

Carolina

FEBRUARY 2018

SPORTSMAN®

www.CarolinaSPORTSMAN.com



DEER OF THE YEAR

SEE THE BIGGEST AND LATEST BUCKS

MONTICELLO CATS ARE HOT

HUNT HYBRIDS AT LAKE NORMAN

TOP TO BOTTOM WINTER SLABS

\$2.99 FEBRUARY 2018



+ TAKE MORE CAROLINA RABBITS

PAINT DRUM BLACK AT LITTLE RIVER

PADDLE, PEDAL TO WINTER REDS



20
18

next level: elite performance



xpress boats®

The original all-welded aluminum boat company
is proud to announce **Bill Lowen,**
Bassmaster Elite Angler to its
Next Level Elite Team.

www.xpressboats.com

"Xpress Boats® truly depicts who I am as a competitive angler and outdoorsman. I fish hard, I play hard, and with Xpress there is a solution for every one of my outdoor pursuit needs".

Xpress Boats prefers to LEAD, not follow, prefers to pioneer, not copy, prefers to be the choice for the finest performing, finest built, original all-welded, high performance aluminum boats on the market today.

For additional information visit our website at
www.xpressboats.com.



Bill Lowen
Bassmaster Elite Angler



Excel BOATS



Quality | Price | Fit & Finish

Excel Bay Pro 220, 203 & 183

Up to 200 Horsepower Rating
Twin Folding Rear Jump Seats
Twin Locking Rod Boxes
24 Gallon Rear Aerated Livewell
Lean Post w/Footrest
w/16 Gallon Aerated Livewell
Front Bow 48 qt. Cooler w/220 Model

Exceleration Pad Hull Performance
up to 55 + MPH
Dry Box Storage Compartments
30 Cubic Feet
.125 Tough Aluminum Alloy
30 Gallon Fuel Tank
Deluxe Console w/6 Rod Holders
w/Three Tray Tackle Center

Excel-Marine.com | 801-352-8011

- Features vary depending on boat model -

When it comes to performance, a Pro XS gets you there like no other outboard. Paired with Excel's Exceleration™ pad hull, this dynamic duo enables the Bay Pro lightning-quick acceleration. Mercury Pro XS and Excel Boats- the most serious outboard combo on the water.



Avenger

AV-26



For more information, go to AvengerBayBoats.com
or call **843-538-6604**
or like us on **Facebook** at **Avenger Bay Boats**
for the latest available information.



222 Sportfish



For more information, go to PioneerBoats.com
or call **843-538-6604**
or like us on **Facebook** at **Pioneer Boats**
for the latest available information.

From The
Back Water
To The
Blue Water



230CC



For more information, go to BullsBayBoats.com
or call **843-538-6604**
or like us on **Facebook** at **Bulls Bay Boats**
for the latest available information.

26 FEET OF PURE FISHING JOY

THE ALL NEW 265XTS

Step up to NauticStar's biggest bay boat, the all new **265XTS** – Xtreme Tournament Series. The carefully designed hull and deck is optimized for performance, functionality and fishability that will give you capabilities never before seen in a bay boat. Inshore or offshore, the STAR Performance hull is designed to minimize draft for skinny fishing and provide a forgiving ride through tight open chops and coastal swells. Check out all the incredible standard and innovative features of the **265XTS** on our website.



LIFETIME
Limited Hull Warranty



NauticStar[®]
BOATS

Call (662) 200-4664 or visit our website or call:

NauticStarBoats.com

      @NauticStarBoats

Some photos shown with optional equipment

Factory installed with

 **YAMAHA**



49

Top to bottom winter slabs



Carolina CONTENTS

Volume 25 | Number 2 | February 2018

43

Run, rabbit run



FEATURES:

26

Cold yaks, hot reds

Kayaks can put adventuresome fishermen into the extremely skinny water where many redfish spend their winters.

>>>By Jerry Dilsaver

31

Feeling blue? You betcha!

Lake Monticello's big blue catfish turn on in winter, giving anglers a chance to do battle with trophy class fish. Here's how...

>>>By Terry Madewell

39

Hunt Norman's hybrids

Winter and early spring are prime times to do battle with Lake Norman's newest gamefish, the hybrid bass. Take this guide's advice and you'll get your string stretched.

>>>By Tony Garitta

43

Run, rabbit run

Rabbit populations in the Carolinas are made up of several species, but all provide plenty of opportunities this month.

>>>By Craig Holt

49

Top to bottom winter slabs

Cold-water crappie can be tough, but tips from three veteran fishermen might help fill your cooler with February fish.

>>>By Phillip Gentry

56

J&J joy on Tillery

Jigs and jerkbaits are a great two-pronged approach to catching bass that become active this month on North Carolina's Lake Tillery.

>>>By Tony Garitta

FISHING HOTSPOTS

90

Little River black drum

94

Cape Fear bay reds

91

Clarks Hill stripers

95

Jordan slabs

91

High Rock bass

96

SC blackfin tuna

92

Wateree Bass

97

Neuse River stripers

93

Wylie crappie

AK McCallum.com or 1-800-682-2628

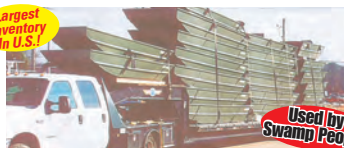
AK HAS OVER 150 MODELS OF ALUMINUM BOATS THAT CAN BE POWERED WITH A NEW  YAMAHA OUTBOARD

72 Years IN BUSINESS!

Call Now For Our New Catalog!

ANOTHER LOAD OF BOATS JUST ARRIVED  **ALWELD**
COMMERCIAL BOATS, INC.

Largest Inventory in U.S.!



Used by Swamp People

12' to 18' The best Value of an Alwelded Boat Anywhere

JUST ARRIVED! Xpress 2018 XP 180SC



AK's Price **\$20,299.00**

Powered by an F70 4 stroke Yamaha, spray in liner, Minn Kota foot control, Hummingbird Helix 5 GPS, custom alum trlr, includes batteries, frt & rigging. Similar boat with CC \$20,299

XP 200SC

VF 115LA, Alum trailer, 70lb Edge troll mtr, Helix 5 GPS, mag wheels

AK's Price **\$24,499.00**

 **YAMAHA**

OUTBOARDS
2.5 to 115 HP
IN STOCK!



New for 2018 Alumacraft Prowler 165



16ft All welded hull with Carpet, 4 Dlx seats, live well, depth finder & foot control trolling motor. Powered by Yamaha F25LC four stroke w/ tilt & trim. Includes 2 batteries, rigging and galv. drive on trlr.

AK's Price **\$13,699.00**

ARRIVING SOON
NEW 1856  **ALWELD**
COMMERCIAL BOATS, INC.



Powered by a F70 Yamaha, Load Rite galv. trailer, battery box and rigging has camo hull with two camo seats, and more.

AK's Price **\$17,600.91**

New For 2018!
1856 Tiller Tunnel Boat

 **ALWELD**
COMMERCIAL BOATS, INC.

Over 30 Models In Stock
AK's Price **\$5699.00**

Rated 50hp, .100 gauge, Alum floor, lights, liner, trolling mtr mount and wiring.

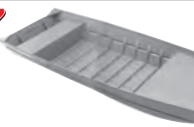


 **ALUMA** **MV1648 NCS** 2018 Model Rated 35 HP



AK's Price **\$2,349.00**

 **ALWELD** COMMERCIAL BOATS, INC.
Model 1860
• 100 Gauge
28" Deep



2015 Model Reg. \$5,299.00

AK's Closeout **\$4,499.00**

Just Arrived - New 26 Ft Sea Ark with Tread Plate Alum Floor



.125 gauge

 **SEAARK**
BOATS

2018 Models In Stock

AK's Price **\$9,299.00**

SPORTSMAN SPECIAL  **ALUMA**
2018 MV1648




25hp Yamaha 4 stroke w/ tilt & trim, Aluminum floor, Windshield, Lights, padded seat, gas tank w/fuel water separator filter, Load Rite deluxe trailer w/guides

AK's Price **\$9,379.00**

LOWE BIG JON DOUBLEWIDE 2018 Models Just Arrived
AMERICA'S MOST POPULAR JONS



 **LOWE** BOATS
14ft Flat..\$2149 16ft Flat..\$2399
14ft MV..\$2249 16ft MV..\$2499

 **ALWELD** 1648 Flat Marsh
COMMERCIAL BOATS, INC.
2016 Reg. \$3,599.00
AK's Closeout **\$3,149.00**

Rated 40hp, .100 gauge, Alum floor, lights, liner, trolling mtr mount and wiring.



NEW  **LOWE** **LITEWEIGHT**
EASILY TRUCKABLE EXTRA WIDE JON FOR PUDDLE JUMPERS

Model 1040 Length 10' bottom width 40" Beam 57" Weight 87 lb Hp rating 5hp
AK's Price **\$749.00**

Model 1240 Length 12' bottom width 40" Beam 57" Weight 105 lbs HP rating 10hp
AK's Price **\$999.00**



 **LOADRITE** **GALVANIZED BOAT TRAILERS**
600LB. CAP. 8 - 12 ft. starting at **\$659.00**
700LB. CAP 12'-14' \$699.00
1000LB. CAP 14'-15' \$749.00
1000LB CAP 15'-16' \$849.00



 **ALUMA** **Model 1436LT** AK's Price **\$849.00**
14ft. Rated 15hp
2016 Models 12ft Model 799.00



 **ROAD KING** Road King Galvanized Pontoon Boat Trailers
For 18ft to 20ft pontoon, 2700lb capacity.
AK's Price **\$1,899.00**
20'-24' tandem galv. trailer **\$2,599.00**



 **LOWE** **JUST ARRIVED!**
18 FT OLYMPIC JON MODEL 1852
AK's Price **\$3,399.00**

Length 18' beam 75" HP rating 50 hp.



5 MODELS IN STOCK
DUCK HUNTERS TOP CHOICE!



STARTING AT **\$449.00**

SPECIAL PURCHASE
CAMO CORDURA Fold Down Bench Seat
REG. \$299.00
AK's Price **\$189.00**
48" LONG



CHECK THIS OUT!
Alum Leaning Post covered in heavy duty vinyl camo w/black trim 34" wide 31" tall 11" deep
AK's Price **\$399.00**



NEW FOR 2018 1436 SS MODEL
 **ALWELD**
COMMERCIAL BOATS, INC.
.080 gauge Forward Ped plate
AK's Price **\$1,599.00**



 **ALUMA** **MV 1546 DD**



15ft all welded hull w/20hp rope start Yamaha 4 stroke. 1200lb cap. Load Rite DLX trailer. Boat features floor and ped plates.

AK's Price **\$7,210.00**

A.K. McCALLUM CO.

715 Ramsey St., Fayetteville, NC
1-800-682-2628
www.akmccallum.com
Mon. - Fri. 8am - 5pm • Sat. 8am - 1pm

Since 1945

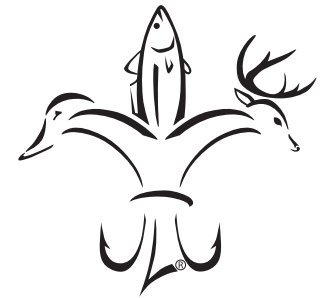
VISIT OUR FISHING TACKLE DEPARTMENT





56 J&J joy on Tillery

26
Cold yaks,
hot reds



Carolina
SPORTSMAN

www.CarolinaSPORTSMAN.com

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER: Ron Dorsey
252.299.2138/rond@carolinaspportsman.com

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

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR: Jeff Caldwell

ASSISTANT PRODUCTION MANAGER:
Desiree P. Lewis

ART DIRECTOR: Rodney Anouilh

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS:
Jeff Cashio, Kevin Orgeron, Alissa Zeringue

CONTROLLER: Juanita Guidry

SALES DIRECTOR: Tony Taylor
504.416.7621/tonyt@lasmag.com

ADVERTISING SALES:
Ron Dorsey, Bref Holten, Asa Faulkner,
Jay Forrest, Brent Comardelle, Mark Boyd,
Greg Webb, Mark Hiltz (National Sales)

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

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

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES:

Contact Tony Taylor
email: tonyt@lasmag.com/504.416.7621

**FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS
OR SUBSCRIPTION ISSUES,
CALL 1.855.224.1667**

Monday thru Friday, 7 am to Midnight
Saturday & Sunday, 9 am - 6 pm EST

CAROLINA SPORTSMAN (USPS #012969) is published monthly by Carolina Publishing Inc., Allen J. Lottinger, President, 14236 Highway 90, P.O. Box 1199, Boutte, LA 70039. Mailed at periodicals postage rates and paid at Boutte, La., and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Carolina Sportsman, PO Box 433294, Palm Coast, FL 32143. All rights reserved. Reproduction of contents is strictly prohibited without permission of Carolina Sportsman. **EDITORIAL** information number is 336.376.5101. Editorial guidelines can be obtained by writing Carolina Sportsman, 433 Holinswood Ave., Winston-Salem, N.C. 27103. Carolina Sportsman is not responsible for the loss of queries, manuscripts or other materials.

P.O. Box 1199, Boutte, LA 70039-1199
800.538.4355

Volume 25 | No 2

ON THE COVER:



The biggest of the big: Patrick Williams of Belews Creek, N.C., killed this potential state-record archery buck last Oct. 25 in Rockingham County.

OUTDOORS UPDATE:

10 Deer of the Year: See Carolinas' best bucks

24 Teen takes huge bear in Beaufort County, N.C.

PLUS

25 SC releases more tagged coyotes for hunters

COLUMNS:

62 Sound & Sea By Brian Cope

64 Lunker Lines By David Fritts

66 Greener Pastures
By Jeff Burselon

70 Small Craft Advisory
By Phillip Gentry

74 Cooking on the Wild Side
By Jerry Dilsaver

76 Santee Stringer By Terry Madewell

78 Head for the Mountains
By Robert Satterwhite

DEPARTMENTS:

80 New Products

81 Hunting/Fishing Scrapbook

84 NC Hunting Regulations

84 SC Hunting Regulations

86 Astro Tables

88 NC Tide Guide

89 SC Tide Guide

98 Classifieds

100 Advertiser Index

Yamaha Outboards

THE KEY TO RELIABILITY

SALES EVENT

Offer Valid From
**January 1, 2018 –
March 31, 2018**

For a limited time, purchase a new, select eligible 2.5 hp - 300 hp Yamaha Outboard and choose either:

5 Years OF WARRANTY PROTECTION

Three years of Yamaha Limited Warranty Coverage, along with the additional protection of a two-year Yamaha Extended Service (Y.E.S.) plan. That's a total of FIVE years coverage at no additional cost!*

or

UP TO **\$1500**
IN DEALER CREDIT

Toward the purchase of goods/services on select models from your authorized participating Yamaha Outboard Dealer.*

ELIGIBLE FOUR-STROKE OUTBOARDS*	3-YEAR LTD. WARRANTY + 2-YEAR Y.E.S.**	OR	DEALER CREDIT TOWARD THE PURCHASE OF GOODS/SERVICES
250-300 HP V6	Free! \$2,300 value	or	\$1,500 based on MSRP
225 HP	Free! \$1,800 value	or	\$1,300 based on MSRP
200 HP	Free! \$1,800 value	or	\$1,000 based on MSRP
150-175 HP	Free! \$1,125 value	or	\$750 based on MSRP
115 HP	Free! \$800 value	or	\$500 based on MSRP
60-90 HP	Free! \$725 value	or	\$400 based on MSRP
30-50 HP	Free! \$450 value	or	\$300 based on MSRP
20-25 HP	Free! \$330 value	or	\$200 based on MSRP
8-15 HP	Free! \$170 value	or	\$150 based on MSRP
2.5-6 HP	Free! \$170 value	or	\$125 based on MSRP

** Y.E.S. value based on MSRP

* Applicable models may vary - not applicable for new models introduced after December 1, 2017.

See your authorized participating Yamaha Outboard dealer today for details! Other restrictions and conditions may apply.

PROGRAM TERMS AND CONDITIONS: Consumer benefit for purchasing a new (unused, not previously warranty registered) select eligible Yamaha 2.5 to 300 HP four-stroke outboard is a choice of either a 24-month Yamaha Extended Service contract (choice offered in Florida is a 24-month Yamaha Limited Warranty), or a credit based on MSRP toward the purchase of goods and/or services at the authorized participating dealer that sold the outboard, at no extra cost to consumer. **NO BENEFIT SUBSTITUTIONS.** To be eligible, outboards must also have been manufactured since January 2011. Promotion is only applicable from authorized participating Yamaha Outboard dealers in the USA, sold to purchasing consumers residing in the USA. Promotion is limited to available stock in dealer inventory that is sold, PDI completed, delivered and warranty registered on YMBS by the dealer in accordance with Yamaha's Promotion and warranty registration requirements during applicable dates. Applicable models may vary. Any new models introduced after December 1, 2017 are NOT eligible for this Promotion. No model substitutions, benefit substitutions, extensions or ran checks will be allowed. Outboards sold or provided for commercial, camp, resort, rental, promotional/demo, government agency, competition, tournament or sponsorship use are not eligible. This Promotion cannot be used in conjunction with any other Yamaha offer. Some exceptions may apply. See authorized participating Yamaha dealer for complete details. Yamaha reserves the right to change or cancel this Promotion at any time. Other restrictions and conditions may apply.

REMEMBER to always observe all applicable boating laws. Never drink and drive. Dress properly with a USCG-approved personal flotation device and protective gear. © 2018 Yamaha Motor Corporation, U.S.A. All rights reserved.



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

DEER OF THE YEAR: QUITE A FEW

THE CAROLINAS PRODUCED A LOT OF TROPHIES THIS SEASON; HERE ARE A FEW

Michael Vargo of Oxford, N.C., killed this 10-point, 159-inch trophy in Granville County on Nov. 19, after a chance meeting with a landowner led to getting permission to hunt two 12-acre tracts of land.

I didn't get in on the trophy buck explosion this past fall. I had my chance, but unfortunately, age and laziness got the best of me.

My 61st birthday was Nov. 9. I had planned to get up early and spend the morning with a muzzleloader, in a tripod stand set up overlooking a food plot of turnips, chicory and clover my son had planted on a 50-acre lease that we stumbled onto just before Labor Day.

The alarm rang at about 5:20, and when I stirred, I heard some light tapping on the window beside my bed. I peeped through the blinds and found that it was raining, and raining pretty good.

"Oh well," I thought. "I guess I'll climb back in the sack. No need to sit in a deer stand and get soaked."

Two days later, my son and I headed to the lease for a Saturday morning hunt. At the end of the morning — I passed up a small buck that was chasing a doe — my son checked the data cards in the two

trail cameras he had out, and what to my wondering eyes appeared but the photo of a nice 8-point buck, standing with a doe in my food plot, 25 yards from my tripod, at 6:56 a.m. on Nov. 9, well into legal shooting hours.

He was in no way in the same class of the big bucks on these pages, but he was one of two bucks that we had on our "hit

list" for the property, probably a 125-inch, 180-pound, 3½-year-old buck.

I hope I see him next year. If he's grown up a bit — and we're planning more food plots for just that reason — maybe I can post his photo here next year among the Carolinas' best in our Deer of the Year rundown.

And maybe pigs will fly. ■

NC MOUNTAIN BUCK IS BAG-A-BUCK WINNER

Darryl Fox of Weaverville, N.C., had no idea he was going to kill the biggest buck of his life last fall. A teacher and baseball coach at North Buncombe High School, he didn't get to do everything he usually does leading up to deer season, or even get in the woods during archery season, because of the sickness and death of his father last year.

But when he finally got a couple of days free off from school, he took advantage of them, taking a big

9-pointer he calls a "high-elevation buck," entering it, then being drawn as the winner of *Carolina Sportsman's* Bag-A-Buck contest for December.

"I killed this deer above 3,500 feet in elevation," he said. "I killed a big 8-pointer in there last year, and I passed up a couple I saw on trail cameras. This one could have been one of them."

His prizes are a \$25 gift certificate to the Sportsman's Online Store and a

continues >

BAG-A-BUCK WINNER CONTINUED

year's free subscription to the magazine. He will remain eligible, along with every other contest entrant, in the drawing for the grand prize: a three-year subscription to *Carolina Sportsman*, a \$50 gift



Darryl Fox had to work hard to kill this 9-point, Buncombe County deer that won the December Bag-A-Buck contest.

certificate to the Sportsman's Online Store, and a two-day deer-hog combo hunt for two people to Cherokee Run Hunting Lodge near Chesterfield, S.C.

Fox, who goes by "blockmason" on www.carolinasportsman.com, killed the buck on Nov. 22, but he didn't enter it in the contest until Dec. 12. He went to a spot where he'd killed a number of deer before, climbed up in his stand, and killed the buck at 4:30 p.m. with a 75-yard shot from his .270. ■

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.

DEER OF THE YEAR

THE BIG BUCKS OF THE YEAR START HERE:

BIG DECEMBER BUCK TAPES OUT AT ALMOST 190 INCHES

Jeff Ferguson of Liberty, N.C., saw a big buck on Dec. 6, while scouting for a place to put up a climbing stand on a piece of land about 15 minutes from his house. The buck was so big, he almost immediately called his boss and asked what he needed to do to get the next day off so he could hunt the buck.

"Take vacation? Use a sick day? Quit?" he said.

Quit a job for a buck? Ferguson admitted, that crossed his mind.

Quite a buck, apparently.

Well, yes. The next time Ferguson saw the buck, on Dec. 7, around 12:30 p.m., he put it on the ground with one shot from his 7mm-08, walked up to and realized, the buck he thought was big enough to quit a job for was even bigger than he imagine.

"I knew he was big, but I didn't know how big until I got to him," he said. "Then, I knew he grossed well over the Boone & Crockett minimum."

Ferguson's enormous 15-point buck, a

main-frame 6x6 with three sticker points that combined to measure 10 inches, had 172 inches of horn on his head and an inside spread of more than 16 inches for a total of 188 $\frac{3}{4}$. But deducting the length of the sticker points instead of adding them, plus deductions for symmetry, will put the buck in the 160s after it's allowed to dry for 60 days before being officially scored.

Ferguson's buck carried a 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch inside spread. its longest tines were 11 and 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and it had four more tines between 8 and 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches long.

The spot where the buck breathed its last was a spot where Ferguson has often gone in December because it gets relatively little hunting pressure. It's a spot where a stand of 25-year-old pines butts up against a stand of 8-year-old pines — a real thicket where bucks can go to hide.

"I hadn't been to this spot in a while; it's a low-pressure spot. I was asking myself, 'Where can I go where a big deer

continues >



Jeff Ferguson was looking for a place to set up a climbing stand when he stumbled on this enormous buck, which he killed the next day 15 minutes from his home in Liberty, N.C.

DEER OF THE YEAR

CONTINUES

is gonna go?"That's this place, nasty thick," he said. "I went to a spot about 2:30 with the wind perfect, just to go in and scout without any intrusion to find a tree where I could hang a climber. I knew I was in the 20-yard circle I wanted to be in, looking for the right tree, and right there it was, Bam!"

"Then, I heard a limb break, and here came a little cowhorn out of the thicket. I saw something behind him, and then this big buck came out. He was completely comfortable; he looked like he'd just woke up from a two or three hours of sleep. They were walking in front of me. The little buck got past me, and I think he saw me. He blew and took off, and the buck one stopped, looked at the other buck for about 30 seconds, then just went to browsing. He went out into the big cutover that's got acorn trees on the back side, and I just backed out of there.

"That's when I called my dad, my brother

and my buddy — no, I called my boss."

Ferguson got the day off, and he was in his stand, 30 feet up in a pine, before daylight. Around 8 o'clock, a small 8-point buck came out of the thicket and strolled past. At 10 o'clock, five does came out of the thicket, browsed around, then walked off about 75 yards and bedded down.

"I watched them bed down, watched them get up and browse around for a few minutes, watched them get back down and just chew their cuds."

At 12:30, Ferguson was looking in a different direction, and when he turned back to the does, they were gone. In their place was his big buck from the previous day, standing where the does had been bedding, sniffing one of their beds.

"I checked him in the scope just to make sure it wasn't a different buck, and I looked at him good and thought, 'Oh my God, he's a typical 12.' Then, it was just a matter of him giving me a shot. It was pretty thick. Finally, he quartered to me, and I shot him in his front shoulder. He ran about 25 yards and went down. The bullet smashed his shoulder. It did everything it was supposed to do." ■



Danny Jacobs of Concord, N.C., killed this 12-point, non-typical buck in a suburban, wooded corridor in Cabarrus County on Oct. 13.



Chris Smythe killed this 160-inch buck near Rldgeway, S.C., on Oct. 14.



Steve Rodger of Key West, Fla., killed this 161-inch trophy on the Allendale-Hampton County line on Aug. 15, opening day in South Carolina.

MORE BUCKS >

LET THE TEAM FROM AMERICA'S #1 OUTDOOR BRAND HELP YOU
FIND YOUR FAVORITE PLACE.



MOSSY OAK[®]
PROPERTIES
NC LAND AND FARMS
America's Land Specialist

Visit us at the Dixie Deer Classic in Booth K18 for the chance to win a Yeti Hopper and other great prizes!

844-480-5263 // NCLANDANDFARMS.COM // INFO@NCLANDANDFARMS.COM

Now serving eastern NC in 3 locations: Outer Banks, Greenville, Lake Waccamaw

Each Mossy Oak Properties office is individually owned and operated.



Michael Vaughan's 158-inch Granville County buck was his second bragging-sized trophy of the 2017 seasons.

NC HUNTER ADDS 8+12

Mike Vaughan of Bahama, N.C., tagged out on Dec. 4 with two trophy bucks under his belt. When he shot a 136-inch 8-pointer with his Bowtech Prodigy bow two weeks earlier, he felt on top of the world and thought it couldn't get any better until a 150-class deer appeared in a trail-camera photo on a 650-acre farm in Granville County. Two weeks later, at 3:15 p.m., Vaughan grunted in the monster 12-pointer.

"It's been a good season, and I was very satisfied after I shot the 8-pointer several weeks ago. Our land-management tactics were paying off in a big way," he said. "When that big 12 showed up on camera, it fired me up, and I was on the hunt again."

Vaughan had never seen this buck before — or anything like it — on that farm.

"Granville County is known for big deer, but I have been hunting this farm for 35 years, and I have never seen anything like this before. We see



Gary Gusler of Burlington, N.C., took this 170-inch, 14-point non-typical buck on Nov. 22.



several 130s and 140s over the years, but nothing ever like this," he said.

Vaughan set up his stand a little more than 50 yards from a corn pile. Within a few days, he started getting photos of the buck, and a few were in daylight. He decided to hunt the buck every chance he got, but not being sure where the deer might come from, he brought his Marlin .30-30 to make sure he could make the shot if it was presented.

On Monday afternoon, Dec. 4, Vaughan climbed into his stand at 2:45, and at 3:15, he lifted his grunt call and made a few calls. It was like ringing the dinner bell; 15 minutes later, the buck showed up, 25 yards out. But started to get nervous and wasn't quite ready to shoot and he started to get nervous.

"Naturally, I started breathing like a cow," he said. "The deer must have heard me, because he locked on me and started trotting away. At 50 yards, I put it on him and let him have it."

The .30-30 dropped the buck in its tracks. When he walked up to the buck, Vaughan noticed the deer's body was smaller than some of the other deer he had killed on the farm.

"My eight-point I killed two weeks ago was over 200 pounds, but this deer only weighed 138 pounds," he said.

The rack more than made up for the smallish body. With 14 total points and 12-inch G2s, his buck scored out 158¾ inches — the largest buck Vaughan has ever killed in North Carolina." ■

— Jeff Burleson



David Andrews killed this 12-point, 163-inch Alamance County, N.C., buck on Nov. 26.

MORE BUCKS >



Drake Safe Co.

CUSTOM BUILT GUN SAFES

We can build any size to fit your needs!




SEE US:
See us at the Crown Center in Fayetteville Feb. 3rd & 4th

- 100% ¼" Steel Plate Construction
- Firelined
- 12 Standard Sizes

Dryes Gun Shop
Bahama, NC
919-251-9935

Greg Drake
747 Leasburg Road, Roxboro, NC 27573
Shop: 336-597-5059

Pa Paw's Pawn
High Point, NC
336-889-7296

877-677-SAFE

(7 2 3 3)

Quail - Chuckar - Pheasant - Ducks



**"See Our"
Web
Videos!**



Sporting Clays - Golf Packages

www.moreespreserve.com

**Guaranteed Opportunity
Wild Boar
Hunting**




MOREE'S

Sportsman's Preserve
Society Hill, SC

843-378-4831 • moreehunt@aol.com

DEER OF THE YEAR

CONTINUES

CONTRACTOR'S TARGET BUCK WAS DEAD, ALIVE, THEN DEAD

Andy Caudle was beside himself when Thanksgiving rolled around. A contractor from Boonville, N.C., Caudle had a huge 10-point buck in multiple trail-camera photos from two different places he hunts, but an uncle told him the buck might have been killed.

"I was about to go crazy," Caudle said. "My uncle had heard somebody had killed a big 10-pointer on the other side of a thicket I was hunting. I was sure it was him."

But on Nov. 30, the buck showed up in another trail-camera photo, and the next day, Caudle was kneeling over a 10-point, 155-inch buck, filling out his deer tag.

The buck had an 18-inch inside spread and tall, ivory colored antlers. The tallest tines were 10¾ and 10½ inches long, and a taxidermist judged the buck to be either 4½ or 5½ years old, based on tooth wear.

"A lot of people had this buck on camera; everybody was talking about him," Caudle said. "I had him on camera a bunch of times, 2 to 3 a.m. in one place, and 8 p.m. in another spot. But this was the first time

I'd seen him in daylight."

Caudle got off work on Friday, Dec. 1, and slipped into a box stand overlooking a food plot of clover and chicory where he had one of his trail cameras. He was in the stand by 4 p.m., and at 4:58, three does walked into the food plot. A few seconds later, the biggest doe broke and took off.

"Not much later, he showed up; he came out of the thicket," Caudle said. "I knew it was him as soon as he got out. As soon as he got broadside, I shot him at 5 o'clock."

Caudle shoots a .338, and the 200-grain bullet did its job at 75 yards. The buck stumbled off but barely got 30 yards before piling up.



