between 12 and 16 feet deep.

continued on page 82 >

Kerr Lake continued

"It's more of a finesse approach. I'll run rods off the front with trolling weights from a 1/8- to 3/4-ounce and a leader with as light a jighead as I can get by with; sometimes just a No. 4 brass hook and a minnow is best. It doesn't impede the action of the live bait, which becomes more important the colder the water gets. When I'm using jigs, I like black/chartreuse and pink/chartreuse."

By the end of November, crappie are likely to wind up settling in on brush and stumpy points inside creeks in the 12- to 16-foot range — they've been heading there all along. Here, Moody either hovers vertically with his tight-line spread or applies one of three techniques. The most-aggressive is casting a 1/8- to 1/16-ounce jig or minnow-tipped jig, allowing it to fall slightly above the brush and retrieving slowly to thoroughly cover the area. As the fish's metabolism further slows, lightly jiggling a minnow-tipped jig vertically or backing off and parking a slip-corked minnow over top of the brush may be most productive. ■

— Dusty Wilson

TROUT TIME FOR MI ANGLERS

Murrells Inlet's reputation as a great coastal fishery brings anglers to the area for a wide range of species, and in November, it's the peak of speckled trout fishing that fills the overflow lot at the public boat ramp on a daily basis.

From the jetty rocks to the shallow, estuarine creeks near US 17, speckled trout can be just about anywhere, and J Baisch of Fish-full Thinking Guide Service loves every minute of it.

"This is my favorite time of year, when the trout and the redfish are thick as thieves," said Baisch (843-902-0356). "We have schools of trout here all-year long, but we get a big flow of fish and bigger fish into our area this time of year that makes the fishing about as good as it gets."

Trout are ambush feeders and can be found anywhere there is a good vantage point to ambush bait; this could be along any bank with deep water, oysters, structure or around creek mouths. Some places that are always better than others.

"The jetties are always a good option, especially for big trout,"



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The author is a regular visitor to Murrells Inlet in November, largely because of the opportunity to catch gator trout like this one.

Jeff Burleson

Baisch said. "We regularly catch some big ones out there, and there are typically several fish caught out there over 8 pounds this time of year."

Live shrimp are deadly fished in the lower third of the water column under a popping cork. It helps that most bait-stealers are gone from the jetties by November, and a live shrimp can drift freely until a big gator trout or redfish decides to eat.

Creeks can offer hot action this month, but the action can be better in some places. Baisch often trolls to find fish, then stop, anchor, and resort to casting.

"I will troll MirrOlures in Christmas-tree color, blue/silver and green," he said, "or I will troll grubs on 1/4-ounce jigheads in electric chicken or opening night, and I troll against the current."

When he finds a school, he will cast the same lures or switch to artificial shrimp or live shrimp under a float.

The most-important aspect to finding a good school of fish is to find an area of broken current or an ambush point in deeper water.

The jetties are a good starting point, especially on an incoming tide. Baisch will fish from Oaks Creek to the south all the way to Garden City Creek to the north. ■

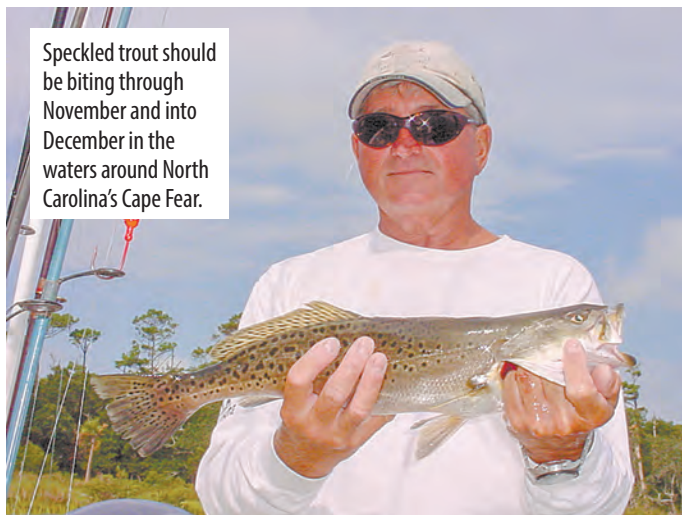
— Jeff Burleson

CAPE FEAR SPECKS READY TO PROVIDE GOOD FALL BITE

Speckled trout in North Carolina waters took a hit in September when Hurricane Florence arrived. The slow-moving storm wreaked havoc on much of the coast, especially from Cape Lookout into South Carolina.

