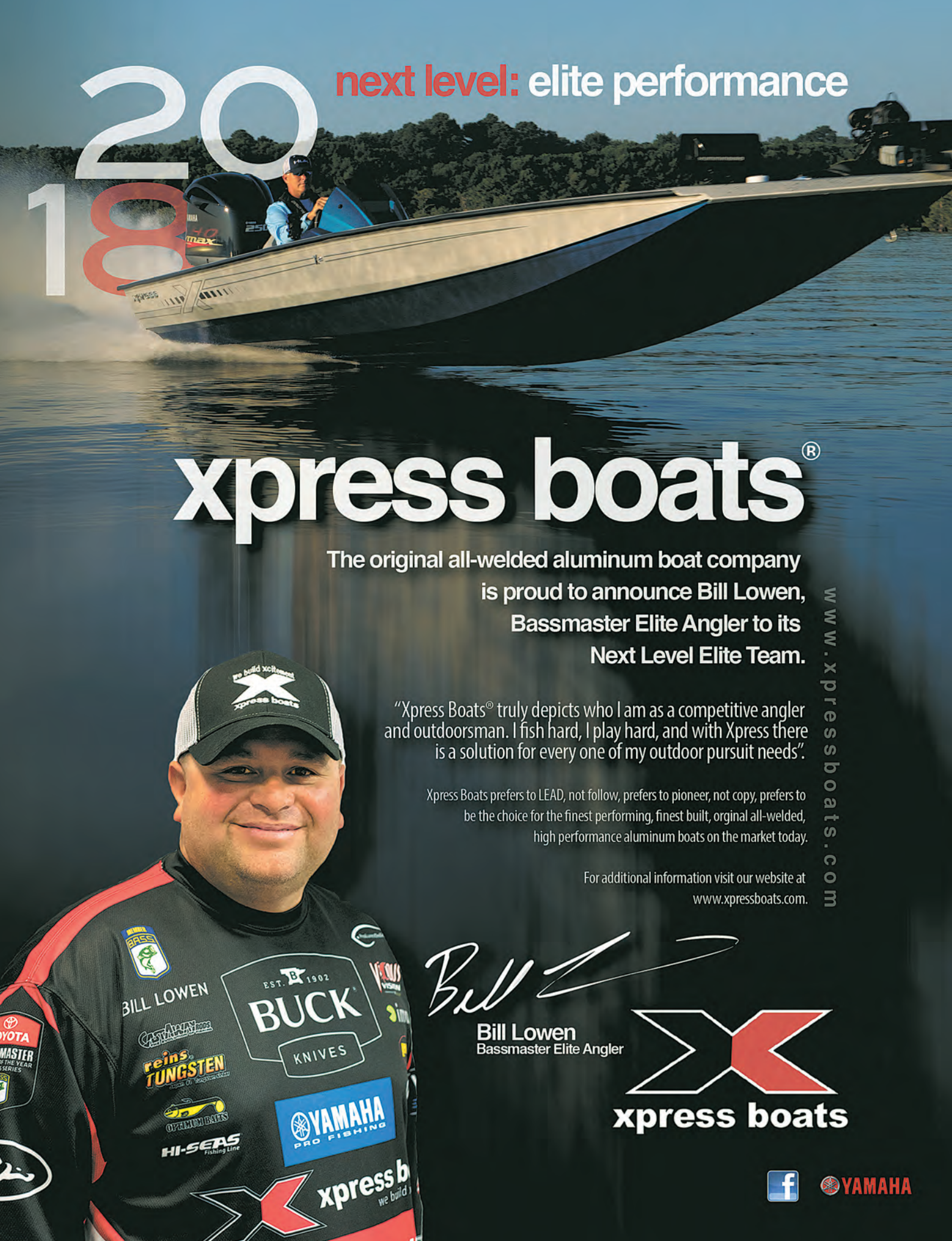

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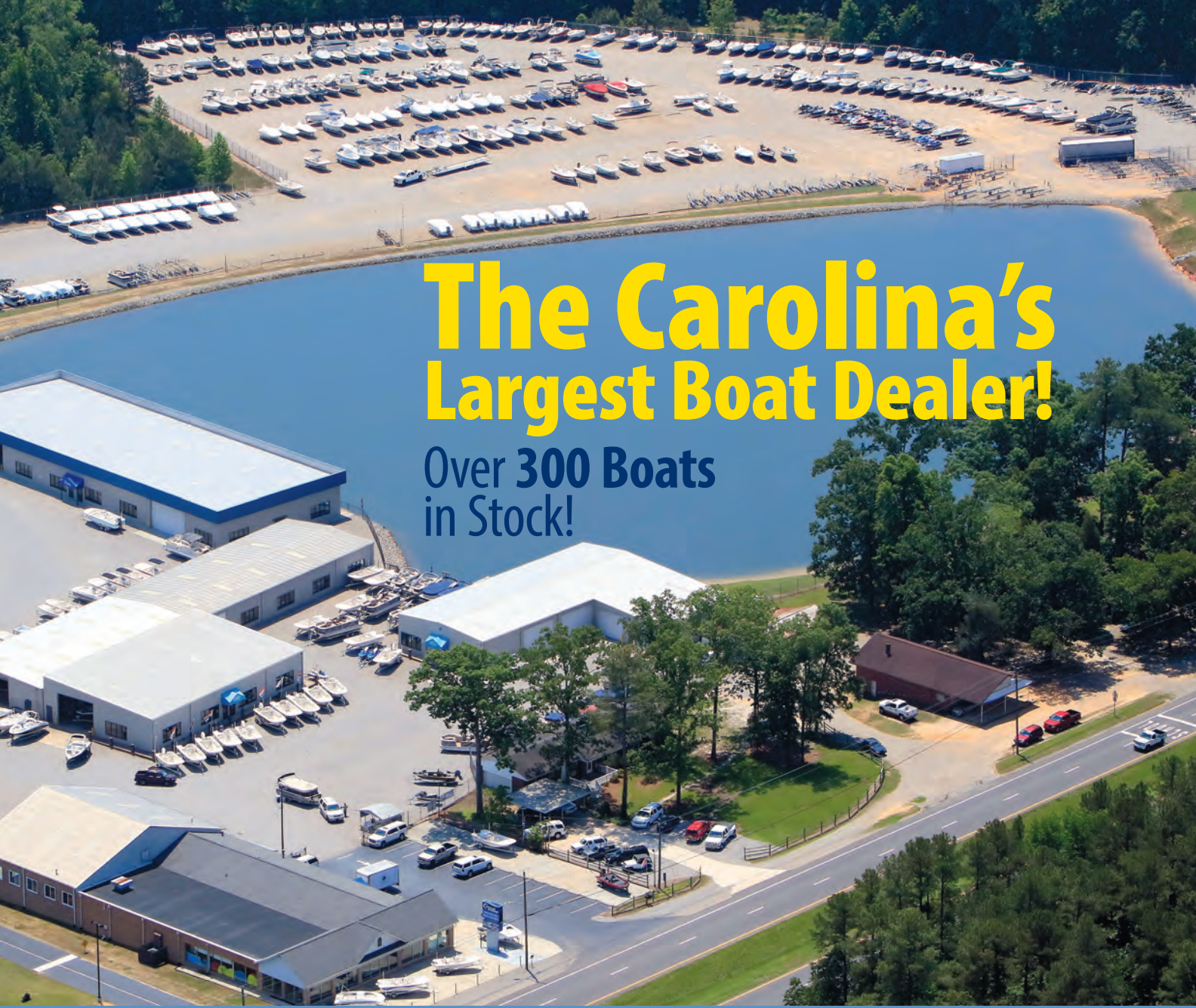
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Public targets

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Metal-free mackerel

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SEPTEMBER IS NEW BEGINNINGS

SPORTSMEN GET PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES AS FALL APPROACHES

September is a month of new beginnings, and perhaps never more so than this year. As usual, dove season gets underway in both Carolinas on Saturday, Sept. 1, the same day that resident Canada geese become eligible to start ducking loads of non-toxic shot.

Hunters in both Carolinas get an early chance at teal in September: Sept. 15-30 in South Carolina and Sept. 12-29 in areas of North Carolina east of US 17.

Bowhunters in North Carolina can climb into their stands on Sept. 8, and hunters in some parts of South Carolina get to pick up bows on Sept. 15 and guns on Sept. 1.

For a number of years, South Carolina sportsmen have had seasons for shrimp baiting and alligators crank up in September. That hasn't changed. Shrimpers can put out their poles and bait and toss those cast nets on Sept. 14 for 60 days, with the usual daily limits of 48 quarts (heads on) and 29 quarts (headed). Shrimpers will get to measure the effects of last winter's extremely cold weather, which caused the S.C. Department of Natural Resources to delay the opening of commercial trawling for a month earlier this year. Alligator hunters drawn by computer from all applicants have a Sept. 8-Oct. 13 season in the Palmetto State.

In North Carolina, however, alligator hunting is new this fall. Twenty lucky hunters can take a gator for the first time. In July, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission approved an "alligator population reduction" season in three areas of Hyde County: Swan Quarter, Fairfield and Engelhard, with hunters being drawn from a pool of applications in August. The season, in designated areas of those communities, will open Sept. 1 and run through Sept. 1 through Oct. 1. Hunters who are drawn will be allowed to take one alligator. ▪



Shrimp baiting season opens a 60-day run in South Carolina on Sept. 14. **BELOW:** Hunters in both Carolinas get a couple of weeks to hunt the early teal migration this month.

Dan Kibler



Outdoor UPDATE with Dan Kibler

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.*

NC CHANGES REGULATIONS ON OUT-OF-STATE CERVID KILLS

With chronic wasting disease (CWD) spreading to another state this year, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission changed regulations, effective Aug. 1 affecting anyone who kills a deer, elk, moose or caribou from any state or Canadian province and plans to bring parts of the animal back into North Carolina. Processing and packaging must follow the following requirements:

- Meat must be boned out so that no pieces or fragments of bone remain;
- Caped hides must have no part of the skull or spinal column attached;
- Antlers attached to cleaned skull plates or skulls must be cleaned and free from meat or brain tissue
- Lower jawbones with teeth must be cleaned of all meat;
- Finished taxidermy products and tanned hides are allowed;
- Any carcass, carcass part(s) or container of meat or carcass parts must be labeled or identified with: the individual's name and address, and the state, Canadian province or foreign country of origin, the date of the kill and the sportsman's hunting-license number, permit number or equivalent identification from the state, Canadian province, or foreign country of origin.

With the discovery of a CWD-infected deer in Mississippi this past January, the disease, always fatal to cervids, has been found in 25 states and two Canadian providence. ▪

BROTHERS' GROUPER ACT

Two brothers from eastern North Carolina put a serious hurting on some amazing gag grouper this past June, but neither came away with a state record, despite both fish weighing more than 60 pounds. Alex Ng of Morehead City, N.C., (below) caught a 63-pound gag on June 12, and his brother, Anthony, of Greenville, N.C., (right), boated a 68-pounder later in the month. The state record is a 47-pound, 7-ounce fish caught last year out of Wrightsville Beach, but neither of the Ngs' fish will be a record because the brothers were using electric reels on their trips. Both fish came out of 180 feet of water about 40 miles out of Beaufort Inlet.



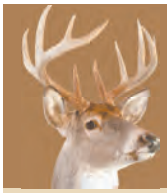


HATTERAS BLUEWATER PRODUCES ONCE MORE

A Georgia teen has likely caught this biggest dolphin ever boated by a youngster on an early July bluewater trip out of Teach's Lair in Hatteras, N.C. Lucas Duke, 14, from Dexter, Ga., caught the 72-pound, 14-ounce fish on a trip aboard the charterboat *Wasabi*. according to Brian Cope of www.CarolinaSportsman.com, which reported the catch on July 11. The current IGFA junior world record is a 61-pound fish caught out of Louisiana in 1999. The North Carolina record is a 79-pound fish caught out of Hatteras in 1983.



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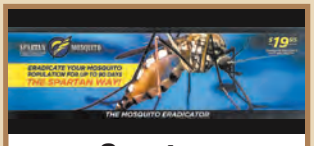
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BASS RETURNING TO SC TWICE IN '19

HARTWELL, GEORGETOWN WILL GET RETURN VISITS BY BASSMASTER ELITE TOURNAMENT FIELDS

B.A.S.S. officials unveiled the 2019 Bassmaster Elite Series schedule in mid-July, and it includes two tournaments in South Carolina on back-to-back weeks.

Lake Hartwell will be host to an Elite Series event on April 4-7. When the B.A.S.S. boys leave Anderson, S.C., they'll head down I-26 and up US 17 to Georgetown, S.C., where they'll fish WInyah Bay, its surrounding tributaries, the Santee Delta and the rivers feeding Charleston Harbor April 11-14.

Three Bassmaster Classics have been held on Hartwell, the last this past March, but the 2019 event will be the first time the Elite Series has visited the Upstsate reservoir. Daily blast-offs will be at Green Pond Landing.

Georgetown and Winyah Bay, where the Pee Dee, Sampit, Waccamaw and Black rivers converge, last had a visit from the Elite Series in 2016. The event drew one of the largest crowds in B.A.S.S. history: 27,500, according to tournament officials. ▪

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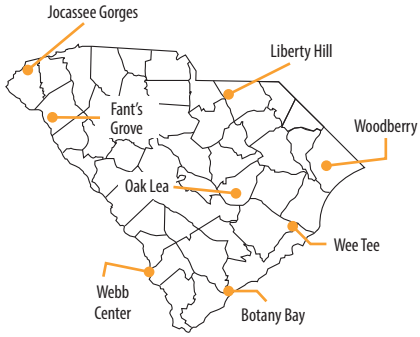
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WMA/GAME LANDS PREVIEW

PUBLIC TARGETS

Hunters in the Carolinas who don't have access to private land or a club membership have more than 3 million acres of public land at their fingertips. Here's the ones you should visit when the time for deer, ducks and doves, arrives.





By Terry Madewell

THE BEST SC WMAS FOR WHITETAILS

LOCAL HABITAT MAKES A HUGE DIFFERENCE ON PUBLIC LAND

GAME ZONE 1

Charles Ruth, S.C. Department of Natural Resources' big-game coordinator, said some of the best WMA deer hunting in Game Zone I is found on small, isolated, tracts that are part of the **Sumter National Forest**. Management activities, such as timber harvests, can alter habitat dramatically, so hunters should check specific areas to ensure good habitat exists. A timber harvest can make a dramatic change for the better in terms of habitat, as dense growth creates areas of prime habitat for several years.

Ruth said the **Jocassee Gorges**, 43,500 acres of land owned primarily by the SCDNR, has a very low density of deer, but that makes it potentially productive for hunters seeking trophy bucks.

"Low density and big-racked deer go together, and the Jocassee Gorges area has the potential to yield some big bucks," Ruth said. "The terrain is rugged and hunters may not see many deer, but the potential exists to see big deer."

GAME ZONE 2

Fant's Grove, an 8,540-acre archery only WMA, offers a real chance for big bucks.

"Fant's Grove sits smack in an area where a lot of big bucks are harvested on private lands, based on our historical data," Ruth said. "With archery only hunting, the population remains very good, and the large acreage and somewhat limited access lends itself to hunters having remote areas that may not be hunted heavily. Hunters that put in the effort have the opportunity for big deer at Fant's Grove."

Liberty Hill is an 8,000-acre WMA that straddles Kershaw and Lancaster counties and offers excellent hunting, but with antler restrictions.

"Liberty Hill has a lot of Piedmont habitat, with lots of hardwoods interspersed with pines," Ruth said. "It's a beautiful setting for deer hunting, and this WMA is not a draw-hunt area. Plenty of opportunities exist, but check the Rules and Regulations."

Ruth cites as having excellent potential for deer in Game Zone 2 the many isolated, unnamed **Sumter National Forest** tracts in the Newberry, Laurens, Fairfield and Chester counties.

GAME ZONE 3

One of the top draw-hunt sites in South Carolina is the **Webb Center Complex** in Hampton County, which includes the **Webb Center WMA** as well as **Hamilton Ridge** and **Palachuacola WMAs**. Ruth said they constitute some of the best deer hunting in the area; hunters must be drawn for all hunts on these WMAs. Application info is on the SCDNR website.

"All Webb Center Complex areas offer quality hunting, but the hunts at the Webb Center property in specific are unique in that hunters are taken out to

continued >



Hunters took 6,753 deer on South Carolina's Wildlife Management Areas during the 2017-18 season, an increase of 2 percent over the previous season.

SC WMAS FOR WHITETAILS
CONTINUED >

the stands and picked up after the hunt, very similar to a quality commercial hunt," Ruth said. "Deer harvested will also be picked up for them. This is an extremely popular and highly productive hunt."

Ruth said **Botany Bay WMA** is way out in the wilds, but that's part of what makes the hunting so good. "This is a very scenic WMA and has an excellent deer population, and a lot of deer are killed here," he said. "Botany Bay does have antler restrictions and offers reasonable gun-hunting opportunities, but bowhunting opportunities are much more liberal."

GAME ZONE 4

Wee Tee WMA lies along the Santee River in Georgetown and Williamsburg counties. Ruth said this 12,439-acre area offers abundant deer habitat, and the Santee River area typically produces plenty of deer. "We don't keep specific harvest data on the Wee Tee WMA, but the private lands around it produce a lot of deer, and some big-bodied bucks with quality racks," Ruth said.

Woodbury WMA is a large property consisting of 25,668 acres of very diverse habitat, including bottomland hardwood forests, upland pine forests and Carolina bays. It's between the Great Pee Dee and Little Pee Dee rivers in southern Marion County; Ruth said this diverse riverbottom habitat adds up to excellent hunting.

Ruth said smaller Game Zone 4 WMAs such as **Oak Lea** in Clarendon County typically offer excellent hunting. Based on historical data, Ruth said the Oak Lea WMA is typically very productive. ▪

NC'S BEST BEARS

By Craig Holt



Craig Holt

Wildlife biologists have a maxim: good habitat translates into more game animals. But the public often misunderstands the rule. It depends upon the adaptability of a species, and no game animal is more adaptive than black bears. It's why bear numbers are growing in North Carolina's mountains.

MOUNTAIN BEARS

"Over the years, de facto (western) bear sanctuaries have expanded as developers came in, bought large tracts of land and put houses in there," said David Stewart, a biologist with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. "It cut off access for folks who used to hunt (public lands) and turned those places into bona fide sanctuaries."

Last season, hunters bagged 285 bruins in the **Nantahala National Forest**, the fourth-highest total on record, and a record 236 in the **Pisgah National Forest**.

Private land allows baiting to concentrate bears, but it's banned at public land.

"Mast crop failures (in the west) puts bears on the move," Stewart said.

COASTAL BEARS

More bears (2,138) were harvested in eastern North Carolina than in the west (1,264) last season, but the public-lands harvest made up only five percent of the total, compared to 45 percent in the west.

Among game lands in eastern North Carolina, hunters took 25 bears off the **Croatan National Forest**, followed by **Bucklands Game Lands** and the **Dare Bombing Range Game Lands.**▪

SCDNR data suggests that very few hunting accidents take place on WMAs, so there's really no reason for hunters not to feel "safe."

SC WMAS: FEW ISSUES WITH SAFETY EXIST



Pete Rogers

As a group, hunters are an opinionated crowd., and many opinions are based on feelings rather than fact.

If you go to a public dove field and there is a hunter every 50 yards, you may not "feel safe." When you pull into a WMA parking area for a deer hunt and three trucks are already there, you may not "feel safe."

Capt. Billy Downer of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources' enforcement division tracks all hunting-related accidents, accidents that occur in the act of hunting. Injuries suffered hanging tree stands before the season don't count.

Over the past three seasons, South Carolina hunters were involved in 76 accidents, 54 related to firearms, and including seven fatalities. The other 22 were accidents related to tree stands.

In 2015, one hunter involved in a firearm-related accident was on WMA land; he was hit by a ricocheting buckshot pellet on a dog hunt.

In 2016, no firearms-related accidents occurred on WMA land, and in 2017, one non-fatal accident involving a firearm took place on WMA land when a hunter mistook another for game.

Hunting inherently offers some risks, but hunting on public land does not seem increase the threat. If anything, the evidence points in the other direction. Millions of acres of public land available for hunters in the Carolinas, a fear of not being "safe" shouldn't keep hunters from taking advantage. ▪

— Pete Rogers

NC DUCKS UP NEXT >

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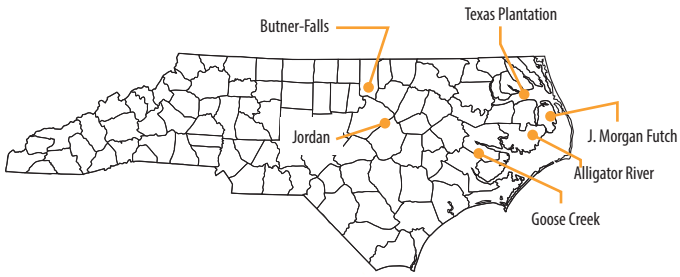
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THE BEST IN DUCKS

By Craig Holt

TOP AREAS ARE ALONG THE COAST

North Carolina's best waterfowl hunting for ducks, geese, swans is in the extreme eastern portions of the state, and public-land opportunities reflect that situation. The region serves migrating birds along the Atlantic Flyway every season.

J. MORGAN FUTCH-TEXAS

"J. Morgan Futch is the most popular in (northeastern North Carolina)," biologist David Turner said. "We added **Texas Plantation,** north of Futch, last year. (We) are working on six impoundments and three blinds are open this season." Futch also features tundra swans. Both game lands are in Tyrrell County.

GOOSE CREEK

Goose Creek Game Lands, which covers 10,027 acres in Beaufort and Pamlico counties, has seven impoundments, the most-famous being four at Pamlico Point. The **Alligator River Game Lands** and the national wildlife refuge of the same name also draw plenty of ducks.

JORDAN-FALLS OF NEUSE

Biologist Chris Baranski said that, in the Piedmont, **Jordan** and **Butner-Falls of Neuse** "can swing hot or cold for mallards, teal, a few black ducks and woodies, depending on the weather." Several impoundments are available, permit-only and first-come, first-serve. ■



North Carolina's coastal game lands are tops when it comes to waterfowl hunting because of the number of birds using the Atlantic Flyway.

Craig Holt

BEAR FACTS FOR SC WMAS



South Carolina hunters have two weeks of bear hunting in the mountains of the Upstate — one for still-hunting and one for hunting with dogs.

Rick Small

Biologist Charles Ruth of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources said two distinct populations of bears are found in South Carolina, and WMA hunting is available for both.

"A mountain population exists in the very upper part of the state, and a coastal population exists in Game Zone 4," Ruth said. "Most hunting opportunities are in the mountain population, and two distinct types of hunting are allowed in the mountain area, with a still-hunting season followed by a season where dogs are allowed."

Ruth said hunters must have a bear tag, available from SCDNR. He said hunters considering bear hunting need to manage their expectations.

"The Upstate hunting is in rugged terrain, and to have a realistic chance of success, a hunter needs do preseason scouting and legwork," he said. "Look for bear sign in the form of tracks and scat and forage such as hickory nuts and acorns. Even with planning and preparation, it's not easy, but it's an exciting opportunity available for a totally different hunting experience."