Andy Caudle killed this 10-point, 155-inch buck a week after he thought the buck had been killed by another hunter.

"Most of the pictures I had of him came from my other place, about three-quarters of a mile away on the other side of the thicket," Caudle said. "But I had 8 o'clock photos of him at this place." ■



Julie Cook of Gaston, S.C., took this big, 14-point non-typical with double drop tines on Nov. 25.



Nick Mead of Fountain Inn, S.C., dropped this 150-inch Spartanburg County buck on Nov. 21.



Cody Pyatte of Holden Beach, N.C., killed this 10-point, 142-inch buck in Brunswick County on Dec. 6.

MORE BUCKS >

HUNTING LAND FOR SALE

**\$2.3
BILLION
& 615,000
ACRES**
sold company
wide in the last
5 years



CHIP CAMP
Agent, Land Specialist
Western North Carolina
(704) 473-3833



SCOTT HICKS
Agent, Land Specialist
Eastern North Carolina
(919) 610-4796



SEAN MALOY
Agent, Land Specialist
Central North Carolina
(844) 412-1200



JIMMY UNDERWOOD
Agent, Land Specialist
Southeast South Carolina
(843) 421-9995



JOSEPH MORRIS
Agent, Land Specialist
Western South Carolina
(706) 910-8557



RICK ELLIOTT
Broker, Land Specialist
South Carolina
(843) 450-5668

**CONTACT AN AGENT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BUYING AND
SELLING HUNTING, RANCH, FARMLAND AND TIMBERLAND**



WHITETAIL PROPERTIES REAL ESTATE

HUNTING | RANCH | FARM | TIMBER

WHITETAILPROPERTIES.COM



Whitetail Properties Real Estate, LLC | Gba Whitetail Properties | Nebraska & North Dakota DBA Whitetail Trophy Properties Real Estate LLC | Lic. in IL, MO, IA, KS, KY, NE & OK - Dan Perez, Broker | Lic. in AR, CO, GA, MN, ND, TN & WI - Jeff Evans, Broker | Lic. in OH & PA - Kirk Gilbert, Broker | Lic. in TX - Joey Bellington, Broker | Lic. in IN - John Boyken, Broker | Lic. in LA, MS & AL - Sybil Stewart, Broker | Lic. in TN - Chris Wekelfield, Broker | Lic. in TN - Bobby Powers, Broker | Lic. in AR - Johnny Ball, Broker | Lic. in SC - Rick Elliot, Broker | Lic. in NC - Rich Baugh, Broker | Lic. in MI - Brandon Cropsey, Broker



DEER OF THE YEAR

CONTINUES

FOUR-YEAR QUEST FOR HUGE SC BUCK ENDS FOR FATHER-SON HUNTING TEAM

Cody Lemere of Walhalla, S.C., killed this 151-inch buck four years after first seeing him in a trail-camera photo.

The father and son team of Andy and Cody Lemere managed to close the books on a four-year quest for an Oconee County buck last Nov. 29. Back in 2013, the Lemeres captured several photos on game cameras of a nice buck that had shown up on the family farm near Walhalla, S.C. Judging by the photos, the buck was a nice 10-pointer at only 2½ years old. At the end of the season, Cody Lemere even managed to collect the deer's antler sheds, definitely placing the animal on the watch list.

Similar sightings, always on camera and always at night, occurred again in 2014 and 2015. The buck maintained its 10-point rack, which grew in size each year.

For a brief moment in 2016, Andy Lemere got a glimpse of the animal but without a clear shot, he let him walk.

By this time, the big buck's reputation had gotten around. He had also shown up on several neighboring properties, and the hunt was on from surrounding neighbors as well.

Cody Lemere ended the hunt on the night of Nov. 29 after he settled into his deer stand overlooking an old 5- or 6-acre pasture that had been interspersed with

soybeans and winter wheat.

"All of the sudden, a doe comes busting out of the tree line straight into the field, headed for me," said Lemere. "I knew something was chasing her, and 10 seconds later, the deer we'd been waiting for

so long busted out right behind her."

Gaining his composure in the fading light, Lemere raised his Remington .308 rifle as the buck changed course and slowed to a slow walk, quartering away

continues >



Deklan Woodell of Chester, S.C., took this 171-inch, 14-point Chesterfield County buck on Oct. 21.



Wayne Louya of Carthage, N.C., tagged this 153-inch Randolph County buck on Nov. 25.

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

DEER OF THE YEAR

at 150 yards. Placing the crosshairs on the deer's vital area, he squeezed the trigger.

"I didn't see him drop, but I was pretty confident I'd hit him," said Lemere. "Dad was hunting not far away, and he came over and was actually the first one to see the deer, laying in the tall grass just 10 yards from where he was standing when I shot."

The Lemere's green scored the buck at 151 inches on the Boone & Crockett scale. The live weight of the deer was 180 pounds. The rack features a typical 10-point configuration with an additional point on the back. The inside spread is 18½ inches, but the most impressive features are the 25½-inch main beams.

Lemere plans to have the deer mounted by Tony Chitwood of Chitwood Taxidermy in Lavonia, Ga., after which it will take its place of honor on his living room wall with the only other bucks he has taken from the family property — his first deer he killed as a child, and three others.

"We don't have a lot of deer here compared to other places," said Lemere. "We only have two or three does living on our farm, so we wait on the bucks and we let them grow." ■

— Phillip Gentry



Kayla Watson took this 9-point, 142-inch Guilford County, N.C., buck on Sept. 10.



Phillip Scott took this 11-point buck on Dec. 13 in Person County, N.C.



Adrian Whitson of Burnsville, N.C., tagged this 169-inch Yancey County buck on Thanksgiving Day



Zach Phillips of Easley, S.C., killed this 163-inch, 200-pound Abbeville County buck on Oct 12.



R.J. Seiler took this 10-point, 135-inch Rockingham County, N.C., buck on Dec. 4.

MORE BUCKS >

DEER OF THE YEAR

CONTINUES

SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF BIG BUCK ROUSED SC HUNTER

Jacob Davis of Townville, S.C., didn't do a lot of deer hunting this season until Nov. 5. That's when a neighbor showed him a trail-camera photo of a huge buck, a monster 6x6 with a high, wide rack.

"I had eight cameras (out) where I hunt, and I wasn't getting any pictures, so I really wasn't hunting very much," he said. "Then, my neighbor stopped me on the road one day (Nov. 5) and asked if I'd seen this deer he had on camera.

"I started hunting the next day."

Davis saw the big 12-point buck the next day, Nov. 6, got too excited and missed a shot when it was presented.

"I took off the rest of the week and hunted him. On Friday (Nov. 10), he came out in the morning, and it was real foggy. He came out at about 100 yards. I could see him with my eyes, but when I put the scope up, nothing," he said.

"He kept walking in and out of the woods; it terrified me. Then, two does came out — they were rutting like crazy. I grunted one time, and eventually, he worked his way to 50 yards, and I shot him."

The buck reacted as if the shot, from

his .308 rifle, was right on, which it was. Davis said the buck trotted across the field and fell dead at the edge of the woods.

Davis' big buck, which carried a 19-inch inside spread and tines as long as 11 inches, scored a fraction above 160 inches typical.

"When I took him to my taxidermist, I didn't anticipate him scoring that high," Davis said. "I killed a 154-inch buck in Kentucky last year, and I didn't think this one was as big as that one. But my taxidermist said he thought he might be a 160-inch buck. About an hour after I got home from taking him, he called me and said he couldn't stand it and had put a tape on him. He said it being a main-frame 6x6 had a lot to do with it. He said he's been doing taxidermy almost 30 years, and it was only the third perfect 12 he'd ever gotten in."

Davis, 21, was hunting in a two-man



Jacob Davis hadn't done much hunting last fall until he saw a trail-camera photo of this huge buck, which he killed on Nov. 10. The buck's rack measures in the 160-inch neighborhood.

ladder stand overlooking a 100-acre soybean field.

"I've been hunting that stand since I was about 7 years old," he said. "It's on an old water oak. I've killed a lot of deer out of that stand. I can walk across the street from my house to that stand." ■



Coty Ingram of Newland, N.C., dropped this 13-point, 145-inch Avery County buck on Thanksgiving Day.



Cody Fields of Antreville, S.C., took this 160-inch non-typical in Abbeville County on Oct. 13.



Josh Wall of Fairfax, S.C., killed this 14-point, 147-inch buck on Aug. 19 in Allendale County.

[MORE BUCKS >](#)



LEITH NISSAN EPIC OFFERS

2017 Nissan
TITAN®
& **TITAN® XD**

Take Up To
\$10,000
OFF MSRP*

LEITH NISSAN

2100 Autopark Blvd. Cary, NC 27511
CALL US TODAY! **919.842.5686**

Visit us at
LeithNissan.com



*Discount taken from MSRP Tax, tag and \$598 administrative / documentary fee additional. Can not be combined with any other offer. See dealer for details. Offer expires 02/15/2018. Nissan, the Nissan Brand Symbol, innovation that excites, and Nissan model names are Nissan trademarks. © 2018 Nissan North America, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

www.CarolinaSportsman.com

Leith Truck CENTER

**WE HAVE THE
BEST SELECTION
OF PRE-OWNED
TRUCKS!**

FIND THE RIGHT TRUCK YOU LOVE
AT THE PRICE YOU CAN TRUST.



PEACE OF MIND NO-HAGGLE PRICING

Never worry about paying more than the next person, and never worry about paying too much. Every single truck is priced to the market based on options, equipment and condition. These prices are monitored and adjusted to move with the market to assure that you not only get the best truck, but the best price too.



2000 Autopark Blvd, Cary, NC 27511

CALL US TODAY!
919.842.3502

DEER OF THE YEAR

CONTINUES

Aaron Loftin of Gastonia, N.C., planned to let a hunting buddy take this huge buck, but the buck changed his plans on Dec. 9.



HUNTER WANTED FRIEND TO TAKE NC TROPHY BUCK, BUT FATE INTERVENED

As Aaron Loftin of Gastonia, N.C. sat in his climbing stand 300 yards from his friend Mike May of Indian Trail, N.C., on the afternoon of Dec. 9, he had made his mind up to let a big buck walk if it was headed in May's direction — and he did just that.

But when that buck made an about-face and trotted back to Loftin, he laid out the 159-inch, Gaston County 12-pointer before it could flee.

Loftin will admit that he wasn't exactly thrilled to get back in the woods that afternoon after getting soaked in the rain and snow that morning. In fact, his plan was to try to persuade May into letting the hunt slide. But when May persisted, Loftin gave in, and they got onto the 30 acres of private land that Loftin hunts by 3 o'clock.

Venturing into an area that Loftin hadn't hunted before, they found a prime spot near a laurel thicket where May would set up his climbing stand before Loftin set off to find his own spot. Within a few hundred yards he made an incredible discovery.

"I'm on this little logging road and see where there's a fork that goes up the hill," said Loftin. "You could tell by the way the leaves were disturbed that something had been thorough there that day. I followed it and there was a tree as big around as my leg that had been rubbed. I walked about 20 yards, and there was another rub on the other side of the logging road. I decided to stop and hunt; got up in my tree and settled down.

"That's when I prayed for my buddy to get his deer. I said, 'Lord, if it's the biggest



Patrick Williams of Belews Creek, N.C., killed a potential state-record archery buck last Oct. 25 in Rockingham County. The 19-point buck green scores better than 181 points.

deer in the world, I'm not going to shoot him if he's headed toward Mike. About an hour-and-a-half later, the deer came down from the top of the hill and jumped across the logging road. I had him in my scope at 20 yards and could have shot him, but he was headed towards Mike."

Loftin watched the biggest buck he had ever seen on the property walk nearly out of sight, close to a halfway between himself and May, but the buck became wary. Before Loftin could text May to be on the lookout, the buck turned and stopped, looked in all directions, and trotted right back under Loftin's stand.

"When he got right out in front of me, I could hear him breathing," Loftin said. "I was trying to get him in my scope, and he must have saw me move, because he took off running really fast for about 15 or 20 yards. Then, he stopped."

As the buck stood broadside, Loftin found him in his scope and squeezed the trigger of his Remington 742 .30-06 when the crosshairs fell on the shoulder. The 150-grain Winchester Power-Point bullet did its job; the deer dropped on the spot.

Loftin's buck carries an inside spread of 18½ inches, outlined by 25-inch main beams. The longest tine is a G2, just under 10 inches long. The base circumference of the antlers is 5½ inches on both sides. ■

— Dusty Wilson

The Wake County Wildlife Club Presents the...

38th Annual DIXIE DEER CLASSIC

Lee and Tiffany Lakosky
The Crush





Kyle Lamb
Viking Tactical



Sponsored by:



RAM
THE OFFICIAL TRUCK OF THE DIXIE DEER CLASSIC





BUY YOUR TICKET ONLINE TODAY!!!

Carolina DockDogs
Jumping Competition



— NC State Championship Turkey Calling Contest
— Get Your Trophy Deer Scored and Displayed on the "Bragging Boards"
[Deer must be scored by spin Saturday to be eligible for awards. The DDC will only score deer that were harvested in compliance with the BSM and P3 Fair Game position statements.]
— Now Scoring Bear Skulls

~WIN A~
2018 POLARIS SPORTSMAN ATV



All proceeds will fund WCCWC Wildlife and Natural Resources Conservation and Education Programs.

— Educational Courses for both Beginners and Seasoned Hunters
— Trail Cam Contest
— Youth Scavenger Hunt

March 2-4, 2018

Show Hours:
Friday 11am - 8pm
Saturday 9am - 7pm
Sunday 9am - 5pm

"HALF PRICE FRIDAY"
Entry Price is \$6
for youth 13-18, military and women.
Kids 12 and under are FREE.

NC STATE FAIRGROUNDS
1025 Blue Ridge Road • Raleigh, NC 27607

Entry Price is \$12⁰⁰
That price includes Entry to all Workshops and Exhibits, Free Online Subscription to the Dixie Deer Classic Magazine and Entry to Win over \$50,000 worth of hunting prizes.

OVER \$50,000 IN HUNTING GEAR AND PRIZES GIVEN AWAY TO ATTENDEES

919.782.5333

www.dixiederclassic.org




BEAR FACT: 705 POUNDS

NC TEEN TAGS BIGGEST BLACK BEAR EVER
KILLED IN CARTERET COUNTY

Branson Long of Beaufort, N.C. turned 13 on Nov. 18, but the biggest birthday present he could have gotten didn't arrive until Dec. 3: a 705-pound bear that's the biggest ever taken in Carteret County.

Long told his father, Brandon Long, that he wanted to kill a bear, and a couple of weeks after his birthday, his father took him on the hunt to remember.

At daylight, Long was in a truck with his father and uncle, glassing fields on the Open Grounds Farms east of Beaufort. His father and uncle had scouted and knew there were bears using the area. After passing on several smaller bears shortly after dawn, they were working deeper

into the farm when they spotted a pair of larger bears well back in a field. When they began working their way toward them, the bears split up, and they picked the one that appeared to be larger for a better look.

"We stopped at a place in the corner of a field to look at these bears, and my dad looked to his left and saw this bear," Long said. "It had been hidden from us by the growth on the ditch bank, but at the corner of the field, the road crossed and we could see it. It was a really big bear, and my dad took a quick look and told me this was the bear we were looking for and to

get out and shoot it."

Long eased out of the truck and braced the Browning .30-06 across the hood to take the shot, but he was too excited and had to calm himself down. Following his dad's advice, he took several deep breaths and let the last one out slowly as he aimed. The bear, apparently as surprised to see the Longs as they were to see it, stood watching them from about 220 yards away.

Long took the shot, which was true, and



Branson Long's enormous Carteret County bear, which weighed 705 pounds, was killed on Dec. 3 on the Open Grounds Farm near Beaufort.



HARD WORK AND GOOD VALUE RUN IN THE FAMILY.

Utility Farmall® A series tractors featuring 45-62 PTO HP offer great value for your operations. Economical yet featuring robust, durable, efficient engines, transmissions and a comfortable operator's area. Simple machines built with all the pulling power and hydraulics you need for loading, blading, tilling, mowing, baling and more. You need reliable power and ease of use. And that's exactly how we designed our tractors.

SEE US TODAY!

CAROLINA AGRI-POWER, LLC

2900 Five Chop Rd. 1875 Wysacki Hwy.
Orangeburg, SC 29115 Bishopville, SC 29010
803-534-4031 803-428-5555

www.carolinaap.com

All rights reserved. Case IH is a trademark registered in the United States and many other countries, owned by or licensed to CNH Industrial N.V., its subsidiaries or affiliates. www.caseih.com



FULLY LOADED

See us at the
Dixie Deer Classic
March 2nd-4th

Bost Argo/Centaur Sales

Hwy. 152 E. 6540 • Rockwell, NC 28138

Email: bostatv@gmail.com

EXTREME TERRAIN VEHICLE SOLUTIONS

COYOTE UGLY?

The S.C. Department of Natural Resources has, for the second year in a row, tagged and released 16 coyotes across the state as part of a coyote-harvest incentive program. Any hunter killing a tagged coyotes is eligible for a complementary lifetime hunting license. Eight of last year's 16 tagged coyotes were turned in, so potentially, 24 tagged coyotes remain at large and eligible for the reward.

the bear went down hard. It moved a little, and Long's father told him to put a couple of insurance shots in the bear, which stayed down after being hit two more times. Later they discovered that the second and third shots weren't needed, as the first had pierced the bruin's heart.

"I had told Branson to pass on the smaller bears we saw early, thinking there were bigger ones around and wanting him to get a trophy," Brandon Long said. "We hadn't seen this bear until just before he shot, and it surprised us. I only took a quick look to be sure it was a big bear before telling him to take the shot. I didn't realize just how big it was until we got to it. It was huge."

"I thought my heart was beating like crazy when I was trying to aim and shoot, but it really went wild as we got close to my bear," Branson Long said. "My dad said it looked like a Volkswagen laying there, and it did. Man, it was big."

"One funny thing happened too," Long said. "Its head was huge, and my dad asked me to see if I could raise its head for a picture. It had fallen and buried its nose in the dirt, and I had to tug hard. There must have been some air trapped in its lungs and as I tugged on its head it began a low growl. I wasn't expecting that and dropped its head and was ready to run."

"Once we realized just how big this bear was, we knew there wasn't any way we were going to be able to load it, so I called for help," Brandon Long said. "It took them about an hour to get there and we had plenty of time to take pictures and let it sink in that this was not just a big bear, but a special bear."

Once the bear was loaded, the Longs stopped on the way home and weighed the bear on the scales at Open Grounds Farms. It pulled the scales to 705 pounds. Later, the weight was verified by Colleen Olfenbuttel, the bear biologist for the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, who said it was the biggest bear ever from Carteret County. ■

— Jerry Dilsaver



10TH ANNIVERSARY
CAPE FEAR
Wildlife Expo
MARCH 16TH - 18TH 2018
CROWN COMPLEX ARENA

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C.

Enjoy three days of hunting and fishing exhibitors, wildlife art, decoys, boats and accessories, truck and ATV displays, fly fishing demos, camping, guides, outfitters, sportfishing simulator, contests, archery demos and fun for the entire family.

SPONSORED BY:
Bass Pro Shops | Beasley Broadcasting | Carolina Sportsman Magazine
Cumberland County Tourism Development Authority
Fayetteville Convention and Visitor Bureau | Wells Fargo

CapeFearWildlifeExpo.com

FRIDAY 9-7 • SATURDAY 9-7
SUNDAY 10-5

FRIDAY ONLY!
10TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION
ADULTS 2 FOR \$10.00

SATURDAY & SUNDAY
ADULTS: \$11.00 • SENIORS (60+) & ACTIVE MILITARY: \$8.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT: \$8.00
CHILDREN 10 & UNDER: FREE (WITH ADULT)



Redfish will often get as far back into marsh creeks as they can, searching for water where they can be safe from predators such as porpoises.

Kayakers can put adventuresome fishermen into the extremely skinny water where many redfish spend their winters.

By Jerry Dilsaver

COLD YAKS, HOT REDS

Approaching the mouth of a creek, Noah Lynk warned a handful of kayakers that the water would be shallow, that they might bump bottom a time or two, and that they would have to wade back across it when they left — but he was certain the fishing would be worth it.

They worked their way past several oyster bars and several creek bends before emerging into a pool roughly half the size of a football field. Lynk wanted to fish a falling tide, but the trip hadn't taken as long as he expected, and the water was still rising. Any concerns he might have had disappeared when he spotted a small school of red drum working part of the pool, hungry and on the move.

Lynk, who runs Noah's Ark Fishing Charters out of Harkers Island, N.C., knows places that hold exceptional numbers of fish, especially during the winter. Some are so shallow, or have blocked entrances, that even flats boats that draft the least amount of water can't reach them. They might get in and out on high

water, but that's sketchy at best, and February isn't a good time to be stranded until the next high tide.

That's when Lynk, a member of the Hobie fishing team, breaks out his kayaks for fishermen who like an adventure, and the reward is usually high. Winter weather isn't a problem as paddling or pedaling to and from the launching ramp keeps fishermen. Even having to drag your kayak out if the water is too low isn't terrible as long as the bottom isn't soft mud.

"There is a lot of skinny water around Harkers Island, and a kayak is a great way to explore it," Lynk said. "The water in some of these areas is too warm during the summer, and fish aren't there. However, once the water cools in the winter, these places still hold a little bait, and fish — especially red drum — know where they are and how to get there. Unfortunately, some of these spots are too shallow even for shallow boats, and a kayak is the only way to reach them."



WINTER KAYAK FISHING REQUIRES EXTRA SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Fish start making their way to these spots once the water temperature drops below about 60 in the open water,” Lynk said. “As it gets colder, especially during January, February and sometimes into March, there can be a lot of drum in these spots. Sometimes you catch a black drum or a trout, and when the water first begins cooling and as it’s warming back up, there will be a few flounder, but it’s mostly red drum. Even in really cold weather, they’re usually hungry and feed during the falling tide. If it’s real cold, they might be up in the shallows sunning to warm up, but often they are in the deeper pools between the flats.”

Lynk’s huge pool featured a hole at the upstream end that’s been carved out by the falling tide. If he doesn’t see fish working in the pool, he’ll start fishing the scour hole. Fishing can also be good in a shallow section broken up by oyster rocks where the current flows more slowly, pushing the bait more slowly.

Lynk (252-342-6911) carries mud minnows for those “just in case” times. He prefers artificials; his favorite is a Fishbites Fight’n Shrimp. He casts into the current and lets it push them along, just as it moves live bait. Most days, fish will bite the soft plastics, but occasionally, he uses a few live mud minnows to get them fired up.

“These spots stay warmer than the water outside the creek, even during the coldest weather,” Lynk said. “On sunny days, the action is a little better, and it continues to improve for the second and third days of warm, sunny weather. We often have these breaks of warm, sunny days, especially from mid-February on, so you can watch the weather and plan trips to take advantage of it.”

Guide Tim Taramelli of NC Pierman’s Outdoor Adventures in Hubert, N.C., specializes in kayak-fishing and spends most of the winter in the channels, flats and holes in the marsh across the Intracoastal Waterway from the mainland between Swansboro and Camp Lejeune.

“I catch more drum during the winter than during the summer,” said Taramelli, a member of the Native Kayaks fishing team. “Drum concentrate in schools during the winter, and when you find them, they’re usually hungry as long as the water temperature is 50 degrees or warmer. Once they start biting, the deal is on, and you can catch a bunch. I’ve had

Anglers must be more diligent when fishing from kayaks during winter. Things that might merely be unpleasant when the air and water are slightly warmer can become life-threatening when the temperature drops.

The most important thing is to wear your PFD. It can’t help you if you aren’t wearing it, and the shock of falling into cold water can incapacitate you briefly — just enough to let a kayak drift away with the current or wind.

Dressing appropriately is a must. Some dry suits keep a kayaker warm and dry, even during a dunking, but they are expensive. If you can’t afford one, do the best you can go with rain gear and waders. Snug the cuffs and waist to slow water getting in and carry a change of clothes for if you get wet.

A float plan is an absolute must. Leave your plan with someone reliable and list where you will launch and return, where you will fish and when you will return. Include your cell-phone number, plus a description of your kayak and vehicle.

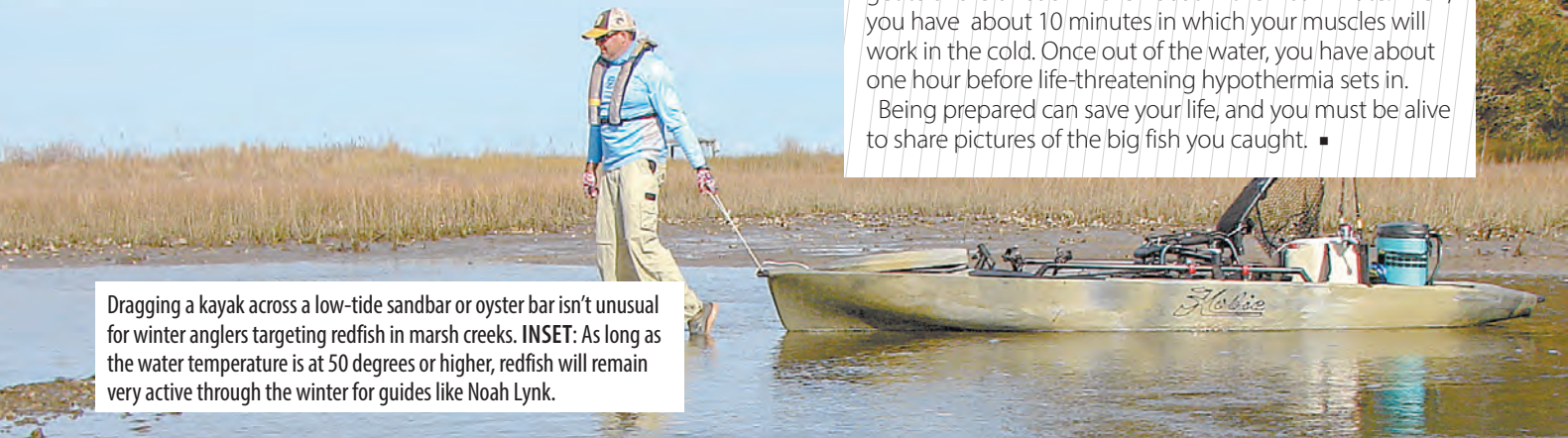
Dry bags and tethers are extra important during cold weather. You must keep your cell phone dry, and the change of clothes must be dry. A VHF radio is a good addition, especially in coastal areas where the Coast Guard monitors Channel 16. Carry a light even if you’re sure you won’t need it — you might. Tethers keep your rods and reels from disappearing, but one on your paddle is more important. If your paddle is dropped and sinks or floats away, it could mean big trouble.

Winter kayak-fishing is fun and can be very productive, but the air and water will harm you much more quickly than in other seasons. There is an axiom known as the “1-10-1 Rule” that everyone on the water should know. In water of around 50 degrees, a person who falls in needs to make the decision to try to get to shore or back in their boat in the first minute. Then, you have about 10 minutes in which your muscles will work in the cold. Once out of the water, you have about one hour before life-threatening hypothermia sets in.

Being prepared can save your life, and you must be alive to share pictures of the big fish you caught. ■



Jerry Bilsaver



Dragging a kayak across a low-tide sandbar or oyster bar isn’t unusual for winter anglers targeting redfish in marsh creeks. **INSET:** As long as the water temperature is at 50 degrees or higher, redfish will remain very active through the winter for guides like Noah Lynk.

days where we've caught 40 or more from a single spot."

Taramelli (910-581-4287) uses a Versa Board to get across the flats, bars, oyster rocks and other shallow spots to get to the drum, he usually fishes for them in deeper water. He sometimes finds them sunning on shallow flats, but he usually has better success working deeper holes between the flats. He looks for places 5 to 8 feet deep but will fish down to 10 feet. Areas with dark bottoms are warmer, and that's something to consider, especially if the water is colder.

"My Versa Board is a hybrid that has some characteristics of a kayak and some from a standup paddleboard," Taramelli said. "It takes less than 3 inches of water, so I can get to places boats can't go. I don't dislike boats, but I like to get away from them when I'm fishing and this is the best way I've found."

Taramelli prefers fishing with artificials and usually does better with them. However, it sometimes takes pieces of shrimp or cut bait to get the fish going, and he always carries some. He primarily catches red drum but sometimes also catches black drum, speckled trout and even occasionally a flounder.

"I primarily use soft plastics, but sometimes a suspending or sinking MirrOlure works better," Taramelli said. "My go-to setup is a JP Hammer Shad from Power Team lures fished on a light jighead. I usually fish a 1/4-ounce jighead so the lure will sink slowly and flutter. Power Team lures are freshwater lures, and the JP Hammer Shad was designed for drop-shotting, but it works well. I fish it slowly, and bounce it off the bottom a time or two and then pause and let it sit." ■



Guide Tim Taramelli prefers fishing for winter reds with artificial lures, but he will pack in some shrimp or cut bait in case the bite is slow.

BULLS BAY **IN STOCK AND READY TO RIDE!** 17-22' BAY BOATS & 20-23' CC'S AVAILABLE!

GREG'S OUTBOARD CENTER, INC
1105 E. OCEAN HWY, HOLLY RIDGE, NC 28445
910-329-0040 GREGSOUTBOARD.COM

YAMAHA

Save up to \$2,000 on a new boat. **ALUMACASH RED TAG SALES EVENT!** Going on now!

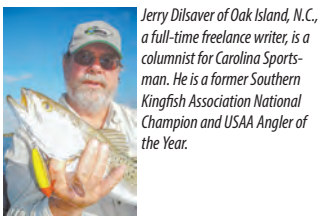
ALUMA Craft 2072 BAY

WILSON MARINE NEWBERRY, SC (803) 276-0809 WWW.WILSONMARINE.NET

YAMAHA - THE KEY TO RELIABILITY EVENT
OFFER VALID FROM JANUARY 1, 2018 - MARCH 31, 2018 FOR A LIMITED TIME. PURCHASE A NEW, SELECT ELIGIBLE 2.5 HP - 300 HP YAMAHA OUTBOARD AND CHOOSE EITHER:
5 YEARS OR **UP TO \$1,500**

YAMAHA

743 Wilson Rd. Newberry, SC 29108



Jerry Dilsaver of Oak Island, N.C., a full-time freelance writer, is a columnist for Carolina Sportsman. He is a former Southern Kingfish Association National Champion and USAA Angler of the Year.