The record flood waters pouring down coastal rivers continued for weeks, and they weren't clean, carrying plenty of toxins and agencies advising people to avoid contact with the water if possible.

The waters returned to non-toxic levels in early October in the areas north of Cape Fear, lingering a while west of the mouth of the Cape Fear River.



Speckled trout should be biting through November and into December in the waters around North Carolina's Cape Fear.

Jerry Dilsaver

When fishermen returned to the water, they found it cooling, with the last spawn of shrimp and minnows pushing out of the creeks and marshes. Hungry gamefish were waiting for them, especially speckled trout, keying on creek mouths and other ambush points.

Specks began biting first in the channels leading from the Intracoastal Waterway to Mason and Rich Inlets. The bite moved south to Masonboro Inlet as the water cleared, then to Carolina Beach Inlet and Yacht Basin and south to the bays and creeks behind Bald Head Island and around Southport. Waters in Brunswick County farther away from Cape Fear aren't influenced by the river, and the action began earlier.

Fishermen should enjoy several weeks of specks hitting top-water lures as the water cools. The bite should continue at least through November, but move under the surface if the water cools slowly. That would extend it into December.

The easiest and often most-productive way to catch specks is using live shrimp under corks. Live minnows and dead shrimp will also produce. Soft plastics and suspending hard lures are generally considered the best subsurface lures for specks.

The preferred bait or lure may change during the month and there may be a lot of shorts, but most fishermen anticipate enjoying a good fall trout bite.

— Jerry Dilsaver

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Guide Gus Gustafson said hybrid bass at Lake Norman have become a great fishery, especially from November through January.



Lake Norman Ventures

LAKE NORMAN HYBRIDS GIVE fishermen fits as water cools and fish school up more

Guide Gus Gustafson of Lake Norman Ventures said fishermen should take advantage of the resurgence of hybrid bass at Lake Norman, especially in November.

"After the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission stocked 162,500 hybrids in 2013, the fish took hold and had a high survival rate," he said. "Fishing got pretty good for a time. Fish weighing 5 to 7 pounds started appearing in fishermen's catches. After a few years, the fishing suddenly went downhill."

Gustafson (www.fishingwithgus.com) contends the decline was partly caused by overfishing at the lake's two hot-water discharges, where hybrids congregate and are easily accessible to fishermen.

Another problem was distinguishing hybrids from white perch. While adult hybrids have obvious broken lines that set them apart from white perch, small hybrids do not have obvious broken lines.

"Hybrids have size and creel restrictions, but white perch do not," Gustafson said. "Many fishermen unknowingly were taking more than their limit of hybrids thinking they were white perch."

The past few years, the hybrid fishery has rebounded in numbers and size for two reasons, Gustafson believes.

"The (Commission) has doubled its stocking efforts, putting 325,000 hybrid fingerlings into the lake, and it has increased policing and education regarding white perch, helping to reduce

the number of illegal hybrids being kept," Gustafson said. "Hybrids are now growing to harvestable size again. Still, fishermen would encourage the (Commission) to further increase hybrid stockings to offset the number of harvested fish."

Gustafson said the best time to go hybrid fishing is November through January.

"Hybrids are more tolerant of water temperature changes than stripers," he said. "They thrive and become more active in cold temperatures."

Gustafson said Mountain Creek, Norman's two hot-water discharges and waters north of the NC 150 bridge near Duke Power State Park are strongholds for hybrids.

"They'll frequent those areas throughout the winter; they'll either be chasing baitfish to the surface or suspended in 20 to 30 feet of water," Gustafson said.