Ruth said coastal hunting is draw-only hunting, and only a limited number of tags are available on select South Carolina WMAs in Game Zone 4. Regulations are very specific, and a seasonal quota exists, so hunters must check before hunting to ensure the season remains open. WMAs for bear hunting in Game Zone 4 include **Cartwheel Bay Heritage Preserve, Lewis Ocean Bay Heritage Preserve A, Little Pee Dee River Heritage Preserve Complex, Waccamaw River Heritage Preserve,** and **Wee Tee**. ▪

— Terry Madewell

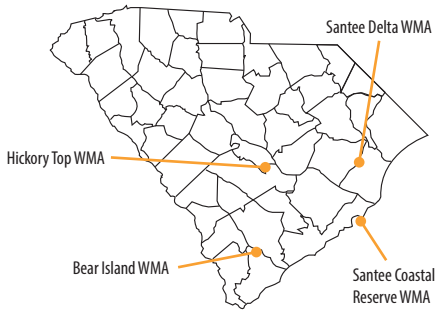
DRAW HUNTS UP NEXT >

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By Terry Madewell

PUBLIC-DUCK SPLASHDOWN

DRAW HUNTS ARE SC'S TOP WMA OFFERINGS



SCDNR'S Category I WMA waterfowl hunts are draw hunts; the application process begins around mid-September. Getting drawn for Category I hunts is usually a three-year process, so your odds of being drawn the first year are not high.

"All Category I WMA waterfowl hunts are held on premier waterfowl hunting properties," said biologist Alicia Farrell of SCDNR. "Some of the very best waterfowl hunting on the South Carolina coast occurs on these areas, and types of hunts may range from hunting in blinds to wading and hunting by standing or sitting. Success rates are usually very high."

Among the top Category I areas are **Santee Coastal Reserve** and the **Santee Delta WMAs**. Farrell said for most of last year, SCDNR had to go to four decimal figures to determine the area with the overall best harvest rate (ducks per hunter per day), but things began to separate out during youth hunts at the end of the season.

"That demonstrates how productive and consistent the hunting is at all the areas when we have to get that detailed to see what area came out on top," she said.

The **Bear Island WMA** is an excellent and highly productive waterfowl WMA, and Farrell said this area also gives hunters a true ACE Basin waterfowl hunting experience.

For the 2017-2018 season, Category 1 waterfowl areas averaged 3.3 ducks per hunter. In all Cat I WMAs in South Carolina, green-winged teal were the most commonly harvested bird, with blue-winged teal and gadwall second and third.

Category II WMAs are open to the public, but hunting may be restricted to specified days and times. **Hickory Top WMA** is a Cat II WMA that sees a lot of use. The most-common species at Hickory Top is wood ducks, with a few green-winged teal thrown in. Of WMAs that track hunter harvest, Hickory Top has the highest wood duck harvest. ■



Green-winged teal are the No. 1 bird Category I waterfowl WMAs around South Carolina.

DUCK NOTES: "We'll have a mixed bag of ducks at all of our WMAs, and some of what's available at any given time depends on the time of year," biologist Alicia Farrell said. "Early in the season, teal comprise much of the harvest. Big ducks are weather dependent and often arrive by mid-to-late season. Black and mottled ducks are very sought after on the coastal WMAs; mallards are more common in the Upstate."

HOLLY SHELTER HAS CHANGED

DEER HUNTING NOW OPEN 6 DAYS A WEEK

On opening day of deer season in 2017, Steve Biszmaier, a 53-year-old heating and air conditioning parts salesman from Wilmington, N.C., was hunting at **Holly Shelter Game Land** in Pender County, as he has for 30 years.

'I watch areas where I can see several ways for long distances," he said. "I usually hunt places where I see lots of tracks. I shoot a .270-caliber Mossberg bolt-action rifle and use a telescoping bipod to hold it steady for making long shots."

Another hunter drove past in his pickup truck. Stopping, he climbed out to join the conversation.

"This place used to be crowded with hunters on opening day," said Chris Lastinger, a 70-year-old retired FAA worker from Hampstead, N.C. "Today, you have to look as hard to find a hunter as you do to find a deer. I saw a doe this morning, but it was too far away for me to shoot."

Lastinger has hunted Holly Shelter for 40 years. He and Biszmaier talked about the changes in deer-hunting regulations that could bring hunters back. Years ago, the game land was open only 14 days a year, including archery, muzzleloader and gun seasons. It eventually became a three-day-per-week game land. Two seasons ago, that Monday-Wednesday-Saturday regime changed. Now, deer and bear still-hunters can hunt Holly Shelter six days per week. Hound hunting for deer and bear is still restricted to the three-day-per-week schedule, but it is also legal on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years days.

Hunters should study Holly Shelter regulations carefully. Bear Garden is a permit-only area, and hound-hunting for deer and bear is a prohibited activity on Pender 4 and Greentree tracts.

"I like the new rules," Lastinger said. "I only wish they had been this liberal when I was younger and was able to hunt six days a week. Now, I am usually only good for hunting three days a week."

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission introduced another regulations change aimed at reducing conflicts between still hunters and hound hunters at nearby **Stones Creek Game Land**, where hound-hunting for deer is restricted to Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. The schedule allows hound hunters to hunt deer at one of the two game lands on most days. For deer still-hunting, Stones Creek Game Land game land remains open six days per week. ▪

— Mike Marsh

NC RABBITS UP NEXT >

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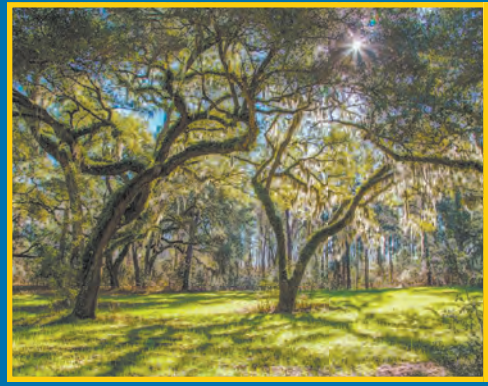
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Whitener Plantation features miles of established interior roads and a private 5-acre lot on the Savannah River. Amenities include the 2,000 sqft lodge and two equipment sheds as well as the added bonus of a deer cleaning station.

Whitener Plantation has long been used and maintained as a first class hunting and recreational preserve. Numerous custom-made single pole deer stands are strategically placed throughout the property. Wild turkey and hogs are plentiful. A dove plot has been laid out and the plantation has high potential for quail. On one boundary, Hodgins Lake offers exceptional opportunities for duck hunting as well as fishing.





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By Craig Holt

THE TOP SPOTS FOR RABBITS

Three subspecies of rabbits — cottontail, marsh and Appalachian — inhabit North Carolina. Cottonails thrive in early-successional habitat (cutovers) that afford cover and safety from avian and ground predators.

VOICE OF AMERICA



"The 2800 acres at the new **Voice of America** tract in Beaufort County is a good one," biologist David Turner said. "It's a permit-only area between Little Washington and Greenville, and this is its second season. It's grasslands and easy walking."

Six or seven Saturday-only permit hunts for parties of five are open. Hunters must park at closed gates and walk into this game land.

SUGGS MILL POND

Biologist Chesley Ward said the N.C. WIldlife Resources Commission "does a lot of forestry work at **Suggs Mill Pond** in Bladen and Columbus counties, including reforestation. It makes good cover for rabbits."



CASWELL, FALLS

Bailey-Caswell and **Butner-Falls of Neuse Game Lands** have managed forests and food plots that provide food and cover for rabbits.

"Butner-Falls has seven managed fields totaling 265 acres," biologist Chris Baranski said. "Rabbits use the fields, but they're heavily hunted. The Brickhouse Road area (88 acres) is popular."

Bailey-Caswell has eight planted fields covering 177 acres.

SANDHILLS GL

Sandhills is a permit-only, three-days-per-week area with 144 acres in 20 managed fields. The field-trail area opens to rabbit hunting Nov. 11-25.

VOICE OF AMERICA GAME LANDS BROADCASTS GREAT QUAIL HUNTING

A new game land that covers 2,818 acres in Beaufort County just east of the Pitt County line, the **Voice of America Game Lands** is in its second year of existence in the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission's Game Lands program.

"It has grasslands, and we control-burn 500 acres each year," biologist David Turner said. "We have six draw (permit) quail hunts with three hunters per party allowed."

Turner said the Commission is managing the property with limited hunts. No other game land has sufficient numbers of quail to hunt. ▪

PUBLIC-LAND SQUIRRELS ABOUND

By Craig Holt

North Carolina is home to four varieties of squirrels — gray, fox, red/Appalachian and flying — hunters target all of them except fliers. Gray squirrels are ubiquitous in all forests that have a substantial number of hardwood, mast-producing trees.

ROANOKE RAPIDS

"(Gray) squirrels are always plentiful at the Roanoke River Game lands," said biologist David Turner. "The **Upper Roanoke (Game Lands)** probably are the better-looking squirrel woods." Hunting at Upper and **Lower Roanoke Game Lands** requires a special-use permit in addition to a hunting license.

FALLS, JORDAN, BAILEY-CASWELL

Squirrel hunting is severely underutilized at **Butner-Falls of Neuse** and **Jordan Game Lands** in the RDU area, according to biologist Chris Baranski, who said **Bailey-Caswell Game Lands** in Caswell County "is great" because of stands of oaks and hickory trees, "but squirrel hunters are scarce."

NATIONAL FORESTS

Gray and red squirrels live in the 1.1 million acres of the **Pisgah** and **Nantahala national forests.** "It's hard to beat Pisgah," said biologist Paul Thompson.

"Uwharrie (National Forest) has top squirrel habitat," said conservation technician Greg Queen. "The Sandhills Game Land (has more fox squirrels than any game land."

SUGGS MILL POND

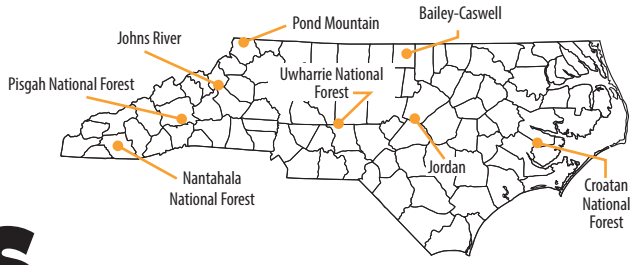
Suggs Mill Pond Game Land also has fox squirrels. "We absolutely do have fox squirrels at our (longleaf) pine stands," biologist Chesley Ward said.

NC DEER GAME LANDS UP NEXT >

By Craig Holt

NC'S TOP DEER GAME LANDS

NATIONAL FORESTS, SMALLER GAME LANDS ARE TOPS



MOUNTAIN GAME LANDS

Of game lands in North Carolina's mountains — outside of the **Nantahala** and **Pisgah** national forests — biologist David Stewart of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, has one real favorite, and one that finishes a distant second.

"**John's River Game Land** (in Burke County) is hard to beat for deer," said Stewart.

Johns River covers 3,887 acres just east of Lake James in the Burke County high country. Last season, hunters killed 36 deer there, an average of six per square mile.

Stewart also likes **Pond Mountain Game Land** in Ashe County. This tract covers 3,682 acres along the borders between North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. Hunters took 36 deer there last year, an average of slightly more than six per square mile.

"Pond Mountain has some big bucks," Stewart said.

NATIONAL FORESTS

North Carolina's two largest national forests, the **Nantahala** and **Pisgah**, cover roughly a half-million acres each in 19 counties. They had the largest public-land harvests last season, 554 and 496 deer, respectively.

But maybe the best deer hunting on national forests is on two smaller ones: the 160,000-acre **Croatan National Forest** in three counties near New Bern, and the 50,000-acre **Uwharrie National Forest** in the southern Piedmont.

Hunters tagged 495 deer last season in Croatan and 321 in the Uwharrie.

Biologist Greg Queen of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission said: "Uwharrie National Forest historically had deer when nobody else did. It's got good deer numbers now and some big (bucks), if a hunter wants to go deep to get away from normal hunting pressure."

PIEDMONT GAME LANDS

In the Piedmont, the **B. Everett Jordan Game Lands,** which surround much of the reservoir of the same name south of Durham, had one of the best harvests among game lands statewide.

Hunters took 419 deer on the 40,937-acre game land last season, an average of almost one deer per 100 acres — a high percentage for public lands.

Biologist Paul Thompson cited the **R. Wayne Bailey-Caswell Game Lands** as another top public-land destination for deer hunters in the Piedmont. Harvest figures bear that out. The game lands cover slightly more than 17,000 acres, and last season, hunters took 142 deer there, an average of about five deer square mile.



Rick Small

North Carolina's game lands produce plenty of deer — and some nice bucks — every season.

Craig Holt

DON'T AVOID PUBLIC-LAND WHITETAILS

OFFSEASON SCOUTING, TACTICS NEED TO REFLECT PRESSURE WMA DEER FACE

More and more hunters are looking past public land in favor of joining hunt clubs and leases. It seems they are more willing to spend a lot of money to hunt with others on a few hundred acres of land rather than spend $30.50 for access to hundreds of thousands of acres of South Carolina WMA land.

Donald Ray Turner of Nichols is not one of those hunters. For the past 38 years, Turner has hunted public land almost exclusively.

"Public land deer in South Carolina are the hardest deer in the country to kill," said Turner, who has still been successful year-in and year-out.



For a better chance at a nice, public-land buck, carefully set up closer to its bedding area.

According to Turner, public-land success boils down to just a few things.

"I do a lot of scouting in the off-season," he said.

In January, Turner begins trying to identify bucks for the next season.

"It takes a lot of effort, hard work and lots of boot time to find and kill big bucks on public land," he said. "I hunt where other people won't go. You have to be willing to hunt where the bucks are coming from, not where he is going to."

Unlike a lot of hunters, Turner likes to set up close to bedding areas and get the bucks as soon as they reveal themselves, leaving their sanctuaries.

"I mostly use lock-on stands, but lately, I have been using my climber more and more because it is so mobile and does not leave scent in the woods," he said, citing a climber's mobility.

One key thing Turner points to is the tendency of hunters to hunt from daylight to about 9 a.m.. and then again in the last two hours of the afternoon.

"Big bucks are sensitive to those disturbances and know when hunters are entering and leaving the woods," he said. "Bucks are beginning to move during off times, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m."

Hunters who are willing to sit later in the morning have a far better chance than not, Turner said.

"The longer I sit there, the more confident I get that a big buck is going to show." ■

— Pete Rogers

By Craig Holt

NC DOVE HEAVEN

THESE PUBLIC FIELDS DRAW FLOCKS

SANDHILLS GL

This game land is huge (61,225 acres), spreading across four counties in the south-central piedmont, and has more dove fields (20) than any public land in North Carolina.

Sandhills draws hunters from Charlotte to Winston-Salem to Fayetteville and is open on Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays and holidays.

The quail-dog field-trial area is closed to dove hunting from the third Sunday in September to the end of the hunting season.

BAILEY-CASWELL GL

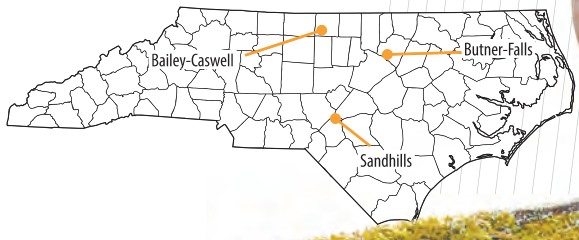
The Wayne Bailey-Caswell GL, a three-days-per-week area, is perfectly situated in the Northern Piedmont and draws hunters from Winston-Salem to Raleigh. It has eight large fields planted in buckwheat, corn, millet and sunflower seeds.

BUTNER-FALLS

With seven dove fields northeast of Durham covering 210 acres, Butner-Falls of Neuse draws hunters from the Bull City to Raleigh to Hillsborough, Roxboro and Oxford/Henderson.

"The depot (field) at Brickhouse Road (88 acres) gets pounded hard early," biologist Chris Baranski said. "Pretty soon the doves leave. It's a shame because other good fields exist."

Remember to check the 2018-19 Regulations Digest or go online at www.ncwildlife.org to see if the game land you want to hunt is a three-days-per-week or six-days-per-week area.



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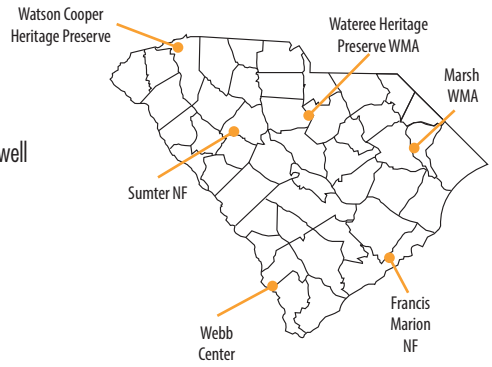


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By Terry Madewell

The BEST OF SC'S SMALL-GAME WMAS

RABBITS, SQUIRREL, GAMEBIRDS HAVE THEIR FOLLOWINGS

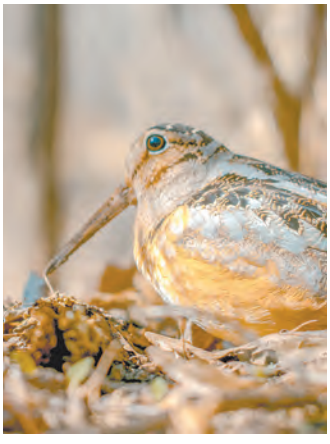
Small game hunters may not present the overall number of deer hunters in the Palmetto State, but they still put up an enormous number of days afield. Biologist Michael Hook is SCDNR's small-game project leader. His WMA picks follow.

WOODCOCK

Woodcock is an often underutilized small-game species in South Carolina, and ample hunting opportunities and good numbers of woodcock are available in both the **Francis Marion National Forest** and the **Sumter National Forest**.

Biologist Michael Hook of SCDNR said the woodcock is a ground-dwelling bird that is generally hunted like quail, except that they prefer wetter areas.

South Carolina's statewide woodcock season runs from Dec. 18, 2018, to Jan. 31, 2019, to take advantage of the birds' migration. Daily bag limit is three birds.



QUAIL

Hook of SCDNR said two of the top quail WMAs in South Carolina are the **Webb Center** in Hampton County and the **Marsh WMA** along the Great Pee Dee River in Marion County.



The Webb Center was the first WMA property purchased by SCDNR, obtained in 1941. The property has developed into one of the top areas for several species, including quail.

"A tremendous amount of quail habitat work has been accomplished at the Marsh WMA," Hook said. "While part of the 8,660 acres of this land is low and swampy, plenty of upland areas exist, and these are prime areas for quail hunting. A lot of thinning and burning has been accomplished during recent years and the quail population has responded very well."

RABBIT

The **Wateree Heritage Preserve WMA** on the Wateree River in Richland County off US 378 is a prime area to find excellent rabbit hunting.

"This area is 3,600 acres and is only 17 miles east of Columbia," SCDNR's Hook said. "Very good small-game hunting in general exists here, and the SCDNR manager for the area has done an outstanding job of ensuring plenty of top-notch rabbit habitat is available."



This area does not open for small game until after deer season closes, but offers it outstanding hunting from that time until the end of the season.

SQUIRREL

Squirrels are abundant statewide and are a species that can withstand more hunting pressure in most areas.

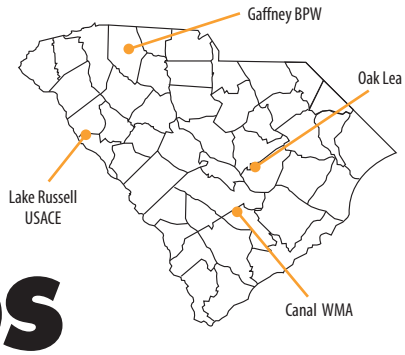
One particularly good WMA is the **Watson Cooper Heritage Preserve** in Greenville County, near the North Carolina and South Carolina state line.



"This area is excellent for squirrel hunting and has the advantage of being a very scenic hunting opportunity," said biologist Hook.

"The Watson Cooper Heritage Preserve is a WMA where the grouse population is actually high enough to provide reasonable grouse hunting opportunities in South Carolina."


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TOP SC DOVE FIELDS

By Terry Madewell

CANAL WMA

The Canal WMA along the Diversion Canal connecting Lakes Marion and Lake Moultrie has provided some of very best hunting dove hunting in the state the past 10 years.

The area is divided into multiple, smaller dove fields with a total of 60 acres of area for hunting. The 2018 hunt dates are Sept. 1 and 8, Oct. 13 and Nov. 17. Hunting is first-come, first-served.

"The Canal WMA does have a fair amount of pressure because of the traditionally outstanding hunting, but hunters still kill a lot of birds," said biologist Michael Hook.



GAFFNEY BPW

This 20-acre Cherokee County dove field is owned by the Gaffney Board of Public Works and managed by the SCDNR. It led the state's WMA harvest in 2017 with 7.28 doves per hunter.

Hook said that the led the state with 4.93 shots per dove harvested in 2017, due in large part to the availability of high-percentage shot opportunities.

LAKE RUSSELL USACE

These fields, on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lands on the Lake Richard B. Russell, are managed by the SCDNR. Hooks said the Bordeaux field is usually top field, but the Parksville and Plum Branch fields also provide excellent hunting.

Hunters on the Bordeaux field recorded an average harvest of 4.5 doves in 2017, Hook said.

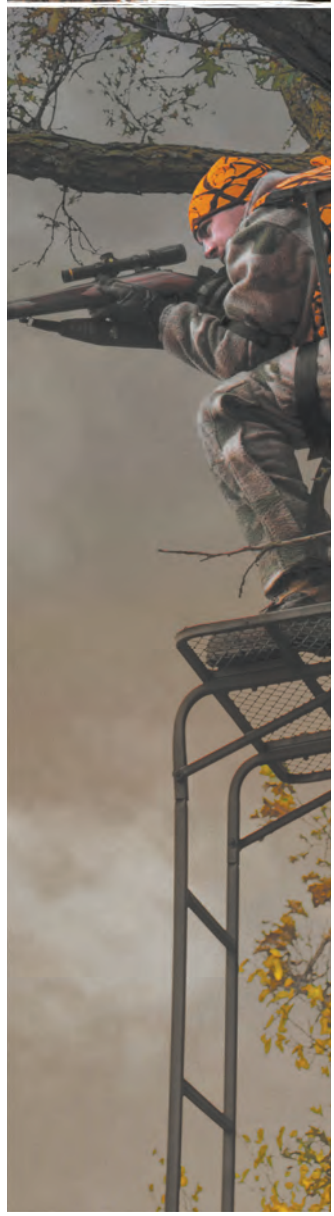
OAK LEA WMA

Oak Lea in Clarendon County may be the "sleeper" WMA dove field in South Carolina in 2018.

"For a period of a few recent years, the Oak Lea WMA did not have high success for doves, and hunter pressure dwindled," Hook said. "But with a renewed focus on doves, the fields were loaded with birds in 2017 but we simply did not have enough hunters to utilize the dove resource as we could have. We need dove hunters at Oak Lea." ▪





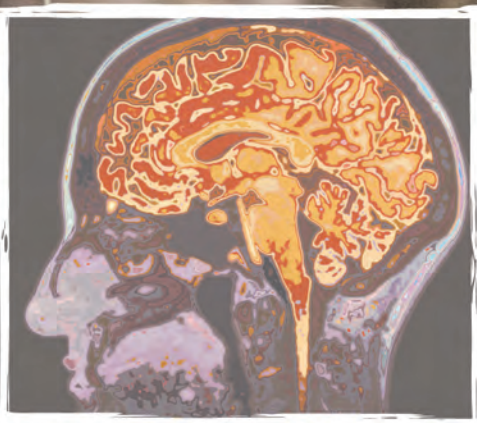


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Fall brings live-bait tactics into the Spanish mackerel community; here's why anglers put away their spoons and load up on mullet.

By Jeff Burleson

Metal-free MACKEREL



After another hot South Carolina summer, the fall fishing season finally arrives this month in all corners. From slab crappie gulping shiners in Lake Moultrie to gator trout crushing Flukes around Little River, cooling conditions ignite a feeding frenzy in freshwater and saltwater environments.

And outside Murrells Inlet, S.C., the Spanish mackerel fishing reaches its peak, and live bait is the name of the game.