THE TRIAD'S ONLY BOAT SHOW THIS YEAR

CENTRAL CAROLINA

BOAT & FISHING EXPO

Feb. 23 - 25, 2018

Greensboro Coliseum Complex



Skeet Reese

Fri 5-8 - Sat. all day



It's Once A Year.....Don't Miss It!!!

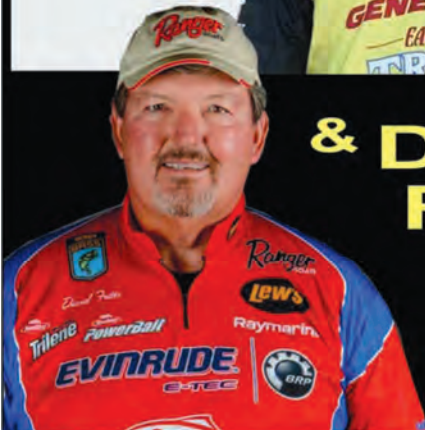
TIME TO STOCK UP!

**On Truckloads
Of The Latest
Brand Name
Fresh & Saltwater
Fishing Tackle**



& David Fritts

**ALL
3 DAYS**



Customer Appreciation Event

Be one of the first 200 ticket purchasers on Saturday Feb 24th and receive a FREE Mercury Marine Hat



* Hat style may vary



Presented By
MERCURY

Plus



Be sure to register at the show for your chance to win a 15 HP Mercury Four Stroke Outboard or a MotorGuide Trolling Motor. Lucky winners will be drawn at 4pm on Sunday.

MotorGuide

No purchase required. Registration available at show entrance. Combined Approx value \$5,000. Winner responsible for any local, state & federal taxes. © 2017 Mercury Marine.

RIGGED & READY

**Fishing Boats, Ski Boats. Pontoons,
Personal Watercraft, All on Display
& Ready to Go.**

**More Than You'll See
At Any Triad Event!**



Find us on
Facebook

**Friday 10am-8pm
Saturday 9am-7pm
Sunday 10am-5pm**

Come Get Caught Up In The Action!
Tickets & Details at
www.ncboatshows.com

Produced By: SOUTHEAST PRODUCTIONS 336 855-0208

**ADULTS \$9 SENIORS \$8
JR. BOATERS \$5
(6-12) Under 6 Free**



FEELING BLUE? YOU BETCHA!

By Terry Madewell

Lake Monticello's big blue catfish turn on in winter, giving anglers a chance to do battle with trophy class fish. Here's how....

Terry Madewell

IF YOU WANTING TO GET YOUR STRING STRETCHED TO THE LIMIT BY A BIG CATFISH IN COLD WEATHER,

you'll be hard pressed to do better than South Carolina's Lake Monticello. It is an real winter catfish destination for a couple of very good reasons.

First, the lake is teeming with blue catfish, the cats that get outlandishly huge and often gorge on multiple food sources during cold weather. This binge-eating mode serves anglers well and provides great winter action when many species seem to shut down. The consistent top-end size of Lake Monticello's blues rivals any and exceeds most other lakes in the state.

Guide William Attaway of Pomaria, S.C., targets these big catfish throughout the year.

"Catching huge catfish at Lake Monticello is possible anytime, but I think winter is the prime time to hook up with big blues," Attaway said. "Monticello also has a lot of catfish in the 15- to 30-pound class that are very active during cold weather, providing excellent action for quality fish. Monticello can be fickle at times, but the winter catfishing is not just about hooking a huge catfish or go bust. We have excellent days with good action and quality fish in the 15- to 30-pound and larger class."

As in any fishery, anglers have different ways to reach the same end result, and in February, drift-fishing, specifically controlled drift-fishing, and fishing from anchored positions are both very productive on Monticello. Small targets holding large numbers of fish can be effectively fished using both techniques.

It's more of an angler's personal preference, but specific techniques tend to make each more productive.

Attaway has developed his drift-fishing technique into a highly productive tactic.

"I want to cover as much area as I can but fish it very effectively," he said. "I target specific targets and work each area thoroughly. I'll typically graph areas such as points, humps, ledges and flats near much-deeper water before fishing

an area. Then, I plot the best drift to keep my baits in front of fish I've marked."

Attaway fishes from a pontoon boat, and his electric motor provides the power to move the boat along a well-defined path. He does not randomly drift; he has a specific area he wants to cover, and keeping his boat and baits in the right position is a key to his success. He prefers to drift at about .4 to .6 miles per hour, and he will typically will drift with six to eight rods to cover a wide swath of water.

"Drift-fishing gives me the mobility to fish large areas. It's not unusual to mark a lot of forage and fish in a broad, general area," he said. "I am looking for that area with active, biting fish. If I present my baits at the right speed and in the places fish are marked, but I don't get bites, I keep moving to find fish in other places. I may return to a good-looking spot later in the day and try it again, and it's not unusual to return and find catfish be biting like crazy. The best technique for me is to effectively fish as much area as I can, and a side benefit, we'll typically pick up occasional catfish while searching for a hot spot."

Attaway said he'll track his drift on the graph, and when he hits a productive area, he can repeat the drift. That's very important if the fish are in isolated areas: on the top of humps or

just off to the side of a ledge. He said a long drift over a series of humps and valleys will produce consistent action.

Attaway typically has better success in the lower half of the 6,700-acre lake because of the warm-water discharge into the lake from the nearby SCE&G nuclear facility.

"The shad seem to be drawn in larger numbers to the lower end because of warmer water temperatures, and the catfish follow the shad," Attaway said. "I'll catch fish throughout the lake during the winter, but the lower end is consistent."



These nice catfish certainly didn't give guide William Attaway the rainy day blues.

Terry Madewell

Guide Justin Whiteside of Rock Hill fishes Monticello year-round and has refined his technique there to primarily anchor-fishing.

continues on page 36

USE DIFFERENT BAITS FOR BIG MONTICELLO BLUES

Guide Justin Whiteside said he begins each day using a variety of different baits to determine what's working best.

"I usually have what I think will work best, but really, it's just a daily catfish preference, so I give them a smorgasbord," he said. "I use gizzard and threadfin shad, perch, bream and even herring if I have them."

Guide William Attaway uses the same assortment of baits and sometimes others, including chunks of chicken breast, but he doesn't soak his in WD-40 as some anglers do.

"I've had really good success on chicken-breast chunks for big fish at times," he said. "It's not always the favorite, but I believe it's worth trying when searching for the daily pattern."

Attaway and Whiteside both like to use white perch with one side filleted from the tail toward the head, then pulling the fillet up, exposing the entrails. Run the hook through the fillet and the head of the perch. Rigged in this manner, they said the bait has great scent dispersal; it helps that white perch are often a favorite winter meal of big blue catfish. ■

A big chunk of white perch is one of a handful of great winter baits for Lake Monticello's blue catfish.



Terry Madewell

DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE — Lake Monticello is just west of SC 215 and just east of the Broad River in Fairfield County, near Jenkinsville. Two public boat ramps service the lake: one off SC 215 on the east side of the lake and one on CR 99 on the lake's northwest corner.

WHEN TO GO — The dead of winter is an excellent time to fish Monticello, especially February, when blue catfish utilize multiple species of baitfish.

ACCOMMODATIONS — America's Best Value Inn, Winnsboro, 803-635-1447; Fairfield Motel, Winnsboro, 803-635-3458.

MAPS — Kingfisher Maps, 800-326-0257, www.kfmaps.com; Delorme's SC Atlas & Gazetteer, 800-511-2459, www.delorme.com.

BEST TECHNIQUES — Drift or slow-troll cut or live baits around humps, ledges and points, or find fish on your depth finder and anchor up, fan-casting baits to different depths. The lower end of the lake is usually more productive, and the 20- to 40-foot depth range is a good place to start.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — William Attaway, 803-924-0587; Justin Whiteside, Whiteside Whiskers Guide Service, 803-417-0070. See also Guides and Charters in Classifieds.

CLOSEOUT ON ALL 2017 MODELS IN STOCK!

WAR EAGLE BOATS SEAARK BOATS LOWE BOATS

Precision Marine Inc.

Find us off Hwy 70 bypass at Exit #369
from Raleigh/Exit #370 from Kinston!
919-751-1199

SEE US AT THE
RALEIGH CONVENTION CENTER
BOAT SHOW – FEB. 1ST-4TH
AND THE DIXIE DEER CLASSIC
MARCH 2ND-4TH



Lowepro Roughneck 2070 Archer, 90hp & galvanized trailer.



961
BLACKHAWKS
ALSO IN STOCK!

2170 Blackhawk w/115 4stroke & alum. tandem axle trailer



GREAT SELECTION
OF SIDE AND CC
MODELS IN STOCK!

2017
V-CAT 2072 W/DF 140!
ONLY ONE AVAILABLE AT A
FANTASTIC PRICE!

Bay Extreme Tunnel BXT220 w/DF150, Hyd Steering & tandem alum trlr.

WHERE GREAT SERVICE GOES ALONG WITH THE SALE!

* with approved credit

New Store Hours: 8-5:00 Monday - Friday
After hours by appointment



WE SELL & INSTALL

MINN-KOTA

POWER-POLE
SHALLOW WATER ANCHOR

CALL US FOR RE-POWERS!
GIMME 6 GOING ON NOW!

SUZUKI

MARINE

WWW.PRECISIONMARINEINC.COM

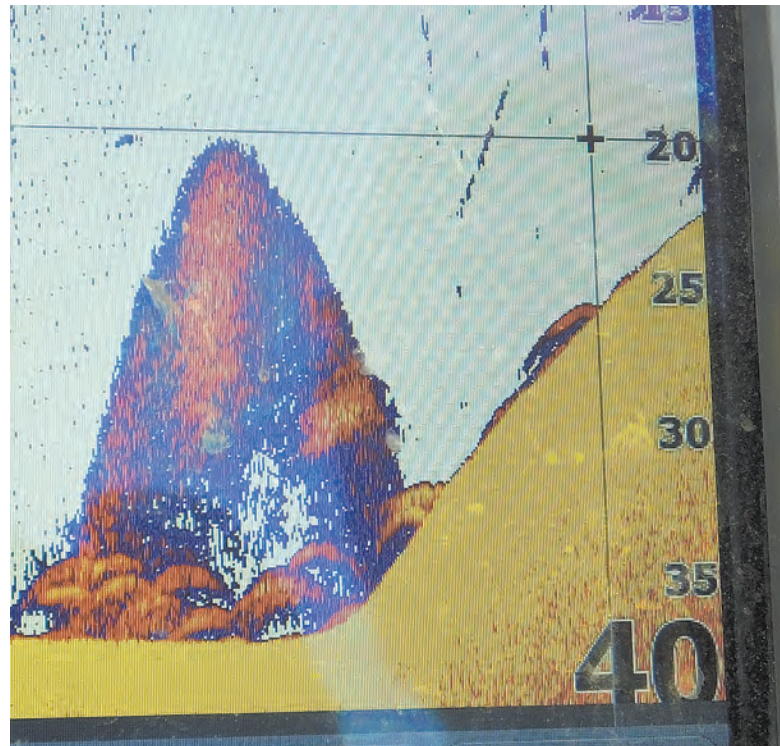
LAKE MONTICELLO CATFISH

TRUST YOUR ELECTRONICS FOR BIG CATFISH

Guide Justin Whiteside of Rock Hill trusts his electronics to depict exactly where fish are located and where to present his baits.

“Proper anchoring means setting up so I can cast to specific targets, not just chunking baits randomly around the boat,” he said. “It takes a little effort, but it’s critical for various reasons.

“First is bait presentation. I use my graph to determine exactly where catfish are holding on any given bottom feature. During the winter, catfish may be located in different clusters around an area, and the graph allows me to select a central area to anchor, enabling me to present my baits right in front of these big catfish even when they’re marked in multiple places. Sometimes, one area will be the hot spot for active fish, but the others not so much, so working them all is crucial!”



Terry Madewell

Marking fish arcs along pronounced bottom structure like a ledge or hump shows why trusting your depth finder is a big key in catching big winter blue catfish.

Whiteside said catfish are found on many bottom features, but a perfect example of would be a big school of shad with multiple big-fish arches under them, tucked in right at the bottom of a ledge.

“That would be ground zero for really good catfish action,” he said.

Whiteside said trusting his graph enables him to avoid randomly casting to imaginary targets, hoping to get lucky; that won’t consistently get the job done. To ensure ideal placement of his baits, he factors the wind into the setup and anchors from the bow and stern with long anchor lines to hold the boat securely.

>

"A secure anchor set is crucial because it eliminates boat drift, so if we start catching fish from a relatively small area, I can repeat my bait presentation," he said. "I've seen it make a tremendous difference in getting repeat bites from a single spot." ■

FLOAT POSITION CAN HELP TRIGGER CATFISH BITES ON A DRIFT RIG

Guide William Attaway said a lot of fishermen prefer to drift-fish and typically will use a standard drift rig that typically works well.

"Fishermen usually have their own style, but I prefer to use a 2-foot leader, a 1- to 2-ounce sliding, Slinky-type weight based on depth I'm fishing, and an 8/0 Gamakatsu circle hook," he said. "But I fine-tune this rig by adjusting the distance I place my 2½-inch float above the hook, based on what I see on the graph and what the bite is like."

Attaway said most fishermen will simply set the float on a standard drift rig at a specific, perhaps random, distance from the hook. He places his at specific distances from the hook based on how fish are depicted on the graph.

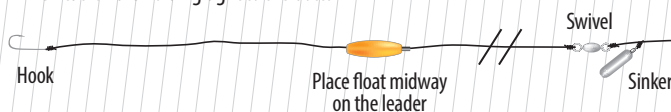
"If the fish are marked off the bottom, I will place the float about 5 inches from the hook, and the trailing bait

TARGET CATFISH USING FLOAT PLACEMENT ON DRIFT RIGS

When catfish are marked just off the bottom



When catfish are holding tight to the bottom



will be slightly higher in the water column as I drift," he said. "If fish are marked holding tight to the bottom I will put the float halfway up the leader; that will keep the bait off the bottom but more at eyeball level of catfish hugging the bottom.

"It makes a difference in bites." ■



Sanford, NC

#1 CAROLINA SKIFF
DEALER IN THE USA
FOR OVER 10 YEARS!



Call Us Before You Buy... We Will Save You \$\$\$!

919-775-7259 Follow Us
www.chatleeboats.com

Celebrating Over 50 Years of Serving the Southeast!

Powered by





LAKE MONTICELLO CATFISH

Lake Monticello will produce plenty of healthy, chunky blue cats for anglers like guide William Attaway.

“I often find on Lake Monticello that the blues will get into a narrow bite zone,” Whiteside said. “When they do, anchoring and casting baits to specific targets increases the number of bites I’ll get.”

When Whiteside sets anchor on his roomy pontoon, it’s not as simple as dropping a brick over the side and letting the wind move the boat until the line tightens. He will double anchor on a precise target

to fish effectively.

“During cold weather, I’ll mark fish on specific places on various bottom features,” he said. “Catfish tend to have preferences, such as congregating on the downwind side of a hump. But the specific locations and depths change daily. Windy and cloudy conditions sometimes have catfish feeding shallow, while bright, cold, windless days on this clear lake often push forage and fish a bit deeper.” Whiteside said deep water is



Terry Madeveit

LIFE IS BETTER IN A CAROLINA SKIFF

GO ANYWHERE. DO ANYTHING.™



Excite the Senses - Let the Ride Decide



We Now Have Fishing Tackle!



YOPP BROTHERS MARINE

Hwy 210W at Four Corners • Sneads Ferry, NC
910-327-2831 • Toll Free: 866-529-2622

www.yoppbrothersmarine.com

a relative concept at Lake Monticello. The lake has water in excess of 100 feet deep, but typically the fish are not often found that deep even in the winter.

“Generally, the catfish will be from 20 to 60 feet deep,” he said. “With a graph, it’s not hard to quickly figure it out. I’ll usually graph a couple of potential places before setting up to get the feel for the depth pattern. At times, catfish will be deeper at Monticello, and I’ll fish where fish are found, but my normal starting point is the 20- to 60-foot range.”

Whiteside said the specific bait used is always crucial, and as a general rule, he favors larger baits for big fish.

“But it’s not a hard and fast rule,” he said. “At times, catfish get finicky about what they eat, and smaller baits can be better. I like the concept that elephants will eat peanuts, so I typically use assorted sizes until I see a daily trend. I’ve caught huge blues here on quarter-sized baits.”

Whiteside uses live bait more frequently in the winter at Monticello than at other times.

“I think the cold water can occasionally make even blue catfish lethargic, so I’ll use

live bait to charge them up,” he said. “Live baits will swim, creating both vibration and movement — often keys to triggering a strike. My favorite for cold-weather catfish at Monticello is dollar bill-sized gizzard shad. Other good choices include white perch and blueback herring. I often use a trailing No. 6 treble hook as a stringer hook on live bait as well as big cut bait offerings.”

Whiteside said the time of day for the best bite can be important on Monticello, but it’s difficult to predict in advance.

“Air temperature may be very cold, but I’ll be on the lake early in case it’s an early morning bite; I don’t want to miss that window of opportunity,” he said. “The fish will bite on and off during the day, but the morning bite is usually pretty consistent, and that gets the day off to a good start. In low-light conditions, fish are usually shallower early, and (they) get progressively deeper as the sun gets higher.”

Attaway said when water is being pumped in or out of the lake, the bite can be better.

“Other than wind, no natural current flow exists here,” he said. “I think the fish bite best is when water is being pumped, because that creates moving water, triggering a good bite. We’ll catch fish without moving water, but it can really turn the blues on. I think during the pumping process, baitfish gets churned, and that triggers catfish to feed.”

Attaway and Whiteside have another common denominator in terms of what it takes to produce a good catch of catfish on Monticello, specifically, patience.

Attaway said winter fishing on Monticello has the potential for great rewards, but it is often a process of searching for active fish, eliminating unproductive areas and staying on the hunt until catfish are caught.

“Sometimes, finding catfish occurs quickly, but on some days, we have to work out a pattern,” he said. “I keep working different places, varying types of baits, the speed of the drift and the depths I fish.”

Whiteside said when anchoring, he will give a spot an hour or sometimes longer if the setup looks really promising.

“I don’t anchor unless I feel confident based on what is shown on the graph,” he said. “Usually, we don’t have to wait long when I put the bait right in front of the fish, but like any fishing, it can be a process. It takes a few minutes to graph and set up on what are often small targets,

but in the long run, we’ll end up spending a lot more time catching fish.” ■



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.



NauticStar
BOATS
2102 Legacy

**GREAT
SELECTION
NOW IN
STOCK!**



26 Bay



YAMAHA

Call Us Today For The
Lowest Re-Power Prices In NC!

LOOKOUT
SKIFF

MITZI SKIFFS

POWER MARINE
outfitters

Sneads Ferry, NC
910-327-3953

www.powermarineoutfitters.com



Sanford, NC

Why Buy From Chatlee?

1 Selection of **Over 300 Boats!**
70,000 sq ft Indoor Showrooms
**LARGE SELECTION
LARGE SAVINGS!**



2 **Service**
8 Full Time Techs



3 **Sales**
9 Full Time Sales & Finance Experts



4 **All the Best Brands**



5 **On Site Owners**



6 **Onsite Test Lake**
Buy Today - Ride Today
Immediate Delivery On Many Boats



7 **Just down the road to save you \$\$\$\$**

35 minutes from Raleigh/Cary
40 minutes from Chapel Hill/Durham
40 minutes from Fayetteville
50 minutes from Greensboro

8 **Longevity**
Over 50 Years In Business

9 **Leadership**
3 Times "Top 100 Dealer" In U.S.

#1 Dealer in the USA for



Powered by



Sanford, NC
919-775-7259

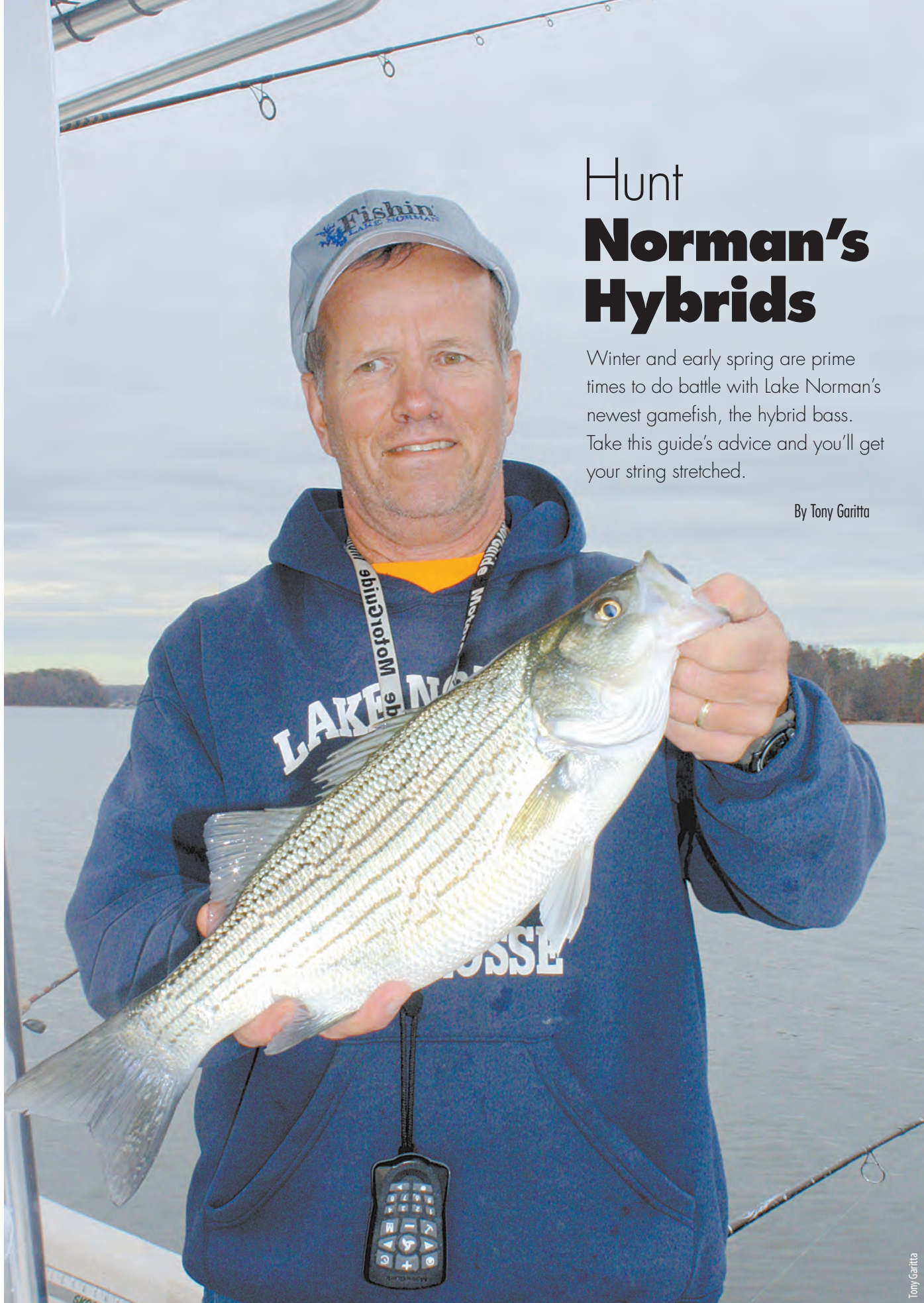
Follow Us On

chatleeboats.com

Hunt **Norman's Hybrids**

Winter and early spring are prime times to do battle with Lake Norman's newest gamefish, the hybrid bass. Take this guide's advice and you'll get your string stretched.

By Tony Garitta



IN 2012, when the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission decided to quit stocking striped bass in Lake Norman, that probably wasn't the best news for Bob Curan, who grew up fishing for striped bass in the Chesapeake Bay before moving to North Carolina in 1997 and putting in 15 years learning the 32,500-acre lake north of Charlotte.

Of course, it probably didn't hurt his feelings that the Commission decided to replace them with hybrid bass, which are as close in habit to stripers as any other fish, being a laboratory cross between a female striped bass and a male white bass.

In fact, Curan took to the hybrids so much that in July 2015, he opened a guide business, Fishin' Lake Norman, with his favorite target being hybrids, which offer a superior-quality fight, grow fast and are willing to bite.

With the Commission stocking 167,500 hybrid fingerlings annually in Norman, beginning in 2013, the fish thrived almost immediately. In just two years, anglers started catching 12- to 15-inch fish regularly, with a few larger fish mixed in. Most weighed between 1 and 3 pounds, with an occasional 4- to 6-pounder showing up.

Curan's years of experience fishing for stripers served as an apprenticeship for catching hybrid bass. Fishing for hybrids is similar to fishing for striped bass, with many of the same techniques coming into play.

Though hybrids are willing biters, they're not homesteaders.

Like stripers, they prefer to roam in open water, which makes finding them a daunting task considering Norman's size. Like other guides, Curan spends hours motoring around the lake, viewing his side-scan sonar unit for schools of hybrids. Since they are new to the lake,

consistent patterns of movement have yet to be established.

Curan, however, has noted some trends since their introduction.

"The best hybrid bite takes place from December through March, with water temperatures in the 40s to lower 50s," he said. "The bite begins upstream from the (NC) 150 bridge, then gradually moves to mid-lake as the water cools. Fishing is

lake channel buoys downstream from the bridge. The fish favor points, humps, drops and creek-channel edges.

Curan slow-trolls at .6 mph using medium-action 6½-foot spinning rods. He spools his reels with 8- to 12-pound monofilament, with terminal tackle being a Carolina rig starting with a 1- to 2-ounce egg sinker threaded onto the main line above a barrel swivel that's

TAGGED HYBRID PROGRAM CONTINUES

Fishing for hybrid bass aka Bodie bass, at Lake Norman is not only rewarding in itself, but it could actually pay off in cash.

In December 2015, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission began a hybrid bass tagging program on Lake Norman, Commission paying fishermen \$100 for catching and reporting tagged hybrids.

To receive the reward, fishermen have to provide the following information:

- Retain the orange tag and tag number;
- Indicate the date of catch and if the fish was kept or released;
- Tell whether live bait or artificial lures were used to catch the fish;
- Tell the location of the catch in respect to a nearby landmark;
- Indicate whether the fish was caught

from a boat or from the shore.

After recording the information, fishermen should report the tagged hybrid to Corey Oakley, a biologist with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, at 919-214-1095 or by emailing corey.oakley@ncwildlife.org.

According to Christian Waters, chief of the Commission's Division of Inland Fisheries, Commission staff members are still tagging hybrid bass at Lake Norman with the assistance of a local fisherman.

"The \$100 reward for a tag return will continue ... and is scheduled for several more years" Waters said.

After the program is completed, the data provided from fishermen will be used for an assessment of the hybrid bass fishery and future stocking plans.

best on overcast days with light winds."

Hybrid hangouts include the mouths of Stumpy and Hicks creeks upstream from the NC 150 bridge and Mountain Creek on the lake's western side, a few miles downstream of the bridge, and the area between the Nos. 6 and 13 main-

connected to a 3-foot leader of 15-pound fluorocarbon, a No. 1 circle hook and a 3- to 4-inch threadfin shad or shiner hooked through the nostrils.

"The 2-ounce sinkers go on the front C-rigs to prevent tangles when I make a turn," said Curan, who occasional sets

continues >

Norman's **STRIPER FISHERY FINALLY SUCCUMBED**

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission put a great deal of effort into maintaining the put-and-take striped bass fishery in Lake Norman, but to no avail, finally giving up in 2012.

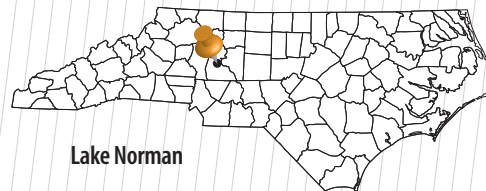
Norman's stripers struggled to survive whenever water temperatures rose into the 90s, a frequent occurrence in July and August. Low dissolved oxygen levels didn't help either.

The decision left Norman fishermen disheartened, though they generally concurred, having witnessed stripers floating belly up after summer fish kills.

The curtailed fishery threatened the livelihood of striper guides, some of whom diversified and started offering trips for other species.

The Commission saved them when it opened a hybrid bass stocking program in 2012, with the first stocking of 167,500 fingerlings in 2013.

The hybrid bass is a hatchery cross between a female striper and a male white bass, and it looked like a promising addition to the fishery. A hybrid is a fast-growing, open-water fish that travels and feeds in schools. They can withstand higher water temperatures and lower dissolved-oxygen levels than stripers. They have a life span of five to six years often obtaining double-digit weights. The state record of 17 pounds, 7 ounces, was taken from Lake Chatuge in 1996.



DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE — Lake Norman is north of Charlotte and within reach of I-77. NC 150 bisects the 32,500-acre impoundment west of Mooresville, with the Pinnacle and McCrary access areas off NC 150 on the east side of the lake very popular. On the west side, Midway Marina is just south of the NC 150 bridge. On the lower end of the lake, Blythe Landing off US 74 at Ramsey Creek provides access.

WHEN TO GO — Good fishing for hybrid bass is from December through March, with the best fishing occurring when the water cools into the lower 50s and upper 40s. Hybrids first become active above the NC 150 bridge, then gradually progress to mid-lake with colder temperatures.

BEST TECHNIQUES — Hybrids are caught by anglers slow-trolling in 25 to 35 feet of water with spinning gear using Carolina-rigged live baits. Other options include casting small spoons or trolling with crankbaits and Alabama rigs. Pre-rigged spinning rods with small jigging spoons are used for casting into breaking fish or vertical jigging. Schools of hybrids can be found with side scan electronics or by looking for birds diving into forage.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — Bob Curan, Fishin' Lake Norman, 704-402-0770, www.fishinglkn.com; Gus Gustafson, Lake Norman Ventures, 704-617-6812, www.fishingwithgus.com; Craig Price, Fish On! Lake Norman, 704-996-0946, www.fishonlake-norman.com; David Clubb Guide Service, www.fishclubb.com; Midway Marina, 704-478-2333. See also Guides and Charters in Classifieds.