Hybrids crashing the surface will hit any small lure tossed their way. Small topwater lures, jerkbaits, bucktails and thin-profile crankbaits are effective.

To catch suspended fish, fishermen use leadcore lines, downriggers, Alabama rigs and Carolina rigs with live bait and artificials.

Gustafson prefers to cast or jig for hybrids rather than troll for them.

"I know where they linger, so I can go directly to them," he said.

Gustafson uses 6½- to 7-foot spinning rods with Penn Battle II spinning reels spooled with 10-pound line. He favors small lures like No. 5 or 7 Shad Raps, Rat-L-Traps, jigging spoons and Alabama rigs with small swim-baits. Color choices include silver and blue to match the shad and herring in the lake. ■

— Tony Garitta

Clarks Hill up next >

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Guide Chris Simpson said he catches plenty of November catfish on Clarks Hill Lake by paying attention to baitfish movements.



Pat Robertson

CLARKS HILL CATFISH BITE

WILL BE GREAT THROUGH THANKSGIVING

November might be the most-consistent time of year to catch big blue catfish and big flatheads on Clarks Hill Lake, just as it is on other South Carolina lakes, according to Chris Simpson who previously guided on Lake Monticello, Lake Murray and Lake Greenwood before moving to McCormick, S.C., 18 months ago to guide on Clarks Hill.

"It is an opportunity to concentrate on one lake instead of two or three different lakes," he said. "Clarks Hill has everything I like to catch in one place, so I don't have to go to different lakes now."

Simpson said the big catfish bite is pretty consistent from Halloween through Thanksgiving and even on into the Christmas season.

"Twenty- to 40-pound fish are fairly common and sometimes bigger fish when you are targeting them," he said.

Two methods are effective for targeting big catfish, he said, drifting and anchoring.

"Anchoring is plenty effective and sometimes may be a little better than drifting," he said, noting that the key is the migration of bait.

"Most of the fish are going to be following the bait, whether it is schools of herring or shad. If there is a big concentration of bait in the creeks, you will find some fish in there, too," said Simpson (864-992-2352), who likes to anchor on ledges near creek channels or on points that intersect with the creek channel. Big fish

can be around, "as long as there are baitfish present and there are good marks underneath them on the graph"

Once that type of situation is found and the anchors are set, he said it pays to be patient.

"You may need to sit there a good while, maybe up to an hour-and-a-half," he said. "But those types of areas are highly traveled, so you may sit there 30 to 45 minutes without even a nibble, and then a group will come through, and you may catch two or three nice catfish in a short time."

If after giving creeks a good time to produce with little to show for it, Simpson said he will probably move to main-lake humps and points and use the same anchoring setup.

"Just like in the other lakes, when I am targeting big catfish, I stick with tougher baits like gizzard shad, white perch and bream," he said. "Herring will catch big fish, too, but when you are anchored down, sometimes smaller fish will tear the herring off. You may not see the rod tip move when you have herring on for bait, but when you reel in you may not have any bait left on your hook."

As is the case with other species, when the water temperature begins to cool down with the approach of winter, fish will begin to move deeper, noted Simpson, who makes one change when targeting flatheads over blues this time of year, he said.

"There are lots of rocky points and drops with big boulders on them. Anchoring on those areas and using live bream for bait really increases your chances of catching a big flat-head," Simpson said. ■