When September rolls around, water temperatures begin to decline a little each week, and that kicks off the mullet run along the beachfront. Toothy predators like mackerel are ready for it and will be waiting in places where baitfish congregate, and the waters off Murrells Inlet offer endless opportunities for anglers to set up and bust a limit of Spanish in a hurry.

Jason Burton of Murrells Inlet Fishing Charters said nearshore reefs and bottom structures are prime locales to encounter big schools of Spanish mackerel this month.

"I like to fish over some kind of structure that will hold bait," Burton said. "The Spanish are usually abundant at the 3-mile and 10-mile (reefs), but ledges and other rock outcrops are also good. We set up on the Myrtle Beach rocks a lot and get into them real good in the fall."

The ocean is full of sandy, clean bottom, and when structure is present, it creates an environment full of life — from the sea floor all the way to the surface. Spanish mackerel and other predators gravitates to these oceanic anomalies to feed. Murrells Inlet has dozens of options within 10 miles of the sea buoy.

>



DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE —Murrells Inlet is at the southern tip of South Carolina's Grand Strand and is easily accessible from the public boat ramp on US 17 Business, just south of the heart of Murrells Inlet's famous restaurant district.

WHEN TO GO — Spanish mackerel arrive in April and stay in the waters off Murrells Inlet until October when the water cools down. The best time to live-bait is in September when the mullet run begins and when mullet from inshore begin to leave the inlets. Check out the beach front, around the jetties and nearshore reefs.

TACKLE/TECHNIQUES — Spanish mackerel are suckers for live mullet, and the best way to fool them is by creating a feeding frenzy. Anglers should catch several hundred live mullet and toss out handfuls of bait at a time above a reef. The Spanish will come to the schools and start crashing on them. Anglers should hook a live mullet in the tail with only a small No. 6 treble hook and toss out in the area of the feeding frenzy. A kite rig can be used with two to four lines running off the kite at 25- to 50-yard increments. Spinning gear is recommended to be able to pitch baits away from the boat. Medium-heavy action rods in 6½- to 7½-foot lengths are preferred. Spool reels with 15- to 30-pound mono, but use a small, wire leader tied to the hook and main line using an Albright or a double surgeon's knot. The leader needs to be double the length of the bait and no shorter than 4 inches long.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — Jason Burton, Murrells Inlet Fishing Charters, 843-798-9100, www.miffishingcharters.com; Perry's Bait & Tackle, 843-651-2895. See also Guides & Charters in Classifieds.

ACCOMMODATIONS — Hampton Inn, Murrells Inlet, 843-651-6687; Myrtle Beach Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, www.visitmyrtlebeach.com; or South Carolina Association of Visitors Bureaus, www.discoversouthcarolina.com.

MAPS — Navionics, 800-848-5896, www.navionics.com; Waterproof Charts (Nearshore No. 98), 800-423-9026, www.waterproofcharts.com; SeaLake Fishing Guides, 800-411-0185, www.sealakeusa.com.

Traditionally, anglers have cranked their outboards and trolled an array of flashy metal spoons behind their boats, but fall is prime time to take a different approach, especially when inshore waters are chock full of baitfish and mullet are parading down the coast. Burton is a strong proponent of targeting schooling Spanish with free-lined live baits, but he first creates a feeding frenzy by slinging a net-full of live mullet into the water that brings the Spanish to the boat.

"I start off the day by catching an enormous amount of bait and filling up the livewell until you can't fit any more bait in there. We usually get 70 to 80 dozen mullet in there before we head out the inlet," he said.

Burton decides on a spot and anchors down above the structure. It doesn't take long for the Spanish to show up when several schools of mullet are darting back and forth and churning up the water. After fish start to crash on the bait, Burton will pitch another live mullet with a treble hook hidden in its tail.



"We usually hook mullet and other live fish in the lips or through the eyes, but I like to hook the mullet in the tail in this scenario because the mullet will naturally flee away when hooked in the rear," he said. "As they go to get away, the Spanish will turn around and get him."

Even though the Spanish will slide relatively close to the boat to eat the mullet, they can be a little shy of hardware and boats. When conditions permit, Burton will break out kites to get baits away from the boat a little and pull hardware out of the water. The kite presents the baits vertically versus horizontally and when the water is clear, it takes all the hardware out of the water.

"The kite rig really works fabulous for any ocean predators that feed at or near the surface," he said. "The bait will be swimming right at the top of the water, making a bunch of racket, and fish will react without seeing any of the gear in the water like with a traditional rig."



ABOVE: In the fall, live bait is especially productive when it comes to catching big Spanish mackerel. **LEFT:** A livewell filled to the brim with mullet is the starting point for a nearshore, live-baiting trip in September.



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Older, larger fish can be caught using the kite rig because there are fewer red flags to alarm them.

"Many tournament king mackerel fisherman that take the top, winning spots use kite rigs routinely. It's a good way to catch a big fish," Burton said.

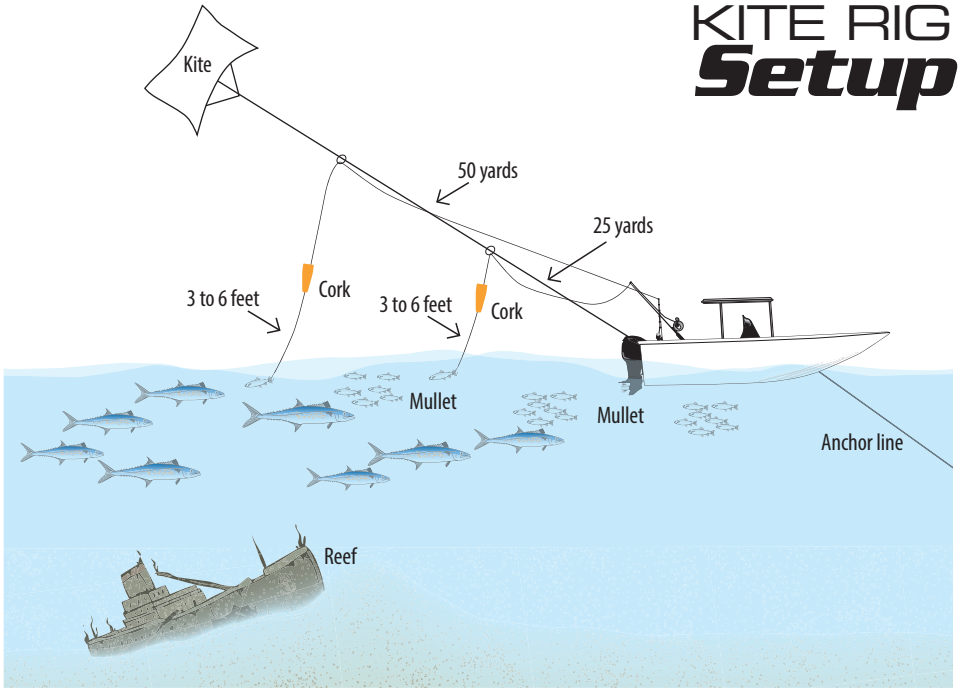
With several kite systems available, Burton prefers the Boston Big Game Kite, made with two tubes to fly with ease in a light, 5-mph wind or a blazing 20-mph wind. Burton will clip two lines to the kite to fish a line at 25 yards and another at 50 yards.

"One needs to be fairly close or near the chum school, and the second one can be further out," he said. "You can fish as many as four lines on the kite, but they can get tangled easy when you have more than two."

When dealing with the wind, the baits can be jerked out of the water routinely when the wind velocity changes abruptly. On gusty days off Murrells Inlet, Burton will keep a close eye on the kite and will release more kite line to get the baits back in the water.

"Kites are a real fun way to catch them," he said. "Often, you can see the fish coming, and it's real exciting when they crash on the bait on top." ▪

KITE RIG Setup

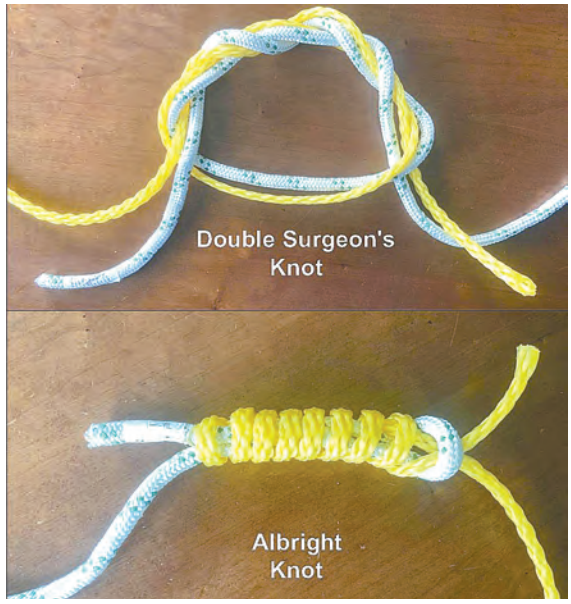




Jeff Burleson *is a native of Lumberton, N.C., who lives in Myrtle Beach, S.C. He graduated from N.C. State University with a degree in fisheries and wildlife sciences and is a certified biologist and professional forester for Southern Palmetto Environmental Consulting.*



HIDE LIVE-BAIT GEAR FROM *sharp-eyed Spanish*



Double surgeon's or Albright knots are two good ways to join different segments of line to keep from having to use a swivel.

For anglers to be successful, the target-of-the-day must be kept in the dark from the angler above, yet some fish don't seem to care or are too involved in feeding to recognize the meal they are getting ready to eat has a razor-sharp hook hanging out.

The species and water clarity makes a major difference in the ability of fish to see the gear. In places where the water is gin-clear, anglers must make an attempt to conceal all hooks, line, swivels and sinkers as much as they can.

Spanish mackerel have two talents that help them eat and avoid being eaten. They have excellent vision, and they can travel at a very high rate of speed; anglers must take this into consideration. Many will use long, light monofilament or fluorocarbon leaders to put enough distance between the swivel and the terminal tackle or bait, but Spanish mackerel have razor-sharp teeth that will slice through 20-pound test nylon in the blink of an eye. The only way to avoid this is to use heavy, nylon or wire leader. Neither of these choices have a natural concealment property, yet wire is very abrasion-resistant, even at very small diameters.

Jason Burton of Murrells Inlet Fishing Charters will fish with monofilament and then incorporate a short, small, wire leader when free-lining live mullet to Spanish mackerel.

"I omit a swivel and tie 4 to 6 inches of flexible, steel leader directly to the main line," Burton said. "The wire needs to be double the length of the bait. I use the lightest-flex wire I can find and tie it directly to the leader using an Albright knot."

Tying directly to the line eliminates the need for a swivel, and the line-to-line connection knots are super strong. In addition to the Albright knot, a double surgeon's knot can be tied. ■



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



GETTING OFF to a good start

By Pete Rogers



Pete Rogers

Cross your t's and dot your i's as archery season arrives; the first few days will be your best chance at a buck before he becomes wary.

Finally, after a long layoff, hunters are getting back into the woods, but many who venture into the sweltering deer stands of early archery season are doing so unprepared.

Too many spent the offseason fishing, lounging around and waiting on deer season to open, when the first weeks of the season may offer the best opportunity to get that buck you have been targeting. They are very predictable and easily patterned, so it's time to use your knowledge and skill to put an arrow where it needs to be.

AFTERNOONS? MORNINGS?

Many bowhunters skip hunting mornings, thinking that afternoons are best early in the season. But the opposite may be true. In places where bow season opens in mid-September, bucks are already putting on their winter coats, and the heat of the afternoon can be oppressive. Cooler, morning temperatures make it not only more comfortable for the deer, but also for hunters. Cooler morning temperatures tend to allow bucks to lazily wander back to their beds. After months of not being under any hunting pressure, a cool morning will often bring bucks past your stand more consistently than afternoon hunts.

STOPPING YOUR SCENT

Vicki Cianciarulo, co-host of *Archer's Choice* and *The Choice,* might is perhaps the most-accomplished female hunter on television. She has spent an inordi-

continues >

>

nate amount of time in the field during the early season in more than 30 years on television. She said scent control is one of the most-important elements in the early season.



Pete Rogers

Making the extra effort to try and remove or mask your scent is at the top of a hunter's early season tasks.

"Being able to keep the deer from smelling you is essential," she said, explaining that she and her husband and co-host, Ralph, have a regimen of laundry, bathing, spraying everything down and wearing the right clothes to keep perspiration at a minimum. She said hunting the wind is more critical in the early season than at any other time.

"Our bodies emit a lot of odors, and while scents and masking agents certainly help, nothing helps better than hunting the wind. You have to pay close attention to the wind, especially during the early season," she said.

NO BUZZ-BUZZ

Another concern of early season hunting in the Carolinas is controlling the throngs of mosquitoes that will feast on you while you are in your stand. Hordes that descend on you in Biblical proportions can make hunting impossible. Nothing has changed hunting more than ThermaCell products. Many hunters will go home before hunting without their ThermaCell mosquito appliance. Being able to sit on stand comfortably and for extended periods is essential for killing bucks. Comfortable hunters are successful hunters. Hunters who are constantly sweating and swatting are not going to be successful.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Last, prepare and practice before the season with your equipment. Too often, bowhunters shelve their bows and arrows until a few weeks before the season opens, then sling a few arrows and consider themselves ready.

Nothing could be further from the truth. You should go through your equipment with a fine-toothed comb every season. Check your cams, cables and string. Serving tends to wear, so replace your "D-loop." Clean you sights and check your rest. Check every bolt and screw on your bow, going through it carefully and tightening everything.

Arrows are next. If they're bent, cracked or splintered, they need replacing, and good ones may need re-fletching. After that, check your peripheral equipment: release aid, broadheads, quivers, etc. It's a good idea to carry a spare release aid in your pack.

Employing these tactics and tips can help you be better prepared for early season when the buck of your dreams shows up during the cool of the morning. ▪

THE VALUE OF A RANGEFINDER

For the past nine months, deer hunters have painfully awaited for the opening day of bow season, and they need to be prepared on several different levels to make their opportunities count and get that big buck on the ground and off to the taxidermist.

Hunters in the Carolinas have invested countless hours planting food plots, scouting, capturing detailed surveillance photos of deer and developing a foolproof strategy to open the season successfully. And who could forget the hundreds of arrows slung into foam targets at various distances.

Even though many archers can group arrows into golf ball-sized targets from 10 yards to 40 yards out, knowing the exact distance is a key component to precise and accurate shots. A rangefinder is must-have gear for the archer.

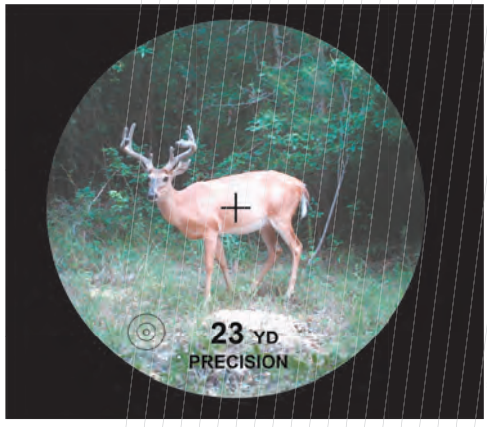
Rangefinders come in various shapes and sizes. Most are capable of producing accurate readings to very long distances, and most come with optical zooms and the works. Extended-range units have been embraced by western varmint or big-game hunters, making 1,000-yard shots across a valley on a neighboring mountaintop a possibility. Sig Sauer makes a Kilo unit that uses comes equipped with an optical zoom and Lightwave DSP technology to accurately range targets out to two miles.

Bowhunters need accurate readings on a much-smaller scale, typically out to 50 yards. With readings accurate to one yard, an optical zoom isn't as important.

High-end and economic options are available that can fill a bowhunter's needs. The two most-important features archers need to consider is whether units will provide corrected distances based on vertical adjustments, and overall size.

Bowhunters have tons of gear to drag into the tree stand, and a rangefinder doesn't need to be much bigger than palm-sized to get the job done. A unit that can fit inside a shirt pocket is ideal.

Nine out of 10 bowhunters will be hunting from elevated positions, and a standard, horizontal rangefinder will not take into account the vertical distance. Most late-model rangefinders developed for hunting have built-in inclinometers to make sure the range results are true distances that compensate for the elevation from a tree stand or terrain.



Jeff Burleson

Rangefinders are a great tool for bowhunters to remove the variable of guessing the distance of a possible shot.

Rangefinders may seem like extra gear for some hunters, but not for the avid bowhunter trying to close the deal on a trophy buck. They will eliminate the distance variable to make an accurate sight-pin choice. ▪

— Jeff Burleson

THE FIVE P'S OF SHOOTING PRACTICE

Ralph Cianciarulo developed a saying when teaching people proper shooting techniques: "Proper Practice Promotes Perfect Placement."

The five P's of practice make shot placement perfect, and when hunting live animals, there is no excuse for bad shot placement.

"When I practice, I want everything to be exactly like I am hunting," he said. "I try and replicate the situation as best I can.

"Too many people go out and sling arrows and have no idea what they may be doing wrong or right. They just go out and shoot."

Cianciarulo stresses that before the season, hunters should consider the responsibility they have in releasing an arrow and do everything to ensure that the arrow will hit exactly where they want.

Cianciarulo is a strong proponent for life-sized targets.

"Shooting bags is good, but it really does not help with judging animal anatomy and where the arrow will go once it hits the animal," he said, encouraging hunters to get life-sized, 3D targets for practice and to concentrate on proper shot placement. "I tell people to aim through the animal. Shoot for the opposite shoulder. If you do that, you will hit the vitals every time." ▪

hen decoys? >



The author crossed off every item on his checklist and came away with this nice South Carolina archery buck.









Jerry Dilsaver

A small buck feeds languidly at a corn pile; a turkey decoy is just out of the photo to the right.

HEN DECOY CAN ADD TO ARCHERY SETUP

Two keys to taking deer with bow and arrow are to get them in range and to make them relaxed once they're there, so they aren't on full alert to jump or duck a shot.

Food is one of the means, and food plots, feeders and food piles are all used with varying degrees of success. But getting them to drop their guard and relax is another problem; the solution can result in easy shots at close range without the problem of a buck jumping the string.

A deer must be confident the spot is safe before dropping its guard. One way is to add something super wary to the area that a deer will perceive as relaxed. Waterfowl hunters use blue heron, seagull and crow decoys to convince wary ducks and geese their setup is safe. This idea works well with deer, too. A blue heron decoy may work with water nearby, but almost all deer respond well to a hen turkey decoy.

Many gobbler decoys are strutters, an unnatural posture in the fall. There are jake decoys with folded fans that might work, but a hen or two feeding in the general area, off to the side, will make deer confident the area is safe.

One North Carolina hunter made it work last season on a spot that deer were using, but where they remained skittish, especially during daylight hours. Even with a corn pile nearby, they remained on high alert, even in trail-camera photos. One buck was caught on a trail-cam video crashing away when the camera activated.

Placing a hen turkey decoy about 10 yards off the corn pile produced immediate and amazing results. Getting ready to enter the area, deer would pause just beyond good bow range and scan the surroundings. When they saw the turkey decoy, most walked right in, and over the next several weeks, three deer were arrowed from the stand, the longest shot at 17 yards. ▪

— Jerry Dilsaver

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FIND THE Dove Buffet

By Jeff Burleson

The best wing-shooting on Labor Day weekend will usually be in fields where doves have discovered a solid food source. You need to join them.

With an estimated population of 275 million in North America, the mourning dove is one of the most-abundant and recognizable birds in the land. In the South, Labor Day weekend brings hunters from all walks of life into fields for the opening day of the dove season.

While some hunters target deer and turkey, and others painfully anticipate the arrival of the first wave of blue-winged teal, every shotgun-carrying Carolinian goes dove hunting, even if just on the opening weekend. Across the Carolinas, the opening day of dove season brings more than 60,000 hunters out of hiding — more than any other single hunting day.

For diehard dove hunters, the opening day festivities are scheduled well in advance with a local dove club membership, where the fields are prepared and ready for the opening day blitz. For many others, a good shoot is just a short drive away from home on both public and private lands.

Learn how to find a good field and where the best places to set up are to reach a quick 15-bird limit during the first season.

Jeff Burleson

Even though doves are considered migratory birds, the dove migration is considered less dramatic than the big move south by waterfowl, according to Michael Hook, the small-game project leader for the S.C. Department of Natural Resources.

"Doves tend to get a lot of focus in our state and in our department," Hook said. "We started banding doves in 2003 in cooperation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The band returns are giving us more information than we would otherwise know — like harvest rates, population estimates and migration data."

Between 30,000 to 50,000 doves are banded annually across the country, with approximately 3,600 banded in the Carolinas. According to 15 years of band-recovery data, the overwhelming majority of the annual dove harvest is resident birds, not those migrating from northern states.

"Field collection from the banding program runs between July 1 and Aug. 15," Hook said. "Most of our band returns come from 5 to 10 miles from where initially captured. The birds aren't moving a whole lot this time of year. We had 110 band returns last year; only eight were killed out of state, and they were all from adjacent states: including North Carolina, Tennessee and Georgia.

"However, the birds may certainly migrate regionally to the south into neighboring states if they survive the initial season. More often, birds from the north migrate into our area due to harsh winter conditions, and that isn't generally until November or December. Our resident flocks will remain local if the food remains available and if the weather remains favorable."

DOVE HUNTING IN THE Carolinas

North Carolina

Seasons: Sept. 1-Oct. 6, Nov. 17-Dec. 1, Dec. 10-Jan.31.

Bag limit: 15, includes mourning dove and/or white winged dove, singly or aggregate. Possession limit is three times the daily bag limit unless otherwise specified

Shooting hours are 30 minutes before sunrise until sunset unless otherwise specified

South Carolina

Seasons: Sept. 1-3 (noon to sunset), Sept. 4-Oct. 13, Nov. 10-24, Dec. 15-Jan. 31.

Bag limit: 15, includes mourning dove and/or white winged dove singly or aggregate Possession limit is the daily bag limit unless otherwise specified.

Shooting hours are noon to sunset the first segment of the season, then 30 minutes before sunrise until sunset unless otherwise specified.

Report all banded doves to www.reportband.gov.



Dove hunters surrounding cut grain fields are bound to get some good shooting on Labor Day weekend.

Jeff Burleson

The bottom line is, the majority of the birds available for the first part of dove season live fairly close to where they were hatched. For the best opening day opportunity, hunters need to pay close attention to where doves have been all summer. The best habitat will attract and keep the largest flocks around.

"Doves need food, water and cover," Hook said. "If they have everything they need, they aren't going anywhere, but doves will not think twice about traveling long distances to find a more-stable food source or if hunting pressure increases."

Doves need a solid food source; they aren't choosy when it comes to food, with seeds making up 99 percent of their daily intake. From native grass seeds and pokeberries to common agriculture grains, doves will stay around any available food source. Manicured crop fields filled with corn, watermelons, sunflowers or millet are a jackpot for doves seeking a reliable food source. Hunters should scout and find fields with abundant grain and a clean surface down below.

"A clean surface with seeds all over the ground makes it easy on them, since they can't push through the heavy stuff with their small legs," Hook said. "Keeping it clean is huge. They will not think twice about flying a long way if they need to find a better food source." >



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Find the dove buffet >

For doves, size does matter, according to Doug Howell, the migratory gamebird coordinator for the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. Larger fields in heavy agriculture areas are typically the ones that will receive the most usage.

"Doves are strong fliers and prefer large expanses of open area for daily movements," Howell said. "Fields that are 10 acres or (larger) tend to have the best potential for concentrating huntable numbers of birds — and the larger the better."

Doves like to stay on a good food source when they can. Birds that have found one early in the summer will remain on it until the season opens or the groceries dissipate.

"If possible, cut the corn early and condition the birds to feeding early," Hook said. "You will draw them in from a long distance, providing a solid food source before other fields mature."