ACCOMMODATIONS — Mooresville Convention and Visitors Bureau, www.racecityusa.org; Go Lake Norman, www.golakenorman.com; www.visitlakenorman.org.

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

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission's decision to replace striped bass with hybrid bass in Lake Norman has paid off for guide Bob Curan.



Tony Garitta

Precision Marine Inc.

HWY. 70E, GOLDSBORO • 919-751-1199

Find us off Hwy. 70 Bypass at Exit # 369 from Raleigh/Exit #370 from Kinston!

**WHERE GREAT SERVICE GOES
ALONG WITH THE SALE!**

FINANCING @ GREAT RATES AVAILABLE!

**SEE US AT THE RALEIGH CONVENTION CENTER
BOAT SHOW – FEB. 1ST-4TH
AND THE DIXIE DEER CLASSIC MARCH 2ND-4TH**

SUNDANCE



DX22HP - w/115hp & alum trailer

Starting at
\$226/mo*



B20CCR - w/115hp & alum trailer

As Low As
\$205/mo*



Lots of
Hull Colors
In Stock!

DX20HP - w/115hp 4-stroke and alum trlr.

Only
\$229/mo*

CUSTOM ELECTRONICS & TROLLING MOTOR INSTALLATION!

*with approved credit

We Sell & Install



Powered By



YAMAHA

**NEW STORE HOURS: 8:00-5:00 MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY
AFTER HOURS BY APPOINTMENT**

www.precisionmarineinc.com

out a free line weighed with just a small split-shot to keep the bait below the surface.

Curan arranges four to five rods on each side of the boat for trolling. Other rods are pre-rigged with Little Cleo, Tackle Town and Hopkins spoons for vertical jigging into concentrations of fish or for casting into breaking fish.

When trolling, Curan makes his baits pass several feet above the forage and fish. Like stripers, hybrids mostly move up to feed.

While searching for hybrids with his electronics, he may troll at 2½ mph to cover more water using Alabama rigs and crankbaits.

Hybrids, spotted bass and white perch frequently school together along with an occasional striper, so when a rod goes down, fishermen never know what they might catch. ■



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

BELOW: Spotted bass, white perch and hybrid bass often school together on Lake Norman during the winter and other, warmer months, because of their love of open, deeper water and current.



Tony Garitta

A man with a grey beard and a yellow cap is holding a rifle and a rabbit. He is wearing a plaid shirt and blue jeans. The background is a field of tall grass under a clear blue sky.

RUN, RABBIT, RUN

By Craig Holt

Rabbit populations in the Carolinas are made up of several species, but all provide plenty of opportunities this month.

If Alex Trebek unveiled this clue on his TV quiz show, *Jeopardy*, would you come up with the correct question?

“Name the wild rabbits that live in the Carolinas.”

Most people would ring in and respond “What is a cottontail?” But that wouldn’t put money in your column. If you happened to have grown up east of the fall lines in both states and responded, “What are cottontails and marsh rabbits?” you’d almost cash in.

But to take home the money, you’d have to respond “What are Appalachian and eastern cottontails, marsh rabbits and swamp rabbits?”

>

Craig Holt

HUNTERS IN SOUTH CAROLINA HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO HUNT ALL FOUR SPECIES, WHILE NORTH CAROLINA HUNTERS HAVE ONLY THE TWO COTTONTAILS AND MARSH RABBITS, AKA "BLUETAILS" OR "CANECUTTERS."

BUNCHES O' BUNNIES

"In South Carolina, we've got marsh rabbits and swamp rabbits," said Michael Hooks, the small-game biologist for the S.C. Department of Natural Resources.

According to SCDNR, swamp rabbits have been documented only in the Savannah River drainages in Oconee, Pickens and Anderson counties.

Appalachian cottontails are found only at higher elevations in Oconee, Pickens and Greenville counties.

Swamp rabbits are as large as marsh rabbits but have fuzzy, white tails, similar to a cottontail. True marsh rabbits are the largest specimens in both states and have small, stubby, brown tails.

"We call every big rabbit a swamp rabbit," Hooks said.

Thomas Boyd, a rabbit hunter from Saluda, S.C., agreed.

"Most of (our) rabbits are cottontails," he said. "Others are swamp rabbits. We occasionally get a bluetail in there. Most of them we find in swampy areas."

The vast majority of North Carolina rabbits are eastern cottontails, and while swamp rabbits are missing, marsh rabbits are plentiful, found in isolated pockets in the Piedmont and across eastern counties. Although they don't necessarily live near marshes, they prefer nearby water, especially creeks.

"We always find 'em with a large creek or shallow river close by, so if the dogs

push them too hard and force them out of their favorite habitat, they can find a creek and swim across," said hunter Pete Acosta of Graham, N.C. "If your beagles run a bluetail too hot, he'll run out of thick stuff, head for the nearest creek and swim across."

Appalachian cottontails, the smallest of the four sub-species, are found mostly in higher elevations in the mountains of western North Carolina.

PUBLIC-LAND BUNNIES

SCDNR and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission manage many public lands — Wildlife Management Areas in South Carolina and Game Lands in North Carolina — for small game, including rabbits.

"Crackerneck WMA near Aiken is a good place for rabbits," Hooks said.

Crackerneck's 10,000 acres feature

CAROLINA RABBIT SEASONS

North Carolina: Nov. 18-Feb. 28.
Bag limit: 5 per day.

South Carolina: Nov. 23-March 1.
Bag limit: 5 per day.



small-game fields scattered across 7,000 acres of upland habitat. The remaining land is 3,000 acres of swamps.

"A good bit of it has been clear-cut and thinned," Hooks said. "It's got older clear-cuts, a fair amount of bottomland and some grown-over field edges."

In South Carolina, make sure you consult the regulations digest (www.dnr.sc.gov/regulations.html) for WMA hunting dates. While many WMAs operate under the same statewide season dates as private lands, many have different dates. Crackerneck, for example, is open to public hunting on Fridays and Saturdays.

"Draper WMA in York County contains only 806 acres, but (we) started years ago doing a little quail habitat work, and it's got a fairly dedicated group of rabbit hunters," Hooks said. "Draper has native, warm-season grasses and dove fields, lots of habitat for small game and rabbits."



Packs of beagles have to work faster and cover more ground to flush rabbits living in cutovers and give hunters the chance for a shot.

Craig Holt

AS CUTOVERS GROW, SLOW PACKS FADE

Biologists point to habitat as the key to having game animals or fish. That's even more true now than in the past for rabbit hunters. Habitat adaptations and more predators have created a sea change in the places dogs may find marsh, swamp and cottontail rabbits.

Think of it like this: you wouldn't expect to find a scantily-clad woman at the North Pole. Well, beagles find few rabbits outside of regenerating cutovers — especially during daylight hours.

Why?

Coyotes, foxes and hawks.

Every claw-and-fang critter loves to eat rabbits, but these predators can't get to them easily because rabbits really do prefer impenetrable briar patches.

So hunters have adapted, benching "slow packs" of

beagles for quicker dogs. Slow-pack dogs, as the name applies, work on a scent trail at a man's walking pace.

"Everyone prefers faster dogs now," said Thomas Boyd, a member of the Rack & Spur Hunt Club in Saluda, S.C. "We use medium- to fast-pack beagles now. Slow beagles can't push a rabbit fast enough in a cutover to make him run across a lane or open spot. A slow-pack just bumps him a little; he'll stop until the dogs get close, then sneak away again.

"Nobody'd ever shoot a rabbit where we have to hunt if they used slow packs."

Boyd and three other rabbit hunters joined a 60-member deer club to have a place for their dogs to chase bunnies.

"The hunters cut lanes in the thick stuff to see deer," he said. "We help them — and that helps us." ■



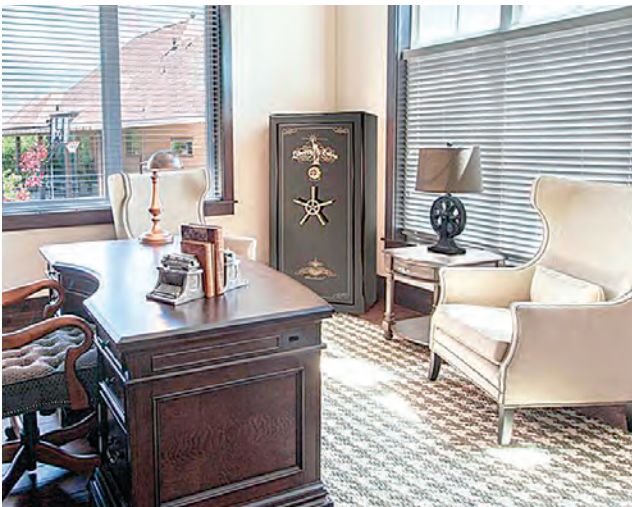


LIBERTY
SAFE

Protect Your Valuables



For Home Or Office



Delivery Available

NICHOLS STORE

Outdoor  Paradise

1980 Mt. Holly Road • Rock Hill, S.C. 29730
I-77, Exit 73
(803) 328.9792 • www.nicholsstore.com



Cottontail rabbits are denizens of the thickest, nastiest briar patches and cutover that can be found.

Craig Holt

Palachucola WMA in Hampton and Jasper counties and Hamilton Ridge WMA in Hampton County “also have good rabbit hunting and prescribed dates,” Hooks said.

Fant’s Grove WMA near Clemson in the Upstate “has decent rabbit hunting,” Hooks said. “We plant quail food plots there and don’t mow them, so they’re good for rabbits.”

North Carolina’s two million acres of public-hunting lands include plenty of areas with good habitat for rabbits. Most seasons mimic those on private lands, except in the case of some areas where hunting for all species is restricted to certain days (www.ncwildlife.org/Hunting/Where-to-Hunt/Public-Places).

On one of North Carolina’s best public-hunting areas, the 61,225-acre Sandhills Game Land along US 1 south of Raleigh, has rabbit hunting, with one restriction: the field-trials grounds are open only from Nov. 11-25.

Similar to South Carolina WMAs, North Carolina’s game lands with dove fields feature habitat that suits rabbits.

“If a game land’s got dove fields, you can count on it having rabbits,” said David Turner, a biologist in the eastern part of the state.

The Green Swamp Game Land in Brunswick County has classic habitat where managed loblolly pines have been planted after old-growth timber cuts and undergrowth has been kept manageable by controlled burns.

Chowan Swamp Game Land in Bertie, Gates and Hertford counties has excellent rabbit areas at the Gates County side of the Chowan River and near Parkers Ferry. Some regions of Gull Rock Game Land in Hyde County, including the Long Shoal Tract, offer cottontails and bluetails.

The two top game lands for rabbits in eastern North Carolina are likely Holly Shelter Game Land in Pender County, the Croatan National Forest in Carteret, Craven and Jones counties.

continues on page XXX

Sandy Bottom Volunteer Fire & Rescue

11th Annual SPORTSMAN's Giveaway

Sat., March 3, 2018 • 1pm - 5pm • Lenoir Co. Livestock Arena

1791 Hwy 11 & 55, Kinston, NC 28504

DOORS OPEN AT 1:00PM. DRAWING BEGINS AT 2:00PM.
TICKETS WILL BE DRAWN EVERY 4 MINUTES.

**YOU DO
NOT HAVE TO BE
PRESENT TO
WIN!**

Times & Prizes

2:00 Half & Half Drawing	3:00 Half & Half Drawing	4:00 Half & Half Drawing
2:04 Remington 870 20ga Youth	3:04 Winchester 24-Gun Safe	4:04 \$500
2:08 \$500	3:08 \$500	4:08 Ruger American 308 w/scope
2:12 Glock 43 9mm	3:12 Ruger American 30-06 w/scope	4:12 \$500
2:16 \$500	3:16 \$500	4:16 CZ-USA 712 Gen-2 12ga
2:20 Remington 870 Express 12ga	3:20 Mossberg Patriot 270	4:20 \$500
2:24 \$500	3:24 \$500	4:24 Winchester XPR 308
2:28 Taurus 605 Stainless 357Mag	3:28 S & W M&P 40 Shield	4:28 \$500
2:32 \$500	3:32 \$500	4:32 Ruger GP-100 Stainless 357Mag
2:36 Henry H-22 Lever Action	3:36 Winchester SXP 12ga Camo	4:36 \$500
2:40 \$500	3:40 \$500	4:40 S & W M&P-15 5.56
2:44 Savage R-93 22Mag w/scope	3:44 Marlin 336 30-30	4:44 \$500
2:48 \$500	3:48 \$500	4:48 Sig Sauer P220 Scorpion 45ACP
2:52 Ruger 10-22 Black	3:52 Ruger LCP II 380	4:52 Half & Half Drawing
2:56 \$500	3:56 \$500	4:56 \$5000
		5:00 \$10,000



Tickets: \$20
Free Food & Drink All Day

Contacts:

Bryan Holloman 919-222-0203
Moose Whitfield 252-560-9013

Jimmy Stroud 252-939-4793
Timmy Mooring 252-560-2047

Jr Goff
252-939-6911



Falling Creek Guns
Hwy 70 &
Kennedy Home Rd
Kinston
252-522-3454

**Contact any of the above to
have tickets shipped via USPS**

RUN, RABBIT RUN

"Butner-Falls of Neuse Game

Land (north of Durham) has rabbits, but it gets pounded so hard it's only good for two or three days," said Chris Baranski, a Commission biologist who oversees northern Piedmont counties.

Jordan Game Land southwest of Raleigh has seven dove fields, and all have habitat suitable for rabbits.

Caswell Game Land in Caswell County has eight dove fields with good field-edge cover, and a CURE (quail restoration) area.

"Except for the restricted zone, the CURE area can be hunted for rabbits," Baranski said. "It's got regenerating clear cuts for rabbits. The dove field off Old 62 south of Yanceyville has hedge rows and warm-season grasses."

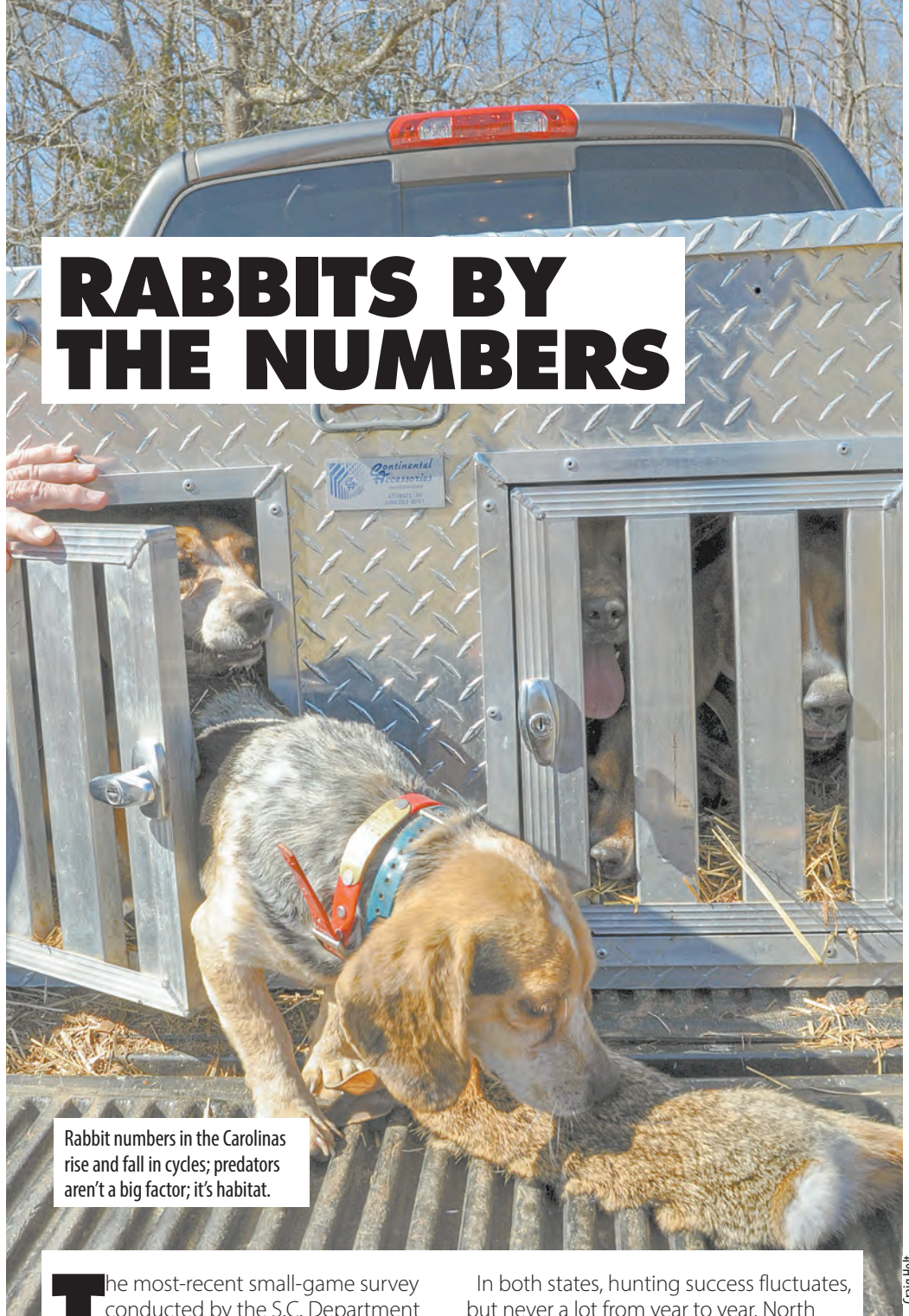
A surprising game lands for marsh rabbits is a section of Harris Game Land in Chatham County. On the west side of Corinth Road where it turns south off old US 1, Shaddox Creek runs through this region, along with a powerline cut-through covered in sawtooth briars. The area also has high ground and cottontails.

In the western third of the state, Sandy Mush Game Land in Buncombe and Madison counties has six dove fields in the French Broad River bottomland that hold rabbits, and the South Mountains Game Lands in Burke, Cleveland, McDowell and Rutherford counties also offers good rabbit hunting. ■



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

RABBITS BY THE NUMBERS



Rabbit numbers in the Carolinas rise and fall in cycles; predators aren't a big factor; it's habitat.

The most-recent small-game survey conducted by the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (2015-16) revealed that the best rabbit hunting occurs in the Midlands (2.19 rabbits jumped per hour), followed by the Low-country Country's (1.22), the Piedmont (0.77) and the Northern Coastal Plain (0.56). Cottontails make up the bulk of kills at 68.6 percent, while marsh rabbits total 27.4 percent and swamp rabbits 4 percent.

North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission surveys showed that last season, the average hunter took .87 rabbits per hunt, or 4.74 rabbits while hunting 6.21 days.

In both states, hunting success fluctuates, but never a lot from year to year. North Carolina hunters took 222,181 rabbits in 2014-15, 248,779 in 2015-16 and 202,658 in 2016-17, indicating cyclical population shifts.

South Carolina's harvest numbers range up and down over the past 10 years.

The conclusion in both states is that habitat for rabbits is key to their survival.

"I don't worry much about predators like coyotes or foxes," said biologist Chris Baranski of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. "As long as there's plenty of cover, rabbits will be around." ■



TOP TO BOTTOM WINTER SLABS

By Phillip Gentry

COLD-WATER CRAPPIE CAN BE TOUGH, BUT TIPS FROM THREE VETERAN FISHERMEN MIGHT HELP FILL YOUR COOLER WITH FEBRUARY FISH.

Phillip Gentry

CRAPPIE FISHERMEN WHO CAN'T WAIT FOR THE START OF THE SPRING SEASON WOULD BE WISE TO GO AHEAD AND HIT THE LAKE RATHER THAN WAIT FOR THE DOGWOODS TO BLOOM.

February is a great month to catch a cooler full of slabs if you understand how fish behave during the coldest part of the year as well as where they prefer to wait out the end of the winter before settling into their prespawn patterns.

If you need help with finding a pattern, try one of these tactics to help you locate and catch crappie anywhere in the water column.

SURFACE SLABS

Stokes McClellan of Huntersville, N.C., is a diehard angler who loves to long-line troll for crappie. While many anglers are slow-trolling for cold-water fish, McClellan

discovered a pattern with big crappie holding in extremely shallow water under specific conditions in February.

McClellan explained that water temperatures in February tend to be static throughout the water column. One exception is on particularly bright, calm days when the sun hitting the water will raise the surface temperature by several degrees by mid-afternoon.

"I discovered this by mistake," McClellan said. "I was slow-trolling one area, and rather than crank up, I simply put the trolling motor on high and crossed the lake with the jigs still out behind the boat."

Much to his surprise, he caught a big slab right on the surface over water that was 30 to 40 feet deep. He circled back and caught another one, then another one, and finally decided he must be on to something.

"The water was extremely calm, and I figured the crappie were laying up on the surface so shallow you'd think you'd see their fins sticking out of the water," he said. "I've since talked to other anglers who have experienced the same thing. The fish are up sunning, laying in that very upper layer because it's warmer than the surrounding water."



Phillip Gentry

Rod Wall looks for winter run-off to make crappie suspend off the bottom in the backs of creek tributaries.



Catch the **G3** Life

INSTANT REBATES

HURRY LIMITED TIME OFFER!



Sportsman up to **\$1500***

Bays up to **\$1500***

Angler V up to **\$1500***

Gator Tough Jons up to **\$500***



LIMITED TIME OFFER - ACT NOW!

*Rebates in effect at participating dealers only. Purchase one of the new (unused and not previously warranty registered) G3 Boats fishing boat, Yamaha motor and trailer packages between 12/15/17 and 3/31/18 and receive a Catch the G3 Life Instant Rebate off the participating dealer's retail price ranging from \$500 to \$1500 depending on the model purchased. Rebates end 3/31/18. This promotion offer is void where prohibited by law. Promotion valid in U.S. and Canada. The G3 Boats Military Instant Rebate Program is open to all U.S. Armed Forces personnel that are on active duty, in the Reserves or National Guard, honorably discharged or retired, including current spouse. This rebate can be used in addition to the other great promotional programs from G3. G3 reserves the right to change, end or cancel this Program at any time. Other restrictions and conditions apply. See g3boats.com for complete details. Some optional equipment shown in some photographs. No model substitutions or rain checks. Not redeemable for cash. G3 reserves the right to change or cancel this promotion at any time. Follow instructional materials and obey all laws. Ride responsibly, wearing protective apparel and USCG approved personal flotation device. Always drive within your capabilities, allowing time and distance for maneuvering, and respect others around you. Never drink and ride. ©2017 Yamaha Motor Corporation, USA.

g3boats.com 901 COWAN DRIVE, LEBANON, MO 65536



McClellan refined the tactic and discovered that between 1.5 and 2.0 mph is the best trolling speed. Because running over the fish with the boat spooks them, he suggests using the longest rods available to keep baits away from the boat, as well as make sweeping turns. He also uses tiny, 1/4-ounce jigs with buoyant rubber bodies.

“People think I’m crazy, speeding along with the jigs almost skipping across the top of the water, but those crappie are there, and over some real deep water, and the way to catch them is to keep that jig right on top,” he said.

BRING ON THE RAIN

Rod Wall of Ninety Six, S.C., loves to troll for crappie in February, particularly after a winter rain.

“I fish Clarks Hill, Santee and Lake Greenwood the most,” Wall said. “Anytime we get runoff that makes the water dingy, I know the crappie are going to get up out of the brush and suspend somewhere in the middle of the water column.”

Using his electronics, Wall will run most of the way back into tributary creeks and scan for baitfish on either side of his boat. He pays particular attention to the depth where he marks both bait and fish.

“If there’s bait there, the fish will be in there too,” he said. “I want good, olive-colored water that brings them off the bottom. Then, it’s just a matter of long-lining jigs behind the boat, adjusting them to the proper depth may show a specific preference for colors late in the winter, and he will mix and match jigheads and body colors on the eight to 12 crappie poles he uses until he catches a fish. He continues switching colors until he hones in on the hot color of that day, and he will change all of his lines to that color.

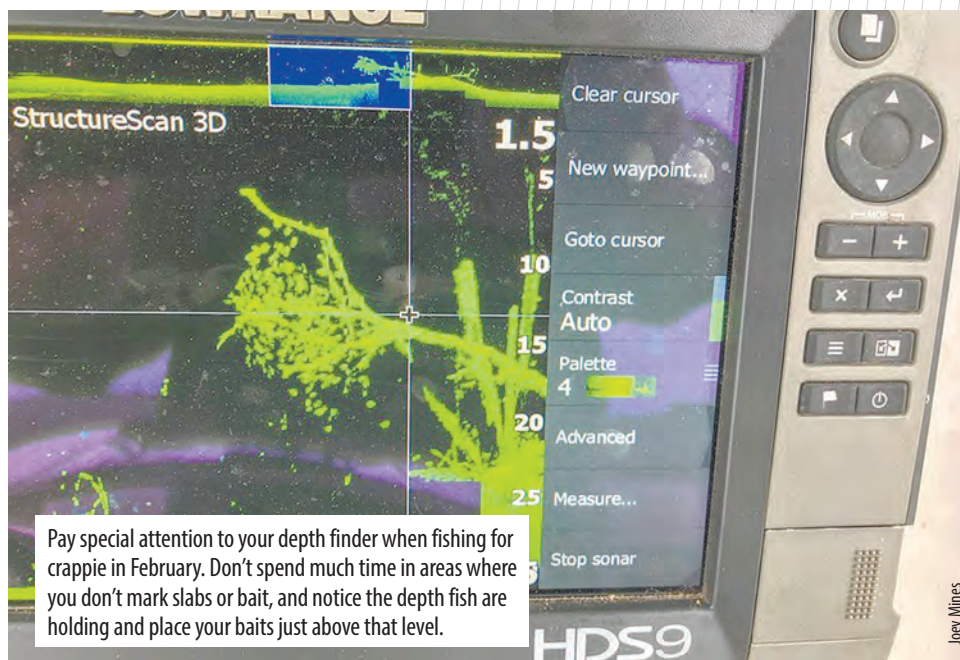
“Color is important, but you’ve also got to be pulling slightly above the eye level of the fish. Crappie seldom go down to eat a bait. You

want to be right at eye level or just above, because they won’t chase it very far up when the water is still cold,” he said.

MINE THE BOTTOM FOR BLACK CRAPPIE

Joey Mines, a fishing guide from LaGrange, Ga., has been host of one of the longest-running outdoor TV shows, and back in the day, he discovered a winter pattern for catching black crappie when water temperatures are under the 50-degree mark.

“I’m looking for lumps on the bottom in water depths of 10 to 25 feet,” he said. “Most anglers who



see these fish never give them a second thought, thinking they’re something else, because they aren’t holding on anything — no creek channel, no stumps, no brush piles — they’re just on the bottom. What they are seeing are small schools of crappie.”

One possible explanation is that female crappie lay in the mud during the early prespawn to facilitate egg production. Another suspicion is it’s simply warmer laying in the mud on the bottom. Mines doesn’t disagree with either idea.

IT’S THE LITTLE THINGS THAT MATTER

Paying attention to details is never more important than when fishing for crappie in cold water, especially in February. If everything is done right, an angler is rewarded with a box full of fish, but missing the mark often meaning coming up blank. Here are some common tips that often mean the difference between catching a limit and going home empty-handed.

Fish on the graph. Crappie tend to hold very tightly in specific places. If you’re not marking fish on your depth finder — or at least substantial amounts of baitfish — you’re wasting time.

Small, lively bait. Crappie shy away from larger baits when water temperatures are below 50 degrees. A tiny live bait or fast-action artificial bait is your best choice.

Longer rods. Less-aggressive fish rarely tolerate boats directly above them, especially in water less than 10 feet deep. Use longer, limber rods to present baits out away from the boat.

Fish above the fish. Crappie feed up and rarely go down for bait. In colder water, the closer the bait is to the fish’s nose, the better you’re chances of getting bit.

Light line. Winter water is often the clearest of the year. Dormant crappie may take notice of heavier 8- to 10-pound line. It’s better to use 4- to 6-pound test in clear colors. Some anglers even opt for 2-pound line in the cold water. ■

Joey Mines

"All of these fish are black crappie, and the vast majority are egg-laden females. They'll have mud-stained bellies from laying on the bottom," he said.

To catch these fish, Mines first marks them with a throwable buoy, then positions his boat right over them. He looks for nearly windless days so he can more easily keep his boat in place. Then, he puts several rods in rod holders and puts his live baits just off the bottom using a drop-shot rig.

"I rig this with a ½-ounce weight on the bottom and a dropper with a No. 2 hook about 18 inches above the weight," he said. "The bait is a small live minnow. It's got to be lively so the fish can find it; they won't move much to eat it."

Using a limber, 12-foot crappie pole, Mines will tighten the line until the rod has a bow in it, then look for the slightest wobble to indicate a crappie has gently inhaled the bait. ■



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.



Guide Joey Mines said he's had numerous good days on the water in February finding schools of black crappie right on the bottom, barely marking on his depth finder the way anglers would expect to see.



Sanford, NC

#1 Triton BOATS DEALER IN THE USA!

Call Us Before You Buy... We Will Save You \$\$\$!



919-775-7259

www.chatleeboats.com

Celebrating Over 50 Years of Serving the Southeast!