— Pat Robertson

Keowee up next >

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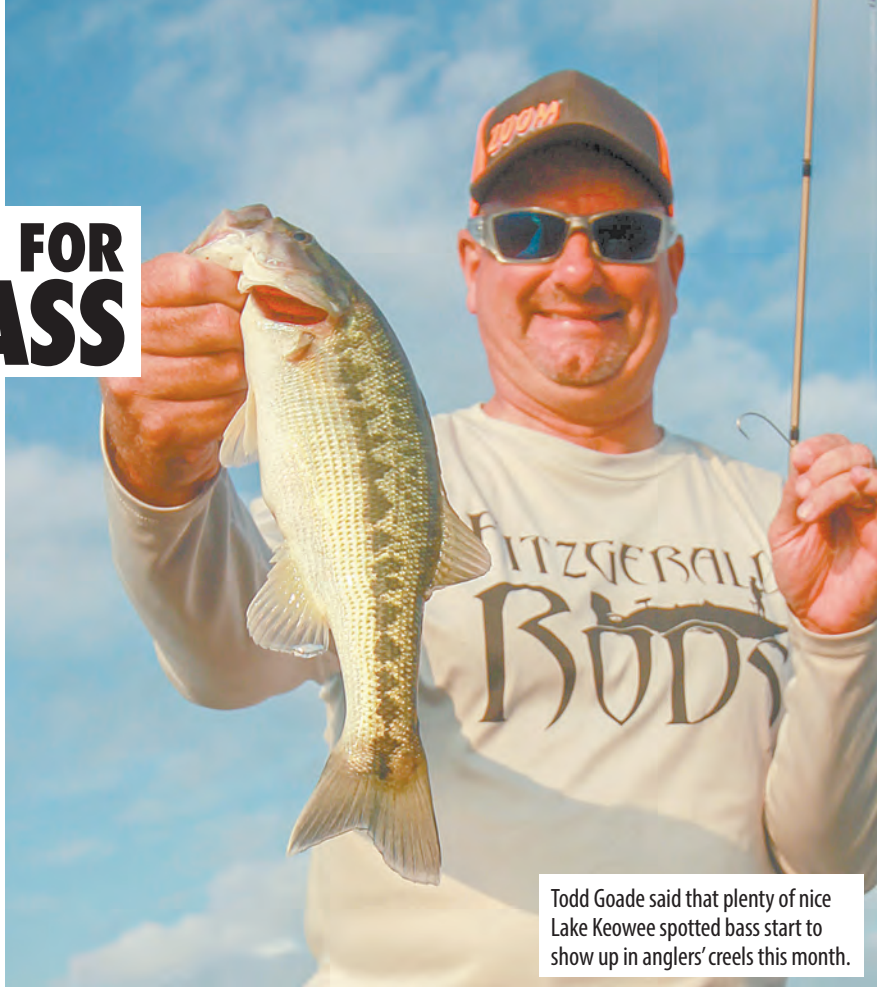
FISHING IS SPOT ON FOR KEOWEE BASS

Two-stage pattern will produce good numbers, good fish

Bass pro and guide Todd Goade of Suwanee, Ga., said November is one of the best times to catch spotted bass on South Carolina's Lake Keowee — for numbers and size.

"Keowee is a good lake to catch numbers of spotted bass, and I've had several 50-fish days in November," said Goade. "There are a lot of 13- to 16-inch fish in Keowee, a lot of pound-and-a-half spots, but at that time of year, for some reason, I catch some of the biggest fish I catch all year long there: 3- to 4-pound fish."

In fact, he said, November can be so good on Keowee that Goade has had tournament days when he weighed 16 to 17 pounds of spotted bass for a five-fish limit. The pattern



Todd Goade said that plenty of nice Lake Keowee spotted bass start to show up in anglers' creels this month.

Pat Robertson

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in November is pretty simple, he said: fish a spinnerbait around shallow-water spots early and a shaky head and drop-shot around deep docks once the sun gets up.

"First thing in the morning, there are some shallow places around some of the islands where I like to throw a spinnerbait. I will mix a Fish Head Spin in there, too," said Goade (470-266-9661). "That bite works pretty good until the sun gets up on the water, and then it dies."

When that happens, he said, he moves back into the creeks and concentrates on boat docks.

"By November, the baitfish have made their fall migration and moved back into the creeks, and the bass have moved with them," he said. "I like to start two-thirds of the way back in a creek or pocket and fish the deeper docks, ones that have 20 to 30 feet of water on the end. Those are typically the ones that hold spots."

"Once the sun gets up and is shining on the docks, the fish will position themselves under the floats, using that canopy for shade. When you make the right cast, they are following the bait to the bottom, and when you lift up, the fish is already there."