Unfortunately, dove hunters don't always have complete control over when crops are harvested and dove food becomes available, but they can scout to see what fields are cut early and ask permission to hunt. These fields will bring the birds in early and ensure a good hunt on opening day, which is Saturday, Sept. 1, in both Carolinas. And as long as the opening day pressure isn't too severe, the birds will remain local, not having a reason to leave.



Jeff Burleson

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, approximately 14 million doves are harvested. In the Carolinas, roughly a million doves are harvested throughout the season, and 75 percent of the harvest is during the September segment. If there was ever a time to get a piece of the action, the first season is by far the best time to set a target on a limit of doves. ▪

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

DOVE FIELD-OLOGY
UP NEXT >



Power lines and other above-ground structures that line or cut through dove fields will attract plenty of birds, which often land on the lines to survey their feeding grounds. **ABOVE:** A good dove hunt is a great way to introduce youngsters to the sport of hunting.

Jeff Burleson


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DOVE

field-ology

The best dove hunts always begin with a solid food source, from native grasses and forbs to carbohydrate-rich grains in agriculture fields.

But it takes more than just a seed buffet to have a good dove hunt. Where there is strategy to tag a Boone & Crockett buck, dove hunters have proven tactics they can utilize to get a quick 15-bird limit for the crock pot.

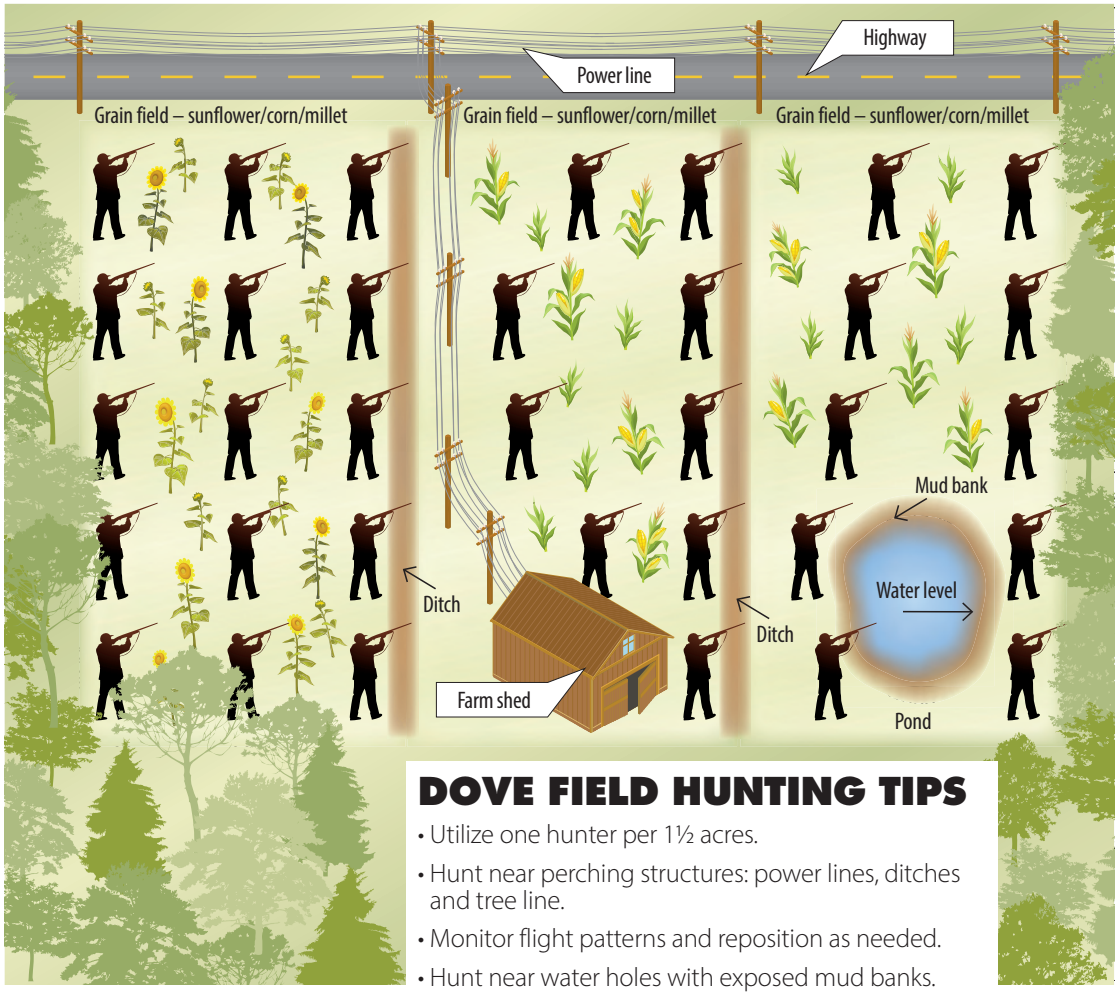
The best dove shoots are generally in fields 10 acres or larger. The bigger the fields, the more hunters needed to keep birds flying and off the feeding grounds. A general rule of thumb is one hunter per 1 to 1½ acres. Hunters should be placed in a grid system, and if extra hunters are available, they should be placed along the perimeter, no closer than 50 yards apart. As long as enough hunters are available to cover the field, the action should keep the birds moving and flying off the ground enough to have a good shoot.

But hunters aren't always as abundant as needed especially when a very large field is selected for a hunt. While doves will fly into the field and swoop down to land, they will often fly to a high perch first to scout the area out for predators before they land. These high perches can be deadly positions to hide hunters. Look also for power lines, interior tree lines, individual trees, rooftops or anything adjacent to the food where birds can perch before landing to feed. High perches can be deadly places to take a quick limit.

Water sources are also perfect places to draw in birds, especially when the weather is seasonably hot. Small ponds or depressions in a field can be hot places. The best water sources are ones with exposed mud banks that provide a clean landing and drinking area for doves.

Every hunter who has invested hours in a dove field in September notices that some people are always in a better place than others. Doves will travel along a familiar flight path to a food source. When hunters are lucky enough to be in the right spot, they will tend to get their limit much earlier than hunters several rows away. When hunting with a large group, successful hunters should leave the field when they fill their limit, allowing other hunters to move to the hottest spot. If a small group of hunters is covering a field, and they notice a predictable flight path, they should try to move to better cover that pattern.

The best way to maximize a field's potential is to scout the field before opening day and draw out a diagram/map. While winging it can bring intermittent success, strategic planning can make a better experience for the entire group. ▪



DOVE FIELD HUNTING TIPS

- Utilize one hunter per 1½ acres.
- Hunt near perching structures: power lines, ditches and tree line.
- Monitor flight patterns and reposition as needed.
- Hunt near water holes with exposed mud banks.
- Keep all shots above a 45-degree angle from the ground to ensure safe hunting.

Doves will flock to fields with solid food sources; for productive hunts later in the season, find fields that aren't cut until after Labor Day weekend.



Donna Brookshire

DON'T GIVE UP AFTER
Labor Day

For many hunters, the first day of dove season is often also the last day, as they quickly shift their attention to deer and the excellent fishing that September generally provides. While the dove population takes a major hit on Labor Day weekend, the rest of the season shouldn't be ignored.

Doves don't enjoy being a target at their kitchen table. If the shooting doesn't subside quickly, they will find a new place to feed without guns blazing every time they try to get a kernel of corn in their craws. It doesn't take long to send a flock of doves off into the sunset, but most will flee to the nearest substantial food source where they can feed undisturbed by hunters.

After Labor Day weekend, hunters can scan the countryside for fields that haven't been harvested or hunted. You may not see doves dive-bombing these fields, but they will often give away their location by resting on nearby power lines and in trees surrounding the field.

Hunters with access to multiple, productive fields should try to hold back a field or two through the early season assault until the time is right for a mid-season hunt. Often, these fields will serve as sanctuaries where hundreds of birds will gather when the sound of shotguns abounds everywhere else.

Even though the Labor Day weekend hunts seem to have fizzled out, there can be plenty of great places to find doves throughout the rest of the season. ■

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SOLVE THE PERCH EQUATION

By Phillip Gentry

Zakk Royce

For those of you who are live-bait fisherman, have you ever been so proud of the job you did catching, storing and presenting bait that you thought, "That looks so good, I'd eat it myself?"

That's not exactly the way it went down for Zakk Royce of Blues Brothers Guide Service, but he got there in the end.

Royce is a famous catfish guide. How else do you describe a guy who pulled back-to-back North Carolina-record blue catfish from Lake Gaston, including several 100-pound fish.

Royce has spent a lot of time learning the behavior of trophy blue catfish on Gaston, a 20,000-acre lake on the Roanoke River along the North Carolina-Virginia border, and one of those behaviors is eating white perch.

Fishing for bait or food? White perch are one fish that fills the bill in both instances across the Carolinas. Here's how to fill your bait tank and fish fryer.

Accordingly, Royce spends a lot of guide prep time catching white perch for bait. In fact, he frequently catches them by the cooler-full in between his catfish guide trips.

"Big blue catfish love to eat white perch, but one of the things I hear most often from other anglers is why am I not keeping those to eat myself," said Royce (919-724-2474). "A couple of years ago, I was catching some really good sized perch — pound-and-a-half fish — so I broke down and filleted them and cooked them. Those guys were right; they're delicious. I eat a lot of crappie that I catch here on Gaston in the spring, and these fish are every bit as good if not better than crappie."

While catching scads of white perch year-round is not a difficult task, Royce said late August and early September are two of the better times to catch bigger fish. He said the typical perch pattern through the year is to find them congregating on long points and humps in typical schooling-fish fashion, but as the water cools, they move.

"I look for them in the backs of creeks in 10 to 15 feet of water when the weather starts to cool off a little at night," he said. "Not all creeks are as good as others; I find the ones with sandy bottoms are best."

The most-likely reason for the seasonal move is the number of young-of-the-year shad that emerge from cover and can be found scattered all over the upper part of the water column in September. Because the bait and predators eating them are so shallow, it's nearly impossible to mark fish on the graph. Royce said if he's perch fishing on a calm day, he can often see the perch schooling on baitfish, along with other predators. Since the perch are not stationary, he's developed a trolling tactic to catch them.

> *"Not all creeks are as good as others; I find the ones with sandy bottoms are best."*

"I troll crankbaits for them," said Royce. "I've heard some of the crappie guys around the country do the same thing, and I use the same 200 series and 300 series (Bandit) crankbaits they use."

Royce also discovered a way to separate perch into two piles, the fish under a pound that he uses for catfish bait and the fish over a pound that he keeps for himself.

"I run a three-way swivel from the 8- to 10-pound main line that goes to my rod and tie two 2- to 3-foot leaders off of it using 20-pound mono," he said. "On the shorter leader, I tie the crankbait, and the longer one gets a Beetle Spin or something with a small blade."

Royce uses the crankbait as a depth planer; the 200 series bait will run to about 10 feet, and the 300 will run deeper. The lighter jig runs above the crankbait and tends to collect the smaller perch, while usually, only biggest perch will hit the crankbait.

"That's not a hard-and-fast rule," he said. "I've caught two smaller perch on the same crankbait."

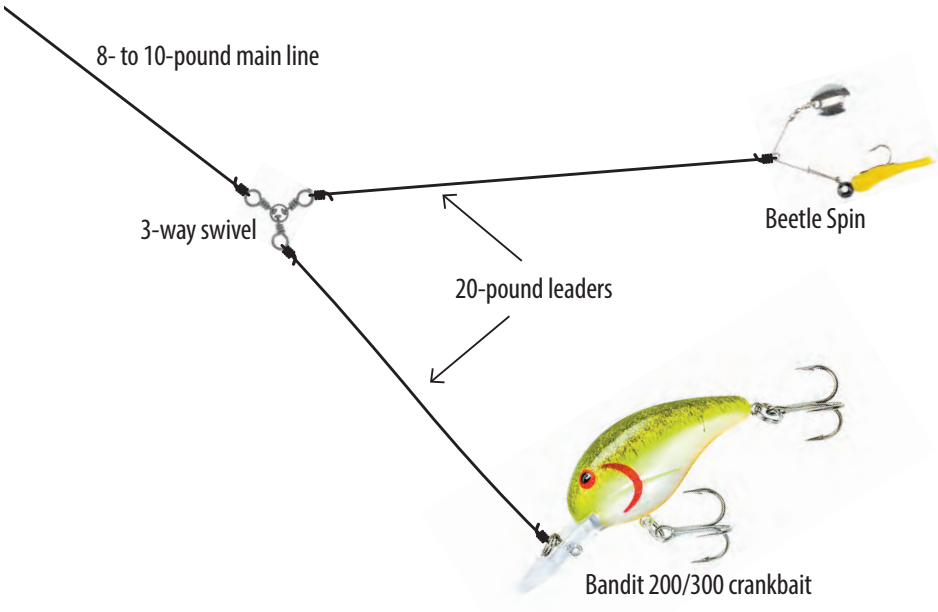


Zakk Royce

When white perch stack up eating baitfish in the backs of creeks, two trolling rods will be as much action as you can handle.

ZAKK ROYCE'S
PERCH TROLLING RIG

Trolling speed: 2.0 - 2.5 mph



Royce uses the 36-volt, 112-pound thrust trolling motor on his boat to troll the rigs, one on either side of the boat. The optimal trolling speed is from 2.0 to 2.5 mph. He has tried to run more rods but said when he's in the perch, two rods is about all he can handle. He'll bring the perch over the side four at a time, then turn around and run right back through the same area until he gets his fill.

"I run the lines way back, like 100 feet behind the boat, so it takes a little bit of maneuvering to get turned around, but if the perch are in the area — along with catfish, bass and crappie — I'm usually catching fish all through the run," he said.

Royce also recommends changing crankbait colors frequently until you find what they like. Somedays, the bright chartreuse and pinks work while the natural colors won't, and vice versa. He can't explain why. He just changes colors until the fish decide. As far as the jig/spin color, he said it's hard to beat white. ▪

YEAR-ROUND WHITE PERCH
UP NEXT >



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.*



YEAR-ROUND WHITE PERCH

While guide Zakk Royce confines most of his perch fishing to Lake Gaston along the North Carolina-Virginia border, you'd be hard-pressed to name any reservoir in North Carolina's Piedmont or South Carolina's Midlands that isn't chock full of them.

The white perch population has become so widespread that neither state considers them gamefish, which means no creel limits and few, if any, restrictions on catching them — including the use of cast nets.

Probably the most-popular and productive method for catching white perch on a consistent, year-round basis is by vertical jigging. Some anglers use a ¼- to ½-ounce metal jigging spoon; Royce prefers a Sabiki rig, which incorporates five to 10 droppers off the main line, each connected to a tiny hook and fly. A weight at the rig at the end of the rig carries it to the bottom, where it is jigged vertically.

The secret to fishing the Sabiki is not to reel the line up at the first bite, but to leave it down long enough to load all of the droppers with fish.

"Perch are so aggressive and so competitive, on a good bite it doesn't take more than about 30 to 45 seconds to load the rig up," said Royce, who has started offering guided perch trips for his clients. "One thing I have learned if I'm perch fishing with more than one rod is you have to have one rig in the water at all



Phillip Gentry

times. If you load both up and take them out of the water, the school will lose interest and move off, and then you either go find another or wait for the school to move back in."

For trolling and vertical jigging, Royce recommends a 6-foot, light-action spinning rod and reel spooled with 6- to 10-pound test line. ■

Restrictions and bag limits are almost non-existent for white perch. The fish are an invasive species and considered a nuisance by most states in the southeast.







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Unique offshore habitat is home to some of the best fishing for yellowfin on the east coast, and late summer is prime time.

By Jerry Dilsaver

OREGON INLET: TUNA CENTRAL



The wind was uncommonly calm as Jim Rickman eased the *Outer Limits* through the sloughs towards Oregon Inlet and then turned south, setting a course for his 55-foot sportfisher toward a bluewater hot spot known as The Point.

Expectations were high among T.J. Lawson of Winston-Salem, N.C., and friends who had driven in to do battle with tuna. The previous day's action had been near spectacular, with several nice yellowfins and two large bigeyes, one estimated at 200 pounds. A few of the men dozed anxiously, but the cabin was filled with excited chatter.

In the cockpit, mate Charles Brown checked the rigs and readied several bags of ballyhoo for fast rebaiting when the expected tuna onslaught began. There was also anticipation of encountering a few marauding white marlin.

After a couple of hours, Rickman eased back on the throttles, and Brown went to work setting the spread. Several boats were already on site, and a couple were hooked up, fighting fish. Rickman felt good as he scanned the horizon and located three schools of feeding tuna cutting across the water and jumping after baitfish.

Brown had eight lines in the water before the first strike. The short outrigger line on the starboard side pulled down, and the clip released with a sharp snap, much like the report of a .22 rifle. The rod went down, and the Shimano 50 Wide reel buzzed for a few seconds. Unfortunately, it quit buzzing, and the rod tip popped back up, the fish having pulled the hook.

The strike and escape happened again on the port transom line. The ballyhoo on both lines had been hit short and crushed, not cut, the signature of a tuna. A third bite led to a bait being pulled off the hook, and finally, as Brown was wrapping a rubber band around the nose of a bait to hold it to the rig, the starboard short-rigger popped again. This time, the tuna got the hook and the reel kept buzzing.

Lawson grabbed the rod as Rickman continued forward at trolling speed to try to entice another strike. When no other strikes came in a minute or so, Rickman slowed the *Outer Limits* to allow Lawson to make headway reeling in his fish.

Lawson was pumped for the fight, and after several minutes of pumping and winding, he worked the tiring fish close to the boat. There was a flash in the water about 20 feet down, and Brown identified the fish as a yellowfin tuna. Smiles quickly spread across the cockpit.

A few minutes later, Lawson wound the small, wind-on swivel through the rod's guides and Brown leaned across the gunwale with the gaff. Lawson inched the tuna a little closer, and Brown struck home with the gaff, then swung the tuna across the transom and directly into the fish box. This 30-pound class yellowfin was the first of the day and had removed the skunk from the boat early on.

"Water conditions and bait mean everything," Rickman said. "I like water that is blue to bluish-green and clear. It needs to >





Mate Charles Brown lifts a nice yellowfin tuna on a gaff towars the fish box. **INSET:** Charterboat mates keep dozens of ballyhoo rigged for fast replacement when the tuna bite peaks.



DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE — Oregon Inlet is about 15 miles south of Nags Head, between Bodie Island and Hatteras Island. US 64 is the best access from most points west to Nags Head. US 264 and US 158 are also major roads that head to the Outer Banks from other points in North Carolina. From Nags Head, head south on NC 12 to Oregon Inlet. Popular public boat ramps are at Oregon Inlet Fishing Center, under the US 64/264 bridge between Manteo and Nags Head on Broad and Mill creeks in Wanchese.

WHEN TO GO — Tuna are in the waters off Oregon Inlet most of the year. Plenty of yellowfins, blackfins and bigeyes spend the summer there.

BEST TECHNIQUES — Heavy equipment is the ticket when trolling for tuna: 50-pound class tackle at least. Reels are spooled with 200-pound braid, with an 80-pound mono topshot and a 90-pound wind-on fluorocarbon leader. Medium to large ballyhoo are trolled behind ¼-ounce sea witches on 35 feet of 90-pound fluorocarbon leader.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES —Outer Limits Sportfishing Charters, www.fishouterlimits.com, 252-453-3436; Oregon Inlet Fishing Center, 252-441-6301, www.oregon-inlet.com; Pirate's Cove Marina, 800-367-4728, www.fishpiratescove.com. See also Guides & Charters in Classifieds.

ACCOMMODATIONS — Dare Haven Motel, Manteo, 252-473-2322; Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce, 800-627-3150, www.outerbankschamber.com.

MAPS — Capt. Segull's Nautical Charts, 888-473-4855, www.captain-segullcharts.com; GMCO's Chartbook of North Carolina, 888-420-6277, www.gmcomaps.com; Maps Unique, www.offshore-fishing-maps.com, 910-458-9923; The Grease Chart, www.greasechart.com, 252-560-6527.

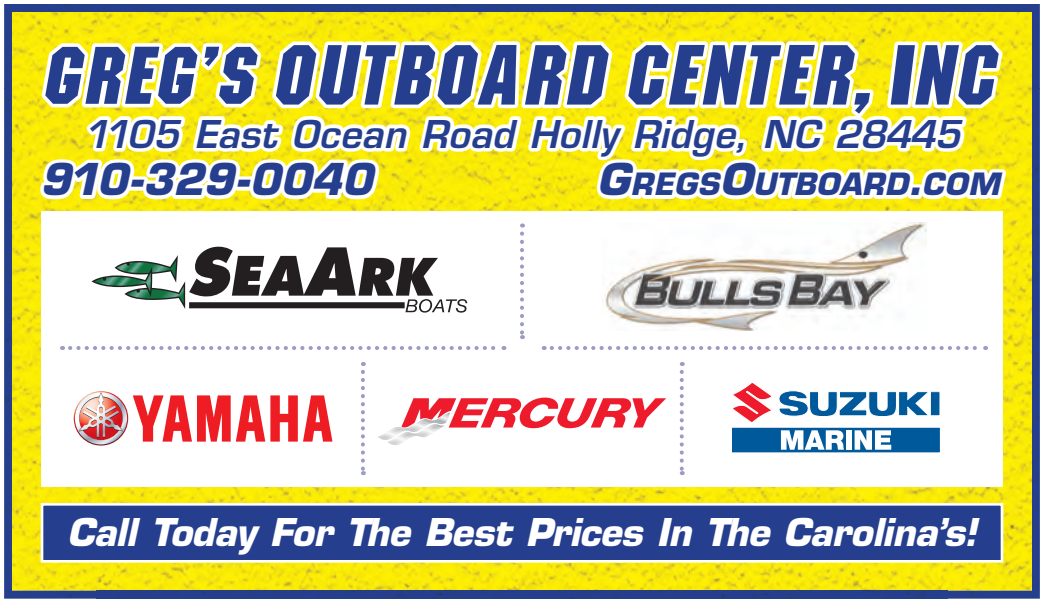
be warm but not hot. Activity, especially with porpoises or pilot whales, is usually a really good sign, and current is a negative. I prefer to fish in currents of less than 2 knots. Usually, when we find these conditions, we have that classic Oregon Inlet tuna bite."

Brown said his standard tuna spread is eight surface lines, all set up with wind-on leaders. When fish are marking deep and are reluctant to bite, he adds a planer line. The rods are a mixture of trolling rods and stand ups, primarily with Shimano 50 Wides, but a couple with 80 Wides. The planer outfit is a bent-butt rod with an old 12/0 Penn Senator. He keeps two smaller outfits rigged and ready with naked pitch baits in the event something unexpected shows up in the spread.

The wind-on setups on the *Outer Limits* begin with 400 yards of 200-pound braid on the reel. This is tied into several hundred yards of 80-pound mono topshot to a barrel swivel. There is 35 feet of 90-pound fluorocarbon leader between the swivel and the lure. The lures are hand-tied, ¼-ounce sea witches. Brown, who ties them, said his favorite color is whatever the tuna are biting at the time. The business end uses a Mustad 7692DT hook in the 10/0 size. This is a forged, knife-edge point, with a tapered ring and Duratin finish.

With wind-on leaders, Brown doesn't have to try to wire a fish and gaff it, too. Fisherman can reel the fish to the boat, and Brown grabs the leader to swing the fish into gaffing range and position. Once the hook is removed, Brown rebaits and they are quickly fishing with the same color lure that caught the most recent fish. ▪

Oregon Inlet >





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OREGON INLET: FAMOUS, INFAMOUS

Oregon Inlet is a prominent port in the sportfishing world and familiar to most big-game fishermen. The inlet is often rough and always unpredictable, but the offshore fishing is typically excellent.