MERCURY

SEE YOUR LOCAL DEALER FOR SPECIALS OFFERED BY



ANGLER'S MARINE

842 Ocean Hwy West
Holden Beach, NC 28462
910-775-7900
anglersmarinenc.com

BAY RACER MARINE

213 US HIGHWAY 70 WEST
HAVELOCK, NC 28532
252-447-2277
bayracermarine.com

BERKELEY OUTDOORS

2955 S. LIVE OAK DR
MONCK'S CORNER, SC 29461
843-761-2628
803-333-9992
803-505-8727
berkeleyoutdoors.com

BRAZDA MARINE

2645 Highway 24
Newport, NC 28570
252-240-1600
brazdamarine.net

BROAD CREEK MARINA

18 SIMMONS ROAD
HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SC. 29926
843-681-3625
broadcreekmarinahh.com

BROWN'S MARINE INC

1825 ANTHONY RD
BURLINGTON, NC 27215
336-229-5784
brownsmarine.net

CAROLINA BOATWORKS OF COLUMBIA, LLC

181 Pontiac Business Center Drive
Elgin, SC 29045
803-736-0035
cbwofcolumbia.com

CAROLINA OUTBOARD

220 NC HWY 210 WEST
HAMPSTEAD, NC 28443
910-319-0506
carolinaoutboardnc.com

CAROLINA COACH & MARINE

I-40, EXIT 135
CLAREMONT, NC 28610
800-305-9045
www.carolinacoach.com

CHATLEE BOAT & MARINE

2615 JEFFERSON DAVIS HWY.
SANFORD, NC 27330
919-775-7259
chatleeboats.com

COASTLINE RV & MARINE

2340 S. HIGHWAY 17
MURRELLS INLET, SC 29576
843-458-3999
coastlinervrentals.com

COVE 2 COAST MARINE

1821 LAKE MURRAY BLVD.
COLUMBIA, SC 29212
803-814-1514
cove2coastmarine.com

COVE 2 COAST MARINE

2476 SAVANNAH HWY.
CHARLESTON, SC 29407
843-212-3915
cove2coastmarine.com

DOSS MARINE

1720 CHAPIN ROAD
CHAPIN, SC 29036
803-345-1001
dossmarine.com

DOWN EAST MARINE

455 HIGHWAY 70 OTWAY
BEAUFORT, NC 28516
252-728-5817
downeastmarine.com

FORT MACON MARINA INC

417 E FT MACON RD POB 370
ATLANTIC BEACH, NC 28512
252-726-2055
fortmaconmarina.com

FOUR SONS MARINE

855 CAUSEY RD
FAIR BLUFF, NC 28439
910-649-5755
foursonsmarine.com

GRAHAM MARINE

318 W HARDEN ST
GRAHAM, NC 27253
336-227-8711
grahammarinesales.net

GREG'S OUTBOARD CTR INC

1105 E OCEAN RD
HOLLY RIDGE, NC 28445
910-329-0040
gregsoutboard.com

HUNTLEY MARINE

307 N POLK ST
PINEVILLE, NC 28134
704-889-2111
huntleymarine.com

JERRY'S MARINE SERVICES

3801-B MEETING STREET ROAD
CHARLESTON, SC 29405
843-554-3732 • Fax 843-554-9435
jerrysmarine.com

JET JOE'S MARINE SALES AND SERVICE

565 SATTERWHITE POINT RD.
HENDERSON, NC 27537
Phone: 252-430-6209
jetjoesmarine.com

JIMMY'S MARINE

6685 BEACH DRIVE SW
OCEAN ISLE BEACH, NC 28469
910-575-3600
jimmysmarine.com

JOHNSON'S MARINE

814 HOUSER ST
ORANGEBURG, SC 29115-6325
803-531-1655 • Fax 803-531-1626
johnsonsmarinesc.com

LONG'S FISHING & MARINE

5401 HWY 24
ANDERSON, SC 29625-6020
864-287-9064 • FAX 864-287-2965

MARINE 360

1925 JOHNSON MARINA RD
CHAPIN, SC 29036
803-749-2360
marine360sc.com

MARINE WAREHOUSE

6921 MARKET ST
WILMINGTON, NC 28411
910-799-1277
marinewarehousecenter.com

MARINE WAREHOUSE CENTER

3881 SAVANNAH HIGHWAY
JOHNS ISLAND, SC 29455
843-974-5353
marinewarehousecenter.com

MARTIN'S PERFORMANCE BOATING

9345 MACEDONIA CHURCH RD
PROSPERITY, SC 29127
803-364-2162
martinsmarine.com

MERRITT MARINE

1804 NC-86
HILLSBOROUGH, NC 27278
919-732-7377
merrittmarine.com

MIRAMAR BOATS LLC

209 ARENDELL ST
MOREHEAD CITY, NC 28557
252-726-7678
www.portsidemarina.com

MUDDY BAY MARINE

13803 C. R. KOON HWY.
NEWBERRY, SC 29108
803-321-1900
muddybay.com

NORTH POINT WATERSPORTS

112 DOOLIE RD.
MOORESVILLE, NC
704-799-1994
northpointwatersports.com
info@npwatersports.com

PERFORMANCE EAST

604 CORPORATE DRIVE
GOLDSBORO, NC 27530
888-503-8900
ncpowersports.com

PRECISION MARINE INC

5201 US HWY 70 E
GOLDSBORO, NC 27534
919-751-1199
precisionmarineinc.com

RADCLIFFE MARINE INC.

865 US 264 BYPASS
BELHAVEN, NC 27810
252-943-3923
www.radcliffemarine.com

REEL DETERMINED OUTDOORS

4308 PAGELAND HWY
MONROE, NC 28112
704-764-3910

ROGUE MOTION BOAT SALES & STORAGE

1411 FOLLY ROAD
CHARLESTON, SC 29412
TOLL-FREE 888-341-9460
roguemotion.com

SALTWATER MARINE

6130 CAROLINA BEACH ROAD
WILMINGTON NC 28412
910-392-7488
saltwatermarine.net

SOUNDSIDE MARINE

114 MARINE DRIVE
EDENTON, NC 27932
252-482-4363
soundsidemarine.com

SOUTHPORT MARINE MART

4711 LONG BEACH RD
SOUTHPORT, NC
910-457-6350
marinemartnc.com

SOUTHPORT WATERSPORTS

4888 Coastal Drive
Southport, NC 28461
910-477-6681
southportwatersports.com

STRICKLAND MARINE CENTER

4520 HWY 24
ANDERSON, SC 29626
864-225-0145
stricklandmarine.com

STROUD AND SON MARINE SALES

1897 OCEAN HWY
EDENTON, NC 27932
252-482-8938
www.stroudandson.com

SUTTON MARINE

914 PARK AVENUE SOUTHEAST
AIKEN, SC 29801
803-648-6141
suttonmarine.com

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

112 A NORTH CHERRY ST.
CHERRYVILLE, NC 28021
704-445-8848
teammgreatoutdoors.com

TRI-COUNTY MARINE

1203 PREMIER ROAD
GRANITE FALLS, NC 28630
828-728-4845
tricityboats.com

TWIN LAKES MARINE, INC

265 Satterwhite Point Rd
Henderson, N.C. 27537
252-431-0416
twinlakesmarinenc.com

WEBSTERS MARINE INC

5974 N OKATIE HWY
RIDGELAND, SC 29936-8248
843-987-6663 • Fax 843-379-2628
webstersmarine.com

YOPP BROTHERS INC

883 HWY 210 W POB 849
SNEADS FERRY, NC 28460
910-327-2831
yoppbrothersmarine.com



Not all North Carolina and South Carolina American Suzuki Motor of America Inc. marine dealers are represented in this advertisement.



SUZUKI MAKES IT EASY AS 1-2-3



1.
Six Years
of Protection
at no extra charge on
all new outboards 25
to 350 HP.




2.
Instant Savings
of up to \$800
on select models.
See your dealer
for details.




These are limited time offers.
See your participating Suzuki Marine
dealer for all the details or visit
www.suzukimarine.com.





3.
Rates as low as
5.99% on new
Suzuki outboards
(OAC).*



Gimme Six Extended Protection promo is applicable to new Suzuki Outboard Motors from 25 to 350 HP in inventory which are sold and delivered to buyer between 01/01/18 and 03/31/18 in accordance with the promotion by a Participating Authorized Suzuki Marine dealer in the continental US and Alaska to a purchasing customer who resides in the continental US or Alaska. Customer should expect to receive an acknowledgement letter and full copy of contract including terms, conditions and wallet card from Suzuki Extended Protection within 90 days of purchase. If an acknowledgement letter is not received in time period stated, contact Suzuki Motor of America, Inc. – Marine Marketing via email: marinepromo@suz.com. The Gimme Six Promotion is available for pleasure use only, and is not redeemable for cash. Instant Savings apply to qualifying purchases of select Suzuki Outboard Motors made between 01/01/18 and 03/31/18. For list of designated models, see participating Dealer or visit www.suzukimarine.com. Customer and participating Dealer must fill out the appropriate form at time of sale. Instant Savings will be applied against the original dealer invoice (Suzuki will credit Dealer parts account). There are no model substitutions, benefit substitutions, rain checks, or extensions. Suzuki reserves the right to change or cancel these promotions at any time without notice or obligation. * Financing offers available through Synchrony Retail Finance. As low as 5.99% APR financing for 60 months on new and unregistered Suzuki Outboard Motors. Subject to credit approval. Not all buyers will qualify. Approval, and any rates and terms provided, are based on credit worthiness. \$19.99/month per \$1,000 financed for 60 months is based on 5.99% APR. Hypothetical figures used in calculation; your actual monthly payment may differ based on financing terms, credit tier qualification, accessories or other factors such as down payment and fees. Offer effective on new, unregistered Suzuki Outboard Motors purchased from a participating authorized Suzuki dealer between 01/01/18 and 03/31/18. "Gimme Six", the Suzuki "S" and model names are Suzuki trademarks or ®. Don't drink and drive. Always wear a USCG-approved life jacket and read your owner's manual. © 2018 Suzuki Motor of America, Inc.



J&J JOY ON LAKE TILLERY

By Tony Garitta

**JIGS AND JERKBAITS ARE
A GREAT TWO-PRONGED
APPROACH TO CATCHING
BASS THAT BECOME ACTIVE
THIS MONTH ON NORTH
CAROLINA'S LAKE TILLERY.**



IF FEBRUARY 2018 IS ANYTHING LIKE FEBRUARY 2017 – WITH ITS UNSEASONABLY WARM WEATHER – BASS FISHERMEN CAN EXPECT TO ENCOUNTER A GOOD NUMBER OF TROPHY FISH.

The key is water temperature; once it climbs into the lower 50s, big female bass migrate in numbers into shallow staging areas before they even think about spawning.

Although the water is warming, it's still cold enough to keep most bass from chasing baits. Lures that can be fished with slow, tantalizing presentations account for many of the chunky bass that get scooped up in fishermen's nets.

Two deadly winter baits that fit the above criteria are what some anglers call "J&J" baits: jigs and jerkbaits.

Those are the baits most-often found tied on by angler Rusty Bowers of Albemarle, N.C., when he fishes Tillery in February and early March.

in the form of docks, tree laps and logs.

"The winter bass at Tillery love to hang around docks and piers," he said. "When fish move shallow, that's where you'll find most of them. If fish are fairly deep, they'll be on rock piles or along steep banks upriver, close to where the Uwharrie River empties into the lake. Fish wood or rocks wherever you see birds diving after baitfish. Birds are smarter than we are in locating fish."

The jig is Bowers' first choice for bass staging on wood or rock, especially in clear water.

"I like a ½-ounce jig with a matching Pro Chunk plastic trailer in green pumpkin, black/blue or red/orange colors," Bowers said. "Let the fish tell you which color they prefer on a given day."

Like most anglers, Bowers flips the jig to his targets.

"If the water's still cold and the fish are inactive, I'll s-l-o-w-l-y drag the jig back to the boat, keeping it in touch with the bottom and any cover along the way," he said. "If the fish are active, I'll hop the jig and keep it hopping all the way back to the boat."

Bowers favors rattling jigs, believing the additional noise gets the attention of the fish. His gear consists of a 7-foot-2, heavy action baitcasting rod and baitcasting reel. He keeps a tight drag and religiously spools his reel with Seaguar 20-pound fluorocarbon.

"I always use fluorocarbon," Bowers said, emphatically. "It's invisible to fish, and since the fish can't see it, I get more bites."

If the jig fails to produce, Bowers isn't stubborn. He'll employ other options.

"If the water is slightly stained, a small crankbait or a No. 7 Shad Rap works great," he said.

Although Bowers said the Alabama rig is not a personal favorite of his, he will use it if his regular arsenal of baits fails. To fish it, he uses the same outfit he uses for fishing jigs.



A jerkbait can be cranked down several feet below the surface, where it will suspend until the angler begins jerking or twitching the bait. Bass will often come up from much deeper water to hit the tantalizing bait.

Dan Kibler

When the bass start pulling up this month on Tillery, Bowers primarily targets wooden cover

>

FLUORO VS. MONO WHO WINS?

Bass fisherman Rusty Bowers is a proponent of fluorocarbon, a relatively new fishing line introduced in the 1970s.

Bowers said he always uses fluorocarbon for jig and jerkbait fishing because the line is “nearly invisible to fish,” which is important when fishing Lake Tillery’s clear waters. The presentation appears more natural because there’s no line visibly coming off the lure.

Fluorocarbon has other advantages over traditional monofilament line, which has been around since the 1930s.

Fluorocarbon has greater strength and abrasion-resistance and less stretch, which Bowers said enables him to pull a big fish out of heavy cover with less chance of line breakage.

Fluorocarbon’s ability to “cut water” and sink also translates into less slack for better hooksets, which Bowers said is beneficial when jerkbait fishing, plus, the heaviness of fluorocarbon lets him get jerkbaits

a little deeper. The sinking line complements bottom-scratching baits like jigs and plastics.

Fluorocarbon stands up better to exposure to water, chemicals and sunlight. Its denser quality helps anglers detect subtle strikes.

Fluorocarbon also has its limitations. It should not be used with surface lures, as its density and weight negates their action. Fluorocarbon does not work well on spinning reels, although Bowers uses it successfully with spinning gear for jerkbait fishing.

Fluorocarbon line has less knot-strength than monofilament and is more likely to “burn” and form a weak spot if not lubricated when the knot is tied. Baits can be cast greater distances with monofilament because of its greater flexibility, and fish

can be played more easily because of its stretch.

Photographer Carl McNeill questions whether fluorocarbon is more invisible than monofilament.

“Having filmed and photographed fish, leaders and tippets for over 10 years, I have never been able to see any appreciable difference between the two,” he said.

Fluorocarbon is more expensive than monofilament, which is why many fishermen use fluorocarbon as leader material or use filler line for backing before topping off a spool with fluorocarbon. ■



Monofilament and fluorocarbon lines each have their supporters, based on different tasks that the two lines perform better.

Tony Garitta

Pogie’s focuses on the outdoor lifestyle for the coastal angler. Whether you’re looking for clothing for a night out on the town or a day spent stalking the flats for redfish, we have you covered. Have a favorite bait, jig or lure or needing some flies and leaders? Questions on casting, rigging or even just trying to figure out the area? We are here for you!



Free Fly

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY



POGIE'S

SWANSBORO NC

910-325-7876

www.pogiesfishing.com

WE HAVE LIVE MUD MINNOWS!

Free Fly

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

FLY

DUDLEY'S

MARINA

FISHING TACKLE - MARINE SUPPLIES

www.dudleysmarinanc.com

NEW FISHING TACKLE & MERCHANDISE HAS ARRIVED

Great Deals on Rod & Reel Combos. \$AVE

We Also Offer:

- Complete Boat Service
- Wide Assortment of Tackle
- Charter Boats In-Out Dry Storage
- Marine Railways
- Dockside Fueling

We Have Ethanol-Free Gas

- We'll Even Give You a Few Words of Fishing Advice and Just a Little Gossip!
- Complete Boat Paint Protection, your Interlux Paint Dealer

Interlux
yachtpaint.com

HR Tackle

Hwy. 24 East • Swansboro, NC
(252) 393-2204

CURADO

FOR REEL LIFE

ICAST
2017
BEST FRESHWATER REEL



The **NEW, Shimano Curado** lives up to its heritage and sets new standards of **versatility, performance** and **reliability**. This is the one reel you will want to use every day, for life.

SHIMANO

fish.shimano.com

DON'T FORGET TO USE YOUR



GIFT CARD

Available at



**FOR ALL.
FOR LESS.™**

academy.com

“I rig it with 3-inch plastics and slow-roll it in front of docks in deep water,” said Bowers. “The A-rig sinks quickly, so you don’t want to fish it around shallow docks gutted with brush.”

Given clear water and water temperatures 45 degrees and rising, he ties on his other money lure, a jerkbait, usually a Rapala X-Rap Slashbait in olive green or a Megabass jerkbait in green or purple. He fishes the jerkbait slowly with spinning gear and a reel spooled with 10-pound fluorocarbon.

“Fluorocarbon line isn’t made for spinning reels, but I use it on my spinning

reels without much difficulty,” he said.

“Tillery is a great jerkbait lake with its clear, cold water. I like 3-inch jerkbaits and work them slowly. I give the bait a series of twitches instead of jerks.”

Bowers pauses 10 to 15 seconds between twitches, giving the bait time to suspend in front of fish on its way back to the boat.

“Patience is the key to fishing a jerkbait,” Bowers said. “Too many anglers get in a hurry fishing the bait, which is intended for sluggish bass unwilling to chase after lures.”

Bowers keeps a fairly light drag to prevent the tiny hooks found on most jerkbaits from tearing out of the mouth of a fish or from breaking the 10-pound line.

The light drag also saves him money.

“I can’t afford to lose too many jerkbaits, some of which cost more than \$20 each,” he said.

Bowers fishes the jerkbait along creek-channel breaks, creek mouths and points.

Bowers said the ideal day for February fishing is sunny with 5 to 10 mph winds, with the lake being stained to muddy. The time to stay home is during an extreme cold front, with water temperatures dipping below 45 degrees. Both conditions give bass lockjaw.

On a good day, tournament anglers usually have 5-fish catches totaling 20 to 22 pounds at Tillery. ■



Lake Tillery is full of healthy largemouth bass, and with its waters normally on the clear side, it can be a great winter fishery.



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

DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE — North Carolina’s Lake Tillery is the transition reservoir between the Yadkin and Pee Dee river system. The Yadkin becomes the Pee Dee downstream from the spot where the Uwharrie River enters Tillery on its eastern bank. East of Albemarle and Norwood and bounded on the north by Morrow Mountain State Park and the Uwharrie National Forest, it forms the border between Stanly and Montgomery counties. The main access is the public ramp on the east side of the NC 24/27 bridge, aka Swift Island. Another popular ramp is in Morrow Mountain State Park.

WHEN TO GO — The winter bite peaks in February, given dingy to clear water conditions.

BEST TECHNIQUES — Jigs and jerkbaits take the majority of winter bass. Jigs work best in the shallows around docks, tree laps and stumps or in deeper water around rock. Jerkbaits are effective in clear water at points, bends and riprap. Jigs should be fished with heavy baitcasting gear; jerkbaits are deadly with light or medium action spinning gear.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — Yadkin Lakes Guide Service, 336-249-6782; Joe’s Bait & Tackle, Albemarle, 704-982-8716. See also Guides and Charters in Classifieds.

ACCOMMODATIONS — Stanly County Chamber of Commerce, Albemarle, 704-982-8116; Morrow Mountain State Park offers camping facilities and family vacation cabins, 704-982-4402.

MAPS — Kingfisher Maps, 800-327-0257, www.kfmaps.com.



SAVINGS ARE ALWAYS IN SEASON.



NEW SPORTSMAN DRI-BALANCE SERIES
NOW 30% OFF!

Quick Dry Moisture Support | Sun Protection SPF +30
Odor Control | Mid-Weight | Wrinkle Resistant



Shop all colors and styles online

SPORTSMANGEAR.COM

Guide Jot Owens caught this nice American Shad during the winter/spring run in the Cape Fear River upstream from Wilmington, N.C.



SALUTE SHAD, THE KICKOFF FISH

FEBRUARY, MARCH ARE PRIME TIME FOR SPRING SPAWNING RUN OF THESE FEISTY FISH

Jeff Burleson

It's been cold, and many anglers have been waiting for the slightest break in weather. And while many are looking forward to next month, plenty of others know that February is really the time to break out the ultralight gear and head to a handful of rivers across the Carolinas for the shad run.

Whether it's American or Hickory shad on North Carolina's Tar or Cape Fear rivers and the several streams and creeks near them, or South Carolina's American shad on the Cooper or Santee rivers, you'll find plenty of strong fish to cure your winter fishing blues.

Shad are anadromous, meaning they're born in freshwater, live in saltwater and return to freshwater to spawn, so they

aren't present throughout the year but are thick as molasses when this part of the calendar rolls around.

These fish do more than just cure the winter blues. They are also good to eat, and while many anglers keep their share of fish, it's mostly the thrill they're after, and these fish provide it.

Shad can range from a half-pound up to 4 pounds, with a few even larger being caught each year. While they may average on the small side for folks who are used to redfish, seatrout, mackerel or mahi-mahi, using ultralight tackle makes them feel like monsters. It makes this type of fishing challenging — as well as a blast.

Four- to 6-pound test line is common,

usually spooled on 1000 series or smaller reels. Basically, if it's an outfit on which you enjoy catching bream or mountain trout, it's good for shad fishing. Making a long cast upcurrent, allowing the lure to sink, then using a steady retrieve is all it takes, and anglers can vary their retrieve when the bite is tough or slows down.

The most-common lures include soft-plastic grubs on 1/16- to 1/8-ounce leadhead jigs; small spoons also work very well.



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

After launching your boat on any of the landings leading to these creeks and rivers, you'll find the shad fishing gets better the closer you get to dams, locks and railroad trestles. Most anglers prefer a fair amount of current, and depending on which waterway you're in, the best current could be on either side of the waterway. That could also depend on which gates are open on the dam upstream from your fishing spot.

One of the best things about hitting these waters early this month is it will be less crowded. Even though a diehard collection of anglers pursue these fish each year, many folks wait until they hear through the grapevine that the shad are biting. But the earlier — and more often — you go, the better chance you have of timing it just right, and being at the top of the grapevine. ■

NUMBERS FIRST, BIGGER FISH AS THE MONTH PROGRESSES

Sammy Black of Longs, S.C., fishes for shad in both Carolinas. He gets started in late January, and he said big numbers follow, and then big fish.

"I've caught fish as early as the last week of January, and while most of the bigger fish are usually caught in late February, it's always worth going throughout the month," he said. "Once they start biting, you can have 100-plus fish days. The majority of shad will be well worth keeping, and you'll happen across a real big one here and there.

"I like to find a spot where there is clearly a stronger presence of current than the

surrounding areas, and I want that spot to be within casting distance of some type of structure like a railroad crossing, downed trees, rock walls — just something other than what makes up the majority of the banks and the floor of the river. But honestly, once you get close enough to whichever dam you're fishing below, the shad will be all around," he said.

Black said later in the month, the rivers will be chock full of boats, but he said it's never a problem.

"Everybody gets along real good on all these rivers," he said. "You'll have boats tying up to other boats that were complete strangers just minutes earlier, and doing that or anchoring down in a straight line is best. You don't

HOW MANY?

North Carolina allows anglers to keep 10 fish per day. On the Roanoke River and its tributaries and the Neuse River and its tributaries, one of those 10 fish can be American Shad. On the Cape Fear River and its tributaries, five can be American Shad. In South Carolina, anglers can take 10 shad per day, except in the Santee River, where the limit is 20 per day.

want to anchor down 10 feet to the side of another boat, which will hurt their casting and yours. These fish come through in schools, so you don't have to be the lead boat. Usually, when one angler hooks up, a whole slew of them do." ■

NEW MODELS FOR 2018 FROM SEA HUNT!

Sea Hunt Ultra 255

CHATLEE BOAT & MARINE #1 SH

Sanford, NC **DEALER IN THE USA!**

Sea Hunt BX 25 FS

919-775-7259 Follow Us www.chatleeboats.com **YAMAHA**

LUNKER LINES

David Fritts

FEBRUARY BASS CAN BE FUN

PICK A CLEAR LAKE, GO SLOW, FISH OPEN WATER



Dan Kibler

A lot of fishermen approach February as a good month to go to boat shows and look at all the newest boats and fishing tackle, but some years, you miss out on a lot of good fishing by staying off the lake.

Bass fishing can be good in February if you've got clear water. You need to be selective in where you fish; stick to lakes with clear water like Wylie, Norman and Badin, and in South Carolina, Murray and Hartwell. Cold, dirty water will kill your fishing trip before you even crank your outboard. Bass are more active in clear water when it's cold; if you're fishing a lake with water of a lot of different clarities, stick with the clear water.

One thing to know about winter bass: they like to feed looking up. Baits like a Berkley Bad Shad — a swimming crankbait — a jerkbait, slow-rolling a spinnerbait, even fishing a little swimsuit, will be good because you can fish them in

open water, off the bottom, and fish that are looking up for the schools of shad — because that's where they spend the winter — they'll see those baits. You want to fish a bait with a small profile, a skinny bait like a jerkbait or a Bad Shad. A bass that's in 20 feet of water will come up to hit a Bad Shad or a bait like that. You are not fishing on the bottom, because most of the fish aren't on the bottom; they're up off the bottom, under the shad.

One thing you have to do with any baits is to fish them slowly. One of the best ways to fish a bait like a Bad Shad is to cast it out, crank it down, then retrieve it by pulling the bait along with your rod tip, then winding up the slack, pulling the bait with your rod tip, winding up the slack. That is probably the best retrieve for a swimming crankbait, because the bait suspends after you finish pulling it, and by winding up the slack, you're ready if a fish comes up and grabs it. If you're fishing a jerkbait like a Berkley

Cutter, you want to wind it down about 5, 6 or 7 feet, then just pause and let it sit. Normally, you'd only let it sit a second or two before jerking it, but in February, you might let it sit five or 10 seconds. Jerk it a few times and let it sit again. If you're fishing a spinnerbait, just slow-roll it down. If you're fishing a little swimbait, let it sink, lift it up and wind in the slack, let it sink again, lift it again. More tournaments are won this time of year by fishing baits this way than any other way.

Now, a lot of fishermen will get hung up on fishing jigs this time of year, but if you do, you're fishing the bottom, and you're not going to have your bait around enough fish. Yeah, you might catch a big one, but you'll put your bait in front of far more fish if you're fishing it in open water, over their heads.

WHERE TO FIND THEM

Here's where I'm looking to fish in February. After finding some clear water,

Bass will bite in February, but you need to fish slowly, in open water, with light line and small-profile baits.

I'm going to be fishing shallow next to deep water, or right off a break so the bait is sitting over deep water. A No. 7 Bad Shad will dive about 8 feet, and fish will come up a long way to get it. On warm days, fish will sometimes move up into deep pockets. Look for pockets that are protected from that cold, north wind. And don't worry about trying to establish a pattern. Bass don't pattern very well in February; they are where they are.

TACKLE THE PROBLEM

It's sometimes tough to really cast little baits like a Bad Shad or a small jerkbait on baitcasting tackle. Lots of guys fish spinning tackle, but a cranking rod with a good, slow action will do the trick. I fish these February baits on a 6-foot-8, Lew's David Fritts cranking rod with a Lew's BB1 reel with a slow, 5-to-1 gear ratio. That will help you keep your retrieve slow; it's hard to wind a bait too fast with a reel that slow.

A huge factor is the line you use. You should never use anything heavier than

10-pound test. Heavy line can inhibit a small bait's action. I think you should try and use 8-pound test any time you can get away with it. Baits become a lot more lively on 8-pound test, and since you're fishing in open water, you're not likely to get hung up on anything that might break your line. You just have to manage your fish once you hook him. Being able to fish 8-pound test line is a huge advantage.

As far as colors, you need just a handful for late-winter fishing. Think shad patterns, chrome, gold and crawfish. You need to have one of those colors tied on. ■



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



FLUORO'S FINE:

Fluorocarbon fishing line isn't normally associated with fishing crankbaits or jerkbaits because the weight of the line takes away a little bit of a bait's action, but in February, it's a great line option, according to David Fritts. "I'm not a big fluorocarbon guy, but in the winter, you can get a bait to suspended better if you're fishing fluorocarbon, especially a jerkbait," he said. "I fish Trilene 100 Percent Fluorocarbon. It's a great line."

BLACKJACK... INSPIRED PERFORMANCE!

The new **BlackJack 256!**



BlackJack
boats

For more information
or to find a dealer near you, visit
www.blackjackboats.com



February is the prime month for coyote breeding in the Carolinas, and with it comes opportunities for coyote hunters to take advantage of the animals' reproductive urges.

HUNT THE CAROLINA COYOTE RUT

BREEDING PREDATORS PRESENT GREAT OPPORTUNITIES

Over the past 20 years, coyotes have taken a foothold in every county in the Carolinas. From livestock and domestic pet predation to population reductions in native game and non-game species, coyotes are well beyond becoming a nuisance. They are a real problem that needs an immediate solution, and increased hunting pressure may help curb depredation issues. Calling coyotes can be very effective at luring coyotes into range.

Coyotes are omnivorous and very opportunistic; they eat just about anything they can, including insects and vegetation. But the diet of most coyotes is made up of rabbit, various rodents, ground-nesting birds and other small animals. And newborn deer fawns are common delicacies for coyotes in the Southeast and are known to have a significant impact on fawn fecundity in the Carolinas.

According to a series of studies conducted on the U.S. Department of Energy's Savannah River Site near Aiken, S.C., coyote predation was the leading cause of mortality for newborn fawns. The timing of fawn births perfectly coincides with coyotes raising their newborn pups, so fawns are the perfect choice for coyotes trying to feed the family.

But coyotes are active during their

breeding cycle, and the peak of the coyote rut in the Carolinas is February.

While deer come into estrus each month during the breeding season until they conceive, coyote females only become available for breeding once a year, usually lasting between eight to 10 days. As a result, both female and male coyotes will become super active courting between late January and the first week of March, waiting around for the conception period to begin. The combination of courting and the cooler weather increases hunger and around-the-clock activity levels. Coyote hunters can expect to see increased activity throughout the month.

In addition to increased activity, coyotes are already quite the communicative species. They use various vocalizations to communicate for establishing territories and to interact with the opposite sex during the breeding season. As a result, coyotes are susceptible to calls, and females and males can be easily lured into range.

Typically, coyotes are monogamous and form lifelong bonds with their mates. Since females vocally alert their male counterparts when they are in estrus, the female mating call can stir up the woods and alert every other coyote around.

Fortunately for hunters, electronic calls are legal and can be very productive



Coyotes of both genders will respond to calls as the breeding season approaches.

during the breeding season. Both male and female coyotes will respond to calls, especially the estrus whimpers made by the female. She begins to whimper when she is in season and ready for insemination. Obviously, males will come in when they hear the mating call, but other females will come in as well curious what other female is around trying to breed with her mate.