"I will dissect the dock. I start throwing at the corner closest to the bank and work out to the end of the dock. My favorite bait is a green pumpkin Zoom Mag shaky head. I'll also throw a Z3 Original Zoom on a shaky head. The hologram dawn color does really well for me."

Goade said there will sometimes be debris in the water in front of the docks, and when he works his way out to that area, he likes to have a drop-shot tied on with a Zoom Swamp Crawler in watermelon red or watermelon candy color.

"I also have some brush piles I've put out over the years in 25 to 30 feet of water. I will throw a topwater over them and after that throw a worm into them," said Goade, who believes anglers can sometimes cash in on schooling fish.

"The lake has a lot of islands, and if you are fishing docks around those islands, a lot of times the fish will come up schooling out there in 70 to 80 feet of water," he said. "They are not relating to anything out there, they are chasing bait. If that happens I'll run over and throw a topwater lure like a Sammie, or maybe a Super Fluke." ■

—Pat Robertson

Waterree River up next >

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WATEREE RIVER

is place to be for November crappie

The November crappie bite is usually hot, and you'll find no shortage of diehard anglers spider-rigging their way across lakes and reservoirs, but you'll have little competition from anyone on South Carolina's Wateree River.

Primarily known for its catfish, the Wateree has plenty of slabs, and they get very little notice — because of Lake Wateree upstream and the Santee Cooper lakes downstream.

Mike Spinks of Dalzell, S.C., loves to fish the Wateree, and not because it's close to home.

"It's rare for me to see more than one or two other boats on the river right now, and I'm often the only boat at the landing when I arrive and when I leave," he said. "There's plenty of crappie here, and they are pretty predictable as the water gets colder."

Spinks looks for crappie in two kinds of areas. Some days, he finds them in both areas, and on others, he finds them in only one.

"This river is very curvy, and the bends in the curves are the key. This time of year, I know I can find crappie in the outside bends or the inside bends, and on some days, they'll be in both," he said.



South Carolina's Wateree River gets very little fishing pressure, especially for crappie, and in the fall, that opens up a lot of opportunities for anglers.

Brian Cope

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"If the current is running really strong, it's easier to fish the inside curves, but I find more crappie in the eddies of the outside curves," he said. "It's harder to fish because of the current, but it's usually worth it. When the water is running pretty slow, they'll usually be in both curves, except on really cold days, when you'll find more on whichever curves have the most sunlight."

A white 1/6-ounce jig called the Grass Shrimp from Crappie Psychic is Spinks' lure of choice; he fishes it on a 10-foot crappie pole, without a cork. He sometimes anchors down but said he's usually able to hold himself steady on downed trees that gather in the river's curves. Then, he tight-lines the jig throughout that bend until he's either caught a few or fails to get a bite.

Spinks loves to limit out on crappie, but he rarely stays in one spot very long, even if he catches a few fish quickly.

"I like to explore this river and try to figure out all the places these fish hang out. So I'm happy with catching just a few in each spot, then trying other spots. There's no shortage of crappie here, and there's plenty of areas to fish for them," he said.

For anglers new to this river, Spinks has a three suggestions.

"Don't waste a lot of time fishing in the center of the river. It's just not productive. Count on your prop and boat scraping the bottom multiple times, because this river has some seriously shallow spots, and don't shy away from a fishing hole because it's full of debris. These are usually the best spots to fish," he said. ■

— Brian Cope

Jordan Lake up next >

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JORDAN CRAPPIE

best targeted by tight-lining this month

Guide Freddie Sinclair said Jordan Lake, south of the Raleigh-Durham area, is holding steady as a good lake for crappie in November.

"You won't catch large numbers of fish, but the fish that bite will be a good size," said Sinclair (919-553-4547). "They'll be gorging on forage to fatten up for the winter."

This month, Sinclair tight-lines for crappie, employing eight rods in the

bow and eight to 12 in the stern, the rods from 12 to 16 feet long, paired with spinning reels spooled with 6-pound monofilament.