In recent years, the channel through the inlet has migrated, and the inlet has filled and deepened without regard to the fishermen that use it. One wind fills the inlet with sand, and the opposite direction sucks it out. North Carolina or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is almost always dredging in Oregon Inlet.

In spite of the dangers, Oregon Inlet remains a premiere fishing destination, used by a large charter fleet and a huge numbers of private boats. The commercial fleet from nearby Wanchese and Manteo also use it.



Oregon Inlet, crossed by NC 12 over Bonner Bridge, offers access to some of the best offshore fishing grounds in the world.

Jerry Dilsaver

The cold waters of the Labrador Current run down the Outer Banks and collide with the warm water of the Gulf Stream, typically a little south of Oregon Inlet in a general area called The Point. This impact disperses nutrients, bait and fish typical of both the cooler Labrador Current and the warmer Gulf Stream current over the area from roughly Cape Hatteras north to the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. Oregon Inlet is the only inlet between Hatteras and the Chesapeake Bay. ▪



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


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Brian Cope



The invisible nature of fluorocarbon could make a big difference when fish are being finicky. A short section of leader is easy to tie in between your terminal tackle and running line.

FLUOROCARBON'S LETHAL EDGE

WHEN FISHING GETS TOUGH, A FLUOROCARBON LEADER MIGHT MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE

Brian Cope

When I first began using artificial lures for inshore saltwater fishing, I was with a friend who had been catching redfish and trout on soft plastics for more than a decade. He made it look easy, and after watching him catch a few trout one morning when I was still waiting for a bite, I paid really close attention to what he was doing and mimicked it as best I could.

Still, not a bite.

A third angler was with us, and he had also not caught a thing, either. Selfishly, I was thankful it wasn't just me.

Once all three of us had our lures in the boat at the same time, our friend pointed out a major difference — even though we were all using the same lures: soft-plastic shrimp.

"You've both got braid tied straight to the lure. I've got a fluorocarbon leader on mine," he said. "The fish can see your braided line."

My frustrated friend and I quickly spliced fluorocarbon leaders onto our braided line, but I honestly didn't put much faith in it. Were the fish really that smart?

And like magic, after a few more casts, all three of us were catching trout. That certainly made me a believer.

For people who fish often enough, they'll have days when the fish bite anything and everything, regardless of size, color or whether you're using a fluorocarbon leader or not. But we've also all had days when getting a bite was so tough that we're willing to try any slight variation of what we're doing to just feel a nibble. So why not stack the odds in our favor no matter what mood the fish are in?

Fluorocarbon material looks more like clear water than any other material on earth — other than water itself. So nothing appears more invisible in the water than fluorocarbon.

When using a fluorocarbon leader with lures like D.O.A. Shad Tails, Z-Man Trout Tricks, or a LIVETARGET Fleeing Shrimp, you don't need to add any weight, which is built into the lure's jighead. And while many anglers are tempted to connect their fluorocarbon leader to their main line with a swivel, that only adds unnecessary weight.

Using swivels are great when Carolina-rigging your lures, but they can have a negative impact on the action and presentation of self-weighted lures. That's where the surgeon's knot comes in.

It isn't the only knot for tying fluorocarbon directly to braided line, but most anglers agree it's the easiest to tie. It is also known for maintaining almost 100 percent of the line strength. Tying on this way instead of using a swivel allows your lure to move naturally while keeping things hidden from your prey.

LEADER LENGTH?

So, how long should your leader be? When Carolina rigging, most anglers like to start off with about an 18-inch leader, but it varies widely for anglers tying to lures that are weighted on their own, like soft plastic shrimp, grubs, etc.

Many anglers stick with the 18-inch rule, but some go much longer. Justin Carter of Charleston's Fish Minded Charters starts his day with a 6-foot leader.

"I'm going to retie throughout the day, whether to try new lures or just keeping the best knot in place after fighting a few fish. If I start with an 18-inch leader, my leader will be too short after retying just a few times. I start off with a really long leader, and that usually lasts all day," he said.



Brian Cope

Even when using a Carolina rig with a traditional egg sinker and swivel, fluorocarbon is still the best option for your leader. It has the added benefit of sinking, and its near invisibility makes using it a no-brainer.

One area many anglers disagree on is whether fluorocarbon is a good leader for topwater lures. Because it sinks, some folks shy away from using it with these lures, but plenty of anglers use it with great success.

"Working a topwater lure properly, the leader doesn't have enough time to sink enough to make a difference. And I like fluorocarbon for one main reason. If I get hung up, I can break the line if I have to. I can't do that if it's straight braid to the lure." said Donavan Hanson of Wilmington, N.C., who fishes many saltwater creeks and inlets along the border between North Carolina and South Carolina. ▪



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



Davy Hite



Largemouth bass will be paying more attention to baitfish in the fall than perhaps at any other time of year.

FOLLOW THE BAITFISH MOVE

SWIMBAITS, SQUARE-BILLED CRANKBAITS ARE THE TICKET WHEN BAIT, BASS HEAD TO CREEKS

One thing I can count on in September — in addition to college football and deer season getting cranked up, is that baitfish will start moving off the main bodies of reservoirs in the Carolinas and into the tributary creeks.

It's always in September in the Carolinas when the baitfish start to move — and the bass follow them. When you see a lot of baitfish on the surface, that's when they'll start moving.

When I was just a teenager, fishing in a john boat without any electronics, I could see them on the surface in September —even in late August — and now, with the electronics we have, we can look around and find the biggest concentrations of baitfish. And the bass really get keyed in on those baitfish on the surface.

There are definitely certain creeks on every lake that the baitfish like better. Maybe they have more fertile water; we don't really know why. But once you fish a lake a lot, you'll know which creeks get the bait in the fall.

If I was fishing on a new lake, I'd go into a live creek, a creek that tends to have more flow. And it's not hard to tell live creeks from just drains. Look for current.

Early in September, the baitfish — gizzard shad, threadfins and blueback herring — they made be over deeper water, suspended, as they move from the main lake into the creeks.

SWIMBAIT TIME

That's when I really like to use a swimbait. Swimbaits are so versatile and have progressed so much over the years, they're great baits to fish around big concentrations of baitfish. When I was growing up, I threw a Sassy Shad in the fall. That's really a swimbait, but there are so many more options nowadays: different colors, different sizes, different ways to rig and fish them. You can imitate gizzards, threadfins and herring.

I like to fish a 360 GT swimbait in 3½- and 4½-inch sizes. You can really do so much with them. You can fish them at the surface like a wake bait, or you can fish them 20 or 30 or 40 feet deep if the bait is that deep. I like to fish both ways, counting the bait down to just above big pods of bait if they're suspended.

I fish a 360 GT on a 7-foot, medium or medium-heavy BPS carbonlite baitcasting rod, a BPS Johnny Morris signature series reel with a 6.3-to-1 retrieve ration, spooled with 12-pound XPS fluorocarbon.

SQUARE IT UP

Now, if you go into the same creek later in September and find shad in there wall to wall, when that's the deal, you've got to get fish to react to a bait to hit it — even if they aren't feeding.

We're talking about times when there's so much bait in a creek that throwing a lure in there is like putting a baloney

sandwich on a buffet line. It may get eaten; it may not.

That's when I like to fish a square-billed crankbait, a Rapala BX Brat, in particular. I want to fish it around some kind of cover — grass, wood or rock — and get some contact and a reaction bite, because you can trigger a reaction bite even when the fish isn't feeding.

You want shad there, and you want good cover, because there will be shad and bass around most of the cover. You've got to get them to react to the bait to hit it.

I fish the square-bill because it doesn't hang up as much as a crankbait with a normal bill, and I'll go away from a swimbait because they will hang up on cover.

I'll fish that square bill on a 7-foot, medium or medium-heavy BPS Crankin' Stik, which is a composite rod. That's important because there's plenty of give in the rod, and that allows you to feel the bite before the bass realizes that he's bitten a chunk of hard plastic instead of a shad. I'll fish it on the same Johnny Morris reel that I fish a swimbait, but it will be spooled with 14- to 17-pound XPS fluorocarbon.

You can really work on the bass when you find them ganged up on baitfish in the September, and these two baits are great tools for catching them. When the fish really get back in the creeks in October, you'll have a little bit different attack plan, but a swimbait or square-billed crankbait are the real ticket in September. ▪



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

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Jeff Burleson



September finds plenty of bucks, many still in bachelor groups, feeding during daylight hours in agricultural fields.

GET YOUR GLASSES ON A NICE BUCK

AGRICULTURAL FIELDS DRAW PLENTY OF SEPTEMBER DEER

Labor Day arrives this month, with autumn's cooler weather not far behind, and of course, more serious deer hunting across the Carolinas.

While hunters are ramping up for hunting season, farmers are excited because they know their money crops will get a break from the constant browsing pressure. Deer in agriculture regions benefit from farmers, especially when soybean, peanuts and other edible crops dominate the landscape.

When it's hot and seasons are barely underway or yet to open, deer remain bold and feed anytime they feel the need for a belly full of soybean and peanut foliage. In places where opening day hasn't arrived, it's a good time for hunters to glass their local deer herd from the windshield.

Late in summer, deer living in the agriculture belt flourish on the farmer's delights. The rural regions of both Carolinas remain dominated by soybeans, corn and peanuts. While corn and peanut crops are generally harvested by the middle of October, soybean fields still have a little farther to go before they end up in front of a harvester. Deer will continue to flood agriculture fields during daylight hours on a daily basis until the food is depleted or when hunting pressure accelerates.

For the most part, deer feeding in agriculture fields this month don't face significant pressure from hunters because, with the exception of some areas of South Carolina's Lowcountry, hunting is restricted to archery. It's not until the gun seasons begin that deer begin to shy away from daylight feeding in fields.

Of more than 10 million deer hunters in the United States, only 25 percent hunt with a bow. In the Carolinas, roughly 10 percent of all the deer harvested fall to an arrow, either from a crossbow or traditional archery equipment. While some hunters will start beating the bushes in September, the majority of hunting pressure will not begin until October.

The whitetail rut hasn't begun yet, except for a few adolescent males checking out their options. It's not until October when most does begin to cycle and bucks start the chase.

Hunters should be able to drive past local agriculture fields near their hunting land to see what the season will have to offer. While some deer in protected areas will continue to hit fields to feed well into the day, the best time to see the mature bucks frolicking will be during early mornings and later in the evening. Make sure to bring a solid good pair of binoculars or a spotting scope to make identifying them easier. ▪



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.*

Clothing treated with insect repellents is perhaps the best way to avoid bugs and the accompanying seven-day itch.



GET INSECTS TO BUG OUT

While many outdoorsmen spend most of their time in the woods during the cool months, late summer and early fall are definitely times to be beating the bushes looking for a big buck.

But woods time during warm weather can come with severe consequences besides sweating profusely. Ticks, chiggers (aka red bugs), and other biting insects are out in full force and can cause extreme discomfort that will last a while.

Luckily, outdoorsman can avoid these repercussions by taking adequate precaution with insect repellents on the skin and clothing. The most common ones contain DEET, which can be sprayed directly on the skin, but it washes off and isn't always the best deterrent for ticks and chiggers.

A more-potent formula has permethrin or permanone listed as the active ingredient. Permethrin kills insects on contact, but it should never be applied to skin and should only be applied to clothing well before use and allowed to dry. Permethrin binds with fabrics and deters biting insects from traveling on clothing. It is the true solution to biting insects that can cause the seven-day itch.

Even though permethrin works wonders, it is not always the most enjoyable task to apply to clothing, especially if you read the warning labels.

Luckily, Insect Shield, based in Greensboro, N.C., has developed clothing with built-in protection to repel mosquitoes, ants, ticks, fleas, chiggers and many other biting flies. The company sells a complete line of outdoor gear. The protection is effective for up to 70 washes before needing retreatment. In addition, Insect Shield will treat clothing that's sent in to its Greensboro factory for a small fee.

Nobody likes to get into a colony of ticks and chiggers and the seven-day itch can ruin a trip to the woods. Furthermore, preventing tick bites will eliminate the chances of contracting one of the crippling, tick-borne diseases as well.

For more information, visit www.insectshield.com or call 888-884-5784. ▪

NO DOVE HUNT INVITE? NO SWEAT. GO PUBLIC

For some hunters, opening day of dove season is the most-anticipated day of the year. It is generally the first day most hunters get to put on their camouflage and break out their shotguns. While most dove hunters join friends and family at a private, organized hunt, sometimes the invites don't always make it around to everybody.

Fortunately, doves are near the top of the list of annual expenditures for the S.C. Department of Natural Resources and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. In North Carolina, more than 100 public dove fields between 40 and 100 acres in size are planted annually with sunflowers, millet, corn and other grains, specifically for doves and for the fall hunts. Doves love small seeds packed with carbohydrates.

The SCDNR and NCWRC manipulate plenty more fields for wildlife that often attract flocks of doves during the fall.

Hunters looking for a place to hunt doves this month don't have to drive very far to find a good place to take a 15-bird limit on opening day. For more information about public dove fields, go to www.scdnr.gov or www.ncwildlife.org. ▪



Wildlife agencies in both Carolinas have planted and managed fields for public dove hunting.

Phillip Gentry



Mike Curtis of Rockingham, N.C., said it's so easy to catch big catfish in the Pee Dee River that anyone can do it.

PEE DEE CATFISH MADE FOR FLOATING BOATS

TROPHY FISH ARE AVAILABLE FOR MUCH OF RIVER'S LENGTH

Mike Curtis

The Pee Dee River stretches from the Uwharrie Mountains of North Carolina to the South Carolina coast. Along much of its route through North Carolina, the river system is dammed for hydroelectric power, however, after the flow exits Blewett Falls Reservoir northwest of Rockingham, N.C., the river maintains much of the character it had in the days when the Pee Dee tribe relied on it for its livelihood.

Today, the river is highly regarded in both Carolinas for its natural beauty and scenery. For one North Carolina kayak angler in particular, it's also a spectacular place to catch trophy sized catfish.

Mike Curtis of Rockingham and his family discovered the fun of paddling and catching catfish from the river several years ago. Unlike most diehard kayak anglers, the Curtis family forgoes all of the gear and tackle normally associated with kayak fishing, especially catfishing, and opts for a more simple approach.

MEAT MARKET BAIT

This fact is best illustrated by their bait choices, which are more readily found in a grocery store than the local bait shop.

"My favorite bait for catfishing in the river is fresh, raw chicken breast," Curtis said. "We cut it into racquetball-sized chunks and let it float in the current."

The Curtis family fishes from a fleet of varied cockpit-style touring kayaks, without the myriad of rod holders normally associated with catfishing. One paddler, one rod is the favored approach. Curtis explains how the family catfishing pattern came into existence.

"For the most part, we just float the river and cast the bait either out front or to the side," he said. "I rig the baits on an 8/0 circle hook and float it under a large slip cork. I just let the current carry the bait in front of me, and we cover water. Every so often, I'll cast along the bank, just like I was bream fishing with bait under a cork."

Unlike bream fishing, Curtis's standard gear is a Shakespeare Catfish Ugly Stik and a Penn 4500 reel spooled with 55-pound braided line.

Curtis said the fishing is either float down and paddle back or, if there are two cars available for a longer float, the family will park one downstream at the take-out and float a stretch.

"I'm sure the catfishing is just as good across the line into South Carolina, but from the Pee Dee ramp you have plenty of river to fish in North Carolina. It's 3 miles to (US) 74 and then from (US) 74 to Diggs Landing is another 6-mile stretch, and then another 5½ to 6 miles to the state line."

SHALLOW CATS

Curtis views float fishing for catfish similar to noodling. The catfish get extremely shallow in the river, especially right before dark, when they may be in only 2 to 3 feet of water. It's for this reason he sets the slip float very shallow when he's casting into likely looking spots.

"When they take the bait, it's not a nibble," he said. "When my daughter hooked her first catfish, she laid the rod down in her lap to paddle, and the fish hit so quick and so hard it yanked the rod right out of the boat."

TAILING MONSTER

Curtis said the biggest catfish he's caught from the Pee Dee River was a

continues on page XXX

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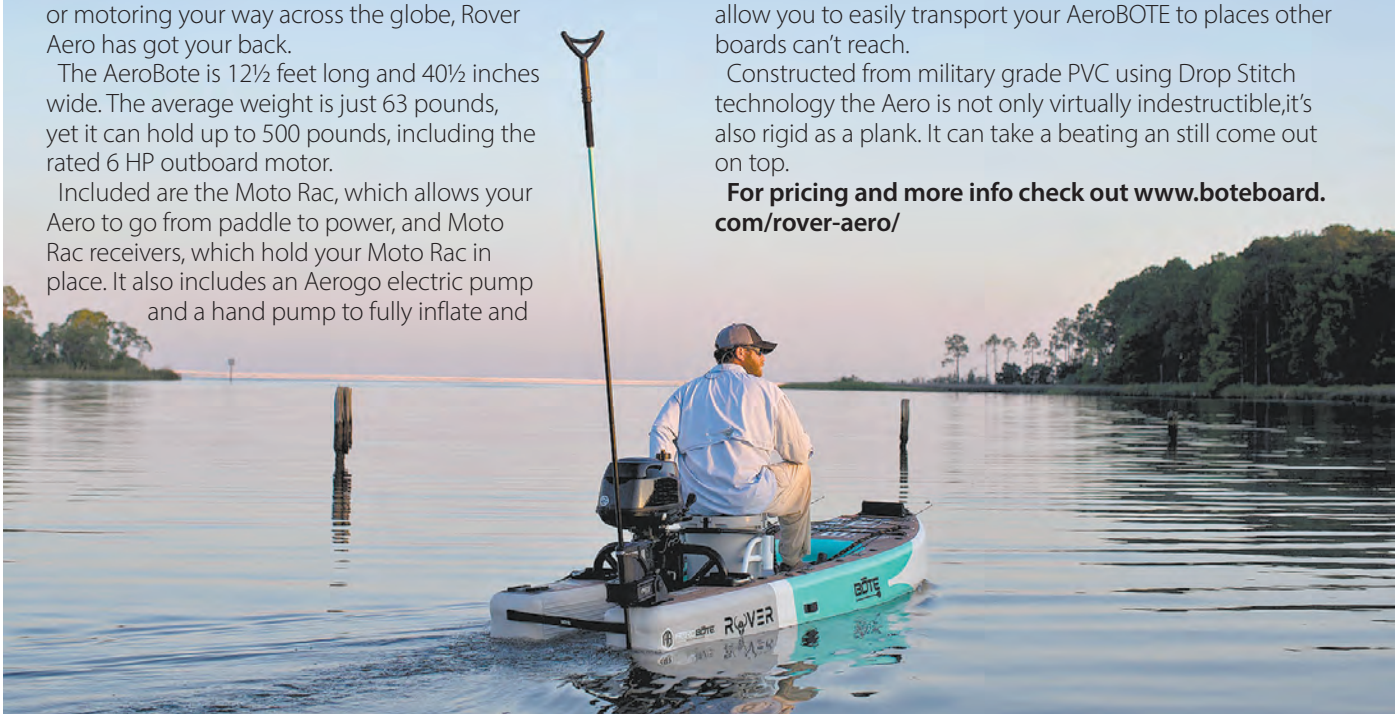
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SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY

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SEPTEMBER'S BEST BETS

NORTH CAROLINA

WHAT — Catfish
WHERE— Pee Dee River
HOW — Rather than anchoring up, drift with the current and float a chunk of chicken (or cut bait) under a large slip cork set to ride just above the bottom. Cast the bait ahead and toward the river bank.
LAUNCH — Pee Dee Landing (below Blewett Falls), Rockingham Landing, or Diggs Landing
INSIDER TIP — Watch for catfish to hold in extremely shallow water in the river where bream and other food sources are holding. Cast your bait upstream and let it drift to those areas.

SOUTH CAROLINA

WHAT — Overslot redfish
WHERE — Charleston Harbor
HOW — Drift or anchor while presenting live or cut mullet or large menhaden if available. Target drop-offs from the jetties all the way back to Ravenel (US 17) Bridge
LAUNCH — Beach launching from Sullivan's Island or put in at Shem Creek, Remley's Point or Wappoo Cut Landings
INSIDER TIP — Use large, 8/0 circle hooks and heavy weights to hold the bait on the bottom and keep the fish from swallowing the hook.

65-pound blue he caught while floating the river with his daughters. They were paddling 2 or 3 miles downstream from the US 74 bridge when they came upon some old Indian weirs, a series of stacked rocks designed to funnel fish into choke points.

They saw catfish tailing in the shallows, digging mussels from around the rocks — like redfish tailing on coastal flats. The girls urged him to try and catch one.

"All I had was a bass rod and an ultralight outfit, so I caught a hand-sized bream on the ultralight and hooked it on the bass rod," he said. "I opened the gap on the bass hook a little and started casting the bream toward the bank."

On his third cast, dropping the bait upstream and letting it float down, Curtis saw a huge splash where the bream had drifted just before the line started peeling off upstream.

"One of my daughters captured the whole thing on video on her iPhone," said Curtis. "I believe that's the fish that got me hooked on floating the Pee Dee River." ▪



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

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COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver

STRETCHED DOVE SALAD

WHEN A HUNT DOESN'T PAN OUT, YOU CAN STILL EAT DOVES

Small pieces of dove breasts are the basis for this great fall salad — and they'll solve the problem of what to do with only a handful of doves. **INSET**: Chopped onions are sautéd in bacon grease before mixing with other ingredients.



We haven't officially made it through summer, but it's almost Labor Day, and the Old Farmer's Almanac says that fall begins Sept. 22 at 9:54 p.m.

The abundance of fishing and hunting opportunities sometimes makes the choices hard for sportsmen in the Carolinas, and it makes choosing a September recipe difficult. Any fish from mountain trout to bluewater brawlers would work, as would several game-birds and venison.

I decided this month's recipe should include doves. Dove hunting is a southern tradition. Some opening day dove hunts are family reunions and many others seem like it, with a big meal — usually barbecue, fried or grilled chicken, Brunswick stew, all the fixin's and gallons of sweet tea. After lunch, many of the older hunters enjoy a siesta before returning to the fields in hopes of filling their limits.

This was, is and will continue to be the introduction many young hunters get to hunting. Unfortunately, the doves don't always cooperate. They may not have found the field, may have moved on to another field or weather may interfere. When this happens the shooting may only be a few scattered singles instead of constant flocks expected. Or, a hunter may also have an off-day shooting and only bag a few doves.

This recipe is for those occasions. It came from days of grudgingly leaving a field at twilight carrying only four to six doves. There just isn't much meat for the table. Sometimes they get frozen, hoping to add more later, but that doesn't always happen, and a small container with 4 to 6 dove breasts is found in the freezer months later.

With this in mind, here's a way to stretch just a few doves into an interesting and tasty treat. You might even find yourself freezing dove breasts in small numbers just for this meal. ▪

DOVE-STRETCHING SALAD

Every dove hunter has had a hunt where he left the field with only a few doves and there wasn't enough meat for a typical dinner or fried or grilled doves

I was challenged to create a way to stretch a few doves into dinner. My first thoughts were it would need to be a stew, soup, pasta or rice dish. I decided to go with something that could be served cold, and that's where the idea for a salad came up. This is the basics of a salad my family has prepared for years. I always liked it, and regular readers know I don't have any issues with mixing two things I like.

The idea was two-fold. I thought adding some bacon would help stretch the doves, and cooking them and the onions in the bacon grease would add some flavor. That didn't take a lot of thought and seemed like a winner from the beginning. After all, who doesn't like bacon?

This might not exactly be dinner, but my friends decided they liked it, and having it for an appetizer or snack is good enough. So, here it is to usher in dove season. The main question is: Why the peas? That's simple. They were in the original salad recipe, and I like them.