Luckily, both the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and the S.C. Department of Natural Resources allow for unlimited harvest and liberal methods of harvest, including night hunting and the deadly electronic mating calls.

IMPOUND AND IMPRINT FOND MEMORIES

Hunters and land managers spend countless hours planning and implementing food-plot and waterfowl-impoundment projects to make hunting seasons memorable. However, these projects can be memorable for wildlife as well — especially waterfowl. Flooded waterfowl impoundments with grain and native browse can provide a service to waterfowl and imprint good memories a



Jeff Burleson

A LASTING IMPRESSION:

Duck season may end in late January, but flooded waterfowl impoundments can help ducks of all feathers in February and through March when they begin to head back north to their Canadian breeding grounds. The availability of food will give ducks plenty of nutrition for their big northward migration, and the location of impoundments may be imprinted on waterfowl, bringing them back in future seasons.

year down the road.

Even though acres of flooded grain lured limits to happy hunters, ducks will slide back into these impoundments after the hunting season is over to eat, rest and spend the duration of the winter in the Carolinas. The last thing ducks will remember before heading back to their Canadian nesting grounds is the flooded grain they left behind.

Land managers should leave impoundments flooded until the middle of March or until the remainder of the

birds leave the area and vacate the premises. After the remaining ducks leave, fields should be drained and dry in order to prepare the soil and a new crop for the next season. ■



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.

EXTENDED LIGHT GOOSE SEASON UP NEXT >

Palmetto Brush Control



- Real Estate Developments
- Residential Lot Clearing
- Shooting and Fire Lanes
- Trail Building
- Wildlife Habitat Restoration
- Forestry Site Prep
- Utility Right-of-Way Clearing
- Pond Construction

FOR ALL YOUR BRUSH SHREDDING NEEDS *CALL US TODAY!*

Bulldozer • Mulching • Trackhoe Work

843-230-8222

Brannon Turbeville - Owner

The Carolina's Newest
LOWE
 BOATS
DEALER!

2018's
ARE READY
TO RIDE!

STINGER 188

With
 Mercury Pro XS 115



SKORPION 16 With Mercury 40



STINGER 175
FISH & DUCK HUNT COMBO

With
 Mercury 60



- Ultimate Comfort • Legendary Ride
- Better Built & Best Backed Industry Leading 10 Year Hull Warranty

Powered by



9797 US-78, LADSON, SC
843-225-2599

tricountyoutdoorsales.com

GREENER PASTURES

continued

EXTEND GUNNING FOR LIGHT GOOSE CONSERVATION SEASON

Waterfowl hunting ranks high among hunter preferences across North America, and for hunters ready to extend their gunning after the end of the 60-day duck season, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's light goose conservation season, beginning in mid-February, is in order.

Anyone who has visited the northeastern corner of North Carolina during the winter is accustomed to seeing massive clouds of snow geese that monopolize growing wheat fields and fields

Regulations for an extended season for snow and other light geese are intended to encourage a large harvest and cut goose numbers.

Jeff Burleson



of cut corn. With the conservation season authorized, hunters can finally "unload" their frustrations on these white cacklers by reducing the flock and alleviating pressure on winter crops, as well as the fragile breeding grounds in northern Canada.

Populations of light geese continue to increase to levels that are causing extensive damage to the nesting grounds in the arctic and sub-arctic tundra breeding grounds. The conservation order, authorized by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and regulated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, allows for a special hunting season after all other migratory bird season are closed. In addition, the order grants the use of liberal methods and unlimited harvest of light geese, including snow geese, blue geese and Ross's geese between Feb. 13 and March 31. Hunters can use unplugged guns and electronic calls between a half-hour before sunrise and a half-hour after sunset.

While light geese migrate into South Carolina's coastal region on occasion, massive flocks of light geese routinely winter in a handful of counties across northeastern North Carolina. The best counties to look for light geese are: Dare, Hyde, Tyrrell, Washington, Chowan, Perquimans, Pasquotank, Camden and Currituck.

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission requires all participants in the light goose conservation season to obtain a free permit and complete a harvest survey. ■

VERSATILE AND FAMILY FRIENDLY

THE 2602 LEGACY

The **2602 Legacy** is NauticStar's most versatile center console. Beautifully styled and loaded with features for a **FUN** day of pleasure boating or sport fishing. Plush seating forward and aft and a large head console make it family friendly while other features make for incredible fishability!



CUSTOMIZE YOUR LEGACY
ON OUR WEBSITE
NAUTICSTARBOATS.COM

LIFETIME
Limited Hull Warranty



NauticStar
BOATS

Call (662) 200-4664 or visit our website or call:

NauticStarBoats.com

Factory installed with

YAMAHA



@NauticStarBoats

Some photos shown with optional equipment



SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY

Phillip Gentry

In areas with current, fish will still hold in the lee of structure such as rocks or blowdowns even when water temperatures are low.

SHALL WE GATHER AT THE RIVER?

MANY OF WINTER'S ADVERSE EFFECTS DISAPPEAR IN MOVING WATER

Stewart Venable

Of all the places to fish during February, some of the most-productive areas are flowing rivers where fish don't have the luxury of going insanely deep and dormant like they tend to do in reservoirs.

While river fish, primarily black bass species, may move deep at times, deep is something like 15 feet, easy enough to reach with a suspending jerkbait or slow-rolled spinnerbait.

The bonus is that, with a few flicks of their tails, these same fish can be in the shallows, offering some good subsurface and even schooling action when bait is present.

Stewart Venable loves to fish inland rivers during the winter. Near his home in the Charlotte/Rock Hill area, the stretches of the Catawba River are broken by impoundments, which means current is often dictated by water releases upstream — even from as far

away as 15 miles — and he said current will often trigger black bass and striped bass to feed.

Even in areas where current is not a factor, Venable likes to fish water with some stain or color, primarily because it warms more quickly on sunny days and offers the addition of better ambush conditions for fish.

On his river forays, Venable often puts in and paddles 3 to 4 miles in either direction, then paddles back and takes out at the same location. On days with heavy current and an additional angler, he may opt for a float trip of several miles, working downstream.

Venable said current flows dictates how the fish relate. On more extreme winter days, residents in localized areas have their furnaces going full blast, and utility companies that operate the dams run more water to meet the power demand.

He said rainfall will dictate water color; his favorite situation is finding a smaller

tributary that is dumping warmer, stained water into the main river. He likes to target the downcurrent side of any structure but said fish may hold on the bottom out of the current or may even be slightly up in the tributary.

Venable will also fish slower-moving coastal rivers. On these rivers, he concentrates more on stationary objects like rock piles or blowdown trees and uses more-conventional soft plastics to tempt fish holding on structure.

Once he reaches blackwater on a coastal stretch of river, he will revert to using blade baits, but he prefers something in a gold color with smaller blades to make a smaller profile bait.

Venable makes it a habit to wear his PFD when fishing from his kayak year-round, but particularly when the weather and the water are cold; he suggests packing along a spare change of clothes in a dry bag in case of a spill.

BEST DAY ON THE WATER

As a part-time kayak-fishing guide, Stewart Venable has to fish whenever he can, even on cold days when the weather seems bleak. On just such a day two years ago, Venable was scheduled to meet a client who cancelled because of the near-freezing air temps and low-40s water temperatures on the lower Catawba River just upstream from Fishing Creek Reservoir.

Deciding he would fish anyway, Venable spent the morning slow-rolling spinnerbaits through deep pools hoping for a big



Stewart Venable's best fishing day on a river came during the winter of 2016, after he pulled into the mouth of a tributary creek on the Catawba River to eat lunch and saw bait flipping.

Stewart Venable

largemouth bass. After several hours without a bite, he paddled into the mouth of a tributary where the creek bank blocked the wind so he could eat lunch.

"The water came up out of maybe 20 to 25 feet in the river into the drainage that was only like a foot deep, but I noticed some baitfish flipping," Venable said. "I cast a hard-plastic jerkbait — I think it was a Megabass 110 JR — over and BAM!, hooked up with a 4-pounder."

For the next hour-and-a-half, Venable worked a 50-yard stretch of river that produced over a dozen bass averaging 4½ pounds.

"I had almost 25 pounds of bass in my best 5 fish, including a big 7-pounder," he said.

Since that day, Venable learned to always keep an eye on his surroundings and look for fish feeding in places they are not supposed to feed under the circumstances. ■

STAIN CAN MEAN GAIN:

In the winter, stained water usually means warmer water, because the sun will warm the tiny particles of dirt or mud suspended in the water much faster than clear water. Warm water will draw winter bass. Fish the downcurrent side of the stained water first, then move toward its source, which is often a tributary creek.




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.

NEW GEAR/BEST BETS UP NEXT >

PADDLECART.COM

The Ultimate Kayak & Canoe Cart!
Manufactured in SC!

Makes A Great Gift For All Paddlers!



Tagalong Bike Trailer

Durable Stainless Steel Axle



Dually Model for Soft Sand

— Simple In Design, Yet Elegant In Functionality —







- EASY TO LOAD
- EASY TO STOW

Clover Enterprises, Inc

290 Thorpe Rd, Summerville, SC 843.851.0045

KING MAC IS WHAT WE DO!



King Mackerel Tackle

Best Source For King Mackerel Tackle

Largest Selection of Custom Bait Rigs & Same Day Shipping on Most Items!

Over 40 years of saltwater experience: We outfit everyone from novice to pro!

Buy online or Download Our Catalog at:
www.KingMacTak.com • 919-900-8998













SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY

continued

KOKATAT DRYSUIT

The men's GORE-TEX Meridian Drysuit from Kokatat is built to stand the test of any paddling adventure. Exclusive "full immersion" GORE-TEX Pro Shell fabric is tough as nails, yet quiet and comfortable. Latex neck and wrist gaskets, along with integrated GORE-TEX socks, keep you dry. The Competition Cut underarm maximizes range of motion. An Optiseal waterproof chest zipper makes the Meridian easy to take on and off. The double-tunnel waist mates with your spray skirt for a completely dry system. A relief zipper gives you easy access when nature calls. Reinforced Cordura seat and knee patches add longevity. The Kokatat men's GORE-TEX Meridian drysuit sets the benchmark for dry comfort.

The Kokatat's Power Dry Drysuit Liner is a great addition to the Drysuit. It is designed to and provide great thermal protection.

The average retail price is between \$920 and \$960, but for paddlers who want to enjoy the water year-round, the Drysuit negates even the coldest and wettest of conditions and allows your fishing season to go on uninterrupted.

More info at www.outdoorplay.com.



THE FISH GRIP

Putting your hand in the water and lipping your catch is rarely a big deal unless: the fish you're grabbing come equipped with sharp teeth or the frigid water where you caught the fish has some "bite" to it.

With the rise of kayak fishing has come The Fish Grip, a fish-landing device developed by avid anglers to find a safer way to land a fish — safer for the fish and the angler.

The Fish Grip comes in two models, the Fish Grip and the Fish Grip Jr, a smaller version for anglers with smaller hands or for landing smaller fish.

The Fish Grip is manufactured by United Plastic Molders. Each grip is machined, constructed, inspected, and tested at the manufacturing plant located in Jackson, Miss.

The Fish Grip retails for \$14.95 and comes available in a variety of colors.

Visit www.thefishgrip.net for more details.

FEBRUARY'S BEST BETS

North Carolina

What: Largemouth bass, striped bass

Where: Catawba River, upper end of Lake Norman.

Techniques: Fan-cast Alabama rigs with Keitech 4.3-inch baits in Tennessee Shad. Look for fish along seams or in calm areas downstream from large, rock outcroppings in heavy current.

Launch: Lookout Shoals Ramp, 4750 Lookout Dam Rd., Catawba, N.C., provides access to the Lookout Shoals Dam tailrace and the river below it.

Insider Tip: Pay attention to water releases when fishing below Lookout Shoals Dam, currents can become treacherous with little warning. Always wear your PFD.

South Carolina

What: Largemouth bass, Smallmouth bass, striped bass,

Where: Congaree River near Columbia, at confluence with any medium to large tributary

Techniques: Fish spinnerbaits with big, Colorado blades or large, paddletail swimbaits slow and deep. Look for stained areas.

Launch: The Congaree has three public launch sites around Columbia: Barney Jordan, Bates Bridge and Thomas H. Newman. Visit www2.dnr.sc.gov/ManagedLands/boatramp/boatrampsearch.

Insider Tip: Shad do not die off as much the further south you go; paddlers can take advantage of shad kills longer. Pay attention to the water and your surroundings. Fish will continue to school on bait.

SUPER SPORTY SUPER PRICING!

SUPER SPORT PROMO

2140 SPORT
\$26,752* with F115XB

21' NauticBay with F115XB featuring the STAR Performance System hull

SUPER SPORT PROMO

2400 SPORT
\$39,421* with F200XB

24'3" NauticBay with YAMAHA F200XB featuring forward and aft casting platforms and ample rod storage

SUPER SPORT PROMO

2102 LEGACY
\$34,942* with F150XB

20'3" Legacy Series with YAMAHA F150XB featuring plush bow and 3-across aft seating

SUPER SPORT PROMO

193SC DECK
\$26,690* with F90XB

18'9" Sport Deck with YAMAHA F90XA featuring seating for up to 10 people

NauticStar
BOATS

Call (662) 200-4664 or visit our website or call:

NauticStarBoats.com

f t u y i n g+ @NauticStarBoats

Factory installed with

YAMAHA

*Plus freight, prep, TT&L. Participating dealers—limited time offer. Does not include trailer. Some photos shown with optional equipment



COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver

BLACKENED VENISON STEW

A NICE, WARM STEW IS THE PERFECT END TO A FEBRUARY DAY

Winters in the Carolinas typically aren't harsh, at least not for more than a few days at a time, but there will be a few times it's nice to have a pot of something simmering and ready to eat to help warm up.

The past few winters have had at least one snow or ice event where some warm, comfort food that is ready to eat is a good thing and always welcome. The enticing aroma wafting from this stew or soup goes straight to your senses and kicks your hunger into high gear — and that's not bad. This is one of those meals your grandparents would have called "Good and good for you too!"

While it's the shortest month, February can usually be divided into two weather segments.

The first couple of weeks might be cold, like a normal winter, but by the middle of the month, the days are usually warming, and there will be several stretches of sunny days with high temperatures reaching the 60s and occasionally 70. Sportsmen are still afield chasing quail, rabbits and other small game, and some are fishing, and this stew hits the spot when they walk into the lodge or hunting camp hungry and cold. ■



Stews are hearty meals that take the edge off the chill after a February day afield or in the boat. Using venison and blackening seasonings make for a great time at the table. (INSET) A bread bowl is a unique service option.

TIP!

If you don't have meat already cut in stew-sized pieces, you can cut up a roast or steak and get the same effect.

BLACKENED VENISON STEW

There are numerous recipes for venison stews, and most are good. It's difficult to go wrong when simmering venison in a hearty stock with potatoes, carrots and onions. The ingredients are tasty individually, and they're even better simmered together.

The difference in this recipe begins with soaking the meat in root beer and Mexican hot sauce. The carbonation in the root beer will help tenderize a tough, older deer and also help hide the beginnings of freezer burn on a package that got shuffled under something and lost for a while. Mexican hot sauce, like Texas Pete Sabor, has a nice flavor that isn't particularly hot and also adds to the tenderizing.

Blackened seasoning began in Louisiana as a way to cover issues with older meat and gradually worked its way into a mainstream seasoning. I use it lightly to medium and find it is all the seasoning the stew needs. Don't fully cook the meat, but sear it just enough to add the blackened flavor, and then use the drippings to wilt the onions and to flavor the roux that begins the stew. Since I'm usually cooking this inside, I use vegetable oil instead of butter for the sear, as it doesn't smoke as much. If you're outside, using butter will make the stew a little richer, but be careful not to burn it.

The taste can be tailored to your preferences. If you want it really spicy, use a lot of the blackened seasoning, and if your palate, family or friends prefer a milder flavor, then just dust the meat. The flavor can always be kicked up a notch or two for those

PREPARATION:

Cut venison into approximately 1- to 2-inch pieces. Put 1½ cups of room-temperature root beer in a Zip-Lock bag and mix in a few drops of Texas Pete Sabor sauce. Add the venison pieces to the bag. If the root beer doesn't cover all the meat, add enough root beer to barely cover it. Swish in bag to mix throughout, then squeeze the bag remove all air. Allow to marinate at room temperature for 30 minutes to an hour.

Cut potatoes in half and chop onions very coarsely. Pour root beer off venison pieces and squeeze to remove as much as possible. Sprinkle blackened seasoning onto venison, and turn with hands to coat all sides. For a spicier dish, add more blackened seasoning; use less for a milder taste.

Put the vegetable oil in a large, deep, cast-iron pan and heat on high until it begins smoking. Dump the venison into the frying pan and stir well for two to three minutes. Remove the venison and reduce heat to medium. Use the venison drippings to heat the onions to opaque while stirring frequently, then remove them. Mix the flour thoroughly with the warm water. Pour the water/flour mixture into the pan and stir while it thickens. When the water/flour mixture starts to brown and become a roux, stir in the beef broth and continue warming to a low boil. When the broth boils, add the potatoes and carrots and return to a low boil.

Preheat the oven to 375. Boil for 15 minutes, then stir in the venison and onions and return to a boil. Cover the pan and place on the middle rack in the oven for an hour. This can be done on the stove over low/medium heat, but requires stirring every few

TIP!

Marinating meat in a carbonated beverage like a soda product will help tenderize it.

who prefer a more robust flavor, but it's near impossible to tone it down without diluting the stew's broth.

The mini golden potatoes and carrot slices were started simply as ways to make the preparation easier. However, the golden potatoes are very creamy and add more than just being easy and filling. If you can't find them in mini size, use large, golden potatoes and cube them to about an inch or so. They really do taste better than other potatoes.

This recipe came about as a way to make something different from most venison stews, a little heartier and with a little more kick for folks who would enjoy it — and to add some variety to the lunch that had been cooked at a hunting club the previous several weekends.

Hopefully, you have some venison in your freezer and would like to try this. If you don't have stew pieces, you can cut up a couple of steaks or a small roast. It tastes good enough you'll be glad you did. Enjoy! ■



minutes to prevent burning. Prepare the wild rice by the directions on its package. Serve the venison stew over the wild rice (or in a hollowed-out, mini-loaf of sourdough bread).

This is a pretty complete meal. The only thing I would consider adding is some warm sourdough bread to help get the last out of the bowl. If by some chance you aren't full after eating a bowl of this stew and would like a little dessert, bread pudding is an excellent choice. ■



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@captainjerry.com.

INGREDIENTS:

1-1½ pounds venison pieces
1 pkg. (1½ pounds) Little Potato Company Boomer Gold potatoes. You may substitute full-sized potatoes, but golden potatoes are best.
2 sweet onions
1½ cup carrot slices
Blackened seasoning (to taste)
1 tbsp flour
3 cups beef broth
2 tbsp vegetable oil
1½ cups warm water
Root beer
Texas Pete Sabor Mexican-style hot sauce (to taste)
1 cup wild rice. An option is to serve in sourdough mini loaves.

SANTEE STRINGER

Terry Madewell

Angler Wyn Mullins believes that February might be the best time to catch a huge, prespawn bass on the Santee Cooper lakes, Marion or Moultrie.

FEBRUARY IS BIG-BASS TIME

SANTEE COOPER'S LUNKERS ARE MAKING THEIR MOVE

Photos by Terry Madewell

Bass fishing gets cranked up early on the Santee Cooper lakes, and some anglers enjoy sensational fishing weeks before spawning activity begins. Largemouths begin a serious move to relatively shallow flats, and some anglers have learned that February is an ideal time to hook up with big, prespawn bass.

Mike Cox from Bonneau, S.C., and Wyn Mullins from North Charleston, S.C., have been teaming up for years, as well as fishing on their own, targeting this prespawn bass bonanza.

Cox said the major spawn for largemouth bass typically occurs in March, but big bass make a shallow-water move in February on both Lake Moultrie and Lake Marion. He and Mullins primarily target Moultrie because of their proximity to that lake, but he said the entire ring of shallow water around the two lakes offers tremendous opportunities.

"When talking water depths for February fishing, I'm not thinking the ultra-shallow spawning sites, but we'll

find plenty of big bass moving into the 3- to 7-foot depths," he said.

FIND DEPTH CHANGE

Mullins said a key is discerning even slight depth changes in the shallow flats.

"I look for small ditches — even depressions that are slightly deeper than the surrounding area — as places that will be the focal point bass target," said Mullins, who explained that fish aren't "schooled up" as in foraging on baitfish, but concentrating and stacking in specific areas.

"I've found many areas all around the lakes," he said. "Once I find the underwater topographic change, I target specific cover such as stumps, logs, cypress and gum trees in that area. Without defining a specific area, we'd be randomly fishing on huge flats and catching only straggler fish. Specific areas with subtle bottom changes will hold many more bass in an area making the process much more productive, and fun."

Mullins said February weather patterns will frequently change lure patterns and

productive depths. This impacts the choice of lures depending on whether bass are holding tight to cover or more aggressive in feeding, so the right lure choice can be very flexible.

"I keep an arsenal of lures ready, and on any given day, I'll work plastic worms rigged Texas or Carolina style, spinnerbaits and crankbaits," Mullins said. "Some days all of these lures can be productive but typically we'll catch the majority of fish on one pattern because of weather conditions on that day. Probably the most reliable searching lure to begin the day is a plastic worm. But my favorite days are when the bite is strong on crankbaits, because we'll catch more fish and just as many big fish."

Mullins said he prefers a 7-inch Zoom Trick Worm with a straight tail. Top colors include green pumpkin, watermelon and junebug.

"But I experiment daily with various colors because color can make a big difference even day-to-day," he said. "For crankbaits, I prefer the Spro Little John

MD; I vary the retrieve rate to match the depth I'm fishing. I want the lure to kick the bottom, but not dig in and plow. I don't get in a big hurry to run the crankbait fast with the water still cold, I like to bounce it off woody objects or the bottom to produce reaction strikes. When they're on a crankbait bite, the action can be very fast."

COLOR MATTERS

Mullins said his preference in crankbait color patterns is some chartreuse for increased visibility.

"Under normal water conditions, the Cellmate color pattern and the chartreuse with a black back are favorites," he said. "If the water is clear, I'll use a natural shad color pattern."

Although Mullins savors crankbaits, Cox favors spinnerbaits. He said he'll use different colors of spinnerbaits based on water conditions, but typically, chartreuse/white is his go-to color. He'll also typically opt for 3/8- to 1/2-ounce lures when fishing water in the 4- to 7-foot depths.

"I'll target stumps, logs, trees and riprap," he said. "I'll fish the riprap at a 45-degree angle and work the spinnerbait to the bottom of the big rocks

where the bottom flattens. This is big bass city this time of the year."

Cox said that slow-rolling spinnerbaits can be lethal on big bass; he'll often work the lure in that manner around riprap.

"The riprap typically has deeper water associated with it and can be the key for post-frontal conditions," he said. "Even on post-frontal days, big bass are a realistic possibility, but the overall numbers of fish are usually down.

"I'll fish these days because we still get a few bites and often from really big bass," he said. "But my favorite time is after two- or three-day warming trend and fish a warm day with cloud cover just prior to another system moving in. Under these conditions, we can work a spinnerbait faster or run crankbaits effectively. The potential for big fish is very good and we'll usually catch and release plenty of fish in the five-pound class and usually hook a few really big fish as well."

Don't wait for the bass spawn before getting in the game. The cold but warming water during February brings sensational big bass action to Santee Cooper. ■



NOT JUST A SHALLOW BAIT:

Spinnerbaits are traditionally discussed as baits worked just below the surface of the water, but they can be just as effective, maybe even more effective, when they're fished slowly, deeper in the water column. Called "slow-rolling," this method involves slowly turning the reel handle, allowing the bait to slide down in the water column, all the while keeping the line tight and feeling the blades rotate. The deeper you need to fish, the heavier the bait you use.



Catch a memory in South Carolina's "Great Lakes" Marion & Moultrie offering world-class fishing year-round for bass, bream, crappie, catfish, and stripers (striper season closed from June 1-Sept. 30). Our lakes hold eight state and one world record, just waiting to be broken!

For our *2018 Visitors Guide* call us at (803) 854-2131, email: tourscc@oburg.net or visit our website. The guide contains all the information you will need to catch your next fishing memory.

www.santeecoopercountry.org/CAR

Photo provided by Capt. Jimmie's Guide Service

HEAD FOR THE MOUNTAINS

Robert Satterwhite



FLY-FISHING MUSEUM GETS A NEW LIFE

SWAIN COUNTY, BRYSON CITY WELCOME HISTORY EXHIBITS

A former bank building in Bryson City is the new home of the Fly Fishing Museum of the Southern Appalachians.

Wesley Satterwhite

After losing its lease in a building in downtown Cherokee, N.C., and not being offered an alternative site by the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians, the Fly Fishing Museum of the Southern Appalachians has re-established itself in nearby Bryson City.

The Swain County Chamber of Commerce provided space for the museum in a former bank building in downtown Bryson City. Not only did the chamber welcome the museum with open arms, it provided space for an expansion that will include aquariums featuring fish and other aquatic life of the region, learning centers and new exhibits. The 1,000-square-foot building, which is under construction, will be in a separate area close to the museum. The first stages of construction are under way with a soft opening scheduled for June.

As now planned, the building will have five 300-gallon tanks, five 125- to 200-gallon tanks, and an indoor stream. The

tanks and stream will be stocked with brook, rainbow and brown trout as well as muskellunge, sunfish, bass, redhorse and other aquatic species found in the streams and lakes of the Southern Appalachians.

Cost of the expansion is projected at \$100,000. Swain County has committed funds to cover the construction and maintenance of the building. Other funds will come from the Swain County Tourism Development Authority, grants, donations and fund-raising events.

To fortify its claim as a fish-friendly town, the Tourism Development Authority funded the installation of three painted fiberglass sculptures of jumping trout in several downtown locations. The largest is in front of the museum. The Tuckasegee Fly Shop chipped in \$1,600 to help pay the \$6,000 cost of the sculptures.

The museum features an array of exhibits that chronicle the rich heritage of fly fishing in the Southern Appalachians. Exhibits include regional flies and the

fly-tiers who originated patterns and modified standard patterns. Among the famous fly-tiers and fly-fishers featured are Mark Cathey, Fred and Allene Hall, Cato Holler, Cap Wiese, Newland Sanders and Don and Dwight Howell. Several modern-day fly-tiers also are featured, including Kevin Howell and Roger Lowe.

Other exhibits include fly rods from the earliest to the latest, fly-tying equipment, videos featuring famous fly-fishers, recordings and photographs. If it has to do with fly-fishing and fly-fishers, the museum has it.

BAKER'S PRIDE

The museum is the brainchild of Alen Baker of Charlotte, who originated the idea in 2012 and was instrumental in the museum's establishment in Cherokee. First welcomed by the tribe as an asset, the tribe cancelled the museum's lease in 2015 on grounds that it had not "raised one red cent" for the tribe. Baker said

BIG ADDITION:

In its new digs in Bryson City, The Fly Fishing Museum of the Southern Appalachians will add 10 fish tanks and an indoor stream to show off the fish that live in mountain streams and reservoirs across the southeast.

although he was surprised by the tribe's rejection of the museum, the move to Bryson City was advantageous in several ways. The museum found a welcome response and support from the Swain County Chamber and an opportunity to realize one of Baker's original goals to have an aquarium as part of the museum so that people could actually see the fish that inhabit the area's numerous streams and lakes.

Although fly-fishing museums are located in several locations in the west and northeast, the Southern Museum of Fly Fishing is the only one of its kind in the south and southeast.

To help cover operational costs, the museum will charge a small admission fee. At present, no admission fee is charged.

Museum hours are 9. a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Saturday openings will begin in the spring. The museum's address is 210 Main Street, Bryson City, N.C., 28713. Telephone number is 800-867-9246. Internet address is info@FlyFishinMuseum.org. ■



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.

We Are Your Coastal Dealer

CAROLINA SKIFF and **SEA CHASER**

GO ANYWHERE. DO ANYTHING.™

6921 Market Street, Wilmington, NC (910) 799-1277 **3881 Savannah Hwy, Johns Island, SC (843) 974-5353**

marinewarehousecenter.com

POWERED BY **SUZUKI** OUTBOARDS

REMOVABLE SAND BAG WEIGHTS AVAILABLE

ON A TRAILER OR LIFT... WE KEEP YOU COVERED!

GBRIAN
You'll Get Hooked.

CUSTOM BOAT COVERS
1-800-334-8277
2330 Womble-Brooks Rd.
Wilson, NC 27893



QMAXX'S BLU

Gun owners have a long menu of choices when it comes to protecting their firearms, and a St. Louis-based company, QMaxx Products, has joined the fray with a pretty powerful entry.

QMaxx's "BLU" is a one-step gun and knife cleaner, lubricant and rust/corrosion preventative that comes in packages as small as 2 ounces to 1 gallon — a big drawing card for professional gunsmiths.

BLU can be used to clean firearms, from rifles and shotguns to blackpowder weapons, and it can be sprayed on all surfaces to prevent rust. It dries quickly and is not oily or tacky, and it prevents the blued or steel surfaces of firearms from picking up any dust, grit, grime or even fingerprints. The company boasts that salt-fog tests in laboratories prove that BLU protects up to 300 percent longer than leading gun oils.

BLU is available in wipe packets, lubricating pens, 2-, 8- and 16-ounce spray bottles and a 1-gallon bulk container, priced between \$1.99 for individual wipe packets to \$28.99 for the 16-ounce trigger spray bottles.

More Info: www.qmaxxproducts.com

G. LOOMIS E6X

Lightweight, strong, and sensitive. That's the recipe for a fishing rod that bass anglers strive to find, and it can be elusive, especially when you add affordability into the mix. Or at least it used to be. But the G. Loomis E6X changes that.

With modern technology and materials, it's become common to find some of the lightest rods on the market are also the strongest. But that combination has always come at a price that has kept many of those rods out of reach of the average angler.