Sinclair tight-lines using double-hook rigs. He fishes a live minnow with a No. 2 hook on the top line and a 1/6-ounce jig tipped with a minnow on the bottom line, occasionally switching to a 1/8-ounce jig to accommodate windy or deep-water conditions.



Guide Freddie Sinclair likes to tight-line for crappie on Jordan Lake throughout November.

Tony Garitta

Water color dictates jig colors. For clear water, Sinclair likes orange, chartreuse and pink; in dingy water, red, blue and chartreuse. Black is also effective.

"In many instances, you can't go wrong with a chartreuse jig since the water at Jordan is usually stained," he said.

Egg sinkers ranging from 1/2- to 3/4-ounce are added under windy conditions.

Later in the month, Sinclair probes depths from 10 to 20 feet, moving at about .5 mph or slower, targeting irregular structure in the form of points, creek-channel edges and flats. Using his electronics, he searches for forage close to structure and sets his rods to cover different depths.

One community hot spot, according to Sinclair, is the US 64 bridge and causeway.

"If the water is high, I'll go a little further into the creeks than usual, still looking for forage," said Sinclair. "In early November, it's not unusual to catch crappie in three to four feet of water."

Sinclair said crappie move deeper when the water temperature is in the high 50s to the lower 60s.

An ideal day for crappie is one with little wind and some cloud cover, according to Sinclair. Other positives are slightly stained water and a stable lake level.

"Strong winds hinder crappie fishing," he said. "Tight-lining requires boat control, and the wind makes that difficult." ■

— Tony Garitta



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Andrew Keilholtz

Andrew Keilholtz caught this nice bass in a private pond in Moyock, N.C., on Feb. 11, 2018. The fish hit a jerkbait.



Abi Reynolds

Abi Reynolds caught this nice crappie on March 11, 2017, on North Carolina's Cape Fear River.

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Jimmy Robson

Jimmy Robson of Onslow County, N.C., caught this tagged, 40-inch red drum in the Neuse River on Sept. 30, 2017.



Dan Failor, Paul Rosso

Dan Failor of Richlands, N.C., and New York guest Paul Rosso caught these Neuse River strippers on topwater plugs.



Adam Marlow

Adam Marlow of Mint Hill, N.C., caught this 7.4-pound largemouth bass from Lake Norman in April 2015.



Emily Brock

Emily Brock caught these two nice redfish at Cape Romain, S.C., on June 16, 2018.



Mckenna Fulcher

Mckenna Fulcher caught this nice puppy drum near Harkers Island, N.C., on a Gulp shrimp under a popping cork.



Randy Wood

Randy Wood of Ivanhoe, N.C., caught this topwater striper out of Swanquarter on Feb. 10, 2018.



Gerard Kelly

Gerard Kelly from Ballentine, S.C., killed his first turkey in Fairfield County on March 25, 2018. It had a 10½-inch beard.



Will Scott

Will Scott of Simpsonville, S.C., shows off a nice golf-course bass he caught and released on May 18, 2018.



Drew Arnette

Drew Arnette killed this gobbler in Dillon County, S.C., on April 18, 2018.



Jason Long

Jason Long of Person County took this 148-inch, 8-point buck with his crossbow on Sept. 17, 2017.



Randy Nimmons

Randy Nimmons caught this big carp on a shallow-running crankbait while bass fishing. It was foul-hooked in the head.



Jeff Wiebe

Jeff Wiebe of Efland, N.C., killed his nice 8 pointer in Orange County last fall with a muzzleloader.



Tommy Johnson

Tommy Johnson caught this striper out of Belhaven, N.C., on Feb. 21, 2018.



Brad Young

Brad Young of Caldwell, N.C., caught this nice bass in a pond in Timberland, N.C.



Harvey Oxendine

Harvey Oxendine killed this nice 8-point buck Thanksgiving morning 2018 in Bladen County, N.C.

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Seth George

Seth George killed this nice buck on Nov. 23, 2017, near his home in Candler, N.C.

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Brianna Lutes

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