This is a versatile recipe. While the primary ingredients remain the same, the flavor can be varied a bit cooking the doves with different seasoning. I use blackened seasoning for this version, but they can be cooked using Cajun seasoning, fajita seasoning, taco seasoning, steak seasonings and more. If you experiment with this — and I encourage it — I believe the seasoning should have some spice, so the pieces of dove stand out in the salad.

Be careful not to overcook the meat: the bacon and the doves. The bacon should be crisp but not to the point of cracking on its own. By boning the dove breasts and then cutting them into small pieces, they can be cooked quickly at a higher temperature, yet still be tasty. If the grease is hot, they only need a minute or so, and they're done. If you wait until the outside begins to crisp, they're probably overdone and will be chewy.

This recipe will also work with small amounts of other game. I've used it with marsh hens, quail, woodcock, a single small duck and more. I even made it once using chicken thighs when I was asked to bring some to a gathering and didn't have any game in the freezer. Chicken thighs were the first readily available dark meat I could think of, and they worked.

I believe if you try this, you'll probably add it to your good recipes list. Enjoy! ▪

INGREDIENTS:

4-6 dove breasts,

4-6 slices of thick-cut bacon

1 cup shredded cheddar cheese (mild or sharp, your choice)

8 ounces of frozen sweet peas

½ small, sweet onion

⅓ cup mayonnaise. I prefer olive oil mayo

2 tbsp sour cream. I use light sour cream

1 splash apple cider vinegar , between ½ and 1 tsp.

Blackened seasoning. You may substitute taco seasoning, Cajun seasoning, fajita seasoning or anything similar

Salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION:

Bone and chop the dove breasts into roughly ¼- to ½-inch pieces, then roll in blackened seasoning. Chop the onions into medium pieces. Cook the bacon in a cast-iron skillet or other heavy pan that distributes heat well. Remove the bacon, crumble and save.

Pour off and save about ⅔ of the grease, then sauté the onion in the remaining grease. Remove the onion and set aside. Increase the heat to medium high, add the saved bacon grease and quickly sear the dove breast pieces.

Use a large bowl to mix the mayonnaise, sour cream, vinegar and onion. Stir in the cheese, peas, dove pieces and about ⅓ to ½ of the bacon, mixing well. I grew up eating this with the peas as the main ingredient, and I often use more of them.

Refrigerate the mix for at least an hour to chill. Refrigerate the remaining bacon separately. When ready to serve, sprinkle bacon crumbles on top.

This serves well in a variety of ways. The most popular is with crackers. I prefer Triscuit cracked pepper and olive oil flavor, but your favorite will work well also.

I don't know that this is really a meal, but I have made it one a couple of times. It stands out best as an appetizer or snack served on your deck or patio on a nice crisp fall evening. ▪



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



Jerry Dilsaver

Sammy Romano



A mature doe is one of bowhunting's toughest challenges. Attention to small details led to the author's success.

SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF ALL THE TIME

DON'T REPEAT COMMON MISTAKES MADE EVERY SEASON BY BOWHUNTERS

September always turns my thoughts to deer and bow hunting. Archery season is already open in some places and about to open in many others. No matter where you hunt though, game time is imminent.

With these thoughts in mind, I'd like to point out some common mistakes that lead to unfilled archery tags and empty freezers. While some seem obvious, I hear every year of hunters making these mistakes — and the heartache that they cause. Hopefully, this will help you avoid some and be more successful this season.

The first is so obvious, but many people fail to make sure that their archery gear and shooting form are up to par. I know several bowhunters who work on their property and scout year-round, only to head into the field with poorly maintained equipment or a bow that is shooting "good enough to hit a deer." This is self-defeating and can be easily avoided with a little planning and practice. Think about it, what good is it to have the perfect stand setup if you can't close the deal by making a vital shot.

Another common mistake is stand placement and setup. Many hunters put tree stands at the wrong height or shot distance, thereby making it much more difficult to get a shot or to hit the animal when a shot is presented.

NOT TOO CLOSE

Stand height is a subject of much debate, but a rule of thumb is to set a stand only as high as necessary to be above the animals' line of sight and in good cover. Fifteen to 20 feet is my preferred height. Any higher begins to leads to steep shot angles and therefore, reduced vitals exposure. Also, the steep angle causes high entry holes, which generally lead to poorer blood trails.

The ideal distance is 20 yards from where the animal will be standing at the shot. Beginning bowhunters have a tendency to set up too close or too far. Setting up too close — under 15 yards — has a tendency to lead to high hits if you are even able to draw. At such close range, clothing noise and/or movement during the draw often leads to blown opportunities. Shooting at whitetails at distances over 30 yards leaves room for string jumping or movement by the deer, leading to poor shot placement and wounded animals.

When cutting shooting lanes, put a lot of thought into what you are doing. There is a fine line between trimming enough brush and limbs for clear arrow flight and trimming away too much cover. Remember, you can always trim a little more, but you can't make new growth appear quickly. A good pole saw or trimmer makes this task much easier. Try to trim lanes that are vertically long rather than wide — since your arrow is travelling an arc — to avoid hitting limbs or alerting deer to your presence. Trim multiple lanes so that if you miss an opportunity to shoot as a deer passes through one of them, you have another chance.

TRIM YOUR TRIMS

A lot of hunters make the mistake of "cutting down the woods," which alerts deer to potential danger or exposes their stand, making it hard to draw their bow unnoticed. Deer are far more perceptive than many hunters give them credit for, and mature deer quickly note any changes to their habitat. More than once, I have seen deer change their travel pattern to avoid a park-like setting caused by over-trimming of shooting lanes. Also, be sure to drag any cut limbs away from your stand.

Failure by a hunter to pay proper attention to scent control has saved the lives of many deer. Wash your clothes in scent-free detergent, and make sure to store them in an airtight container. Nothing screams, "Here sits a hunter" like household odors and human scent. If you can't beat a deer's nose, you're done before you even get started. Shower

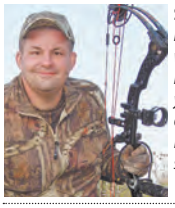


Sammy Roman

HIDDEN AGENDA:
This stand is still well hidden despite overlooking shooting lanes. The cover around it makes it difficult for deer to see a hunter.

before each hunt with unscented soap, and spray down with a scent-killing product. Use carbon clothing and an ozone generator to give you every edge possible. A whitetail's No. 1 defense is its sense of smell, never underestimate this! Don't hunt stands without a favorable wind or weather. Once deer figure out you are in the area, your chances of success drop drastically.

By avoiding these mistakes, you should drastically increase your chances this season. While most of this is common knowledge, each year I hear of hunters repeating these mistakes to a bad end. Pay attention to small details, and your opportunities — and therefore, your success — will increase. ▪



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

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SANTEE STRINGER

Terry Madewell



Guide Inky Davis looks for bass in September around isolated trees and vegetation.

Terry Madewell

SANTEE FISH ARE ON THE MOVE

SEPTEMBER IS BIG TRANSITION MONTH ON LAKES

September is a transition month from summer to fall patterns on the Santee Cooper lakes, and the fishing is excellent for several species. The key is following fish, as they're often on the move following forage. Find the forage and the right habitat for the species you seek, feed them the right stuff, and they'll eat it.

Here's what's happening.

BASS CHASING BAIT

Guide Inky Davis said bass-fishing patterns begin to change for the better this month as bass begin chasing shad and schooling frequently.

"The move from dense cover to chasing forage becomes much more noticeable during September," Davis said. "The water temperature begins to cool, and the current year's shad become a prime food source. This action improves right on into October, but this is when I transition from primarily working dense cover to working edges and isolated weeds and trees while watching for schooling action."

Davis (803-478-7289) said soft plastics continue to be some of his favorite lures, with a variety of plastics working well. He also begins to use crankbaits and spinnerbaits as search baits.

By late September, topwater lures produce during the day, as well as early and late, around points, pockets and forage-packed flats.

"I'll also fish the point trees of cypress stands, especially where the water depth drops from a couple feet down to 6 feet deep," he said. "I use the wind to an advantage, and if a strong breeze is blowing into small coves and pockets, I've found that shad will sometimes pile up making it very attractive to bass.

"I always keep a heavy topwater and a tailspinner rigged and within reach so I can quickly cast ultra-long distances to bass schooling at my extreme casting limit," he said. "This usually results in a few extra bass caught during a day of fall fishing," he said.

MEET SLABS DEEP

The most-consistent crappie fishing will be working deeper drops where brush, logs, stumps and other cover exists. The deep brush is a prime target for consistent catches of slab crappies. Forage will also converge on these woody structures, making crappies even easier to target.

Guide Steve English fishes both Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie, and he said that, typically a depth range of 20 to 35 feet can be productive on either lake.

"I'll typically target underwater brush at the base of a drop," he said. "Live minnows are good baits, but jigs and the jig-minnow combination are very productive. I'll maneuver my boat over the top of the targeted cover and fish vertically. I use long poles with sensitive tips so I can see even the slightest bite of a crappie."

English (843-729-4044) said light bites may be common in these deep-water spots, but some heavy slabs are caught.

"Crappie will move from one area to another frequently as forage moves, although in some cases a really productive place may produce fish for multiple trips," he said. "I'm always ready to move to other spots if the action slows. I'm patient enough to give a specific place a chance but I won't linger long. At this time of the year, those crappie are going to be holding around deep cover and once we find them the action is usually fast."

BUST BULL BREAM

Bream may be the most free-spirited fish this month, because they can be caught deep around brush piles, shallow around heavy cover and foraging around mayfly hatches that can occur almost anywhere.

Deep brush, where crappie are often found, can harbor huge numbers of bull bream looking for something to eat. The same vertical technique used by crappie anglers — using crickets as bait — often results in limit catches of big bream.

For shallow-water fishing, work points and pockets of vegetation in water from 2 to 6 feet deep, using long poles or ultralight rigs loaded with crickets. This technique requires culling if you're keeping just big bream.

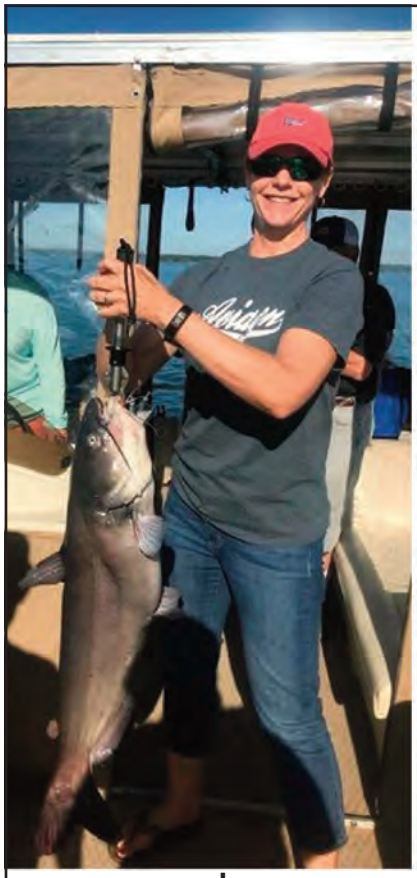
September may not be prime time for mayflies, but it's not uncommon; last September numerous hatches occurred. Mayflies are the tenderloin of bream forage; find it and you will find bream. Hatches do often occur in the same general areas from year to year.

A mayfly hatch typically has bream popping the surface, feeding on these morsels literally often all around the boat. When you run out of crickets, grab a couple of swarming mayflies and cram 'em on the hook.

And hold tight to your rig when you cast, because about any species worth catching is probably eating those same mayflies. ▪



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



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Robert Satterwhite



Big streams are ideal for streamer fishing, especially when water is high and dingy, as it often is after summer showers and thunderstorms.

STREAMERS ARE MADE FOR SUMMER TROUT

FLIES THAT IMITATE FISH ARE THE TICKET IN SOME INSTANCES

Wesley Satterwhite

Thunderstorms and showers are as much a part of late summer as huckleberries, fireflies and bobwhites. Although summer storms arrive quickly and usually end just as quickly, even high-gradient mountain streams need a little time to calm down.

When water is high and slightly dingy, it's pointless to try to float a dry fly or nymph unless you just like to see how fast your fly moves in swift water. This is the time to break out the streamers, the draft horses of fly fishing.

While dry flies and nymphs work by sight, streamers work by sound. The size and bulk of a streamer cause it to vibrate when it's stripped through the water, making it easier for a trout to find.

Another advantage of streamers is that they attract bigger trout, especially lunker brown trout. As browns increase in size, they rely less and less on insects and more on forage fish for sustenance. Big browns prefer a feast, not a snack. Streamers are designed to simulate typical forage fish such as dace, darters, chubs, sculpins, shiners, small fish and other aquatic life found in mountain streams.

Although streamers come in a variety of sizes, patterns and colors, the four basic types are muddlers, hackle wings, bucktails and zonkers. Muddlers usually have large heads designed of clipped deer hair. Hackle wings have wings of long hackle feathers. Bucktails have wings made of deer hair and other animal hair or, more commonly now, synthetics. Zonkers have a strip of soft fur tied along the top of a hook.

Other streamers, especially brightly colored ones, serve as attractors, and while they are easier to see in murky water, they don't get as many productive strikes as forage fish imitations.

The most-productive way to work a streamer is to try to match the actions of the aquatic life the streamer imitates. A shiner imitation, for example, will simulate the darting actions of a real shiner when the streamer is stripped in 4- to 6-inch pulls across a current. When using a sculpin pattern, strip the line in 4-inch pulls and let the fly drop to the bottom and sit for a few seconds before resuming the retrieve.

WORK IN CURRENT

Under most conditions, cast upstream, give the line time to sink, and begin the retrieve, using short jerks alternated with long, steady pulls. Try to place the streamer close to overhung or grassy banks, places where big trout tend to

lurk. Let the stream work for you by keeping the streamer in the current and letting it sweep and swirl naturally. In flat water, twitch the streamer across the surface to simulate a struggling insect or minnow. When fishing near obstructions such as logs or large rocks, let the streamer wave in the current for a few seconds before casting to another spot.

Streamers can be fished with floating or sinking lines, and weight can be added to get the streamer down into deep pools. The added weight causes the streamer to dip between jerks, giving the fly an erratic motion that suggests an injured minnow, something a big brown will find hard to resist.

A major advantage of using a streamer is that presentation is not as crucial as it is in dry-fly fishing. Detecting a strike is much easier with a streamer. Also, when a trout hits a streamer, the large hook — anywhere from size 1/0 to 10 — usually will hold the fish. Make sure you have a tippet strong enough to accommodate the extra load.

Suggested patterns for mountain streams include: Woolly Bugger, Sculpzilla, Micky Finn, Muddler Minnow, Black Nose Dace, Hornberg, Spruce Fly and trout imitations.

Fly shops usually have a variety of streamers in a variety of colors and sizes, some that imitate real aquatic life and others that don't seem to imitate anything. Stick with the basics and save your money. ▪



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.*



Marc Hipp

THE BIGGER THEY ARE....

As trout get older and larger, like this nice brown, they switch from a diet primarily of insets to one primarily of small forage fish, which works in favor of anglers who like to fish streamer flies, which typically imitate minnow-type fish.



BAIT-UP CONTAINER MAKES TOTING MINNOWS EASY

By Dan Kibler



Anglers who like to fish with live minnows but don't like to drag along a bucket — especially if they're wading or fishing from a kayak or other paddle boat — will feel like somebody is thinking about them with the introduction of the Bait-Up live bait container.

The cylindrical container comes in two sizes — 20 and 35 ounces — and can hold up to two dozen minnows. Each container comes with a special lid that allows you to exchange stale water for fresh water as needed without losing any bait. When the lid is removed, a plastic mesh basket that rides on the bottom of the cylinder floats to the top filled with minnows. This allows anglers to remove bait without the need for a dip net, or digging their fingers into a minnow bucket and risking losing other baits.

A lanyard attached to the lid can be clipped onto your belt for easy carry, or onto the rigging of your kayak for a weekend float trip.

MSRP for the Bait-Up 20 is $19.95, and $24.95 for the Bait-Up 35.

More Info: www.bait-up.com

MALUNA: COOLERS WITHOUT HINGES

By Dan Kibler



The seal is the deal.

That's what Scott Hoyt, an expert in thermodynamics, discovered when he set out to build a better cooler, just introduced under the Maluna brand.

"The seal on the lid is the most important part of a cooler," he said. "Heat acts a lot like electricity or water. It seeks the path of least resistance and can enter through even the smallest opening."

And two of those openings were around the hinges on coolers — even high quality ones. So he eliminated them, making Maluna coolers "unhinged."

Four rubber tensioning straps — two on the back wall and two on the front — create a much better seal to keep heat out and cold in. Hoyt said tests show his coolers outperform industry leaders by 23 percent.

Another great feature is a thermometer built into the rotomolded cooler's drain plug, which shows the internal temperature to the outside world. A test cooler, filled with ice and vegetables for canning on a Friday, showed an interior temperature of 39.4 degrees the following Tuesday.

Maluna coolers sit on non-slip feet that keep it from sliding around in your pickup or on the deck of your boat.

Unhinged Maluna coolers come in 40-, 50-, 70- and 111-quart models, with MSRPs between $269 and $449.

More Info: www.maluna.com

DANCO PRODIGY PLIERS

By Brian Cope



Whether crimping a split-shot, unhooking a fish, bending a hook back to its original shape or cutting fishing line, pliers are essential tools that no angler should be without.

And you can't go wrong with Danco's 7.5-inch Prodigy pliers. The aluminum frame is lightweight, rustproof and strong, and features silicone handle inserts for comfort and slip-resistance. Replaceable tungsten carbide side cutters make quick work of mono, fluorocarbon and braid, and the replaceable stainless steel jaw inserts are durable and corrosion-resistant.

These pliers automatically spring open when pulled out of their included sheath, and the coiled lanyard keeps them handy at all times. They come in 15 colors, and custom engraving is available for a personalized touch. At $39.99, they won't break the bank.

More Info: www.dancopliers.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

AVAILABLE PRODUCTS:

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

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

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

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

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

Send to: PrimeTimes 2018 • Dept. LS • 2487 NW 75th Ave., Ste. 100 • Ankeny, IA 50023

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

2018 SEP

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

LUNAR PERIODS — TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED

	VALUE	MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
Sat 1	51	11:32 pm	4:10 am - 7:06 am	12:30 pm	4:35 pm - 7:31 pm	
Sun 2	64		4:56 am - 8:02 am	1:32 pm	5:21 pm - 8:27 pm	HALF
Mon 3	56	12:15 am	5:45 am - 9:01 am	2:36 pm	6:10 pm - 9:26 pm	
Tue 4	52	1:05 am	6:40 am - 10:02 am	3:39 pm	7:05 pm - 10:27 pm	
Wed 5	53	2:02 am	7:40 am - 11:02 am	4:38 pm	8:05 pm - 11:27 pm	HIGH
Thu 6	64	3:05 am	8:41 am - 12:01 pm	5:34 pm	9:06 pm - 12:26 am	
Fri 7	73	4:13 am	9:46 am - 12:56 pm	6:23 pm	10:11 pm - 1:21 am	Perigee
Sat 8	80	5:24 am	10:52 am - 1:48 pm	7:08 pm	11:17 pm - Midnight	
Sun 9	82	6:34 am	11:54 am - 2:36 pm	7:48 pm	Midnight - 2:13 am	NEW
Mon 10	68	7:43 am	12:57 pm - 3:19 pm	8:25 pm	12:19 am - 3:01 am	
Tue 11	53	8:50 am	1:56 pm - 4:02 pm	9:01 pm	1:22 am - 3:44 am	
Wed 12	40	9:55 am	2:55 pm - 4:43 pm	9:37 pm	2:21 am - 4:27 am	
Thu 13	31	10:58 am	3:52 pm - 5:24 pm	10:13 pm	3:20 am - 5:08 am	
Fri 14	29	11:59 am	4:46 pm - 6:08 pm	10:51 pm	4:17 am - 5:49 am	
Sat 15	31	12:57 pm	5:40 pm - 6:52 pm	11:31 pm	5:11 am - 6:33 am	
Sun 16	39	1:53 pm	6:32 pm - 7:38 pm		6:05 am - 7:17 am	HALF
Mon 17	28	2:46 pm	7:23 pm - 8:25 pm	12:15 am	6:57 am - 8:03 am	
Tue 18	21	3:35 pm	8:11 pm - 9:13 pm	1:01 am	7:48 am - 8:50 am	LOW
Wed 19	20	4:19 pm	8:57 pm - 10:03 pm	1:51 am	8:36 am - 9:38 am	Apogee
Thu 20	20	5:00 pm	9:41 pm - 10:53 pm	2:43 am	9:22 am - 10:28 am	
Fri 21	32	5:38 pm	10:22 pm - 11:44 pm	3:37 am	10:06 am - 11:18 am	
Sat 22	44	6:12 pm	11:00 pm - 12:36 am	4:32 am	10:47 am - 12:09 pm	Fall
Sun 23	56	6:45 pm	11:38 pm - Midnight	5:29 am	11:25 am - 1:01 pm	
Mon 24	63	7:17 pm	Midnight - 1:26 am	6:26 am	12:03 pm - 1:51 pm	FULL
Tue 25	55	7:48 pm	12:14 am - 2:20 am	7:23 am	12:39 pm - 2:45 pm	
Wed 26	48	8:20 pm	12:53 am - 3:11 am	8:22 am	1:18 pm - 3:36 pm	
Thu 27	42	8:54 pm	1:30 am - 4:06 am	9:22 am	1:55 pm - 4:31 pm	
Fri 28	40	9:32 pm	2:10 am - 5:02 am	10:24 am	2:35 pm - 5:27 pm	
Sat 29	44	10:13 pm	2:53 am - 5:59 am	11:27 am	3:18 pm - 6:24 pm	
Sun 30	46	11:01 pm	3:41 am - 6:57 am	12:30 pm	4:06 pm - 7:22 pm	

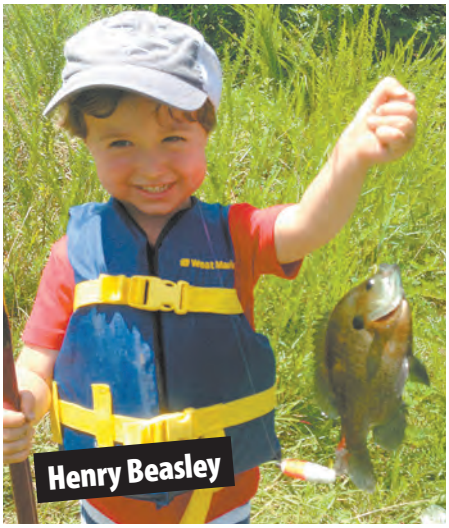
25 50 75 AVERAGE

For more, visit primetimes2.com

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

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





Henry Beasley of Wilmington, N.C., with his first fish, a bream caught in a pond near his home.



Joe Lowdermilk and Jeff Rouse caught and released these nice bull reds after in the Neuse River with Capt. Joe Anderson.



Isaac Lee Johnson, 13, took this gobbler, the biggest ever killed in Randolph County, N.C., on May 6, 2018. The bird weighed 20.25 pounds, had a 12-inch beard and 1.5-inch spurs.



Chuck Stewart of Stem, N.C., with a 18-pound blue catfish from Lake Gaston caught on Mother's Day 2017.



Robert Stines of Dallas, N.C., caught and released this 60-pound catfish at Lake Wylie on Jan. 31, 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

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



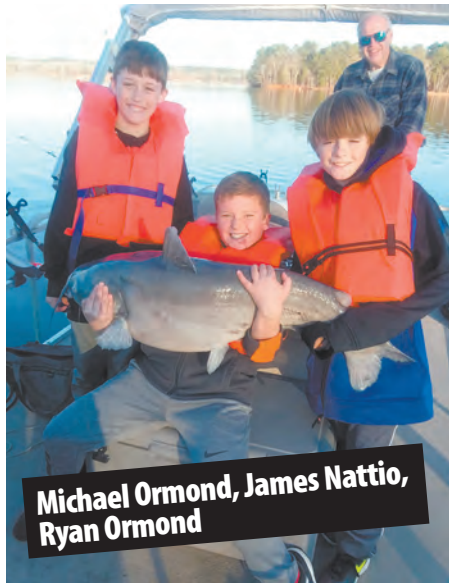
Tim Skeen caught these two flounder in the Chesapeake Bay in June 2016.