This E6X won the "Best New Freshwater Rod" award at ICAST in 2015, and it's now available in 30 models of spinning and casting rods, including numerous technique specific models, as well as Classic models that are good for all-around use.

So whether you're flipping, pitching, jigging, cranking, or using spinnerbaits, swimbaits, and everything in between, the E6X has a model to fit your needs.

The rods are available at Academy Sports and

www.academy.com/shop/pdp/g-loomis-e6x-freshwater-casting-rod#repChildCatSku=104981499.



SILVERSPORT



Hunters have long been trying to block or camouflage their natural smell from game animals, using scent sprays to camouflage those aromas, storing their hunting clothes in containers that keep them away from unwanted odors or even buying clothes treated with scent blockers.

NFL Hall of Famer Franco Harris has entered the market through his Pittsburgh-based company, Silversport, which is offering hooded sweatshirts, t-shirts and socks treated with his Silver Clean technology in Mossy Oak camouflage.

Silversport hunting clothes are infused with nano-sized particles of silver — silver ions — that block odor-causing microorganisms from attaching to or penetrating clothing, which largely prevents the human body odor that game animals can detect with their superior senses of smell.

Balacavas, neck guards, camouflage hoodies, t-shirts and socks are available from Silversport in Mossy Oak. Prices start at \$15 and range upward.

More Info: www.silversport.com



Brian Buckner

Bryan Buckner of Saluda, S.C., was surprised by this chain pickerel while fishing for catfish on Lake Hartwell on Oct. 15.



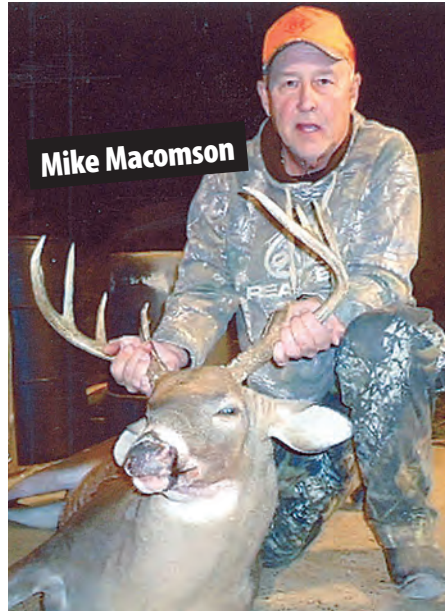
Eleanor Moon

Eleanor Moone of Mebane, N.C. caught this 43-inch bull red in the surf at Avon, N.C., on Nov. 2, 2016.



Colin Yoder

Colin Yoder caught this 31-inch redfish on the "Grillage" in Charleston Harbor last June.



Mike Macomson

Mike Macomson of New London, N.C., killed this 12-point, 178-pound buck on Nov. 22, 2016, in Stanly County, N.C.



Claudia Brown, Billy Yost

Claudia Brown and Billy Yost of Winston-Salem, N.C., show off a 40-pound High Rock Lake flathead cat caught March 2015.



Cole Claiborne

Cole Claiborne of Oxford, N.C., took this 7-point buck on Nov. 23, 2016, in Granville County, N.C.

Take your camera **TO THE WOODS!**

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

**Hunting/Fishing Scrapbook,
Carolina Sportsman,
433 Hollinswood Ave.,
Winston-Salem, N.C. 27103
or to dank@carolinaspportsman.com**

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

Hunting/Fishing
SCRAPBOOK



Jay McClure

Jay McClure broke in his 2017 Sailfish 270 center console from Butler Marine with this nice grouper off Charleston last June.



Dawson Wheeler

Dawson Wheeler 15, killed this massive 10-point buck in in Williamsburg County, S.C., near the Santee River, this past fall.



Brady Jarman

Brady Jarman, 10, of Richlands, N.C., killed his first buck, this 6-pointer, in November 2016, in Onslow County.



Shawn Worrell

Shawn Worrell of Belews Creek, N.C. caught this 22-inch Lake James smallmouth bass from his kayak on Oct. 18, 2017.



Dallas Brooks

Dallas Brooks from Chatham County, N.C., caught this 5-pound black drum near Fort Fisher on Sept. 11, 2016.

**GOT PHOTOS?
WE WANT 'EM**

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

**Hunting/Fishing Scrapbook,
433 Hollinswood Ave.,
Winston-Salem, N.C. 27103
or to dank@carolinaspportsman.com**

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



Curtis Kennedy

Curtis Kennedy, 84, caught this 30-pound flathead on North Carolina's Lake Tillery on July 9, 2016.



Tim Johnson

Tim Johnson caught this nice sailfish on Aug. 28, 2016, fishing out of Masonboro Inlet near 23-Mile Rock.



Kate, Lucas Curtner

Kate and Lucas Curtner with their PawPaw Chappell after their first quail hunt on Feb. 4, 2017, near Ayden, N.C.



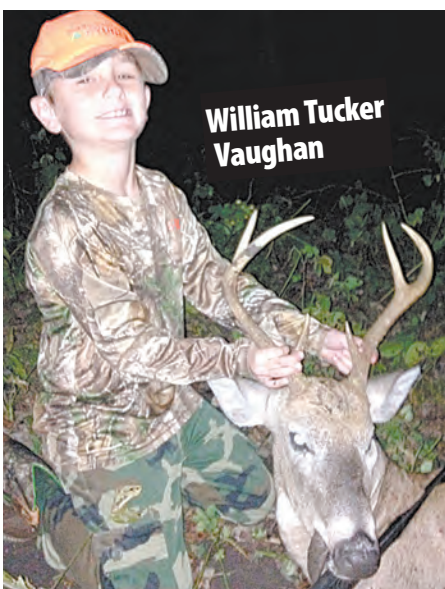
William Spaulding

William Spaulding of Wilmington, N.C., caught this 10-pound, 1-ounce bass from the Cape Fear River on Aug. 1, 2016, on a chartreuse/white spinnerbait.



Benji Brown

Benji Brown caught this 46-pound Lake Wateree blue catfish in early August on a piece of white perch fished on a shallow flat.



William Tucker Vaughan

William Tucker Vaughan, 7, of Ayden, N.C., killed this buck last season near his home.



Craig Murphy

Craig Murphy of Knightdale, N.C., took this 10-point, 175-pound Halifax County buck on Nov. 20, 2016.



Noah Lynch

Noah Lynch, 7, caught this 1-pound, 10-ounce bluegill on a cricket in a pond near Clayton, N.C., in July 2016.

HUNTING SEASONS

DEER

Western	Bowhunting	Sept. 9-Oct. 1 Oct. 15-Nov. 19 Dec. 10-Jan. 1, 2018 (bucks only)
	Muzzleloader	Oct. 2-14
	Gun	Nov. 20-Dec. 9
Northwestern	Bowhunting	Sept. 9-Nov. 3
	Muzzleloader	Nov. 4-17
	Gun	Nov. 18-Jan. 1, 2018
Central	Bowhunting	Sept. 9-Oct. 27
	Muzzleloader	Oct. 28-Nov. 10
	Gun	Nov. 11-Jan. 1, 2018
Eastern	Bowhunting	Sept. 9-29
	Muzzleloader	Sept. 30-Oct. 13
	Gun	Oct. 14-Jan. 1, 2018

BEAR

Oct. 16-Nov. 18 & Dec. 11-Jan. 1, 2018:	In and west of Surry, Wilkes, Caldwell, Burke and Cleveland counties
Nov. 11-Jan. 1, 2018:	Alamance, Anson, Cabarrus, Caswell, Chatham, Davidson, Durham, Granville, Guilford, Lee, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Orange, Person, Randolph, Rockingham, Rowan, Stanly, Union counties
Oct. 14-Jan. 1, 2018:	Franklin, Harnett, Johnston, Hoke, Moore, Richmond, Scotland, Vance, Warren, Wake counties
Nov. 18-Jan. 1, 2018:	Alexander, Catawba, Davie, Forsyth, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Stokes, Yadkin counties
Nov. 13-Jan. 1, 2018:	Bladen, Brunswick, Carteret, Columbus, Cumberland, Duplin, New Hanover, Onslow, Pamlico, Pender, Sampson
Nov. 13-18, Dec. 11-23:	Beaufort, Camden, Craven, Chowan, Dare, Edgecombe, Greene, Halifax, Hyde, Jones, Lenoir, Martin, Nash, Northampton, Pasquotank, Pitt, Tyrrell, Washington, Wayne, Wilson counties
Nov. 11-18, Dec. 11-23: Dec. 4-23:	Bertie, Currituck, Gates, Hertford, Perquimans counties Robeson County

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, 2018

GROUSE

Oct. 16-Feb. 28, 2018

WILD TURKEY

April 14-May 12, 2018 (Youth Only: April 7-13, 2018)

RAILS

(KING, SORA, VIRGINIA, CLAPPER)

Sept. 2-Oct. 21, Nov. 22

CANADA GEESE

Resident zone, Oct. 4-14, Nov. 11-Dec. 2, Dec. 16-Feb. 10.
Statewide: Sept. 1-30
S. James Bay zone: Oct. 4-Nov. 3, Nov. 12-Dec. 30.
NE Zone, Jan. 12-27, permit only

SNOW, BLUE, ROSS GEESE

Oct. 10-Feb. 10, 2018, Feb. 12-March 31, 2018

DUCKS

Oct. 4-7, Nov. 11-Dec. 2, Dec. 16-Jan. 27, 2018

SEA DUCKS

Nov. 20-Jan. 27, 2018

BRANT

Dec. 16-Jan. 27, 2018

DOVE

Sept. 2-Oct. 7, Nov. 22-Jan. 15, 2018;

TUNDRA SWAN

Nov. 11-Jan. 28, 2018. Bag limit 1, by permit only.

RACCOON, OPOSSUM

Oct. 16 (at sunrise)-Feb. 28, 2018

WOODCOCK

Dec. 14-Jan. 28, 2018

HUNTING SEASONS

SPECIES	SEASON DATES (PRIVATE LAND)	BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT
Doves	Sept. 2-4 (afternoons only) Sept. 5-Oct. 14, Nov. 11-25, Dec. 15-Jan. 15, 2018	15	45
Crow	Nov. 1-March 1, 2018	No limits	
Quail	Nov. 20-March 1, 2018	12	36
Rabbit	Nov. 23-March 1, 2018	5	15
Squirrel	Oct. 1-March 1, 2018	10	30
Fox	Nov. 23-March 1, 2018	No limits	
Grouse	Nov. 23-March 1, 2018 (Game Zone 1 only)	3	9
Raccoon/ Opossum	Sept. 15-March 15, 2018 (statewide) Sept. 15-March 15, 2018 (Game Zones 3, 6)	3 raccoons per party No limits	
Other furbearers	Nov. 26-March 1, 2018 (bobcat, otter, weasel, mink, muskrat, skunk)	No limits	
Bear	Oct. 17-23 (still hunting only) (Game Zone 1 only) Oct. 24-30 (dogs), (Game Zone 1 only) Oct. 24-Nov. 5 (Horry, Georgetown, Williamsburg counties)	1 5 per party 1	(permit only)
Early Teal	Sept. 15-30	6	18
Rails	Oct. 6-10		
King & Clapper Sora & Virginia,	Nov. 3-Jan. 6, 2018	15 25	45 75
Gallinules	Nov. 3-Jan. 6, 2018 (common/purple)	15	45
Snipe	Nov. 14 - Feb. 28	8	24
Early Geese	Sept. 1 - 30	15	45
Woodcock	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31	3	9
Wild Turkey	March 20-May 5, 2017 (statewide private land) April 1-May 5, 2017 (statewide WMAs)	3 3	

DEER SEASON

ZONE	ARCHERY	PRIM WEAPON	GUNS
1		Oct. 1-10	Oct. 11-Jan. 1, 2018
2	Sept. 15-30	Oct. 1-10	Oct. 11-Jan. 1, 2018
3			Aug. 15-Jan. 1, 2017
4	Aug 15-31		Sept. 1-Jan. 1, 2017
Youth Day			Jan. 6, 2018

WATERFOWL SEASONS

SPECIES	DATES	BAG LIMIT
Duck	Teal only: Sept. 15-30 Nov. 18-25, Dec. 9-Jan. 28, 2018	6 6
Canada geese	Sept. 1-30, Nov. 18-25, Dec. 9-Jan. 28, 2018, Feb. 13-28, 2018	15
Blue/snow (light) geese	Nov. 18-25, Dec. 9-Jan. 28, 2018 Feb. 13-28, 2018	25
Brant	Nov. 18-25, Dec. 9-Jan. 28, 2018	2
Sea ducks	Nov. 19-26, Dec. 10-Jan. 28, 2018	6



26th Annual

500 South Salisbury St.
Raleigh, NC

February 1-4, 2018

- Thursday: 10am-8pm
- Friday: 10am-8pm
- Saturday: 10am-8pm
- Sunday: 10am - 5pm

Offering These & Many More Quality Brands:

KEY WEST

HarrisKayot
FLOTHERS & DECK BOATS

BOSTON WHALER

Hurricane

TRITON
BOATS

SPORTSMAN
You CAN have it all!

CONTENDER

HAWK
BOATS

REGULATOR
THE FINEST IN OFFSHORE SPORTFISHING BOATS

CAROLINA SKIFF

CHAPARRAL

SEA FOX
SPORT BOATS

Parker

CRESTLINER

Scout

ROBALO

Jones Brothers Bateau

Sea Ray

Ranger
BOATS

JUPITER

G3 Boats

BlackJack
boats

NauticStar

LOWE
BOATS

cape horn

MERIDIAN
YACHTS

KenCraft

POLAR

SUNDANCE

crest

BAYLINER

STINGRAY

Pioneer BOATS
Charting a new course.

PURSUIT

COBALT

SEA HUNT
SH

GRADY-WHITE

For more information visit
raleighconvention.com/boatshow

CATCH MORE FISH WITH A SUBSCRIPTION TO CAROLINA SPORTSMAN!



Subscribe today for the best:

- FISHING HOTSPOTS
- LATEST MUST-HAVE GEAR
- EXPERT ADVICE

\$19.99
12 issues

Toll-free

1-855-224-1667

or for faster service visit

CarolinaSportsman.com/subscribe



Carolina
SPORTSMAN

Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of first issue

NORTH CAROLINA TIDE GUIDES

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

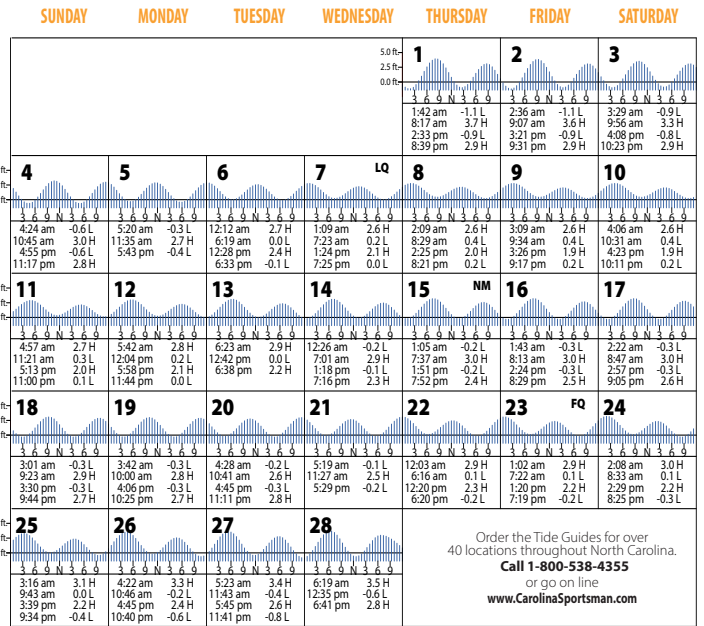
Oregon Inset, USCG Station HIGH LOW

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

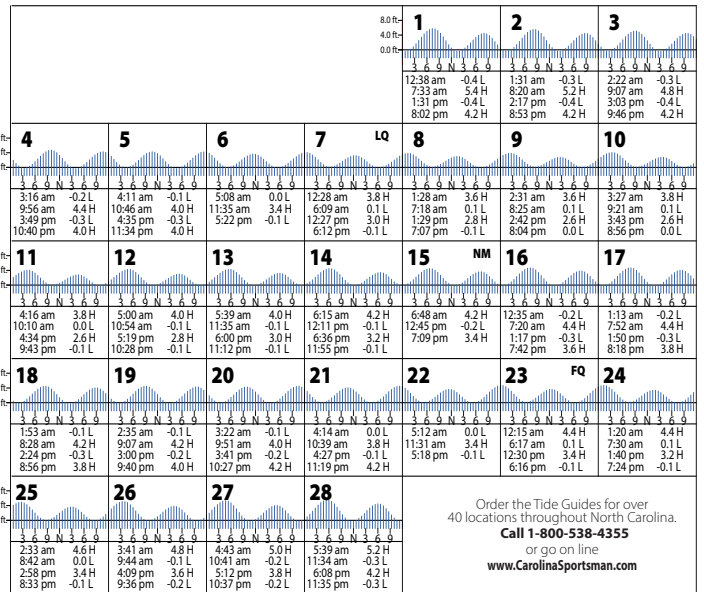
Southport, Cape Fear River HIGH LOW

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

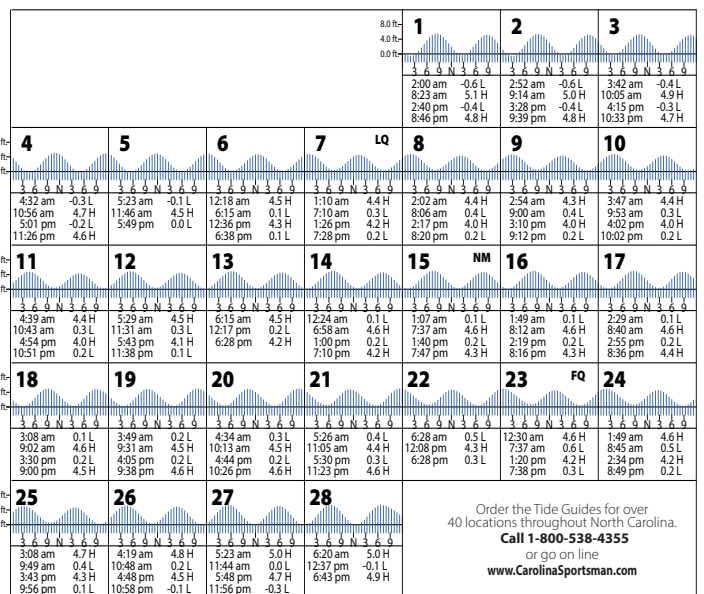
Atlantic Beach Ocean



Oregon Inlet USCG Station



Southport Cape Fear River



How to use the SPORTSMAN Tide Guide

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

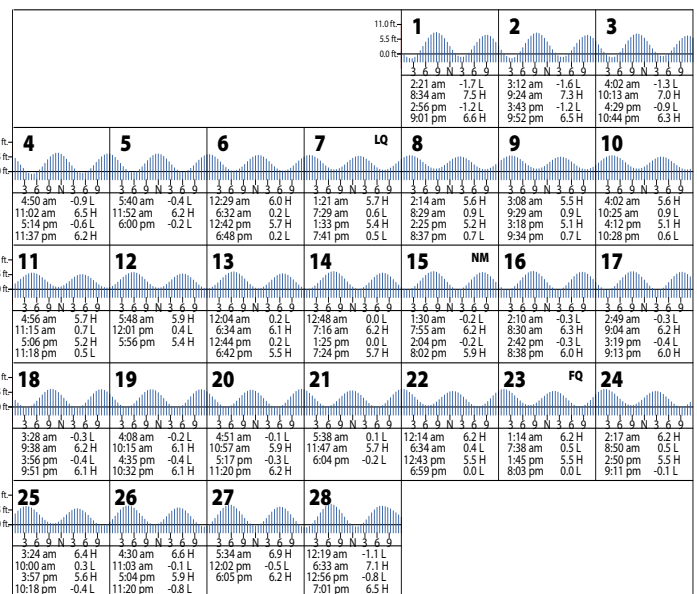
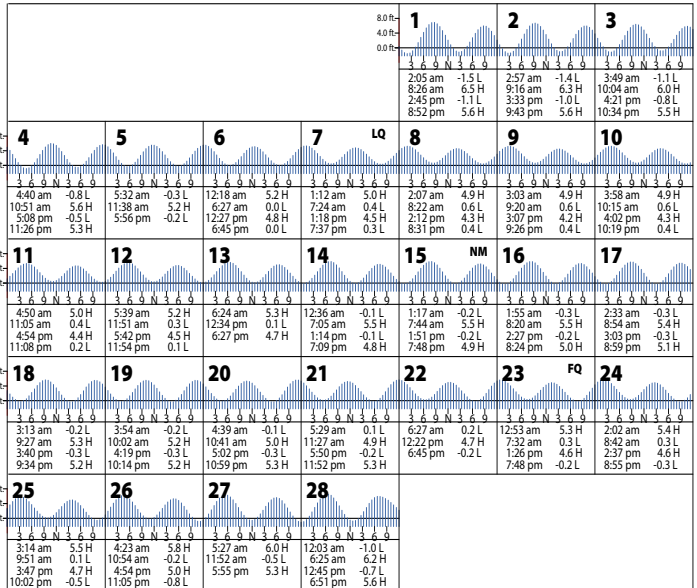
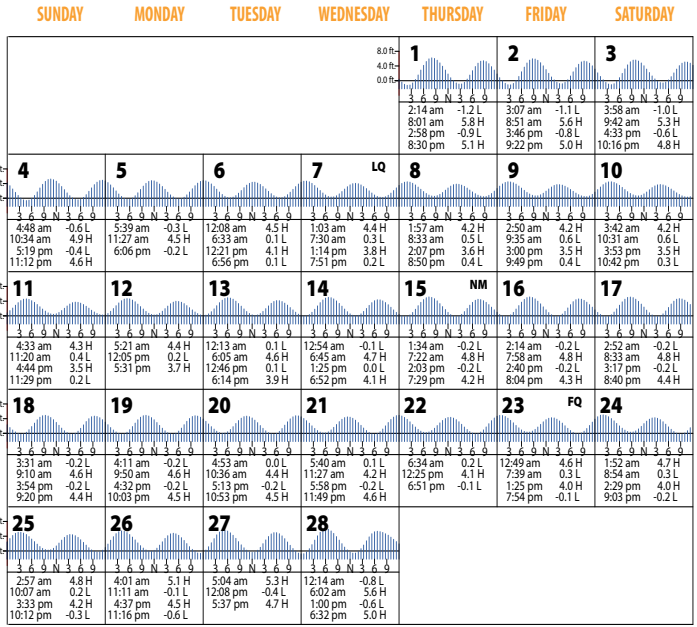
Tide Corrections

	HIGH	LOW
Cherry Grove(inside)	0:24	0:04
Springmaid Pier Outer Coast	-0:07	-0:30
Murrells Inlet Outer Coast	0:12	0:12
Pawley's Island Outer Coast	-0:10	-0:33
North Inlet Outer Coast	0:03	-0:08
Ent. (south jetty) Winyah Bay	-0:07	-0:36
S. Is. Ferry Winyah Bay	1:08	1:13
Georgetown Pee Dee River Br.	1:55	2:27
Black River (south of dunbar)	3:33	3:57
Sandy Island Thoroughfare Crk.	2:51	3:12
N. Santee Brg. Outer Coast	1:23	1:42
Brown Island S. Santee River	0:41	1:19
McClellanville Jeremy Creek.	0:36	0:40
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



PAINT LITTLE RIVER BLACK, AS IN DRUM

Winter weather doesn't bother black drum too much, especially in the ICW near Little River, S.C.

Stretch of ICW around NC/SC border abounds in hearty, winter fish

During the dead of winter, anglers can expect a strong inshore bite, specifically in the section of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway around Little River, just a few yards south of the North Carolina-South Carolina border.

While many species have vacated the premises, several hunker down for the winter, and black drum are one of those that can bring steady action when many anglers are off the water.

Black drum are not only a good-eating fish, they are strong fighters and will continue to offer opportunities during the middle of the winter. They are a species that guide Keith Logan of North Myrtle Beach Fishing Charters targets in February.

"Black drum are a good fish to target during the winter," said Logan (843-516-0614). "We typically get on a good bite this time of year on fresh shrimp in the waterway."

Black drum are very tolerant of cold water but will seek out depressions along the waterway where scattered bait is present. Logan looks for deep water associated with docks or some other type of structure

between Little River and Sunset Beach, N.C.

"We like to find places with water as deep as 15 feet at the end of docks if we can find it. Those places where people load their boats onto their boat lifts can be really good places to find a handful of fish resting in the depressions," he said.

The section of the ICW between the Little River swing bridge and the Sunset Beach bridge is loaded with docks and deep-water hangouts perfect for holding black drum over the winter. In addition, the concrete wall at Tillman Point has both deep water and structure — a deadly combination for big schools of wintering black drum.

Logan recommends anglers getting to spots like this when the water is moving in either direction.

"It doesn't matter as much if the tide is high or low, but they like the tide moving," he said.

Black drum eat a wide variety of foods, from small crabs to shrimp and fish. Shrimp is an easy bait choice that is not only easy to get at local seafood markets, but it's deadly

on the end of the hook for black drum.

Logan uses a typical Carolina rig with an egg or tear-drop sinker with 16 inches of leader down to a No. 2 hook. Black drum feed on the bottom, and a Carolina rig is a perfect choice to get the bait down where it needs to be, right in a black drum's feeding zone.

While black drum can run anywhere from a pound up to 100 pounds, the typical size for wintering fish in the Little River area is between 3 and 7 pounds. On light tackle, a 5-pound black drum can be well worth the price of admission on the water and on the dinner table. ■

— Jeff Bureson

GOT PICS? Send 'em in!

Email images to:
dank@carolinasportsman.com

*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.

SIMPLE STRIPERS?

Clarks Hill fish are in Little rivers this month

There's not much strategy involved in catching striped bass on Clarks Hill Lake this month, according to guide Tommy Dudley of Plum Branch, S.C.

"It's fairly simple. Just go up the two Little Rivers (Georgia and South Carolina) and the main tributaries of those rivers," he said.

The stripers will be well up the rivers and creeks because they are filled with baitfish this time of year, and the bigger fish are gorging on them, said Dudley who concentrates mostly on South Carolina's Little River simply because it's closer to home.

"Most people pull planer boards this time of year, but you can still catch fish down-lining, usually 10 feet or so down," he said. "I like to put some lines down and just ease along in the creeks, and at the same time put out some free lines. That makes for a little-more productive fishing."

February is one of the best times of the year to go after a big striper, according to Dudley (706-833-4807).

"Those creeks at the upper end of the lake are slap full of bait, and when the big fish get back in those little creeks, you have a lot smaller area of water to bump into them," he said.

One of the best ways to target those bigger stripers is to pull 10- to 12-inch gizzard shad or trout on planer boards, he said.

"A lot of times, the big stripers will be in just a couple of feet of water. I've caught a lot more big fish up in the shallow water up on the bank than out in the ditch. Most of the time, when one goes after the bait, being in that shallow water when he makes a move, you can see him."

The same strategy works in Georgia Little River above Raysville and Amity and all the creeks and major ditches above the bridge, he said. Soap Creek near Lincolnton, Ga., is also a good area upstream of the "crooked bridge" to the back end of the creek, Dudley said.

"People sometimes try to get out at daylight, but on cold days, especially, the bite will come on better about lunchtime or later after the sun gets up and warms the water up."

"These are pretty much the best areas and best fishing methods until spring when the fish start moving out of the creeks back down the lake, but it is also probably the best time of year to catch a big fish," he said.

Dudley added one caveat. The lake level has been 10 feet down during the winter, which can make navigation hazardous.

"With the water as down like it is, especially at the top of Long Cane Creek where there are some serious boulders under the surface, you need to be very wary if you don't know the area." ■

— Pat Robertson

GO SLOW FOR BASS at High Rock Lake through February

February is an unpredictable month for bass fishing, but the fish that bite are usually big.

"It can be in the 70s one day and be bitter cold the next day," said veteran angler Chris Brown of Lexington, N.C. "Given a warming trend, some of the biggest bass of the season move to shallow, staging areas."

Brown mainly fishes High Rock Lake, and though that impoundment is not known as an early season hot spot for largemouth bass., last year's unseasonably warm weather triggered some excellent fishing in February

Whether the water level is up or down, Brown fishes the same way. "Most of the time, the lake will be down several feet, which makes the fishing somewhat easier for me because the fish aren't as scattered and the cover is limited," said Brown, who heads for creeks and targets the mouths of small pockets about midway back.

continues on page 92



Stripers on Clarks Hill Lake will be congregated in the Georgia and South Carolina Little Rivers this month in search of baitfish.

Pat Robertson

High Rock Lake continued

"The fish aren't on the bottom this early in the year," Brown said. "They're suspended in about 4 to 7 feet of water and sluggish because of the cold water. I use a slow retrieve so I don't take the bait away from the fish. Many times, I can't feel the bite; the fish is suddenly just there."

Brown uses Nos. 5 and 7 Shad Raps in gold and crawfish colors as well as jerkbaits. The No. 5 Shad Rap is his go-to bait.

Unlike many fishermen, he doesn't use spinning tackle to fish Shad Raps, which are light and difficult to cast. Instead, he fishes them with a 6-foot-8, medium-action Level Performance Rod designed for small crankbaits and jerkbaits. He pairs the rod with an Ardent baitcasting reel filled with 8-pound fluorocarbon.

"The sensitivity of the fluorocarbon line increases my chances of

detecting light strikes," Brown said. "I can also feel my bait moving no matter how slow the retrieve."

Brown targets corners and shallow rocks in the pockets; he favors slightly stained or clear water and hates muddy water.

"Muddy water is the worst condition a fisherman can face in February," he said. "I'll stay home unless I'm fishing a tournament."

Flat Swamp Creek often features clear water, making Brown switch baits. "I'll go to a jerkbait and fish it slowly along the rocky wall and pockets within the Swamp," he said. "I've caught some huge bass fishing that way."

Brown said as long as the water temperature is above 50 degrees, he can catch bass. ■

— Tony Garitta

Angler Chris Brown looks for stained to clear water for February bass at High Rock Lake.