Mike Toler caught this nice redfish on a Z-Man paddletail soaked in Baitpro scent, on a trip to Beaufort, S.C.



Rebecca Rossi (in blue) and her brothers and sister had a great offshore trip out of Hatteras, N.C., this past spring, landing these four yellowfin tuna, three of them between 40 and 60 pounds.



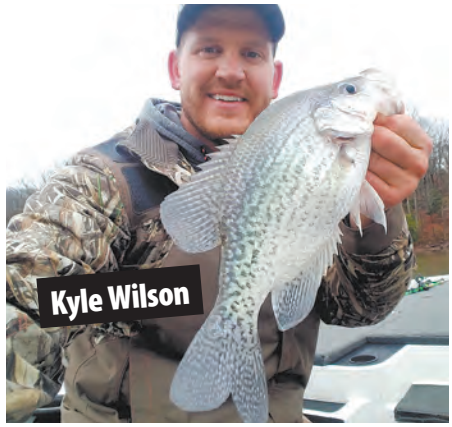
Michael Ormond, James Nattio and Ryan Ormond boated this 43-pound blue cat on a February 2018 trip on Lake Wateree.



McKenzie Chrismon, 15, killed this 8-pointer on Nov. 26, 2016, on a dog hunt in Beaufort County N.C



Gayla Jacobs of Youngsville, N.C... caught this 5-pound bass in the Roanoke River near Plymouth.



Kyle Wilson of Greenville, S.C., caught this 15-inch crappie on March 13, 2018, from Lake Hartwell.



Matthew Futrell and his dog, Cabela, celebrate a great duck hunt on Buckhall Creek near Warsaw N.C.



Jason Bolick took these two turkeys, one a rare silver phase, the last week of season in Catawba County, N.C.



J.B. Baker of Williamston, N.C. caught these two trout on the Pamlico Sound. One was 28 inches, the other 22 inches.

2017-18 NORTH CAROLINA HUNTING REGULATIONS

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

HUNTING SEASONS

DEER

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

BEAR

Oct. 15-Nov. 17 & Dec. 10-Jan. 1, 2019:	In and west of Surry, Wilkes, Caldwell, Burke and Cleveland counties
Nov. 10-Jan. 1, 2019:	Alamance, Anson, Cabarrus, Caswell, Chatham, Davidson, Durham, Granville, Guilford, Lee, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Orange, Person, Randolph, Rockingham, Rowan, Stanly,Union counties
Oct. 13-Jan. 1, 2019:	Franklin, Harnett, Johnston, Hoke, Moore, Richmond, Scotland, Vance, Warren, Wake counties
Nov. 17-Jan. 1, 2019:	Alexander, Catawba, Davie, Forsyth, Gaston, Iredell Lincoln, Stokes, Yadkin counties
Nov.12-Jan. 1, 2019:	Bladen, Brunswick, Carteret, Columbus, Cumberland, Duplin, New Hanover, Onslow, Pamlico, Pender, Robeson, Sampson counties
Nov. 10-25, Dec. 8-23:	Dare, Hyde, Tyrrell counties
Nov. 10-18, Dec. 8-23:	Currituck, Gates, Perquimans counties
Nov. 9-18, Dec. 8-23:	Camden, Chowan, Pasquotank counties
Nov. 17-Dec. 16:	Beaufort, Bertie, Craven, Hertford, Jones, Martin, Washington counties
Nov. 17-Dec. 16:	Edgecombe, Greene, Halifax, Lenoir, Nash, Northampton, Pitt, Wayne, Wilson counties

SQUIRREL	Oct. 16-Feb. 28, 2018 (gray & red squirrels) Oct. 16-Dec. 31 (fox squirrels) in Alleghany, Edgecombe, Moore, Scotland, Anson, Greene, New Hanover, Stokes, Ashe, Harnett, Onslow, Surry, Bladen, Hoke, Pender, Watauga, Brunswick, Johnston, Pitt, Wayne, Cumberland, Jones, Richmond, Wilkes, Duplin, Lenoir, Sampson
RABBIT & QUAIL	Nov. 18-Feb. 28, 2019
GROUSE	Oct. 16-Feb. 28, 2019
WILD TURKEY	April 13-May 11, 2019 (Youth Only: April 6-12, 2019)
RAILS **(KING, SORA, VIRGINIA, CLAPPER)**	Sept. 1-Oct. 13, Oct. 22-Nov. 28
(GALLINULES, MOORHENS)	Sept. 1-Oct. 13, Oct. 22-Nov. 28
CANADA GEESE Statewide: Sept. 1-30	Resident zone, Oct. 3-13, Nov. 10-Dec. 1, Dec. 15-Feb. 9. NE Zone, Jan. 11-26, permit only
SNOW, BLUE, ROSS GEESE	Oct. 9-Feb. 9, 2019, Feb. 11-March 30, 2019 (permit)
DUCKS	Oct. 3-6, Nov. 10-Dec. 1, Dec. 15-Jan. 26, 2019
SEA DUCKS	Nov. 19-Jan. 26, 2019
BRANT	Dec. 15-Jan. 26, 2019
DOVE	Sept. 1-Oct. 6, Nov. 17-Jan. 1, 2019; Dec. 10-Jan. 31, 2019
TUNDRA SWAN	Nov. 10-Jan. 29, 2019. Bag limit 1, by permit only.
RACCOON, OPOSSUM	Oct. 16 (at sunrise)-Feb. 28, 2018
WOODCOCK	Dec. 8-Jan. 29, 2019

2017-18 SOUTH CAROLINA HUNTING REGULATIONS

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

HUNTING SEASONS

SPECIES	SEASON DATES (PRIVATE LAND)	BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT
Doves	Sept. 1-Oct. 13, Nov. 10-24 Dec. 15-Jan. 15, 2019	15	45
Crow	Nov. 1-March 1, 2019	No limits	
Quail	Nov. 20-March 1, 2019	12	36
Rabbit	Nov. 23-March 1, 2019	5	15
Squirrel	Oct. 1-March 1, 2019	10	30
Fox	Nov. 23-March 1, 2019	No limits	
Grouse	Nov. 23-March 1, 2019 (Game Zone 1 only)	3	9
Raccoon/	Sept. 15-March 15, 2019 (statewide)	3 raccoons per party	
Opossum	Sept. 15-March 15, 2019 (Game Zones 3, 6)	No limits	
Other	Nov. 26-March 1, 2019	No limits	
furbearers	(bobcat, otter, weasel, mink, muskrat, skunk)		
Bear	Oct. 17-23 (still hunting only)	1	
	(Game Zone 1 only) Oct. 24-30 (dogs),	5 per party	
	(Game Zone 1 only) Oct. 17-30		
	(Horry, Georgetown, WIlliamsburg counties)	1	(permit only)
Rails	Oct. 6-10		
King & Clapper	Nov. 3-Jan. 6, 2018	15	45
Sora & Virginia		25	75
Gallinules (common/purple)	Nov. 3-Jan. 6, 2018	15	45
Snipe	Nov. 14 - Feb. 28, 2019	8	24
Woodcock	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31, 2019	3	9
Wild Turkey	March 20-May 5, 2019 (statewide private land)	3	
	April 1-May 5, 2019 (statewide WMAs)	3	

DEER SEASON

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

WATERFOWL SEASONS

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

Carolina HUNTING HANDBOOK

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How to use the SPORTSMAN Tide Guide

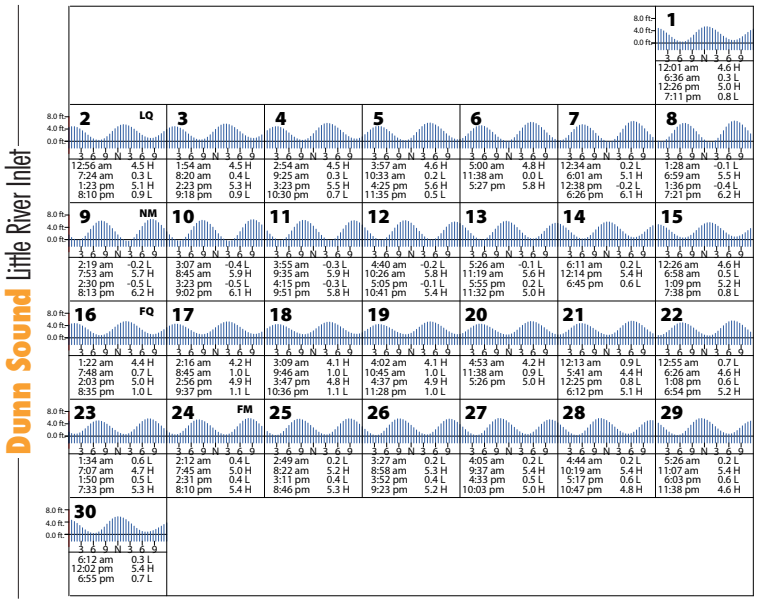
Fish feed most actively when the tide is moving. The Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most active feeding periods each day in the TIDE GUIDE. To find the best time to fish your favorite honey hole, locate the spot under Tide Corrections that is closest to the area and add or subtract the time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

Tide Corrections

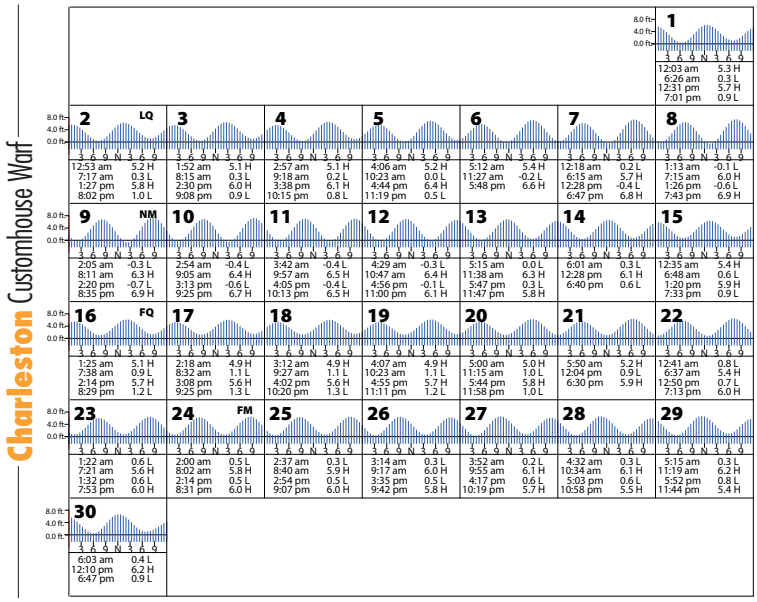
	HIGH	LOW
Cherry Grove(inside)	0:24	0:04
Springmaid Pier Outer Coast	-0:07	-0:30
Murrells Inlet Outer Coast	0:12	0:12
Pawley's Island Outer Coast	-0:10	-0:33
North Inlet Outer Coast	0:03	-0:08
Ent. (south jetty) Winyah Bay	-0:07	-0:36
S. Is. Ferry Winyah Bay	1:08	1:13
Georgetown Pee Dee River Br.	1:55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

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

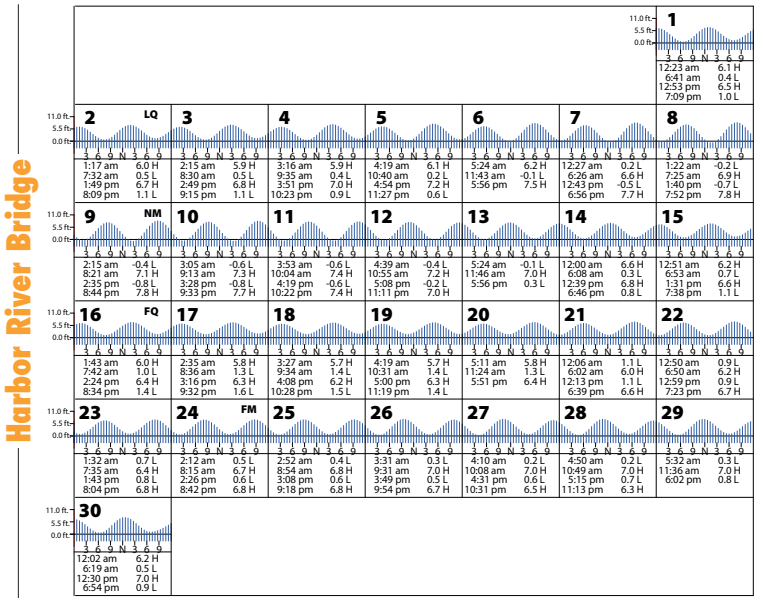
Dunn Sound Little River Inlet



Charleston Customhouse Warf



Harbor River Bridge



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

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

Atlantic Beach Ocean

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 12:03 am 2.8 H 6:06 am 0.3 L 12:39 pm 3.2 H 6:50 pm 0.7 L
2 LQ 12:52 am 2.7 H 6:54 am 0.4 L 1:34 pm 3.2 H 7:51 pm 0.7 L	3 1:49 am 2.6 H 7:49 am 0.3 L 2:36 pm 3.3 H 8:58 pm 0.7 L	4 2:53 am 2.6 H 8:52 am 0.3 L 3:42 pm 3.5 H 10:07 pm 0.6 L	5 4:01 am 2.6 H 9:58 am 0.1 L 4:48 pm 3.6 H 11:11 pm 0.4 L	6 5:07 am 2.8 H 11:04 am 0.0 L 5:49 pm 3.8 H	7 12:09 am 0.2 L 6:09 am 3.0 H 12:07 pm -0.2 L 6:46 pm 3.9 H	8 1:02 am 0.0 L 7:06 am 3.2 H 1:05 pm -0.4 L 7:39 pm 4.0 H
9 NM 1:52 am -0.2 L 8:00 am 3.5 H 2:01 pm -0.5 L 8:30 pm 4.0 H	10 2:39 am -0.3 L 8:52 am 3.6 H 2:55 pm -0.5 L 9:19 pm 3.8 H	11 3:25 am -0.3 L 9:42 am 3.7 H 3:48 pm -0.3 L 10:07 pm 3.6 H	12 4:11 am -0.2 L 10:32 am 3.7 H 4:40 pm -0.1 L 10:55 pm 3.4 H	13 4:56 am 0.0 L 11:23 am 3.6 H 5:34 pm 0.2 L 11:43 pm 3.1 H	14 5:42 am 0.2 L 12:14 pm 3.4 H 6:29 pm 0.5 L	15 12:34 am 2.8 H 6:30 am 0.4 L 1:09 pm 3.3 H 7:29 pm 0.8 L
16 FQ 1:29 am 2.6 H 7:23 am 0.7 L 2:07 pm 3.1 H 8:32 pm 0.9 L	17 2:29 am 2.4 H 8:20 am 0.9 L 3:09 pm 3.1 H 9:37 pm 1.0 L	18 3:32 am 2.4 H 9:22 am 0.9 L 4:10 pm 3.0 H 10:36 pm 1.0 L	19 4:33 am 2.4 H 10:21 am 0.9 L 5:05 pm 3.1 H 11:27 pm 1.0 L	20 5:25 am 2.5 H 11:15 am 0.8 L 5:53 pm 3.1 H	21 12:11 am 0.9 L 6:11 am 2.6 H 12:03 pm 0.7 L 6:36 pm 3.2 H	22 12:49 am 0.7 L 6:52 am 2.8 H 12:46 pm 0.5 L 7:14 pm 3.3 H
23 1:24 am 0.6 L 7:30 am 3.0 H 1:27 pm 0.4 L 7:51 pm 3.3 H	24 FM 1:57 am 0.4 L 8:07 am 3.1 H 2:06 pm 0.3 L 8:26 pm 3.3 H	25 2:30 am 0.3 L 8:43 am 3.3 H 2:45 pm 0.3 L 9:01 pm 3.3 H	26 3:02 am 0.3 L 9:20 am 3.4 H 3:25 pm 0.3 L 9:37 pm 3.2 H	27 3:36 am 0.3 L 9:58 am 3.5 H 4:06 pm 0.3 L 10:15 pm 3.1 H	28 4:12 am 0.3 L 10:39 am 3.5 H 4:51 pm 0.4 L 10:57 pm 3.0 H	29 4:52 am 0.3 L 11:25 am 3.5 H 5:40 pm 0.5 L 11:42 pm 2.9 H
30 5:37 am 0.4 L 12:15 pm 3.5 H 6:35 pm 0.6 L						

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Oregon Inlet USCG Station

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 5:01 am 0.1 L 11:51 am 4.8 H 5:44 pm 0.2 L
2 LQ 12:05 am 4.0 H 5:49 am 0.1 L 12:45 pm 4.8 H 6:44 pm 0.3 L	3 1:01 am 4.0 H 6:44 am 0.1 L 1:44 pm 5.0 H 7:53 pm 0.3 L	4 2:04 am 3.8 H 7:48 am 0.1 L 2:52 pm 5.0 H 9:05 pm 0.2 L	5 3:19 am 3.8 H 8:58 am 0.1 L 4:03 pm 5.4 H 10:09 pm 0.1 L	6 4:32 am 4.2 H 10:04 am 0.1 L 5:07 pm 5.6 H 11:06 pm 0.1 L	7 5:36 am 4.4 H 11:05 am 0.0 L 6:05 pm 5.8 H	8 12:00 am 0.0 L 6:34 am 4.8 H 12:04 pm -0.1 L 6:59 pm 5.8 H
9 NM 12:50 am -0.1 L 7:28 am 5.2 H 1:01 pm -0.1 L 7:49 pm 5.8 H	10 1:37 am -0.1 L 8:17 am 5.4 H 1:54 pm -0.1 L 8:36 pm 5.6 H	11 2:21 am -0.1 L 9:03 am 5.4 H 2:44 pm -0.1 L 9:21 pm 5.4 H	12 3:04 am -0.1 L 9:50 am 5.4 H 3:33 pm 0.0 L 10:07 pm 5.0 H	13 3:47 am -0.1 L 10:38 am 5.2 H 4:25 pm 0.1 L 10:55 pm 4.6 H	14 4:32 am 0.0 L 11:29 am 5.0 H 5:18 pm 0.1 L 11:46 pm 4.0 H	15 5:19 am 0.1 L 12:20 pm 4.8 H 6:14 pm 0.2 L
16 FQ 12:38 am 3.8 H 6:09 am 0.2 L 1:14 pm 4.6 H 7:15 pm 0.3 L	17 1:37 am 3.4 H 7:03 am 0.3 L 2:16 pm 4.4 H 8:23 pm 0.3 L	18 2:50 am 3.2 H 8:07 am 0.3 L 3:23 pm 4.2 H 9:25 pm 0.3 L	19 4:00 am 3.4 H 9:11 am 0.3 L 4:22 pm 4.2 H 10:16 pm 0.3 L	20 4:54 am 3.4 H 10:05 am 0.3 L 5:10 pm 4.4 H 10:59 pm 0.2 L	21 5:39 am 3.6 H 10:52 am 0.2 L 5:51 pm 4.4 H 11:38 pm 0.1 L	22 6:18 am 4.0 H 11:37 am 0.1 L 6:29 pm 4.6 H
23 12:14 am 0.1 L 6:54 am 4.2 H 12:20 pm 0.1 L 7:04 pm 4.6 H	24 FM 12:49 am 0.0 L 7:27 am 4.4 H 1:01 pm 0.1 L 7:37 pm 4.6 H	25 1:22 am 0.0 L 7:59 am 4.6 H 1:41 pm 0.0 L 8:11 pm 4.6 H	26 1:55 am 0.0 L 8:33 am 4.6 H 2:20 pm 0.0 L 8:46 pm 4.6 H	27 2:29 am 0.0 L 9:09 am 5.0 H 3:00 pm 0.0 L 9:24 pm 4.6 H	28 3:05 am 0.0 L 9:49 am 5.2 H 3:44 pm 0.1 L 10:06 pm 4.4 H	29 3:45 am 0.1 L 10:34 am 5.2 H 4:33 pm 0.1 L 10:54 pm 4.2 H
30 4:32 am 0.1 L 11:25 am 5.2 H 5:28 pm 0.1 L 11:49 pm 4.0 H						

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Southport Cape Fear River

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 6:00 am 0.2 L 11:54 am 4.6 H 6:56 pm 0.7 L
2 LQ 12:26 am 4.3 H 6:50 am 0.2 L 12:55 pm 4.6 H 8:03 pm 0.8 L	3 1:33 am 4.2 H 7:54 am 0.3 L 2:09 pm 4.7 H 9:12 pm 0.7 L	4 2:48 am 4.2 H 9:07 am 0.2 L 3:29 pm 4.8 H 10:17 pm 0.6 L	5 4:02 am 4.2 H 10:17 am 0.1 L 4:42 pm 4.9 H 11:18 pm 0.4 L	6 5:10 am 4.4 H 11:22 am 0.0 L 5:47 pm 5.0 H	7 12:15 am 0.2 L 6:13 am 4.6 H 12:22 pm -0.2 L 6:46 pm 5.1 H	8 1:09 am 0.0 L 7:11 am 4.8 H 1:20 pm -0.3 L 7:41 pm 5.2 H
9 NM 2:01 am -0.2 L 8:06 am 5.0 H 2:15 pm -0.3 L 8:31 pm 5.2 H	10 2:50 am -0.3 L 8:59 am 5.0 H 3:07 pm -0.3 L 9:21 pm 5.1 H	11 3:37 am -0.3 L 9:51 am 5.0 H 3:58 pm -0.2 L 10:09 pm 5.0 H	12 4:23 am -0.2 L 10:43 am 5.0 H 4:48 pm 0.0 L 10:59 pm 4.8 H	13 5:08 am -0.1 L 11:35 am 5.0 H 5:37 pm 0.2 L 11:49 pm 4.6 H	14 5:53 am 0.1 L 12:27 pm 4.8 H 6:28 pm 0.4 L	15 12:41 am 4.4 H 6:40 am 0.3 L 1:19 pm 4.7 H 7:29 pm 0.5 L
16 FQ 1:33 am 4.2 H 7:28 am 0.4 L 2:11 pm 4.6 H 8:14 pm 0.6 L	17 2:25 am 4.1 H 8:20 am 0.5 L 3:03 pm 4.6 H 9:09 pm 0.6 L	18 3:18 am 4.0 H 9:14 am 0.5 L 3:55 pm 4.5 H 10:01 pm 0.6 L	19 4:11 am 4.1 H 10:07 am 0.5 L 4:46 pm 4.6 H 10:52 pm 0.5 L	20 5:03 am 4.1 H 10:59 am 0.4 L 5:37 pm 4.6 H 11:40 pm 0.4 L	21 5:54 am 4.2 H 11:48 am 0.3 L 6:24 pm 4.7 H	22 12:25 am 0.4 L 6:42 am 4.4 H 12:36 pm 0.3 L 7:08 pm 4.8 H
23 1:08 am 0.3 L 7:25 am 4.5 H 1:22 pm 0.3 L 7:49 pm 4.8 H	24 FM 1:50 am 0.3 L 8:05 am 4.5 H 2:06 pm 0.3 L 8:25 pm 4.8 H	25 2:29 am 0.3 L 8:38 am 4.6 H 2:50 pm 0.3 L 8:55 pm 4.7 H	26 3:06 am 0.3 L 9:03 am 4.7 H 3:32 pm 0.4 L 9:21 pm 4.7 H	27 3:42 am 0.3 L 9:24 am 4.8 H 4:16 pm 0.4 L 9:47 pm 4.6 H	28 4:19 am 0.3 L 9:56 am 4.9 H 5:01 pm 0.5 L 10:24 pm 4.5 H	29 4:58 am 0.3 L 10:40 am 4.9 H 5:51 pm 0.6 L 11:13 pm 4.4 H
30 5:43 am 0.3 L 11:35 am 4.9 H 6:48 pm 0.7 L						

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Guide Chip Hamilton said Lake Hartwell stripers and hybrids will move from very deep water to shallower flats.

Sportsman
FISHING HOTSPOTS

Pat Robertson

CATCH HARTWELL'S SEPTEMBER STRIPERS

Effective patterns change from early to late in the month

Catching striped bass and hybrids on South Carolina's Lake Hartwell is a pretty simple deal this month, according to guide Chip Hamilton of Easley, S.C.

Two major things are happening with the fish, he said. "At the beginning of the month, they are still coming off their summer pattern and are still in deeper water. When the water temperature starts to drop as fall starts to come in, they will be in transition, moving up to shallower water."

Hamilton (864-304-9011) said that when September arrives, fish will be holding on flats 60 to 80 feet deep off river channels that may run twice as deep, or they may be suspended out in those channels.

"That is the typical August pattern, and it carries on at least through the first week of September," he said, "and I have seen it go on longer. The fish are not always aggressive in early September. You can see a bunch of fish on the graph and drop the bait down to them, expecting to catch them fast, but they are still coming off that summer pattern."

But, he added, as the water cools toward the end of the month, the bite will pick up considerably.

"When the temperature starts to drop, the fish will be in transition," Hamilton said. "The bait moves up, and the fish just move up with them into shallower water. They will come up to 40- to 60-foot depths on flats, and if they are suspended they will be in the 40- to 50-foot range."

Hamilton said he will be fishing this month in the last couple of miles of the Tugaloo River and Seneca River and all the areas down towards the dam, fishing mostly live blueback herring on Carolina-rigged down lines.

"You can catch them on artificials, too," he said. "A lot of guys like to work big, magnum jigging spoons, but smaller spoons work, too. As for topwater, I've seen the fish start schooling towards the end of the month."

The catch in September is a good mixture of stripers and hybrids, Hamilton said, but it is also a good time to catch big stripers before the fall migration up into the rivers.

"Before the fish start moving up, a lot of the bigger stripers will still be down in that ares close to the dam," he said.

One other factor to be aware of in September is current.

"The heavier they generate at the dam the more aggressive the fish will be," he said. "They have to eat, but they eat better when the current is moving and making the water more oxygen rich." ▪

— Pat Robertson


Jerry Dilsaver

Live-bait rigs with smaller baits are great ways to catch Spanish mackerel on light tackle in the fall outside a handful of inlets along North Carolina's southeastern coast.

LIVE-BAIT SPANISH

are fall favorites outside SENC inlets

It is a bit of an oxymoron along the North Carolina's southeastern coast, that as fall approaches, the water cools and the fishing heats up.

The cooling water prompts bait to leave the protection of the marshes and begin moving down the beaches. Larger fish move in to gorge themselves, building fat reserves for the fall migration and upcoming winter.

Spanish mackerel have been off the beaches all summer and have been feeding consistently, but the combination of cooling water and an influx of food really gets them going. This is a great time to catch Spanish, especially the larger fish that get more aggressive. Fishermen trolling small flashy lures will continue to catch fish, but a growing group of savvy fishermen switch their tactics to live baits to target larger fish.

Larger Spanish mackerel often gather around inlets, especially on a falling tide. As bait washes out, they chomp like a hungry man at an all-you-can-eat buffet. They eat a wide variety of baits, but their favorites are 3- to 4-inch finger mullet and 4- to 5-inch menhaden. These baits fished on light tackle will usually provide a morning or afternoon of reel-screaming fun and tasty, fresh fillets for dinner.

Baitfish don't need navigable inlets. Falling tides flush mullet and menhaden from Rich, Mason, Masonboro, Carolina Beach, Cape Fear River, Lockwood Folly, Shallotte, Tubbs and Little River inlets. Hungry mackerel are usually waiting just a few feet into the clearer water beyond the tide lines. Fishermen can anchor and drift baits or work along the tide lines with live baits, ready to cast when activity is spotted. Sometimes Spanish can be seen cutting and jumping while chasing baitfish and often, hovering seagulls give away their location.

Most inshore outfits handle live-bait Spanish fishing well. They make a hard initial run, but it's rarely more than 100 to 150 yards. This lights up the reel and gets the fisherman's adrenaline going. A really big one might make a second long run, but most of the time the first run is the big one, followed by several slowing 10- to 30-yard runs.

The rig is simple too. It's basically a live-bait rig for king mackerel in a smaller size. No. 3 wire with two No. 6 treble hooks about 3 inches apart allows hooking the bait through the nose and in the belly. Spanish hit hard and running, so the trailing hook catches many of them. Some fishermen use a single No. 6 treble hook just behind the head, with a few inches of No. 2 or No. 3 for cutoff protection and suspend the bait under a small float. Both methods usually produce well and are lots of fun. ▪

— Jerry Dilsaver

SHADOW STATE-LINE BULLS

Mullet run will kick off September fishing action

Dove season and college football arrive in early September, and fall fishing follows soon thereafter along the North Carolina-South Carolina border. The big news is, the first run of bull reds usually shows up towards the end of the month.

Big, adult redfish, aka spot-tail bass, channel bass or puppy drum, gather up every fall, leave inshore areas and travel south along the eastern seaboard, using the abundant mullet and menhaden behind the breakers to fuel their engines.

Greg Holmes of Fish Skinny Charters out of Little River, S.C., steers his boat to the beachfront along the state line to intercept these oversized bronzed beasts.

"The big reds pile in hard towards the end of the month, but they can show up any time when the big schools of bait show up along the beaches," said Holmes (843-241-0594). "The mullet run begins in September with the flood tides, and the bull reds will generally show up about the same time."

Holmes keeps his ear to the ground to see when he needs to start looking for reds.

"They show up just below Cape Fear along the beaches first. Watch the reports up north and know they will be here soon," he said.

Big schools of menhaden are also pushing down the beach this time of year, giving the old drum plenty of groceries to from which to choose. But, anglers can quickly get a pull down from a big, ol' drum when they are hovering around schools of menhaden.

Holmes leaves Little River Inlet, making either a right-hand or left-hand turn depending on where the most action is.. He typically fishes between 8 and 17 feet deep; that's where most of the bait is located in September.

"I run the beach looking for bait pods," he said. "There can be a lot of bait out there this time of year and the fish will be on one or several pods of bait. We stop and fish one for 10 minutes and then move along to the next one if we don't get hit. If the fish are on the bait, they will eat."

For Holmes, live menhaden on a Carolina rig is tough to beat, but he will also use artificial lures, too.

"We throw 1 to 1.5-ounce white bucktail jigs tipped with Gulp curlytail trailers," he said. "Toss it out and hop it off the bottom just like you would a 1.4-ounce trout jig in the creek. If he sees it, he will let you know

continues >

Bull Reds continued >

pretty quickly," he said.

The bull red bite can be a barrel of fun for anglers, especially when the catch is pushing 50 inches and weighs more than 40 pounds. However, these fish are the breeders that re-populate the local population. Anglers are encouraged to use 5000-series spinning reels and 40-pound line to get these fish to the boat and back in the water quickly. ▪ — Jeff Burleson



Bull redfish move out of inshore areas and into the nearshore ocean around Little River this month, and they can provide plenty of good fishing.

Jeff Burleson

BE READY TO MOVE FOR WATEREE BASS

Changes in weather can push bass from deep to shallow

Some bass fishermen like to work the shallows; some like to fish deep. You have to be willing to do both to be successful on Lake Wateree this month, according to bass pro Dearal Rodgers of Camden, S.C., who grew up fishing the South Carolina reservoir.

"In September, I always start out in the morning fishing around grass and rocks in the zero to 5-foot deep zone," he said. "Bass at Wateree will cruise up shallow looking for an easy meal that time of day."



Bass pro Dearal Rodgers said he is ready in September to fish topwater baits in shallow water, as well as probing deep water for Lake Wateree bass.

Pat Robertson

Fishing main-lake points and in pockets, Rodgers said he likes to throw a frog around grass beds and a Pop-R or Zara Spook Jr. around rocks. His lure selection includes a white Buckeye double willow leaf spinnerbait and a Strike King 1.5 crankbait.

"A morning breeze really helps the top water bite," he said. "If there is no wind — and definitely if there is fog — I stick with the spinnerbait and crankbait. Shad colors are best."

Wateree bass tend to pile up offshore around deeper breaks on points and along creek-channel ledges and humps, according to Rodgers, so as the sun begins to rise, he will move to the deeper water in the 10- to 20-foot range.

"These bass in the deeper water will bite a variety of lures, like Carolina-rigged lizards or Baby Brush hogs, deep-diving crankbaits, Buckeye football Mop jigs, and the Spot Remover with a Zoom trick worm."



Noting that boat electronics have come a long way in the past decade, Rodgers said he relies heavily on his to locate bass and baitfish in the deeper zones before making a cast.

"Once you find a productive spot, don't be afraid to stay a few hours trying different baits and retrieves to fire up the school," he said.

"As water temperatures begin to cool later in the month, the bass will transition more to the shallows," he said. "That's when I begin to mix in dock fishing with the Buckeye Mop jig and Spot Remover." ▪ — Pat Robertson

SHANK A HARBOR SHEEPSHEAD

Charleston jetties, bridge pilings come alive

Anglers looking for something a little different will find it along the Charleston Harbor jetties and bridge pilings this month. It's a great time for sheepshead fishing.

"You can catch these fish throughout the summer with no problem, but this month is definitely when you start to see it get even better," said Marc Deschenes of VIP Adventures in Summerville, S.C. "It's also easier on the angler, because it stays cool later into the mornings and begins cooling off a little earlier in the evenings."

continues >





Sheepshead continued >

Deschenes likes to get on the water just before the tide starts in, and he will stay on the sheepshead until about two hours after the tide reaches its highest point. He anchors down or ties up to a piece of structure that allows him to fish vertically next to barnacle-encrusted structure.

"At low tide, you can see all the exposed barnacles. That's what the sheepshead are after. The fish will come in at low tide and sit, waiting for the tide to come up and make those barnacles available to them. So you can catch some with fiddler crabs at low tide, but they are really in a feeding mood when they can reach those barnacles," said Deschenes (843-708-5473).



Just as the tide begins to come in, Deschenes likes to chum the water with a homemade mixture of crushed barnacles, and he uses a Carolina rig with a ½-ounce sinker, a 12-inch leader of 20 to 30-pound monofilament, and a 2/0 hook with a live fiddler crab.

"You want a quality, stout hook that stays sharp. I don't use any kind of fancy or expensive line, but I don't skimp on hooks," he said. "Setting the hook on a sheepshead is like setting the hook on a rock. It will wear out a cheap hook real quick."

When not using a Carolina rig, Deschenes will use a ⅜-ounce Ralph Phillips jighead with a fiddler crab.

"It's got a good, sharp hook and a big eye on the jighead," he said. "That's working really well too, and you usually don't get hung up as much with this as you sometimes do with a Carolina rig."

Deschenes suggests anglers slowly drop their baits straight down, let them touch the bottom, then reel up three cranks of the handle and get ready to set the hook.

"As the tide gets higher, you'll want to adjust how far you reel up. You want to reel to where the fish are most likely to be, which is the most congregated area of barnacles they can reach depending on the tide. You might also have to bump up the weight to a 1-ounce or even 1½-ounce sinker as the tide starts moving quicker to keep your bait straight down," he said. ▪

— Brian Cope

FEED SPANISH WITH A SPOON

Casting to fall mackerel can fill your cooler quickly

September is a transition month at the North Carolina coast, as fish move from summer's deep offshore haunts to nearshore waters.

The first "mullet blow" — a northeaster — drops water temperatures and puts inshore baitfish on the move. How the word gets to gamefish around offshore wrecks and reefs is anyone's guess, but they head inshore to gorge on this moveable feast that lasts two months.

"The water will be cooler, and baitfish will be thick, on the beaches," said guide Noah Lynk of Harkers Island (252-342-6911).

Veteran such as Lynk and local, Cape Lookout-area anglers know Spanish mackerel will be within a few long casts of the beaches. Moreover, these tasty fish that weighed 1 to 2 pounds during summer often add several pounds by September.

"Spanish mackerel school up more than they do in the summer," he said. "They school in fall and winter like false albacore; it's pretty similar to early spring. And they'll be (mixed) with albies."

Keys to finding mackerel include watching for diving birds and seeing alarmed baitfish schools scatter on the surface.

Even though baitfish such as glass minnows preoccupy Spanish, they'll still be alert for unusual movements — such as boats.

"Trolling for Spanish in the fall isn't the best way," Lynk said. "You can scatter them and make them go deep if you run through a school."

Lynk prefers to get within casting distance and make long casts with jigs and spoons.

"We catch a lot of Spanish with metal jigs," he said.

For equipment, Lynk likes a 7- to 7½-foot rod with a 3000 Series Okuma reel spooled with 12-pound braid and 3 feet of P-line fluorocarbon leader.

"The P-Line fluorocarbon has a coating that makes it soft and easy to tie, like monofilament," said Lynk, who uses a surgeon's knot to join his braid and leaders and a loop knot to tie his lures to the P-Line.

Jigs, which weigh between ½- and 1 ounce, will be only 2 to 3 inches long.

"Sea Striker Jig Fish work well,





Noah Lynk switches from trolling to casting jigs and spoons for Spanish mackerel once September arrives.

along with three new casting jigs made by the same company that makes Clark Spoons," Lynk said. "Any (lure) that resembles a small glass minnow, 2 to 3 inches long, will catch Spanish.

"It depends on how you want to fish and how deep you want a lure to fall.

"The best way is to burn a jig across the surface. A lot of people think by burning a jig, I mean waiting until it hits the water, then start reeling. But that's not what works best.

"When I cast to Spanish mackerel, I click over the bail and start winding before the lure hits the water. If you troll for Spanish, the boat has to run at least 6 knots. Spanish like fast-moving baits. But if you're casting, it's hard to wind a reel handle that fast, especially if you wait 'til the lure hits the water.

"So I'm burning the reel before a cast lands. You'll get more strikes that way."

If the target is false albacore, anglers may choose to let lures sink and then wind. Fat Alberts often hang beneath Spanish mackerel schools.

"If you want Spanish though, you got to burn your reel," Lynk said. ▪

— Craig Holt

Georgetown up next >

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GO FOR THE TOP!

Georgetown specks turn to topwater

As the temperatures finally drop to comfortable levels, the inshore bite begins to take a turn for the better.

For anglers around Georgetown, S.C., who love to catch speckled trout, it's time to sharpen the hooks on topwater baits, because that bite takes off, and there may not be a more-exciting way to connect with a yellowmouth.

Specks rank high on the hit list of Jeff Latig of Living Water Guide Service, when the groceries get thick in waters around Georgetown and the fish get hungry.

"Once September comes, the abundance of shrimp and bait-fish in the area makes the trout fishing pretty good," said Lattig (843-997-4655). "It's a great opportunity to throw topwater, and the best time is at dawn and dusk."

Trout prefer cooler waters, and the combination of cooler waters and periods of low light makes September a prime time to find trout filling up at their normal breakfast hangouts, which stretch from Debordieu south to McClellanville and Bulls Bay. Anywhere recreational shrimp baiters are ganged up will be good places to look for surface-feeding trout. The grassy banks, oyster points and creek mouths near North Inlet, Muddy Bay and Cape Romain are going to be good places to look for trout.



Topwater baits such as Zara Spooks account for plenty of speckled trout when the weather finally cools in September.

Jeff Burleson

"I work the back of the eddies of sloughs and the oyster rips," Lattig said. "Anywhere you normally find trout ambushing bait, you can expect trout to feed upward. One of the best techniques in the fall is to look out for the birds. They will tip you off to a school of feeding trout."

When using spinning gear, Lattig will use a Heddon Zara Spook in different sizes, depending on how big the fish are. He will also vary up which topwater baits he uses depending on the water depth and if the fish are short-striking.

"If the fish are short-striking, I will rig up a hopper-dropper (rig) with a Chug Bug-type topwater with 18 inches of line and a circle hook holding a DOA CAL or a DOA or VUDU shrimp," he said.

Lattig uses the popper just like a cork, popping it a couple of times and letting it sit.

"A lot of times, they will take the dropper, and other times, they take the popper. It's a good way to get them to eat," he said. ▪

— Jeff Burleson

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JORDAN'S BASS WORKING TOWARD SHALLOWS

Start looking more in creeks this month as water cools

Anglers itching to fill a bag with big largemouth bass will need to be ready for a shift come September, but with a little searching, willing fish will be ripe for the plucking on North Carolina's Jordan Lake.

According to local tournament angler Jonathan Phillips of Pittsboro, N.C., Jordan's bass will likely be in similar areas as their summer pattern — only shallower as water temperatures cool and baitfish begin migration.



Jonathan Phillips and his son, Carter, show off what a September bass looks like at Jordan Lake.

"It's all baitfish-related," said Phillips. "The bass will be coming out of their summer pattern and following the baitfish as they move out — coming closer to the shore. Some fish will move into the mouths and first thirds of the creeks, but most will be in offshore areas."

Phillips touts stumps and rocky places on points as well as old road beds and isolated patches of timber as key areas to focus on during this time. Although water temperatures will likely begin to slowly slide down, the thermocline is still subject to hover in the 10-foot range — depending on temperature, rain, and water movement — meaning most fish will be caught just above this depth and shallower.

"The water is still warm," said Phillips, "and they'll be a little lethargic, not really wanting to chase. So, I slow my presentation down. A football jig or a big worm on a Carolina rig are good baits to use. What energy they do expend, they use eating a big meal. I use green pumpkin, red bug, or junebug colors with a ½- to ¾-ounce weight on 15-pound P-Line fluorocarbon. It's also a good time to fish a shaky head. It probably gets more bites over the course of a day.

"A lot of fish will suspend this time of year, especially around the isolated patches of timber. The timber may be in 12 feet of water, but the fish will be 4 or 5 feet deep. You can throw a spinnerbait or a swimbait on a ½ to ¾-ounce jighead around those: anything that imitates a shad. Or you can bounce a square-billed crankbait off their head and get a reaction strike. Laydown trees can also be a part of the pattern. A lot of Jordan's have rotted away, but the (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) has cut down and cabled some off, so there's more than there used to be."

Phillips prefers the section of Jordan Lake from the S-turns on the southern end of the main lake to the rocks in the Haw River. ▪

— Dusty Wilson

Roanoke Rapids Lake up next >

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TIME TO DOUBLE UP

Upper end of Roanoke Rapids Lake has plenty of stripers, largemouth



Tony Garitta

When guide Tim Biesecker unleashes a long cast with either a Zara Spook, weighted Fluke or swimbait into the rock-laden waters at the upper end of North Carolina's Roanoke Rapids Lake, below Gaston Dam, he doesn't know if he'll be rewarded with a powerful run from a striped bass or an acrobatic leap from a perturbed largemouth.

What Biesecker (252-532-1846) does know is that the upper end of the lake is the feeding ground for both species, and he's as apt to catch one as much as the other on cloudy days or when the water is being pulled through the upstream dam.

"In the summer, Roanoke Rapids becomes an upper-lake fishery," said Biesecker. "The lower lake has fish, but the majority of fish are concentrated at the upper end."

Biesecker's tackle for schooling fish depends on water clarity. In clear water, he selects spinning gear, using a 7-foot, medium-action rod paired with a reel filled with 8-pound line; in stained water, he uses a 7-foot, medium-action baitcasting rod and baitcasting reel spooled with 10- to12-pound line.

In many respects, Biesecker said 4,600-acre Roanoke Rapids Lake resembles 2,500-acre Tuckertown Lake on the Yadkin River system.

"Like Tuckertown, Roanoke Rapids is small in size and almost completely undeveloped, and there are only three major creeks," said Biesecker.

Both lakes are populated with a mix of stripers and largemouth and depend upon the release of water at their upper reaches to improve the fishing.

They're also navigational nightmares, with shallow stumps, rocks and vegetation. Their treacherous upper reaches can take out lower units in a heartbeat.

Unless striper activity forces his hand, Biesecker mainly targets largemouth bass.

Like the largemouth at Tuckertown, Roanoke Rapids bass love a properly presented frog.

Biesecker fishes Spro frogs in black or white amidst the thickest vegetation he can find, using stout tackle and heavy line. He favors black frogs on cloudy days; white frogs in the mornings and evenings.

He probes grass edges and pockets with weightless Flukes or Senkos rigged with ⅛- or ¼-ounce tungsten weights

Much to Biesecker's chagrin, Roanoke Rapids, like Tuckertown Lake, is no longer a crankbait fisherman's paradise because of unruly vegetation or algae.

"Roanoke Rapids was an ideal crankbait lake with its numerous stumps and points until the intrusion of grass," said Biesecker.

Biesecker now confines his crankbait fishing to mid-lake and lower-lake areas where the water is deeper and where the grass is not as dominant. He cranks stumpy flats and creek channel edges. ▪

— Tony Garitta

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STRIPERS ON THE PROWL

High Rock fish working down main-lake areas

Jerry Hill of Triad Fishing and Guide Service in Lexington, N.C., hopes the striper fishing at High Rock Lake this September resembles last fall's action.

"I started catching quality stripers last September just as soon as the water temperatures cooled," said Hill, who guides on High Rock and Badin lakes. "I caught the fish at the mouth of Crane Creek, and they lingered there for several weeks."

After that, Hill (336-247-1265) said he followed the stripers as they moved down the lake. From Crane, the fish went to the mouth of Second Creek, and by October, they were at the mouth of Abbotts Creek.

Wherever they moved, Hill caught the majority of his fish trolling the channel in 12 to 14 feet of water with ¾- and ⅜-ounce green bucktails and green plastic worm trailers.

"In September, stripers hit bigger baits," Hill said. "Later, I'll switch to smaller bucktails and Sassy Shad plastics."

Hill dislikes live bait because he doesn't want to waste time tossing a casting net.

"I want to go fishing, not chase after live bait," he said.

Hill uses his outboard motor for trolling; his spread consists of three outfits spooled with 36-pound lead-core line, and two carrying 30-pound line with double-rigged bucktails dropped behind downriggers,

The double rig consists of a 3-way swivel tied to the main line and two leaders of different lengths holding the baits.

"I let out 2½ colors of lead-core line and set the downriggers so all the baits are covering 12 to 14 feet of water," said Hill, who is not influenced by water color and current, two factors considered important by some striper fishermen. Nor does the water level matter.

"Many fishermen say stripers won't hit in stained or muddy water," Hill said. "That may be true at Badin, which holds deep, clear water, but High Rock has mostly stained water. Stripers acclimate themselves to it. I've caught stripers at High Rock in some pretty muddy water by switching from green bucktails to white bucktails with white plastic trailers."

Hill said current improves the bite by stirring up the forage, but finding forage in conjunction with stripers with your electronics is the key.

"When forage resembles clouds on your electronics, you're not likely to catch many fish," said Hill. "The forage must be broken up, which indicates feeding stripers."

At High Rock, Hill prefers sunny days to cloudy ones, while the reverse holds true at Badin.

Hill said most stripers this month will range from 10 to 14 pounds, with about four bites an outing.



Guide Jerry Hill works bucktails in 12 to 14 feet of water this month for High Rock Lake's stripers.

Dan Kibler

"High Rock is known for its big stripers, not its number of fish," he said. ▪

— Tony Garitta



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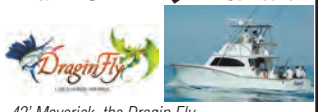


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