Tony Garitta

WHACK WATEREE'S EARLY BASS

Look for fish around all kinds of cover through February

February is a prime month for bass fishing on South Carolina's Lake Wateree, said bass pro Dearal Rodgers of Camden, S.C., "February at Lake Wateree brings warmer water temperatures, longer days and biting bass."

Rodgers said early spring fishing begins in February when warmer days become interspersed with lingering winter cold, triggering an urge to eat in bass. They will gorge themselves on the abundant baitfish in anticipation of the coming spawn.

"The bass at Wateree use several types of cover during early spring," Rodgers said. "Good places to find them include rocks, grass, laydowns and docks. My favorite cover to target is rocks."

The rocks at Wateree hold a ton of crawfish and heat, two of a fat female bass's favorite things, he noted.

"A lot of the rocks at Wateree now have scattered grass around them, making a ChatterBait in shad colors hard to beat. A spinnerbait comes in a close second," said Rodgers, who advises anglers to look for rocks and grass around the main lake, in the backs of coves, along points — and everywhere in between.

His favorite baits for other types of cover and conditions include:

Laydowns: "A crankbait is what I like best. A Strike King 1.5-inch in shad or crawfish pattern can be great."

Grass: "A Snag Proof frog is hard to beat. Use dark colors in low-light conditions and lighter colors for sunny conditions. Don't be afraid to throw the frog in broad daylight, and always use 50- to 65-pound braid."

Cold fronts: "Try flipping a worm or small craw. Under post-front conditions, try the Buckeye Mini Mop Jig to get more bites."

Docks and brush: "You can't beat the Mop Jig. I throw 3/8- and 1/2-ounce jigs in green pumpkin, black/blue and Texas craw colors. Fish them on at least 15-pound line and baitcasting equipment. Concentrate on every dock pole and 'worm' the jig through the brush."

If all else fails, Rodgers advises to pick up a 1/8-ounce or 3/16-ounce Spot Remover, with a green pumpkin trick worm, use 8-pound line on a spinning rod and throw at any cover you can find. ■

— Pat Robertson



Catch a few warm days in February, and bass pro Dearal Rodgers said Lake Wateree bass will turn on.

GET THAT JIG TO A WYLIE CRAPPIE IN FEBRUARY

If guide Jerry Neely of Bessemer City, N.C., had his druthers, he'd be tight-line fishing the creeks for crappie this month on Lake Wylie along the North Carolina-South Carolina border.

"You can catch crappie either tight-lining or long-lining, but I'd rather be tight-lining," said Neely (www.carolinasfishing.com). "I'll definitely tight-line early in the month because that method is more effective in cold water. Later, when the water warms, long-lining becomes an option."

For tight-lining, Neely sets out as many as 12 B'n'M rods, six in the front of his boat and six in the back to limit the possibility of crossing lines. The rods are 10-, 12-, and 14-feet, so Neely can sample various portions of the water column, although he anticipates catching suspended crappie mostly in 16 to 25 feet of water.

He pairs them with light Shakespeare reels spooled with 6-pound line, so he can detect subtle bites from unaggressive, cold-water crappie.

"I always use a ½-ounce egg weight and lower the jig or minnow at different depths until I establish where the fish are holding," Neely said. "I keep a steady eye on my electronics for forage and fish."

Neely impales a live minnow on a No. 6 gold hook; he might add a tiny split-shot about 14 inches above the hook if more depth is needed or if it's windy.

He uses ⅙- or ⅓-ounce jigs in yellow, green and sour grape. He also uses bare, blue or red jigheads in the same sizes and adds a minnow to

each one.

The creeks he fishes vary from year to year.

"You never know what the weather and water conditions will be," he said. "Whatever the creek, I move slowly at ½-mph down the middle of the creek, or I'll favor the sunny side. I look for the warmest water I can find in selecting a creek as well as concentrations of fish and forage. Creeks with a slight tinge are better than creeks with clear water."

Neely tight-lines above the fish or brush because crappie often rise to take a bait, but later in the month he might long-line some. ■

— Tony Garitta



Guide Jerry Neely catches February crappie on Lake Wylie by tight-lining jigs or minnows along creek channels.

Tony Garitta



**Pig Cookers, Patio Grills, Smokers
Customized BBQ Trailers**



For More Info **1-252-236-4464**
www.BQGRILLS.com
6043 Hwy 301N, Elm City, NC



Guide Jeff Wolfe looks for winter redfish in the shallow, warmer bays east of the Cape Fear River upstream from Bald Head Island.

CAPE FEAR BAYS ARE RED SPOTS

Jerry Dilsaver

Bays on east side of river hold plenty of fish in winter.

Even during the harshest winter, the bays of east of the mouth of North Carolina's Cape Fear River are a haven for red drum, and they hold some black drum, speckled trout and even an occasional flounder.

Three shallow bays and a creek system stretch between Fort Fisher to the north and Bald Head Island to the south on the east side of the Cape Fear across from Southport. The bays are separated from the Cape Fear by The Rocks, a water-control structure built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the late 1800s, so they are protected from swells and wakes, and their waters don't freely mix. The Basin is the northern bay, with Second Bay in the middle and Buzzard Bay to the south.

The Federal Point boat ramp at the end of US 421 near the Fort Fisher Ferry Terminal is the only ramp with direct access.

There are several spots in the Fort Fisher State Recreation Area to launch kayaks into The Basin and Second Bay, but it requires a four-wheel drive vehicle and a daily or annual pass to access. There is no land access to Buzzard Bay, but boats may enter from Second Bay or from the Bald Head Island end through Deep, Cedar and Still creeks.

These bays are very shallow and are best fished from shallow-draft boats and kayaks. Much of the bottom is soft, so wading isn't a good option. Fishermen should carry extra food and warm clothes, as missing a channel by a few feet or tarrying a little too long on a falling tide may mean waiting eight to 12 hours until the rising tide brings enough water to float again.

The tide change is approximately 4 feet, and low tide exposes acres of dark, soft mud or sand flats and oyster rocks. This

exposed bottom and absorbs warmth from the sunlight and warms the water in the bays several degrees.

The water doesn't drain completely from all the bays each tide. The area doesn't have to completely reheat every day and maintains those few degrees of warmth. During the winter, baitfish look for the warmest water possible, and in this area, these bays are it.

Jeff and Christian Wolfe of Seahawk Inshore Fishing Charters fish this area often and know it well. They usually fish with soft plastics on light jigheads and retrieve them slowly, concentrating on hopping the lures off the bottom a few inches to get them noticed. They also carry shrimp and pieces of mullet. ■

— Jerry Dilsaver

JORDAN SLABS

are ready for a big, February move



It will only take a few days of warm weather in February to send Jordan Lake crappie scrambling into big creeks to begin preparing for the spring spawn.

Freddie Sinclair

February may be a transition month, but that doesn't mean it can't be a big month for crappie at Jordan Lake near Raleigh, N.C.

According to guide Freddie Sinclair of Clayton, N.C., the key is being prepared to follow slabs wherever they go and drop a spread of tight-lined jigs and minnows to pick them off.

"Typically, in February, crappie are still going to be deep," said Sinclair (919-219-2804). "But, in the middle of February, they're moving from the mouths of the creeks and coves to the midsections, depending on the weather."

The fact that the spawning season can start as early as the first week and as late as the third week of March means anglers have to be vigilant to weather forecasts, because upticks in temperatures that remain stable for several days can make all the difference in the world for transient, prespawn crappie.

"One day you can be fishing 18 to 20 feet of water, and three days later you can be fishing in 7 feet of water," said Sinclair. "Once the water starts warming to 47 or 48 degrees, they can actually start moving to the back of the coves and creeks."

With certainty, crappie will have moved out of the main-lake channel where they've wintered and headed to the mouth of Stinking and Bush creeks to stage by early February. But any creek or cove with a large spawning flat in the back is fair game. From there, it's a matter of watching his sonar for fish near points, creek-channel ledges, brush and rock while working inward. Once fish are marked, Sinclair puts out his tight-line spread.

"I'm fishing eight to 12 rods off the front of the boat," said Sinclair, "with, most likely, a 1/2-ounce egg sinker 14 to 18 inches above a 1/2-ounce jig or a plain No. 4 hook tipped with a minnow. If I can get away with it, I'll use just a plain, 1/8-ounce jighead without the egg sinker and tipped with a minnow in shallow water."

Sinclair favors 6-pound mono-filament in Jordan's typically stained water clarity on his 12- to 16-foot rods. His go-to colors for a 2-inch curlytail jig are chartreuse, black, red and orange, but pink can be a winner in dirty water. Sinclair mixes the colors into his spread and tips them with minnows.

Speed and bait placement are crucial. Jigs should be trolled at or no more than a foot or two above where crappie are marked. The dirtier the water, the closer the baits will need to be. Speed should be kept between 0.2 and 0.7 miles per hour. ■

— Dusty Wilson



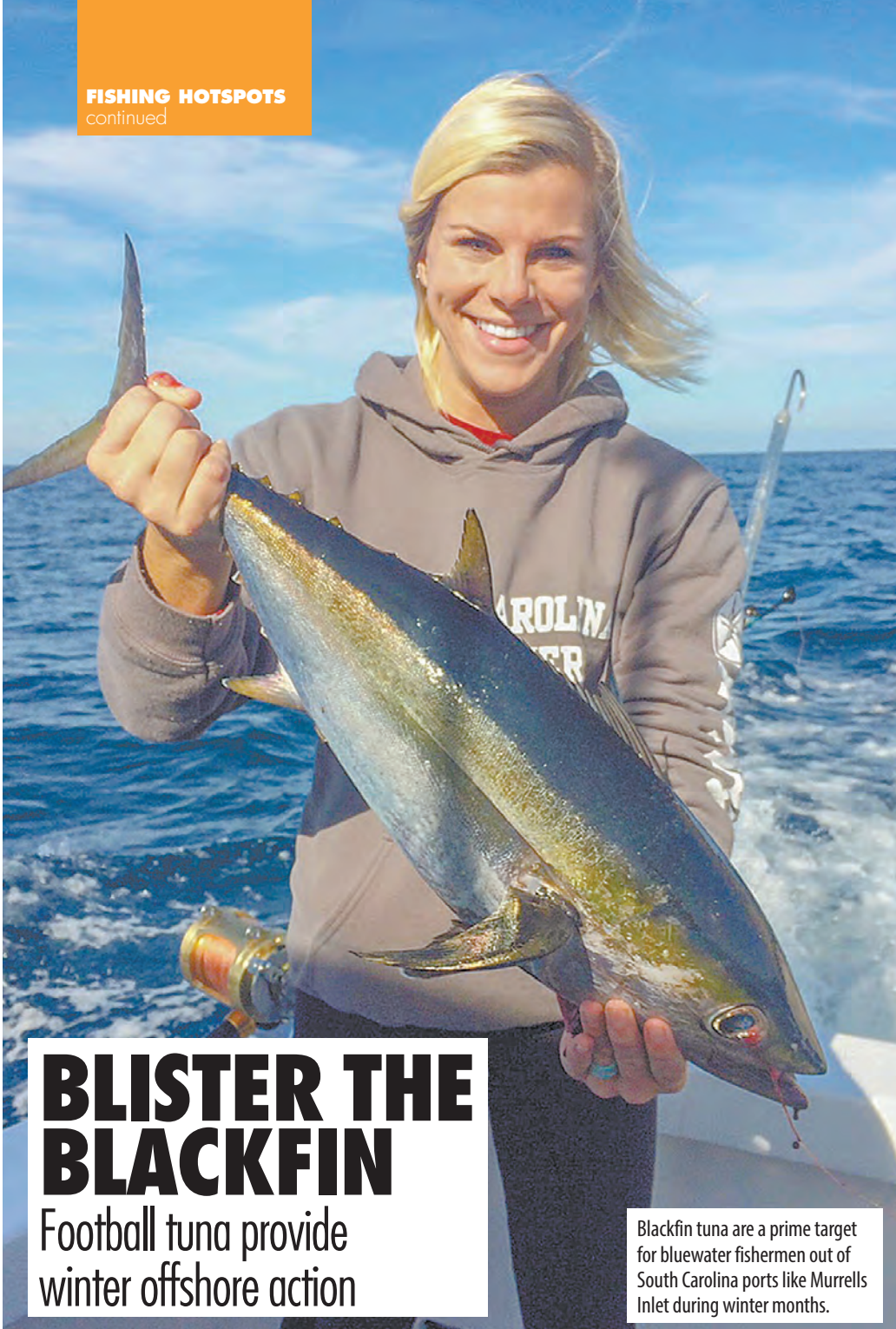


Drain Plant Hunt

See Us On **Amazing Banana Water Lily, Reborn.mp4**

DYNAMITE DUCK FOOD www.BANANAWATERLILIES.com

(843) 240-0530 www.FROSTWATERFOWL.com



BLISTER THE BLACKFIN

Football tuna provide winter offshore action

Blackfin tuna are a prime target for bluewater fishermen out of South Carolina ports like Murrells Inlet during winter months.

Jeff Burleson

For many anglers, summer is the season when warm weather and lots of fishing opportunities are available. But winter should never be forgotten, especially in offshore waters. Jay Sconyers of Ace's up Fishing Charters loves to head offshore out of his Murrells Inlet, S.C., home base on a winter day.

Sconyers heads offshore every chance he gets between December and April to target after wahoo, dolphin and tuna, and when blackfin tuna are schooled up near the Winyah Scarp, he can't resist the topwater action these fish offer.

"They are all over the place this time of year — or that is what it seems when we head out to the Scarp," said Sconyers (843-997-3270). "We see them jumping out of the water chasing flying fish and any other type of bait out there."

Tuna travel in large schools and will be parked close to the best bait around. During the winter, the bait will be around the warm-water edges of the Gulf Stream.

"We like to fish along the edge of the Gulf Stream where the water is 74 to 75 degrees," he said.

Tuna are chasing bait wherever they find it. Most will suspend in 120 feet of water and push bait to the surface, create a feeding frenzy. They will follow the bait all winter, so wherever the bait ends up will be where tuna are found.

Tuna can be caught a variety of different ways. Most offshore anglers troll cedar plugs, sea witches and rigged ballyhoo. Sconyers will troll small ballyhoo or cedar plugs in areas holding bait, or he will use high-speed jig butterfly jigs to fish he sees suspended on his bottom machine.

But when the fish are surfacing frequently creating a mad froth of water, Sconyers recommends using surface lures. He will have several rods rigged with topwater poppers when tuna break the surface.

Sconyers prefers large poppers in 5- to 7-inch lengths because he can case them a long distance on spinning reels.

"Tuna get shy around the boat, and you need to use big, heavy plugs so you can chunk them a long way," he said.

Sconyers recommends using 30-pound braided line with a 2- to 3-foot fluorocarbon leader for the best results.

Wintertime blackfin tuna fishing can be exciting enough, but catching them on topwater options can turn a fun, fishing trip an exhilarating, heart-pounding experience that will bring anglers back asking for more. ■

— Jeff Burleson

NEW BERN STRIPERS: A BRIDGE THAT'S NOT TOO FAR

In February, two fishing games keep angler hopes alive at the central coastal region of North Carolina — red drum in the ocean and striped bass in the rivers.

While fishing for drum can have some weather-related drawbacks, plenty of rivers cross eastern North Carolina, and one of the most-convenient for anglers is the Neuse River near New Bern.

Guide Joe Ward of FlyDaddy

bridges across the Neuse and Trent rivers around New Bern.

"In the main river, (stripers) hang out around concrete bridge supports," said Ward (252-229-4656).

Bridge pilings deflect river currents and force baitfish through the underwater openings. They also offer ambush spots for stripers to feed on menhaden, herring or shad.

Stripers caught around New Bern typically weigh from 2 to

in light-green, baby bass or smoke colors. I also jig Super Flukes and lipless crankbaits off the bottom near pilings."

Fishing for stripers around bridges is a waiting game because fish won't chase lures in the winter, when their metabolisms have slowed. They'd rather have baits come to them.

"It's also why I want a lure or bait to fall slow," Ward said. "Sometimes I use a split-shot a foot above a Fluke or other soft plastic — to make it fall a little faster than with no weight at all."

He usually casts to the upcurrent side of a piling and lets it fall slowly toward the bottom. If he doesn't get a bite, he'll jig it toward the surface, cranking his reel handle a few times, then lets it drop again. He expects most bites to come 7 to 12 feet down.

Ward said stripers can also be caught trolling crankbaits in the river channel or fishing live eels around the pilings. ■

— Craig Holt



Guide Joe Ward shows off a nice striper caught in the Neuse River around New Bern.

Charters fishes for stripers in February and March; he knows their favorite haunts from Oriental upstream from New Bern to the bridge pilings around the US 70, US 17 and NC 55

8 pounds but some come in magnum sizes.

"I fish with 1/8- to 3/8-ounce jigs," Ward said, "and I like smoke-color Bass Assassin curlytail soft-plastic grubs or Jerk Shads

CHEROKEE RUN
Hunting Lodge

**Hunt deer, wild boar and turkey
in the wilds of South Carolina**



**Trophy Managed Whitetail
on the Great Pee Dee River**



**Trophy Wild Boar
in the SC Swamps**

NIGHT Hog: March 1 - July 1
SC Rifle Deer: Sept 1 - Jan 1
SC Wild Boar: Year' round Season
SC Turkey: April 1 - May 1
Deer/Boar or Turkey/Boar Combos

Located on the border in beautiful
Chesterfield County SC, one hour from Charlotte, NC.
Comfortable lodging including satellite TV,
pool table, bass ponds, rifle & 3-D archery range.

(704) 301-7950
eatsleephunt.com

HOMEOWNER • MOBILE HOMES • AUTO • BOATS • MOTORCYCLES



Sarah Judy's

INSURANCE AGENCY

Personal Service Guaranteed

3090 Jefferies Hwy • Walterboro, SC 29488
 Phone (843) 538-5856 • Fax (843) 538-5282
www.sarahjudysinsurance.com

VERSATILE. CAPABLE. CLEVER. HSUN **The Fully Electric SECTOR E1**

**AND SAVING YOU UP TO
\$7,000⁰⁰**

With All These Features Included:
 Roof • Windshield • Aluminum Rims
 Winch • Nitrogen Assisted Shocks

RUN TIME ON A SINGLE CHARGE - OVER 45 MILES*
 MAINTENANCE FREE DISCOVER™ DRY CELL BATTERY
 OLT, 38 HP WITH OVER 220 FT. LBS. OF TORQUE



RAY'S TRACTORS, LLC

3478 Alex Harvin Hwy. - Manning, SC • 803-249-1077 • raytractors.com

Guides & Charters

Display Ads

1/16 Page BW\$70/mn*

1/8 Page BW\$120/mn*

*Based on Pre-Paid 12 Month Contract

To place an ad in Guides & Charters

Ron (NC) - 252.299.2138
or rond@carolinasportsman.com

Bret (SC) - 843.442.7250
or breth@carolinasportsman.com

INSHORE

Noah's Ark CHARTERS
Cape Lookout, NC
252-342-6911 • 252-504-3139



*Custom Inshore Fishing and Tour Charters
Designed just for you!*

www.noahsarkfishingcharters.com

OFFSHORE

DOWN EAST GUIDE SERVICE

1907 Paulette Rd.
Morehead City, NC 28557

info@downeastguideservice.com
www.downeastguideservice.com



Your Costa Rica Connection



42' *Maverick, the Dragon Fly*
Not just fishing trips, also honeymoons, family and surf trips available. Packages include a variety of hotels and condo options, all ground transportation, guides, tours and fishing.

Also Costa Rica Tarpon
Argentina Duck and Dove Hunting
North Carolina Inshore/Offshore

Special discounts May-September

252-671-3474

HUNTING



BLACK RIVER PLANTATION
803-883-8747
www.blackriverplantationsc.com
1390 Epps Rd • New Zion, SC




Book A Combo Hunt For Spring 2018... Call Today!!!



2 Day / 3 Night at \$600 per Man

FRESHWATER



YADKIN LAKES GUIDE SERVICE
High Rock, Badin, Tuckertown

**Largemouth Bass
Striped Bass
Crappie and Catfish**

Maynard Edwards
336-249-6782
fishguide@triad.rr.com



POGIE'S
SWANSBORO, NC
910-325-7876
www.pogiesfishing.com

LET US PLAN YOUR DAY ON THE WATER!



INSHORE

DOWN EAST GUIDE SERVICE

1907 Paulette Rd
Morehead City, NC 28557

info@downeastguideservice.com
www.downeastguideservice.com



PAMLICO SOUND / ORIENTAL

- TARPON
- GIANT RED DRUM
- TROUT, DRUM, FLOUNDER

**CAPE LOOKOUT/
ATLANTIC BEACH**

- COBIA
- ALBIES

ROANOKE AND NEUSE RIVER STRIPERS

ALSO: COSTA RICA SAILFISH,
TARPON AND ROOSTERFISH.
ARGENTINA DUCK AND DOVE HUNTS.

252-671-3474
Call Capt. George Beckwith, Jr

At Pogie's you can find a variety of guided and unguided trips to book. Whether by boat or kayak, YOU can go on nature tours, fishing trips, island exploration, or self guided paddle trips.



ADVERTISE
Your Charter Boat or Guide Service here!

Reach 1000's of potential customers each month starting at **\$70**

Call for details at
252.299.2138
843.442.7250

HUNTING

Hunt Argentina



Kids Dove Hunt FREE

All inclusive packages for dove and duck hunting in Argentina. Limit of 50 ducks/person/day

No Limit Doves

DOWN EAST GUIDE SERVICE

1907 Paulette Rd.
Morehead City, NC 28557

info@downeastguideservice.com
www.downeastguideservice.com

252-671-3474
**With 4 adult full fare hunts*

CONTENTNEA CREEK HUNTING PRESERVE and KENNELS

Snow Hill, NC
252-524-1515



Offering Hunting For:

- Deer
- Quail
- Chukar
- Pheasant
- Ducks
- Doves



We also have

- Wild Duck Hunting over rice, corn millet & flooded timber
- Dog Training

Call today to Book your hunt!

www.contentneacreekhunting.com

HUNTING



CHEROKEE RUN
Hunting Lodge
Hunt deer, wild boar and turkey
in the wilds of South Carolina



Trophy Managed Whitetail
on the Great Pee Dee River



Trophy Wild Boar
in the SC Swamps

NIGHT Hog: March 1 - July 1
SC Rifle Deer: Sept 1 - Jan 1
SC Wild Boar: Year' round Season
SC Turkey: April 1 - May 1
Deer/Boar or Turkey/Boar Combos

*Located on the border in beautiful
Chesterfield County SC, one hour from Charlotte, NC.
Comfortable lodging including satellite TV,
pool table, bass ponds, rifle & 3-D archery range.*

(704) 301-7950
eatsleephunt.com

ADVERTISE
Your
Charter Boat
or Guide
Service here!

Reach 1000's
of potential
customers each
month
starting at

\$70

Call for details at
252.299.2138
843.442.7250

HELP WANTED

**We are looking for drivers to deliver the
Carolina SPORTSMAN Magazine.**

If You Love to Fish, Hunt and Meet People You Qualify!

Circulation experience helpful but not necessary.
Dependable vehicle with insurance & a valid NC
drivers license a must. If you have 2-3 days a month
to help spread the word I would like to hear from you!

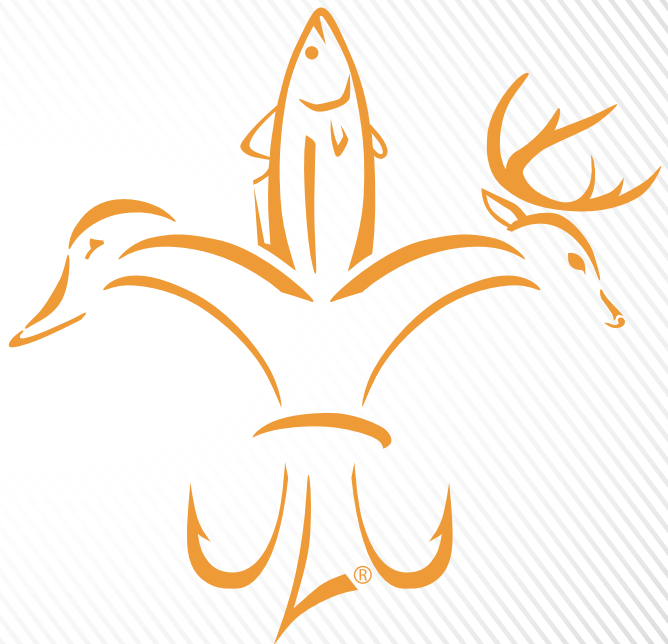
Please Contact: Mitch Eby,
Circulation Manager @ 919-602-3862 -or- mitchebync@gmail.com

Carolina
SPORTSMAN[®]

Peel
and stick

The perfect decal
for the SPORTSMAN
in your family.

SPORTSMAN
SPORTSMANGear.com or 866-616-3315



ADVERTISERS INDEX

A.K. MCCALLUM CO.....	7	GREG'S OUTBOARDS	29	SANTEE COOPER COUNTRY	77
BLACK RIVER PLANTATION	98	K2 MARINE	65	SARAH JUDY'S INSURANCE AGENCY	97
BOST ARGO.....	24	KING MACKEREL TACKLE.....	71	SHIMANO AMERICAN CORP.....	59
BQ GRILLS	93	LEITH NISSAN C/O LEITH MARKETING SERVICES	21	SLEEP INN/MAIN STAY INN	86
BUTLER MARINE	103	MARINE WAREHOUSE	79	SOUTHEAST PRODUCTIONS	30
CAPE FEAR WILDLIFE EXPO.....	25	MOREE'S SPORTSMAN'S PRESERVE.....	15	SUZUKI MOTOR OF AMERICA, INC.....	54, 55
CAROLINA AGRI-POWER, LLC	24	MOSSY OAK PROPERTIES - BILLY MCOWEN	13	TEX'S TACKLE.....	86
CAROLINA COMPOSITES, LLC.....	4	NAUTIC STAR BOATS.....	5, 69, 73	TRI-COUNTY OUTDOOR SALES.....	68
CHATLEE BOAT AND MARINE	35, 38, 53, 63	NICHOLS STORE, INC.	46	WAKE COUNTY WILDLIFE CLUB	23
CHEROKEE RUN HUNTING LODGE.....	99	NOAH'S ARK FISHING CHARTERS.....	98	WHITETAIL PROPERTIES	17
CLOVER ENTERPRISES	71	O'BRIAN TARPING SYSTEMS	79	WILSON MARINE.....	29
COLLINS INC.	104	PALMETTO BRUSH CONTROL	67	XPRESS BY ALUMA-WELD, INC.	2
CONTENTNEA CREEK HUNTING PRESERVE	98	PERFORMANCE EAST INC.	101	YADKIN LAKES GUIDE SERVICE.....	98
DOWN EAST GUIDE SERVICE.....	98	POGIE'S.....	58, 98	YAMAHA MOTOR COMPANY.....	9
DRAKE SAFE COMPANY	15	POWER MARINE OUTFITTERS	37	YOPP BROTHERS	36
DUDLEY'S MARINA.....	58	PRECISION MARINE, INC.	34, 42		
EXCEL BOATS	3	RALEIGH CONVENTION CENTER BOAT SHOW	85		
FROST WATERFOWL TRUST, LLC.....	95	RAY'S TRACTORS	97		
G3 BOATS.....	51	SANDY BOTTOM VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT.....	47		

Get decked out in the latest from the **SPORTSMAN** Store 61, 102

Subscribe Today and SAVE 87

\$\$ NEED CASH FAST? \$\$

We Will Buy Your Boat!

CALL ROBBIE!

919-775-7259

www.chatleeboats.com



**CHATLEE
BOAT & MARINE**



**Prefer 15' – 24' and 2000 Model Year or Newer
SKIFF • PONTOON • BAY BOAT • DECK BOAT
RUNABOUT • FISH & SKI • CENTER CONSOLE
ALUMINUM BASS BOAT**



YAMAHA

FOR ALL YOUR TOYS!



PERFORMANCE EAST INC.

604 CORPORATE DR.
GOLDSBORO, NC
888-503-8900

CHECK OUT ALL OUR INVENTORY AT
www.PerformanceEast.com

BLACKFIN
THE GREAT LIFE ON

BLUE-WAVE

can-am

Excel
BOATS

MERCURY

POLARIS

SCARAB

SEA-DOO

SEA PRO

SLINGSHOT

SUZUKI
MARINE

Wellcraft

YAMAHA

NEW YEAR, NEW GEAR.

FOR PERFORMANCE THAT'S PERFECT.

The Sportsman Performance Pique Shirt is made from our premium blend of Peruvian Pima Cotton and micro denier polyester. This blend offers ultimate moisture wicking properties for comfort and year-round durability for the active outdoor life.



BUTLER Marine



March 2 - 4 Savannah International Trade and Convention Center



OFFER VALID FROM JANUARY 1, 2018 - MARCH 31, 2018
FOR A LIMITED TIME, PURCHASE A NEW, SELECT ELIGIBLE
2.5 HP - 300 HP YAMAHA OUTBOARD AND CHOOSE EITHER:

5 YEARS OR **UP TO \$1,500**

OF WARRANTY PROTECTION

Three years of Yamaha Limited Warranty Coverage, along with the additional protection of a two-year Yamaha Extended Service (Y.E.S.) plan. That's a total of FIVE years coverage at no additional cost!*

IN DEALER CREDIT

Toward the purchase of goods/services on select models from your authorized participating Yamaha Outboard Dealer.*

Ready for Immediate Delivery

2018'S IN STOCK!

Come See Us At The Show!



TWO LOCATIONS TO SERVE YOU

70 Sea Island Pkwy
Beaufort
843.522.9461

3590 Savannah Hwy
Charleston
(corner of Savannah Hwy & Main Rd)
843.576.2233



YAMAHA



20 ISLAND BAY

W/YAMAHA F115 & LOADRITE TRAILER



CHOOSE YOUR COLOR

Snow White	Silver Cloud
Ice Blue	Driftwood
Sea Mist Green	Sea Mist Green

NO UPGRADE CHARGE

\$27,995

PAYMENTS STARTING @ \$240/MTH*

Smithfield, NC • 919-934-3143

www.collinsboating.com

